

FORUM

FOR THE

DISCUSSION

OF NEW

TRENDS IN

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Two Years After Plowden

What use was **Plowden** anyway? If a camel is a horse designed by a committee, then the **Plowden Report** was a many-humped creature whose disparate sections defy any reader to gain a rational grasp of the whole. What we need is a bevy of specific reports on different aspects of primary education, pushing forward an on-going critique and constructive re-appraisal for each reader to make his own coherent sense of, year by year. So runs the argument against 'once-for-all' portmanteau reports.

All the same, **Plowden** has its uses. The main, short-term, effect is probably psychological: a considerable boost to the morale of the primary sector. The continuing cry of 'neglect of the primary schools' may have had its dangers in inducing resentment coupled with a feeling of fatalism. **Plowden** was not the first to raise the issue of educational priority areas (Newsom had done so in quieter terms) but it firmly stressed that a start should be made in the primary schools: 'They have long had less than their share of new building and their classes have always been larger. Since they draw their pupils from smaller catchment areas they feel the full impact of social conditions in their immediate neighbourhood'. (*para. 172*).

Some changes, then, on the political and economic front, with special funds for EPA districts and teachers, the first small steps towards new nursery school places, the possibility of a mild shift in Burnham to narrow the primary/secondary differential, and a significant re-allocation of funds from secondary to primary building.

But perhaps the most far-reaching changes that **Plowden** has helped to encourage will be those that require little or no cash, but a great deal of human ingenuity, intelligence and sympathy. In this issue we give distinctive examples from four primary schools (two in EPA districts, rural and urban) of developments in home/school relationships. Here **Plowden** was at its most revolutionary, both in the research it

sponsored which suggested that parental support for the child's school life may be the most alterable key to the child's success in school, and in its specific accounts, in Chapter 4, of participation by parents. Detailed descriptions in several recent publications, including **DES Education Survey No 5**, should do much to help teachers who are sympathetic towards this work, but chary of starting off on the wrong foot. **Forum** will be glad to receive further accounts, however brief, of specific ways of nurturing good home/school connections – particularly in neighbourhoods where parents have had little previous contact with the school (and *vice versa*) – and in secondary schools.

Two articles and two reviews continue the renewed interest that **Plowden** helped to pinpoint in Chapter 2: 'Spoken language plays a central role in learning'. (*para. 54*). Here practice and research, from infant school to college, in America, Russia and England, is producing new evidence on the importance of **Plowden's** categorical assertion. Two books relevant to this subject – John Dixon's **Growth through English** and Denis Lawton's **Social Class, Language and Education** – are reviewed in this issue. Is there a fundamental dichotomy between the purposeful warmth and acceptance exemplified in Lil Thompson's Infant School and the formal linguistic core to the language programmes proposed for the comprehensive school by Douglas Holly?

Once again we discuss unstreaming, its introduction and continuing practice; two articles raise the current issue of 'so we agree that streaming is educationally unsound, but aren't there more alternatives than blanket unstreaming on a whole class basis?'. Meanwhile Form 4S – as described in another article – will probably continue to be created in the majority of schools over the next decade, and the young men and women who are placed in 4S need the most sympathetic and imaginative teachers of all.

Spoken Language

Lilian Thompson

The **Plowden Report** declared (in Chapter Two) that 'spoken language plays a central role in learning'. The best Infant Schools have believed this for years. Lil Thompson, head of Birches Infants School, Codsall, Wolverhampton, is well known as an outstanding member of the National Association of the Teaching of English.

As a head teacher I found that one of the most interesting sections in the Plowden Report was that on Spoken Language. Every teacher has a 'bee in her bonnet' and mine has always been that children should be allowed to talk freely when they come to school. Too often I have been confronted with tight-lipped children who have been told by their parents, 'You'll have to shut up when you go to school'. Memories of standing in the corner, lines, etc for talking, have no doubt prompted this piece of parental advice, and it is not always easy to convince parents that, today, we encourage children to talk as much as possible. It is sad that, after many years of prompting by the **Hadow Report, Handbook of Suggestions**, Bernstein, Lewis, **The Times**, Old Uncle Tom Cobbley and now – **Plowden**, and having finally reached the stage when teachers are convinced about the need and benefits coming from spoken language, children have, at the same time, been born into a world where their own speech is being smothered by radio and television. They are constantly at the receiving end, and very little is being transmitted. The very structure of our social life is against the encouragement of spoken language. Parents, who for socio-economic reasons go out to work, have little time to talk to or, more important still, to listen to their children. Large blocks of flats, situated in artificial layouts, are not conducive to communal play and talk, as were some of our back-streets. Older relatives living nearby, who could always be relied upon to talk to their small companions, are now scattered.

Nursery schools, where children learn to play and talk together, have been squeezed out of existence by the demand for more money to build bigger and better schools for the older children. We sometimes have to meet, and cater for, the child who has only communicated with the immediate family and then, possibly, only to receive commands and instructions.

This school begins the year with about 120 on roll and this increases to about 160 by the end of July. The building is modern, completed in 1959, the classrooms are large, the corridors narrow, and there is no hall. Our classes are large, but the teachers are young and enthusi-

astic and share with me the belief that oracy should be one of our main aims.

Atmosphere

The most important single factor is atmosphere. Is it possible to tell others how this can be achieved? We must realise that it is our own job to create the right environment where children will speak freely from their own experience. They will do so if they are encouraged. We must convince children that not only are they allowed to talk, but that we are always ready to listen. We must convince them, too, that we are genuinely interested in what they have to say and that we consider their contributions to be of some importance. There must be ample time given to this 'listening'. 'Tell me later, dear', 'I'm too busy to listen at the moment', is a sure killer of spoken language. The child must feel free to talk. There must be mutual trust between the teacher and child, and to establish this our first task is to know the child. We do this by finding out all we can about him, his home background, his interests, his fears, his place in his own family, and the hundred and one things which together make this child unlike any other.

Pre-school visits

To establish this atmosphere and to enable us to know the children, we have an assembly each Friday afternoon. Parents, friends and younger children are invited, and in this way our future pupils are absorbed at a very early age into the school atmosphere. Parents are also encouraged to bring their child to visit us in school in the term preceding entry. They usually stay for story, poetry and drama, having arrived round about playtime. So many children are deprived, today, of storytime, and this early introduction to a story, told at first hand by the classteacher, can be a very rewarding experience for the child. It may even inspire the mother to turn off the television and try her hand at telling a story herself. The 'getting to know us' stage, which is the cause of so much unhappiness and silence, is bypassed. It is not unusual for

a reception class child, who has only been in school a few days, to tell a story or a piece of news to the school assembly. A frightened, insecure child will not talk and we hope that this early, happy relationship will give the child confidence to talk and establish himself.

Atmosphere can be established even over a *good* school meal. We have family service, and every member of staff sits with the children, who serve themselves. Our aim is to make this a family social occasion, and judging from the conversations which are carried on, this is achieved. Carolyn was talking to me over a piece of suet pudding the other day, 'You know, Mrs Thompson, I took my painting home and my mummy said, "Christ Carolyn, what the hell's this supposed to be?"' Strange as it may seem, no member of staff wanted to opt out of dinner duty here.

There must be many ways, in various schools, of creating an atmosphere. Here, we hope, we never miss an opportunity to make school a happy place.

Timetable

Where can we find this talking and listening time? In the days of a fixed timetable and twenty minute lessons this would have been impossible. Today, in most of our Primary Schools, we have earned our release from this restriction. This is our timetable:-

BEFORE SCHOOL CONVERSATION.

9 am	ASSEMBLY	ACTIVITIES	POETRY
		(3 R and Creative)	DRAMA
			STORY

12 - 1.30 LUNCHTIME.

ACTIVITIES	POETRY
(3 R and Creative)	STORY
	DRAMA

With an integrated day, and mixed activities, there is opportunity for spoken language. This free timetable requires that a teacher must keep her finger on all the activities of the day, and with large classes this is no easy task. 3 R and creative activities are working together in the classroom and this lessens the number who require the attention of the teacher. Children will build with bricks, model from junk, paint pictures, dress up, model with clay, play in the Wendy House, with just the odd word of encouragement. Half the class, employed with these creative activities, leaves the other half with its many demands, to the teacher. She then has more time to listen, to talk to and talk with, the other half. We are

particularly fortunate that this school has been recognised as a training school for students taking the N.N.E.B. Certificate. At the moment there are six girls in training. They spend alternate weeks in College - and this means that in each classroom there is an extra pair of listening ears.

Our assemblies begin with a record - anything from Acker Bilk to Beethoven. The record is a talking point. The appeal of the different kinds of music triggers off different speakers each day and, as in all things, when children know they can all talk, they do not monopolise the conversation - their turn will come when something particularly interests them. During assembly, too, local and national news is discussed. Birthdays are celebrated, and in this way every child has one morning in the year when he can hold the floor by virtue of it being his day.

The item 'News' on our timetable is, we feel, one of our greatest stimuli for spoken language, and considerable time is given to this. In reception it is the patient, listening ear that is required. The most interesting item of news each day is used to make a class reading book, so there is always a reason for telling news.

In middle school, children's news is made into a diary. 'Last night I watched television' is discouraged and children are encouraged to contribute items that will interest the other children. There is an eagerness to tell this kind of news - or it could be a story, and rarely do we have a child who has 'no news today'.

News in the top class comes from discovery, items of interest and questions and answers. Topics vary from the latest Olympic Games results to a cobweb found on a hedge on a misty morning. These topics often trigger off our activities for the day. Jeremy, aged six, had three questions to ask his class . . . 'Whose tummy did God come out of?' 'How many feet are there in this school?' 'How does the food we eat get into the cells of our body?' If only I could have recorded the spoken language which came from these questions! We talked, we searched for information, we did our mathematics, and were occupied for the greater part of the day, trying to find the answers. With a 'free' timetable we could do this - we could talk without feeling we were missing 'a lesson'. There is time for discovery and the excitement of discussion.

I cannot stress too much the value of story, drama and poetry in the development of oral language. The sad commentary on today is that children come to school without knowing their nursery rhymes or traditional stories. If children are involved as often as possible in activities concerned with language, they must be influenced and their own language must develop. Our own vocabulary,

our own speech, the poems we read, the stories we tell, must all help the child at this stage. There must be much time given to these oral activities. The children in my own class derive great pleasure in reading the poems and stories they have written to the other children. The importance of this listening part of oral language cannot be overstressed.

Visits

These children venture forth on various expeditions – to the farm, the post office, the dairy, fire station, ballet, etc armed only with their tongues and ears. The pencil and notebook are left in school. They look, they talk and they listen. When they return to school, they discuss with one another what they have seen, they draw and paint and (what is more interesting) they produce more written work than they would have done if they had been burdened with that interminable list of questions.

The friendly environment

Environment must be closely linked with atmosphere and timetable. As teachers, we must create the right environment and must have at hand as many situations as possible to increase the experience of the child. We have established that this must be a very happy environment if children are to develop . . . and as these children have just left the security of their own homes this link must be maintained. Parents are encouraged to come with their children each morning, talk to the teacher, to look at and talk about the things which are interesting to the child in this new environment. How can parents discuss school with their child when they have little or no idea what is going on during these very important hours of the day when the child is entrusted to our care? Children are encouraged to bring toys and possessions from home to use as a talking point. An old Teddy bear, a doll, anything which is a link between home and school is used to loosen tongues and to establish this environment. Children come straight into school when they arrive. The child who has some exciting news will come into school a little earlier so that he can talk to the teacher. It is an added advantage if they are accompanied by mummy or daddy, who will join in the conversation with the teacher. This establishes the friendly environment and the child quickly feels that school is an extension of home and not divorced from it. Our corridors and playground, too, are hives of activities. Tables in the smaller classrooms have been reduced to a minimum and areas have been created where children can go to take part in a particular activity.

Because children are able to move freely about the classrooms and corridors, they can discuss the work they are doing with other children. This gives them, in another way, the practice they need in developing the skill of communication.

Outside, we have an Adventure Playground. This is not the concrete dream of some Borough Architect, but an assembly of building materials: large blocks of wood, gate posts, doors, bricks, tyres, etc. There are walls which have been built for children to run along – ditches dug for bridging with large sleepers of wood, hills to climb, valleys to run down into. There is a large Wendy House, and an old car. Descriptions of imaginary journeys up the motorway at 70 m.p.h. leave one wondering if there is any limit to the imagination of these infants. There is real activity in the playground. Groups are formed to build and construct dens, rockets, houses, lorries, fire-engines etc. The foreman gives his instructions, his men building alongside. The language is lively and uninhibited. There are no fights; nobody is bored. There are so many things to do and talk about that there is no time left for quarrels. Here is real purposeful activity, triggered off by the imagination of the children and aided at every stage by lively talk. At the moment there is a rocket base, complete with 'count down', 'blast off' and running commentary of the progress of the space ship. In another corner, a house, complete with bunk-beds – and a party in progress. The vocabulary in this playground is rich, and it is a joy to listen.

We have the usual crop of pets: rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, budgerigars, lovebirds, terrapins and goldfish, pet snails, etc. These always provide excellent topics for conversation, especially when they reproduce! All are used for conversation lessons – they are living, they are real, and they provide experience for children who, today, are often deprived of pets because of their own housing conditions.

This is a lengthy description of life in our infant school. There appears to be no beginning and no end to this business of getting children to talk. As teachers, we have faith in the importance of oracy in the development of these small children. We will grasp any opportunity to develop skill in language. We realise the importance of atmosphere and environment and because these are happy, and because we use every kind of stimulation inside and out of the classroom, we have interested 'listeners' and willing 'talkers'. We try to recognise the child who has a good command of language and encourage him; and we try to fan any spark in the less able child. This is our aim; we can only hope that we will succeed.

Talent Untold

T J V Solomon

Sometimes unusual conditions encourage unusual solutions. When over 90% of your intake come from a very mobile RAF station you can't afford to wait for the ideal kind of leisurely growth that occurs in most primary schools. Jack Solomon is head of Trevisker Primary School in Cornwall.

Trevisker is a Junior Mixed and Infant School, situated on the Royal Air Force Station at RAF St. Eval in Cornwall. It is surrounded by Service Quarters; of its population of approximately 380 children roughly thirty come from civilian homes. Our turnover is enormous. The normal tour of duty is two and a half years but many of our children stay for a much shorter period. In my eleven years tenure there have been over 4,600 admissions and postings.

The Service children come to us from all over the globe and we are a cosmopolitan family which includes a group of Americans, occasionally other NATO representatives, and several children of mixed marriages.

We are housed in an excellent building constructed in 1956, with additional classrooms added as numbers have grown.

Our Parent Teacher Association is extraordinarily well supported. Meetings are very well attended – often we have 300 parents present – and at our last Open Evening there were some 800 people. Over the past five years the PTA has built a swimming pool, installed filtration, chlorination and heating plant, laid out the surrounds and built a terrace and a surrounding wall.

This illustrates the support which is available, and I could write an article dealing with this aspect only. However the object of this exercise is to describe how the parents become more and more involved in the day to day life of the School.

About four years ago – before Plowden had been compiled – we held a PTA meeting to discuss the problems imposed by Service Life. One point, which particularly perturbed the Infant Staff, was the time taken in settling children into the class, assessing their levels and slotting them into the correct group. This led, quite naturally, to discussion on the organisation within each 'Family Unit' class and the great deal of supervision needed to operate this system satisfactorily. Play Groups were cited as an example where much care was needed, and immediately a group of mothers offered their services as supervisors. This was the beginning of an experiment which is still going on and which has transformed the School.

These three or four mothers came in each morning,

extracted the new entrants from the four classes and, seeing the pressure on the teaching staff at first hand, were soon volunteering to *help* with reading. Small groups appeared in work space corners, the library and even the Staff Room, and soon the stage was reached where the amount of reading time available to each child was more than doubled!

We realised that there was enormous potential here and began to widen our horizons. We wondered what lay outside the gate so we drew up a circular letter and sent a copy to every home. It read as follows:

Dear Parents and Friends,

The Plowden Report lays great stress on the value of teamwork and co-operation between parent and teacher and home and school. Already the School is deriving great benefit from the efforts of parents and friends who give of their time to help supervise the new entrants' Play Groups and assist the staff with reading.

I am sure that many of you have time, hobbies, and attributes which would be of great value to us and hope that you will consider joining our team of unpaid volunteers.

We would appreciate help with any of the following: Playgroups, Reading, Swimming – drying and dressing Infants – French, Dance/Drama, Soccer, Cricket, Athletics, Pottery, Basketry, General Handicrafts, Collectors Club, Nature Club, Folk Dancing, etc etc.

This list is by no means exhaustive and if you have a speciality not included please let me know.

Would you kindly complete and return the subjoined form. You will be both welcome and valuable.

Yours sincerely,
T J V SOLOMON
Headmaster.

I can offer (subjects)
on (days)
at (time)

Signed
Address

The response exceeded all expectations.

There were some forty volunteers and a wide range of subjects was offered. The next problem was to fit all this

into the framework of the timetable and to review the 'applicants'.

We found that in addition to the original helpers in the fields of reading and play groups we were now able to allocate a 'permanent' helper to all Infant Classes and the four Junior Forms which comprise the 1st and 2nd years. These good folk were available for long periods to assist the teacher in any way whatever, such as *hearing* reading, distributing milk, mixing paint, helping in handicraft and generally supervising. On the specialist front we had two expert swimming instructors – one a mother and the other a father – who coached our swimmers to County Championship success both during school and for three evenings a week. Others joined in with the various clubs which operated out of school hours. Another – a qualified teacher – took handicraft, Games and PE for one afternoon a week. Another – an American mother – who holds a degree in French – took the Advanced French Group every morning for a full lesson. A basketry expert and a potter gave us three periods a week. A whole group operated their own duty roster and helped to supervise Infant swimming and dried and dressed the little ones after they had left the pool. An experienced librarian took over the School Library, which opens every break time, and a retired Bank Official now deals with the administration and banking of the dinner money. Others helped with dancing, coaching games and the supply of refreshments to visiting soccer and netball teams. In short, we now have some thirty-five unpaid voluntary assistants who play their parts in the time-table and in the smooth running of the school. A side issue was the drawing up of a list of experts (TV Engineers, Ciné Operators, Electricians, Carpenters, Masons, and Car Drivers available for School visits, Sports fixtures, etc) whose services were available if needed.

Apart from the more obvious benefits we derive, we have many invisible assets. We have thirty-five Public Relations Officers circulating within the area selling our wares. Preaching the gospel that the School is an integral part of the Community where teachers, parents and friends (for some of our helpers have no children) are working together for the common good; telling others that there is no barrier between home and school; that all are welcome to come and see the school in operation whether they can contribute or not; assuring the newcomers that their children will be assimilated into the family quickly and that the teachers are human and enthusiastic and anxious to do their best for the children in their care.

Recently the work I have described was featured in a TV programme which included the inevitable discussion. It was suggested that there must be snags in the system somewhere, but if there are I have yet to meet them. *Obviously selection must be very carefully done.* One must have the right type of person and one must know him/her well before issuing an invitation to join the group but, in my experience, very rarely does an unsuitable type volunteer.

It has also been said that only in a closely knit community such as ours can the system operate successfully, but this has been disproved by four of my staff who have become Heads over the past four years. They have set up modified versions in very different areas and have reached the same conclusion as I have: there is an enormous reservoir of talent and good will available to all who are prepared to work hard in this vital sphere of relationships with parents and the school's place in the community.

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Back to School for Parents

D J Keast

The **Plowden Report** had some new things to say on rural and semi-rural schools, and on home-school links in predominantly working class neighbourhoods. David Keast, head of Otterton Primary School at Budleigh Salterton in Devon, explains how he encourages parents to learn in the way their children learn.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the **Plowden Report** are a challenge to Head Teachers. We are told that good parental attitudes to education can strongly influence a child's educational performance. We are also told that parental attitudes can be improved and it is up to Head Teachers to improve them. We are warned that Heads are often complacent and are sure that they already have very good relations with parents.

I am no exception. I was convinced I had very good relations with parents. But it is particularly easy for a Head in a small rural school to know all the parents. I see them around the village and often chat to them individually. I had what I considered to be a satisfactory programme of parent-teacher meetings throughout the year and I was fairly sure that parents regarded me as, at least, approachable. This was all very cosy, but could I claim to be improving parents attitude to education? About eighteen months ago I decided to build on my existing 'good relations' and then make positive attempts to involve parents in their children's education.

My greatest problem was, and is, the low educational attainment of many parents. This is not surprising as 72% of the fathers are either farm labourers or semi-skilled workers on a large Devon estate. Most of these parents were not really interested in their children's education beyond the supposition that if there were no complaints from school all must be well. I was confident that the few middle class parents would be easily involved.

Early in the school year I invited parents to come to the school to talk about their children. This was not a group meeting but a programme of appointments whereby teachers saw two or three parents each day after school and so were able to talk at length and privately. Parents who were unable to come at the time I offered were invited to name their own time – a few did and came during school hours (this programme of appointments is the nearest we come to 100% participation of parents). With each parent we discussed these main points:

- (1) The child at school – his strength, weakness, likes and dislikes etc.
- (2) The child at home – his interests, behaviour, attitudes to school etc.

(3) We suggested ways in which parents could help at home.

(4) We tried to find out just how much the parent was prepared to become involved in the child's education.

We used this face to face meeting to stress the importance of parent-teacher co-operation. A number of parents were genuinely worried that in attempting to help at home there would be consequent conflict between parents' and teachers' methods. We decided to hold an evening which we called 'Back to School for Parents'. I anticipated that this meeting would be well supported by the middle class parents but would be conveniently forgotten by the working class parents. I realised that some people would be reluctant to take part in such a meeting because they feared embarrassment. In the letter to the parents inviting them to come back to school for an evening, I stressed that parents would be able to choose their activities and that we would avoid 'sums' and 'spelling'. I outlined the sort of evening I had planned to three enthusiastic working class parents and asked them to chat about it with other parents and so persuade more to attend.

For the first of the 'Back to School' sessions I gave each parent a choice of tasks including Maths, English, Environment Studies, Music, Art and Craft. Teachers moved around the groups which gradually formed and provided the necessary resources and encouragement. In the discussion which concluded the evening, parents asked questions which are typical of teachers who are contemplating an integrated approach to teaching:

'What happens if everybody wants to paint at once?'

'How can you be sure their reading is improving?'

'Must they do some maths every day?'

Some parents were keen to have another evening devoted to mathematics. This was conducted in a similar way with parents being allowed to select mathematical topics appropriate to the age of their children. On these and subsequent evenings I tried to create the same atmosphere for parents which exists at school during the day. I did not attempt to stand up and lecture parents but provided situations for them to learn for themselves. These meetings help a number of parents to understand

the way the school operates. When children come home and tell their parents how they spent a whole day surveying the village green, or a morning setting up a loom, the ensuing conversation is likely to add to the quality of the child's experience at school rather than detract from it. On one occasion a girl went home telling her father how she had been estimating lengths of buildings in the village. Father wasn't convinced that our estimated height of the church tower was sufficiently accurate. That evening he persuaded the captain of the ringers to go up the tower with him and lower a line from the parapet. To me this is an excellent example of parent-teacher co-operation.

As a parent I know the pointlessness of the question to my children: 'What have you been doing at school to-day?' The answer is either 'nothing' or some irrelevant comment on the enormity of the school dinners they have consumed. As a Head Teacher I have tried to keep parents informed of at least some of the topics the children are following. I do this by issuing three or four bulletins a term which describe some aspect of the curriculum – this is usually related to the environment. The bulletin at least provides a starting point for conversation between parent and child. I sometimes pose direct questions to the parent in the bulletin which make the parents stop to think and then have something to discuss with the family.

We are told that 29% of all homes have only five books or less. I encourage and often direct children to take school books home. More than once a message has come back saying: 'Dad enjoyed that – can he have some more'! Children often go home clutching a book which they will read to Mum or Dad. We also try to send them home occasionally with a book for Mum or Dad to read to them. Keeping a check on the library isn't much of a problem in a small school but even so a parent can save a teacher this chore and so allow the teacher to spend more time teaching.

Parent-help in school is a different aspect of the Home and School link. The parents who come into the school to work voluntarily are almost certain to have the right attitude to education. While they will gain from their experience in the school they can also help by explaining to other parents who are less interested in their children at school. This leads to the inevitable question: 'What about apathetic parents who never appear at any parent-teacher functions?'

First I have found that if they are ever likely to come to the school they will do so when specifically invited. If this fails I feel compelled to go and visit them. Again I know

that this is particularly easy for a rural Head because it is not unusual for me to call at parents' homes for a variety of reasons outside school matters. I do not then find it difficult to call on a parent and bring the conversation around to their children's education. I would not pretend that this is the panacea. One parent was genuinely appreciative that I had shown such concern for her son. Another couldn't care less. But it is up to the Head to make the attempt to gain the parents' interest and not to prematurely decide who will or will not be interested.

It is doubtful if research can accurately measure the efforts to improve parental attitudes. I am prejudiced, but occasionally parents reveal that they can become in tune with the school and reflect its values. Not long ago a farm labourer's wife came breathless into school to tell me that men from the River Board were electrically stunning fish to catch them for some research. She thought that I would like to know so that I could take the children down to see this for themselves. This person understood the importance of children learning through direct experience and had sufficient confidence in her relationship with the school to come and suggest this excursion.

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Parents in Construction Groups

K W Foster

An extra pair of hands can be of direct use, if they belong to a skilled parent or friend of the school. Kenneth Foster is head of Twydall Junior School at Gillingham in Kent.

Although Parent-Teacher organisations often have similar aims and common procedures it is my belief that the really successful programmes are those which have been tailor made to the particular needs of the individual school. Any attempt to transplant a complete PTA programme from one school to another is likely to yield a feeble growth – even when there has been ample enthusiasm and energy expended.

Although each new Home-School programme should be special to *that* school in *that* neighbourhood, all the really successful PTA's I have known have had the following features in common:

1. Regular opportunities for *informal* discussion between teachers and parents. (To rely on a programme of formal meetings is possibly to inhibit enthusiasm);
2. Direct opportunities for parents to contribute to the life of the school through *practical* activities that encourage them to feel involved.

Parents can contribute in many ways and even the most lavishly equipped school has additional needs – particularly special aids, apparatus, equipment planned for new developments in Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Making Music, keeping pet animals, gardening etc.

Parents of the children in any school – even within the apparently socially unfavourable and economically restricted areas – represent a source of practical skill and/or direct labour. The use of active, well directed practical work groups (a) gives the teacher a supply of purpose built equipment of direct help to the children, and (b) gives the parents direct awareness of the modern class-room teaching approach through having discussed with the teachers the function of the aids they are engaged in making. It is also possible to arrange for children to demonstrate to the parents how they use these aids and equipment.

There is also greater significance attached to items that the children know have been planned and made by 'parents for our own work', rather than obtained from some remote source of supply.

Some parents may prefer to undertake practical work at home – perhaps because they have adequate tools and facilities there or simply because they enjoy such work in isolation. There is no difficulty, as materials, sketch plans,

etc can readily be provided – very often with their own children acting as messengers and carriers.

The majority of parents are likely to enjoy working in small groups within the school. Even when the physical limits and the layout of the school appear to offer no worthwhile working space it is surprising how many worthwhile items can be produced by three or four parents who are simply provided with a small collection of tools, a battered desk top and an odd corner or area of corridor space.

The current Do-It-Yourself movement offers tremendous advantages to schools that encourage the parents to join construction groups. The range of materials and aids is so extensive that perfectly satisfactory standards can be achieved by adults who have no claim to being carpenters, painters, etc. When older children serve as 'mates' to their own parents engaged on practical work there is, I believe, additional social gain. The present generation of mothers are often very competent tool handlers and very good painters so this is *not* the father's special activity!

I have found the following procedure worthwhile in the formation of Do-it-Yourself groups:

1. Firstly teachers discuss amongst themselves their main requirements and agree on the aids and equipment they wish parents to make. In this discussion it is perhaps worth maintaining the aim of starting with small simple items and then aiming for more lavish and substantial items when the parents have developed a group confidence in their own production standards.
2. An 'Any Volunteers?' circular is then sent out – outlining the aims and asking interested parents to come along to discuss the proposals. At the meeting a pile of School Equipment catalogues, paper and pencils, and ample supplies of tea and biscuits helps the general planning. Initially it helps to give parents a variety of items to choose from so that they can feel their first attempts will be within their capabilities. If from the very beginning you find two or more parents asking if they can work together on a bigger task it is generally as well to encourage them as they are almost certain to be compatible and probably have common interests that they are already aware of.

3. Once the group has been formed, the items to be constructed agreed, and the best favoured evening accepted, it's important to make an early start on the practical work. To delay for more than a few days is often to lose that first eagerness which is so important – 'getting cracking' is the first aim with any new labour force.

4. The materials needed can normally be obtained at surprisingly low cost and in adequate quantities. A politely worded request from 'Sir' or 'Miss' – (sent on official notepaper) – for off-cuts of timber, pegboard, hardboard, block board, plywood, etc often yields bargain price supplies from local timber merchants, handyman shops, etc. (Hopefully asking children to look out for any odd bits of timber tends to produce a very large and very angry General Foreman, making a very direct school visit from the nearest housing estate!)

It is also an encouraging fact that almost all the practical groups I have known seem to possess an inbuilt

ability to conjure tools, materials, paint, etc out of thin air.

5. There need be no despondency if the clarion call for volunteers at first produces only a tiny band of helpers. In my experience this is the one social group that tends to do its own recruiting – once their enthusiasm has been obtained. Quite soon there are requests to bring a friend or neighbour: 'My mate at work is good with his hands, can I fetch him along?' It is interesting to find how widespread the talents are. Many men and women who spend their days in offices find a real interest in handling tools and end up producing very adequate equipment.

Once there is a good production line flow it is worth considering inviting parents along to watch a group of children using home-made equipment as part of a normal class-room activity. It is a helpful form of recruitment, and parents always seem to appreciate an opportunity of seeing their children working together.

Naturally the mothers may offer other forms of practical service. They might well produce various forms of flannelgraph to be used in language development, to create puppet characters to go with a model theatre, to assist with the creation of various displays, etc.

As the relationships within each small do-it-yourself group develop and extend it becomes possible to plan and execute team projects, for example, the production of mobile display units, storage units, and attractive room dividers for teaching or activity bays.

Incompatibility amongst members of such small construction teams is, in my experience, quite rare. Very often new friendships arise and the members develop new interests and skills from the shared experiences. It is particularly encouraging if the teachers maintain a personal interest in the activities of these groups as it then becomes a common endeavour and no volunteer will feel that he is being taken for granted.

These practical groups have not only been of direct service to my own colleagues and children but have often become regular supporters of many other school activities without ever becoming 'a tail that attempts to wag the dog'.

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A Community Primary School

Charles Betty

Charles Betty was, until last October, head of Lordswood Junior School, now designated an E.P.A. school at Chatham in Kent. He is now Project Director of the I.L.E.A. part of the Social Science Research Council's three year action research programme in Educational Priority Areas.

'How can I be of help?' 'What do you want me to do in the classroom?' 'Will the teachers object to my presence?' These were some of the questions which interested mothers asked me in response to my plea for *active* home/school co-operation. Our school organisation ideally requires more than one adult in the classroom; most classrooms could do with extra help. Some teachers tend to become agitated and worried about the presence of another adult in the classroom. But if the headteacher and the staff discuss ways in which volunteer parents can help, short of actually teaching, then guide lines can be laid down which satisfy most teachers.

How did we obtain the services of parents as lay assistants? Firstly, by the normal letter to parents and secondly and more importantly, by direct communication with parents. 'Are you prepared to help in the school?' I am sure that you have something to contribute', were the type of probing question to test a parent's reaction to active involvement in school. Of course many parents (although keen to help) are hesitant, but gentle encouragement usually results in a 'mum' entering a class room for half a day or so. Most of our lay assistants are working with us full time and over half of them are now thinking of taking teacher training!

Reluctant parents

How can reluctant parents be involved in their children's education? Formal PTA's have a useful function for the interested few but generally they do not attract 75% of parents. Teachers must foster the idea that the school and its organisation is a joint responsibility; this can include curriculum content. At our school we have a joint committee of myself, the deputy and two parents; we meet to discuss the school, ideas and aims.

We have published a brochure which costs less than 6d. each. This was written for our parents and reached all of them including reluctant mothers and fathers. Local firms and shops also had copies. This twenty page brochure has details of our school organisation, and information on the whole range of activities common to most schools. It was very well received and many parents ex-

pressed an interest in its contents and some of them suggested extra items which they felt would be of interest to other people.

Contained in the brochure was an invitation to visit the school at any time, stay in the classrooms, talk to children, take part in Assembly and discuss general educational concepts with teachers. Many parents responded to this invitation and it is proving a fruitful link with the home.

Whilst formal PTA meetings, educational and social, have their place, direct involvement of the parents is more productive in terms of continued interest and help. One method to involve parents is to use the school as a local community centre. **Plowden** rightly pointed out that schools represented a considerable capital investment in plant and materials, which were under-used because few primary schools opened their doors after 6.00 pm. Our school began with a couple of clubs for parents and children and now within a short space of time has developed to the point when over 100 children and many parents jointly come together for two hours once a week to take part in mutually satisfying activities. Some of the shared experiences are run by teachers and others by parents. Numbered amongst the attractions are badminton, table tennis, French conversation, chess, needlework and model making. The School PTA gave a small grant for necessary materials, so there is no drain on school resources. I am sure that teachers, parents and children working together in this way can better understand each others' ideas, hopes, problems and anxieties.

A further development of the Community School idea is to provide activities for parents and friends without their children taking part. We have organised, with the help of the local Adult Education Centre, classes which parents asked for (in a questionnaire); these include photography, art, keep fit, dressmaking and car maintenance. The classes provide an opportunity for parents to mix socially and by the sharing of a stimulating activity they are able to discuss common problems and ideas. In the long term development we hope that these classes will be divorced from Adult Education Centre control and their functions governed by a committee of

teachers and parents. They will then be able to provide activities which are normally educationally uneconomic. The tutors of these classes, whether parent or teacher, will be paid at normal rates by the school PTA.

Home visiting

Many schools have excellent PTA's and rewarding links with the community, but what about the most reluctant parent? The mother who never visits school whatever the inducement. This is a particular problem in educationally deprived areas, yet it cannot be assumed that the socially deprived parents have little or no interest in their children. My experience proves that parents in the twilight areas are passionately interested in their children's education, but we as teachers are not aware of this concern. How can we be? Do we visit the homes? Have we a team of teachers and parents who regularly visit reluctant parents? Do we as teachers use the specialised social services to help the parents and children in the deprived areas?

It is our policy to make sure that we have at *least* one contact with a parent a year, especially the harrassed, over-worked and sometimes suspicious mothers and fathers. Children and families in any need are visited in their homes by teachers. This does not involve as much extra work as may be imagined. A cup of tea and a sympathetic ear can establish a bond between teacher and parent. Both parties benefit from shared discussion.

We must look afresh at the traditional teacher's role. Words and volumes have been written but they will not suffice. *Action* is what is required. Are we content to remain one adult and a group of children within the confines of the classroom? Is it not right and proper for us to absorb the homes and local community into our educational thinking and planning? Can we afford to neglect them? Do we need trained teacher/social workers? These are pertinent questions and they demand an answer. What are we as teachers going to do? Now is the time to stand up and be counted.

THE MIDDLE YEARS OF SCHOOLING (8-13 years)

and the role of the Middle School

A **Forum Residential Conference** will be held at Clare Hall, University of Leicester, at the week-end March 21st—March 23rd 1969.

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Discussion



think should be added 'as a responsible member of society'.

The first social group which a child knows is the family. The next is the school which should be preparing the child to take his (or her) place in a democratic society. It is not surprising that democracy is not working in this country when our schools and universities are not democratic societies. If young people are to take their places as responsible adults they should be able to learn how democracy works. As local Councils elect their own chairmen, and parties their own leaders, so teachers should elect their own chairman of the staff. Parents and teachers should be able to elect their own representatives on the managing body of the school, and children should elect representatives to a school council.

It is recognised that the child learns more during the first five years of life than at any other period, and this is before starting formal education. He learns through play which is largely self-directed. Many infant schools and some junior schools are allowing the children to continue to learn in this way.

We are given a life and children from an early age should be taught that they are responsible for what they do with it, and teachers are there to help them to know the joy of achieving their best. The children have a two-fold task in school, to master skills and gain experience. The skills are best taught individually or in small groups, but the children need to be left alone as much as possible to make their own discoveries, with an adult available to advise or discuss their discovery with them. Children's powers of concentration vary, so in a free day they can change their activity when they wish, without wasting time. Man's knowledge is increasing rapidly, and it is impossible for anyone to learn everything, so children should be allowed to follow their own interests in ever widening circles rather than being forced to learn what a syllabus or exam decrees.

Much time and thought has been spent in the past trying to classify children by examination but it is being realised that the only thing an examination shows is the child's ability to pass it. It does not give a true assessment of the child. Instead of schools and universities setting examinations they should concentrate on preparing young people to live purposeful lives. The onus for testing an applicant for a job should rest on the employer who could devise a test to see whether the person has the aptitude and ability to perform the task needing to be done.

E E D NEWBIGIN, *Liverpool*

School Democracy

There is a great need today to look at education as a whole and to redefine its aims and purpose. When the State took over the responsibility for education nearly a hundred years ago there was one teacher in a school appointed by the managers or governors who were interested people in the locality. This system still operates today though everyone has had some education and there are many more teachers in the schools. The purpose of education has widened and is no longer limited to the three Rs, but in the ferment of new ideas we need to have an underlying principle if we are not to lose our way. One principle which is gaining acceptance is to allow every child to develop his full potential, to which I

Towards Equality

May I make a few comments on E F McCarthy's demolishing of the comprehensive myth in the last *Forum*?

It is possible that slight educational gains can come from the sort of hypocrisy he attacks: that changes of name, senior to secondary modern to comprehensive, with catchwords like 'parity of esteem', make opponents more ready to concede other small sorts of change towards equality.

But even if this were not so, it might be necessary to keep up the pretence that it was, to bolster the confidence of parents and children otherwise written off as failures.

If we took something like this definition of comprehensive: 95% of the age range in the area served; the extracted 5% not all 'cream'; sexes

mixed; run by governors, officials and teachers who by and large understand the comprehensive principle and believe in it; unstreamed or in some other way saved from being bilateral in disguise: would there then be any comprehensive outside Wales? If not, and comprehensive is a great sham, is it good to say so? 'Old men have grey beards . . . a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams; which . . . though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down'.

We shall not achieve comprehensive until we get rid of the academic idea from universities downwards. In academic terms (academic=remote, theoretical, not issuing in action, intellect without intuition, the part for the whole) segregation makes sense; for academic is a separation and naturally falls into assessment and ranking orders of the kind which are holding up real education.

JOHN KIRKHAM,
Kesteven College of Education.

purpose to discuss the pros and cons of non-streaming; we didn't meet to discuss *why*? but *how*? This is why it was subject-based, most classwork in schools being devoted to the conventional subjects. We had, as tutors, teachers of English, Maths, Science, History, Geography and French who had some years' experience in teaching in unstreamed comprehensive schools.

It was difficult to recruit tutors, as the number of teachers with appropriate experience is very limited. Even more difficult is to know whether they have done the job well and can communicate their ideas to other teachers. On this score, there was some conflict of opinion among the course members. I was surprised to find two of the tutors advocating methods that I would consider too rigid and academic even for top streams, and, as the course organiser, I was embarrassed to find myself sympathising with some of the more critical members. All members were invited to send comments on the course and it is these that are the basis of my remarks here.

It is difficult to generalise about the comments: one member singled out a tutor for criticism (for evading the issue, not being practical, being unprofessional about his colleagues) while others mentioned the same tutor as practical, detailed, sympathetic and thoroughly helpful. Two others were accused of arrogance ('youthful arrogance' to be precise). In these groups, members were resisting a whole philosophy of education, but instead of facing their own insecurity when threatened with the loss of their familiar teaching properties – discipline, rigour, standards, authority – they created diversionary incidents for themselves, objecting to the idiom of the tutor, or the irrelevance of his experience because his school was rural – or urban (both were objected to). But whatever the rights and wrongs, there was certainly some failure on the personal level that obstructed the flow of ideas, and in my view some sound practice didn't get the attention it deserved.

It was interesting that there were nearly 50 English teachers, 30 History teachers, but only 9 linguists. Certainly the lack of interest among linguists confirms my belief that languages are not easily taught to mixed ability groups, and also that a training in language predisposes a teacher to habits of thought that place the subject in the centre and the pupils on the circumference. Is it not time that modern language teaching learnt from other interests that an obsession with correctness and pronunciation is not an important contribution to communication?

Several tutors were outstandingly successful, but even then some members shook their heads because they thought these tutors were a species of super-teachers who could achieve things because of their special gifts.

Members were asked to attend main subject sessions and then subsidiary subject sessions. This suited some members, but not others. In another conference, I think it would be better to have smaller groups, with more independence from each other, so that *ad hoc* arrangements could be made during the course as needs became clear.

The heart of the problem of mixed ability groups is how to individualise learning, and so it is with teachers' courses.

The conference was opened by Robin Pedley. He spoke of unstreaming in other systems of education, and of the wider school contexts in which progressive developments could take place. A number of his points were taken up on the last morning, when the course met in subject-mixed discussion groups to discuss the rationale of non-streaming. This proved too big a subject for a short morning's work, but it helped to focus attention on underlying issues, particularly the organisational ones that school administrators must face if they are to be effective innovators.

MICHAEL TUCKER,
High School, Settle, Yorks.

Unstreamed Classes

Teaching Unstreamed Classes, a course with special reference to Comprehensive schools, run by ACE at Oxford, 2-4 August 1968

This course was intended to deal with the details of classroom practice and school organisation. It was not our

Preparing a Department for Non-Streaming

R G Wallace

Ron Wallace was formerly head of History at Rutherford School, London, where the innovation described in this article took place. He is now sixth form master at Highbury Grove School, London.

The purpose of this article is to describe how a start with non-streaming has been made in a five form entry comprehensive school.

In its early years the school, which is now eight years old, was rather rigidly streamed. Four years ago a new headmaster was confronted with the most obvious manifestation of rigid streaming – behaviour problems among bottom-stream fourth year pupils who, as statutory Easter and Summer leavers, had nothing to look forward to but departure. These pupils spent all their time at school together in a large class as a tightly-knit group united by a lack of purpose; inevitably there were disciplinary problems. It was decided that a small ‘remedial’ group should be retained, for it was felt necessary to give special attention in a small class to pupils who by the age of 14+ still had difficulty with basic skills; and in any case most pupils in this category were neither statutory leavers nor the worst behaviour problems. But most of the bottom-stream, which previously had had its own special time-table (including eight periods of its own special subject labelled ‘social studies’) to mark it off from the rest of the year, was assimilated into the main fourth year courses. Most subjects in the fourth year (all except English, mathematics, French and history) are options. Classes in these subjects thus became open to all pupils throughout the fourth year (except the small remedial group) and many of them were therefore de facto unstreamed.

At this stage, as Head of the History Department, I looked for ways of extending non-streaming in my department. It was possible to lessen streaming in some ways without raising the general principle. For example, as it happened, history in the fourth year, where it is a basic subject and not an option, was time-tabled so that streams 1 and 2 and streams 3 and 4 had it at the same times. It was a simple matter to mix the first stream with the second and the third stream with the fourth, thus gaining two main streams, each with two parallel classes, instead of four streams. This kind of ad hoc partial de-streaming was a start.

But I was also anxious to start an experiment with non-streaming across a whole year group. The first year

seemed the obvious place to conduct such an experiment. There were a number of favourable circumstances.

Firstly, the local authority, whilst still having selective grammar schools, had ended the old-style 11+ examination with its IQ tests and had replaced it with a primary school profile for each pupil which was bound to rely more on the personal judgment of teachers and therefore to be more subjective. My school received pupils from thirty-one primary schools on the basis of such profiles. Streaming in the first year of the secondary school, based on these assessments, is likely to result in much overlapping of ability between streams. To some extent, therefore, the techniques required to teach mixed ability groups were already required under the existing arrangements.

Secondly, the well-attended conference on non-streaming, arranged by **Forum** and the Comprehensive Schools Committee, had recently been held in London, and had demonstrated the growing professional interest in non-streaming. The reports given were sufficiently encouraging to justify further steps in the movement to reduce streaming. The climate of professional opinion was seen to favour further experiment.

Thirdly, I had just completed a thorough revision of the history syllabus, which had been circulated in draft among all teachers of history in the school. The revised syllabus therefore reflected the wishes of the teachers who would be asked to teach it to mixed ability classes.

In these fairly propitious circumstances, I decided to propose that for the following year the whole of the first year should be unstreamed for history. I first discussed the proposal with two colleagues in the Remedial Department and with the other principal history teacher. They were in agreement, suggesting as a modification that a small group consisting solely of non-readers (about a third of the normal first year ‘remedial’ class) should not be included in the main mixed ability classes, but should instead have a special reading class during history periods. A major problem was that of time-tabling, for, if history was to be unstreamed whilst all other classes were streamed, all the history classes would have to be arranged coincidentally.

There was, however, general agreement that the proposal should be made to the headmaster. I therefore submitted a memorandum to him, concluding, 'I feel that this proposal could prove a very valuable educational experiment and would benefit the boys concerned, without causing that alarm (largely unfounded in my view) to their parents that is sometimes associated with non-streaming'. The headmaster agreed to the proposal and the practical difficulties in the way of its implementation were overcome.

At the beginning of the next school year the new pupils were divided on an alphabetical basis into five history classes. We could now get down to the job of adjusting our teaching methods to the new situation. In a special section of the history syllabus dealing with non-streaming in the department, I suggested the following as the best approach:

'When a new topic is started, it will be necessary to give at least part of the lesson formally; and, in order to maintain a standard basis to the class' work, it will be desirable to do some formal written work together.

'An increasing part of the work, however, should be done individually by the pupils themselves or in groups. The essence of non-streaming is that each child is a unit and must be allowed to progress at his own pace. The teacher can thus use the lesson to supervise more carefully the individual child's work.

'Clearly it is important to have available sufficient books on any topic to keep the fastest learner purposively working whilst the slowest learner is still covering the basic work.

'The principle to be encouraged among the pupils is that each should compare his present work with his last piece of work. There will still be a tendency at first to compare his work with the work of others, with the consequent "resting on laurels" for some and despair for others which is a familiar feature of streamed classes taught on a competitive basis'.

After the experiment had been running for just over half a year, it was possible to make a tentative appraisal. The general view of the teachers taking part was that it had resulted in a very good classroom atmosphere (a definite gain over the general atmosphere that normally pervades 'bottom' streams) without the feared slowing down in the progress of the faster-working pupils. The experiment proved sufficiently successful for the Head of the Remedial Department to suggest spontaneously at a Heads of Departments' Meeting that it should be extended to other subjects; and the Heads of the Geography and the RI Departments said that they wanted their first year classes to be unstreamed. These suggestions were carried out in the following year and thus the experiment of one department was spread by agreement to other departments.

The disadvantage of proceeding towards an unstreamed first year in this piecemeal, subject by subject, way is that an aura of artificiality and complication pervades the change. We had been teaching classes which were consciously de-streamed for history after they had been streamed for all other subjects. On the other hand, change which requires the acquisition by teachers of new attitudes and techniques has to be introduced in such a way as to avoid those antagonisms which can be avoided. It is a familiar truism, but one which educational reformers forget at their peril, that most teachers work under great pressure. This should never, in my view, be used as a reason for delaying progress. After all, in the long run progress in teaching techniques will make the teachers' work easier, not more difficult. But non-streaming certainly involves extra work in the initial stages and the mode of its introduction must take into account the difficult conditions under which teachers have to work.

Readers' Experiences and Opinions

The editors would welcome contributions to discussion (up to 800 words) or articles (about 1500 words) describing the development of new curricula and teaching

methods in the more flexible school situations that are currently being evolved at all stages of primary and secondary education.

An Experiment in Unstreaming

D Thompson

Mr Thompson's earlier article in *Forum* (Vol. 7, No. 3), on the changeover to unstreaming at The Woodlands School, Coventry, aroused a great deal of interest. Three years later, there are several interesting modifications to the original plans and comments from staff and inspectors.

In September, 1965, *Forum* published an article under my signature entitled **Towards an Unstreamed Comprehensive School**, which described the various stages, extending over a period of four years, by which The Woodlands School had changed from being a rigidly streamed ten form entry school to one which was completely unstreamed in the first year and much less rigidly streamed in the later years. The article ended with the words, 'How long one can continue with completely unstreamed forms as opposed to having fairly wide groupings of parallel forms one does not know. Time and experience alone will decide.' In short, we had embarked on an educational experiment, the results of which would not be known for some considerable time.

Nearly three years have now elapsed and the 300 boys who entered the school in September 1965 have been together in unstreamed forms for the first two years of this period. During this time every school subject has been taught without recourse to either setting or streaming, the only exception being a small number of boys of low VRQ, who occasionally have been taken out of certain lessons to receive remedial teaching.

The decision to continue with unstreaming for two years was a majority decision of the staff, taken towards the end of the first year. Last September, at the commencement of the third year, we decided, on academic grounds, not to continue with complete unstreaming, but to form a top block containing 7 parallel forms and a bottom block containing 3 parallel forms. Nevertheless, the range of VRQ's in the top block was still considerable (VRQ 135-85).

The reasons which led the staff to a decision not to continue with complete unstreaming in the third year were quite simply those which I imagine would cause most educationalists to question, in the first instance, the feasibility of teaching across such a wide ability range. In other words, it was felt that two years was the reasonable limit that one could go with unstreaming, if the needs of the less able were to be safeguarded and the progress of the majority of pupils was not to be hindered nor their chances in external examinations prejudiced. On the other hand, one could say categorically that the behaviour and personal standards of all the pupils, their attitude

towards work and school at the end of the two year period was superior to what it would have been under the previous system. Furthermore, I expected to find that the academic progress and attitude towards school work of the 90 boys, who this year were placed in the bottom block of 3 parallel forms, would suffer as a consequence of taking them away from the rest. This has been found to be the case, although it is still better than under the previous system. In short, if one did not have to consider the question of preparation for external examinations, a completely unstreamed school would be an obvious choice. Such is the dilemma in which we found ourselves and we decided to compromise.

Prior to commencing the experiment and chiefly because no member of the staff had previously had experience of teaching across such a wide ability range, a staff committee gave considerable thought to the problems involved and subsequently issued a memorandum entitled **Notes for the guidance of staff in the teaching of unstreamed first year groups**, a copy of which was given to every member of the staff. The philosophy which lay behind the original decision to unstream (or more accurately to renounce streaming) was partially contained in this memorandum, which stated:

'There is some evidence that the process of streaming initiates, or at least perpetuates, certain undesirable social attitudes leading to the well-known situation in which pupils who are generally badly behaved are found to be concentrated within the same form or group of forms. There is also some evidence that in a streamed school, many pupils do not do as well in school work as they otherwise might, since labelling pupils, say C, D, E or F appears to set a limit to what they think they are capable of achieving, and, indeed, to what the staff who teach them believe such pupils are capable of achieving'.

It is no use pretending that there are not inborn differences in learning potential, for there certainly are, but these differences are not so great or as absolute as we have previously regarded them. The differences in learning potential that exist between children are now seen to be very much more the consequence of conditioning factors, more particularly those to which the child is subjected in the home during the first five years, than

attributable to innate ability and one of the worst features of streaming is that it not only widens the natural differences that exist between children, so that the vast majority fail to do as well as they otherwise might, but it enhances those differences in school attainment that are attributable to social factors. Because the streams we form, based on tests and examinations, are correlated highly with social class structures (so that the lower streams generally contain pupils from socially deprived homes), non-streaming is very attractive, theoretically, as a device which may be expected to minimise the effect of social environment on school performance. That it will, in fact, do so we do not, as yet, know.

In order to select pupils for each of the ten unstreamed forms, we first prepared a rank order list, showing the VRQ's of all pupils. Then, using the ten different letters of the name of the school (THEWODLANS) as the basis of designation of the forms, the first pupil on the VRQ list was placed in 1T, the second in 1H, the third in 1E and so on. Doubling back took place when 1S was reached, so that pupils occupying the 10th and 11th positions both went into 1S, the pupil occupying the 12th position into 1N and so on. At the same time, where a boy had, or previously had, a brother in the school, care was taken to place that boy in the same house without destroying the shape of the ability curve for each form (since each form is also a house unit).

The time-table was then written in such a manner as to ensure that every member of staff in a particular house was scheduled to take the first and second year forms in that house for his own subject. This ensures that for at least 50% of the time a junior boy is being taught by a member of the staff of his own house who, during the course of the year, will come to know him intimately as a result of contacts made in the classroom and the house.

Having decided to try unstreaming, no *a priori* decisions were made concerning the adoption of new teaching methods or the modification of syllabuses. I was not personally very keen on planning entirely new approaches in method or syllabuses, based on theoretical considerations, for I am essentially an empiricist and mistrust theorists in education. Without closing my mind to the possibility of having to use new techniques and to some extent modify the syllabuses in the first two years, I really wanted to see how far it was possible to teach unstreamed forms without revolutionary changes being made. In this I probably differ from most others who have tried unstreaming, but my attitude not only sprang from my empiricism and a certain natural caution, but was based on scientific considerations. In conducting an experiment

such as we were doing, I regarded it as unwise to change, initially, too many of the conditions, for if, in addition to changing the structure of the system, entirely new methods had been adopted, there would have been no way of deciding whether the results achieved were occasioned by a change of structure or of method. In short, I saw the desirability of keeping the number of variables as low as possible, in the first instance.

A short while ago I asked members of staff what they felt about teaching unstreamed forms. Here is a selection of the comments I received, some of which may go some way towards answering the sort of questions that inevitably arise when one begins to face up to the implications of non-streaming.

'The boys come from primary schools, which are as different as chalk from cheese. A period of non-streaming is, therefore, almost essential to establish basic academic habits.'

'I support non-streaming because it has improved the tone of the school. It has encouraged better behaviour by eliminating the "sink" forms and has consequently encouraged staff morale as well as class morale.'

'One has to reject the traditional habit of thinking in terms of boys who are "good" "indifferent" or "bad" and acknowledge with Newsom that all boys are educable, that intelligence is not innate, that it can be acquired and that it fluctuates. This adjustment is not easy, especially for the mature teacher, who has proved himself over the years with one or other of the traditional groups, but unless it is made the teacher will be relatively ineffective.'

'Academically unstreaming raises the mean level of the class. The impact of two or three good boys who set a standard for all to see is tremendous.'

'The non-streamed classes at Woodlands have far more collective ethos than almost anything I have previously experienced.'

'The less able boys are often more difficult as far as discipline is concerned when placed together in the same form. When mixed with more able boys this problem never appears to arise.'

'It is obvious that the majority of weaker pupils benefit, particularly in self-confidence.'

'The less able are usually spurred into more fruitful activity by the more able. On the other hand, the more academic are sometimes more inhibited orally and quite often they have much to gain from the less able boy, who can lead the way when it comes to discussion or asking questions.'

'There is no need for an able pupil to get bored provided that he is fed with sufficient work to do of the right nature. This is where individual assignments can be of value. Even in a non-streamed form the really good boy is not likely to relax for there are always other able boys to provide him with the incentive.'

Is Unstreaming Irrelevant?

M J Holt

Maurice Holt became head of a new comprehensive school, Sheredes, at Broxbourne in Hertfordshire this month. He wrote the following reservations while he was deputy head and head of Maths at Chipping Norton School, Oxon.

Irrelevant to what? Well, it's impossible at the moment to discuss the general pattern of secondary education – and curriculum reform in particular – without the streaming issue arising. And this is as it should be: the rigidly-streamed school may be convenient to timetable, and may appeal to a kind of conventional wisdom; but no sound research study has justified that appeal in terms of pupil attainment, and in any case the idea of ability-labels for our pupils runs counter to the kind of social environment and learning situation we want to develop in our schools.

This view represents the New Enlightenment, and we must be thankful for it, while noting in passing that the number of streamed schools would appear to be woefully large, despite the sympathetic noises one hears. This is the more surprising when one realises that as far as unstreaming the first year is concerned, parents will readily see that this step will smooth the transition between schools by providing an environment not unlike the primary school, while preventing ability judgments being carried forward into the new school. In this particular context one may choose to soft-pedal the social advantages if it makes the unstreaming pill easier to swallow. Mathematics and language departments may hold out for separate setting, but they will probably come in from

the cold in time; adopting modern mathematics and an audio-visual course will encourage them.

So much for a start in the first year. But what happens next? It will depend on the kind of thinking that has informed the decision to unstream in the first year. There might, for example, be an integrated approach to teaching the humanities: the group of teachers involved might want to carry this through on an unstreamed basis to the second year at least. If unstreaming has become an organic force, and has indeed changed the role of the teacher from solution-giver to problem-poser, then the chances are that there will be a ground-swell of staff opinion in favour of continuing with it. This can happen only if there is a clean break from conventional class teaching, and a continuing study of the way the experiment is going, by the teachers who are involved in it, so that the change in method does lead to a change in content and a reshaping of the curriculum under the action of this new force.

If this has happened, the headmaster will want to lead staff and parents on together to continue the experiment. But if unstreaming has not emerged essentially as a social force, acting at the grass roots, then there will be pressure to adopt some form of grouping. The formation of ability-bands is one answer; separate setting by subject

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'I like unstreaming. It is the vital issue of the day and its benefits, social as well as academic, are obvious.'

No system will provide the perfect answer and it may be that what one gains on the roundabouts by unstreaming, one may lose on the swings. It really depends on what one sees as the chief purpose of education whether or not non-streaming will prove to be an acceptable alternative. The imperfections of streaming are plain. Will non-streaming present more problems than it will solve? It is as yet too early to say with any degree of finality. Socially the advantages are fairly obvious. What we cannot be certain about is the effect on academic standards and, in particular, those of the so-called able pupil. My own view is that at The Woodlands, unstreaming in the early years will lead to enhanced academic performance by the end of the fifth year because the attitude of the pupils is so much better than it previously was.

Postscript

Since writing this article the school has had a three-day visit by four members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, who came specifically to look at the work of the pupils in the first three years. Their observations briefly, were as follows:

- 1 Whilst the standard of work of the average, slightly below and slightly above average pupil is good, the needs of the intellectually very able and the very unable (say 3 or 4 of each in each form) must be safeguarded.
- 2 Those pupils who under a system of streaming would be in the lower streams are so co-operative and amenable as to be indistinguishable from the rest in attitude or appearance.
- 3 Not only the morale of the boys but that of the staff is higher than it previously was under a system of streaming.

into ability-groups is another. Neither is rigid streaming, although banding seems altogether less desirable than setting which the recent American study **Ability Grouping in Schools** by Goldberg, Passow *et al* suggests may be advantageous in some forms. But the same study concludes that there is 'no consistent predictable effect' attributable to patterns of grouping; that is, that the effects of grouping *per se* are minimal; which really leaves us with our own intuitive feeling that rigid streaming will have undesirable social consequences for the rejected ones. We seek to avoid the rejection associated with bottom streams and sets, while acknowledging the traditional thinking that requires a separation by ability. What sorts of groupings are likely to arise? If we want to 'unstream', are we committed to wide-range mixed-ability groups at all points as a doctrinaire necessity? Or are other patterns of grouping likely to be helpful in the right context?

There is a situation in which complete unstreaming will be the prerequisite to an entirely new curriculum approach, based on the supposition that unstreaming can in fact become an organic force and lead, perhaps, to inter-disciplinary inquiry and method. But the result of this development is the growth of individual and small-group work, and when this happens the unstreaming issue is irrelevant. Yet it is learning situations of this kind, matched to the needs of teacher, subject and student, which we hope will, by some means or other, evolve within our schools in the next few years and give them a supple structure for the seventies. Is total unstreaming here and now the only way to achieve this?

It would be surprising if it were the only way, because the flexible school will itself contain ability-sets; it cannot otherwise provide adequately either for remedial work or the needs in particular subjects of the very able. But larger groups will lack the homogeneity of present subject sets in many schools, and teachers will need the skills of mixed-ability work. At the same time, there will be teachers with a flair for effective presentation of material in a more formal mode, and we may see lecture-groups based on both narrow and broad ability ranges, depending on the material and the objective.

The real issue, therefore, is to secure grouping in a variety of patterns; and in seeing how to achieve this, another finding of the Goldberg study is important. It emerged that, for all the pupils considered, the effect of class membership accounted for as much of the observed variance as that attributable to changing the parameters of grouping; in other words, the effectiveness of the individual teacher matters as much as the grouping pattern. It would seem unwise, if modish, to suggest our emphasis

must be 'the individual learning, not the teacher teaching'; for this is to over-simplify. It is the teacher-pupil relationship that will tie together our 'learning packages', and we cannot afford to lose sight of this as we edge our way forward to develop new learning situations.

What, then, should be our immediate strategy? Unstreaming is certainly a possible one, provided the initiative comes from and stays with the teachers concerned, so that they act as an overseeing working party while the experiment takes shape and becomes, one hopes, more than just the sum of its parts. But in many cases a team-teaching pattern – perhaps based at first merely on one subject – may be a more fruitful move in the long run. It is easy, for example, to set science separately so that biology, physics and chemistry are taught on a termly basis by each specialist; and extending the science double and treble periods to take in other subjects could be the next step. Block timetabling, in fact, has much to commend it and from it a flexible approach to grouping might emerge; a single enthusiast planted within the block team would see the possibilities and how to realise them. The team approach, too, will inevitably lead to inter-disciplinary discussions, and it is difficult to see how new subjects like social studies can enter the curriculum unless schools establish inter-departmental machinery of some sort. Whether the opportunity should be taken to make some of the work topic-based, or whether to devise inter-related studies which preserve the structure of the separate disciplines, are further points for discussion; the great thing is that a climate will have been established in which teachers will hammer out an approach not as a remote exercise but as a bread-and-butter classroom necessity. The danger with an inadequately-prepared flip-over to mixed ability sets is that individual teachers will remain isolated and struggle on with unsuitable material; significantly, Goldberg found that teachers did not adjust their methods noticeably when the range of ability of their pupils was varied, except when dealing with the lowest ability groups on their own, when they taught less and expected less.

The need is to recognise the different skills of different teachers and to establish teams – both within and across subject boundaries – which will harness these skills most effectively to child-centred learning situations. It is a task in human engineering, and it will need a clear-sighted view of all the issues involved. One of the issues is streaming, and its rigid forms are abhorrent; but we must be careful not to replace them by systems which may turn out to be equally rigid in their own way. The future will lie with diversity.

Self-directed Learning in the Comprehensive School

Douglas Holly

Douglas Holly is a former comprehensive school teacher, now lecturing in education at the University of Leicester. He is also Secretary of the Comprehensive Schools Committee Research Advisory Panel and author of the introductory handbook for teachers **Enquiry and Experiment in the Comprehensive School** (8/- from CSC, 123, Portland Road, London, W.11).

Recently there has been an increase in the pressure to bring a new look to secondary education – not just organisationally, by the introduction of comprehensive plans, but, more fundamentally, in the classroom itself.

This pressure has taken several forms, some of which seem to be rather contradictory. In the first place the Nuffield Foundation projects, whose tradition is now taken over largely by the Schools Council, have imported from post-Sputnik America a renewed concern with the *intellectual* quality of secondary school activities – the depth and quality of learning. These projects have, on the whole, concentrated on improving the pupils' understanding while undertaking a springcleaning exercise on the traditional curricula. They have typically worked from the top downwards, concentrating on the fifth and sixth forms initially – though an Anglo-American concern about maths and science education has directed at least some of the attention to the primary school. Although the projects have varied in emphasis, it is generally true to say that they have accepted conventional subject divisions while opening content and presentation to critical scrutiny. The rationale has derived in large part from the work of the psychologist Jerome Bruner and others at Harvard: the 'structures' of thought are seen as interacting dynamically with the 'predispositions' of individual pupils, the interaction being complete only with the willing participation of the learner. For this reason there is, in the approach of the various 'Nuffield-type' curriculum projects, a twin concern with clarifying the structures of disciplines (and jettisoning unwanted material) and encouraging problem solving activity on the part of pupils.

All this, of course, has gone on independently of British secondary reorganisation and is in no way consequent upon it. At the same time a number of other innovative tendencies have arisen at least partly in response to the new situation presented by comprehensive schooling. Young and Armstrong (1965) clearly enunciated the demand for 'flexibility' in the secondary school – seen in terms both of organisation and learning experiences.

Favouring on balance the introduction of non-streaming as a necessary and logical consequence of comprehensive education, they called for a reappraisal of the conventional class-teaching technique and a concentration on the individual at some times and on group methods at others. They too favour problem solving activities, seeing this as an extension of the Sixth Form approach and an extension upwards of primary school innovations, with the addition of a team-teaching element involving a more flexible use of space, equipment and teachers.

Contemporary with these theoretical and organisational perspectives, there has been developing a grass-roots movement towards team teaching. Several schools are now experimenting with this, all on the whole tending to eschew theory in favour of individual expediency. This lack of theoretical background no doubt explains the lack also of any coherent body of principles, so that each school tends to be interpreting team teaching in its own way. None the less there seems, from observation and what little literature there is available on British practice so far, to be a movement away from the extreme didacticism which appears to be a feature of the movement in America. One discerns a common desire to 'involve' the pupils, even in large group activities where there might be – exceptionally – as many as two hundred gathered for a 'presentation' or 'lead lesson', and here too the tendency is to increase the amount of project work, individual and group, in 'follow-up', so that an emphasis is again placed on pupil-directed activity.

Finally the University of London Goldsmiths College Curriculum Laboratory has, for the past three years, been busy promulgating the concept of 'interdisciplinary enquiry' – IDE to the initiate – the main elements of which are the view that disciplines are tributary to the curriculum rather than divisions of it and that learning should be thematic, based on problem-solving.

Thus it happens that, however diverse in origin and sometimes contradictory in application, the main currents in innovation in the secondary school at the moment come together at one point: a common insis-

tence on pupil-directed activity as a fundamental element in educational experience. Given a coincidence of the movement towards nonstreaming within the comprehensive schools it is little wonder that one or other of these approaches is receiving eager attention in many of them. For, as Young and Armstrong point out, the very logic of non-streaming is towards an individualised approach which recognises, even more than the so-called 'homogeneous' streamed classes, the essential non-equality of human beings. Also, of course, the idea of 'class teaching' a form consisting of pretty nearly the whole normally educable ability range is likely to be rejected by any conscientious teacher unwilling to adopt the expedient of 'aiming at the middle' with the near certainty of reaching hardly any. In these circumstances an approach basing education on individual, pupil-directed, problem-solving activity is bound to be attractive provided the organisational framework and staff deployment is available.

But here we come to a paradox: comprehensive education was designed to benefit the widest range of pupils in the public sector of secondary schools. These schools are populated largely by young people from manual working class, routine clerical and lower professional homes. The teachers who teach in them derive, on the whole, from this same majority section of the population. There is a growing body of sociological-educational theory, in part substantiated by empirical enquiry, that certainly for the manual working class, probably for the routine clerical occupations and possibly even for many people in lower professional jobs, the style of thinking required for problem-solving activities and educational self-direction cannot simply be assumed.

In other words we cannot simply rely on a 'natural spirit of enquiry' – not of *sustained* enquiry at least – in our pupils. The concept of 'linguistic codes' developed by Bernstein and recently re-examined by Lawton (1968) – both at the London Institute of Education – would entail a socially induced resistance to problem-solving activity on the part of the 'restricted code' users. Such a 'restricted code', the argument runs, virtually confines many working class people to a style of thinking in which intellectual curiosity and a manipulation of complex relationships are inconceivable simply because the concept of using language to organise ideas is lacking. This linguistic code is predicated upon a close, solidary group such as a family or work group or a neighbourhood where people have 'grown together' as well as 'grown up together'.

In such social circumstances, for people – the majority of the population – whose work does not involve close or

Everybody's business

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This is an anthology for discussion work in religious education and general studies for 16-18 year old pupils and for students in Colleges and Departments of Education. It is divided into two parts: the first consists of passages which pinpoint some of today's major personal, social and political problems (gambling, suicide, strikes, drugs, sex, race, Communism, world poverty and over-population, nuclear weapons) and which challenge the reader to think out his attitudes to them in terms of a coherent philosophy. The second part examines the convictions on which a Christian philosophy of life is based, expounding and questioning the central Christian beliefs about Christ, the Church and God. Questions and topics for discussion are suggested throughout the book, and there is an Appendix of further suggested reading.

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frequent contact with strangers, an 'elaborated code' is unnecessary for daily life. Meanings can be communicated by subtleties of voice inflection and facial expression and need not be verbally elaborated. Neither Bernstein nor Lawton in fact discuss the distribution of availability of the codes in terms of the social/occupational structure, but it would seem to follow from a rigorous application of the theory that only children brought up in higher professional homes could be expected at secondary school age to have a 'natural' facility for elaborated codes, since it is only in these homes that the code might be expected to come naturally and easily to at least one parent whose work daily involved intellectual decisions of a fairly high order.

For all the rest, conversation in the home will tend to be more or less confined within the restricted code whose function is closely tied to the emotional-affective bond of family life. The nearer the parents – especially the father – to the business of interacting cognitively with others at some level the more likely there is to be a 'carry over' of *some* elaborated code usage. A certain facility with the code may be acquired by education – typically at a university – which is preparing people for responsibility but this surely diminishes unless there is actual experience or likelihood of using language as a means of control. At a certain level one would suppose that the use of an elaborated code becomes purely formal – as with shop-girls or routine office workers. At this stage, even for these 'middle class' people, facility with the cognitive skills required for 'natural' problem-solving is not very great. As one descends the scale of occupational power through various grades of working class jobs the need for and skill with intellectual operations mediated through language becomes more and more remote until with unskilled labourers – Bernstein's 'ideal type' – it is virtually nonexistent.

Josephine Klein (1965) links the Bernstein analysis with another tradition: that of the students of child rearing and early socialisation. She points out that most working class children and a large proportion of those from lower middle class homes are brought up in an atmosphere of arbitrary injunctions and dependence – an atmosphere not likely to breed any automatic tendency towards self-direction and problem-solving.

What follows from this evidence? Not, certainly, the rejection of problem-solving and self-directive approaches.

Bruner and others have given us sufficient reason for seeing these as the only real basis for learning which involves genuine understanding, and therefore not to be denied to the bulk of our school population. Lawton derives from his own research the conclusion that restricted code users *can* be brought to use elaborated codes. His proposals for 'intervention techniques' would suggest a careful appraisal of the curriculum and an increase in *directive teaching aimed at producing eventual self-direction*. It is this relationship between desired outcome and expedient method which should be central to the design of curriculum and teaching practices in our developing comprehensive system. Method should clearly involve pupils in situations where they can acquire and gain confidence in using an elaborated linguistic code – though creative work should be developed alongside this to build upon affective – emotional bases which are already rich – in the culture of working class pupils at least.

Approaches which place emphasis on self-directive techniques – like Goldsmiths' IDE – should receive careful scrutiny to discover what element of structure and training in problem-solving and enquiry is needed at what stage for which pupils. Similarly techniques like team teaching which tend to place responsibility on pupils for self-direction of 'follow up' work and topics should be examined to see how the didactic 'presentation' element can be used to initiate pupils into the skills and attitudes necessary for such activity and how the supervision of follow-up work can sustain these skills and attitudes. If the new initiatives in secondary school work especially in humanities, are not to result paradoxically in further reinforcing the advantages of the advantaged and the disadvantages of the disadvantaged, a whole new dimension of pedagogical research needs to be recognised.

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The Film 4S Made

A W England

A W England was head of English at Ellergreen Comprehensive School, Liverpool when he made a film with form 4S. He is now Senior Lecturer in English at Eaton Hall College of Education.

This school became comprehensive two years ago through the amalgamation of Ellergreen High School and the two Abbotsford Road Secondary Modern Schools. At the time of the change, the High School had three fourth year classes, 4A, 4S and 4T. The first of these consisted of the academically most able; 4T of those of the remainder with some particular 'technical' ability; 4S of the rest. The 'cream' of the district had the option of going to the city schools with good academic reputations and Ellergreen suffered further by being in an area where intellectual and cultural pursuits were not considered to be among the most important of human concerns.

I was teaching 4S. The general level of ability was not high, although there were, freakishly, one or two who were highly literate, just as there were some at the other end who made one realise how fallible the old 'selection' process had been. Orally, however, they were quite lively, and capable of throwing up some bright ideas and they enjoyed improvisation and drama.

I had used film extracts to highlight successful direction, editing, acting and scripting before, but last year the school acquired a cine camera and I took the chance to let 4S discover and face the creative and technical problems for themselves.

We chose the rather threadbare theme of the day-dream. None of us had made a film before, so we relied on this proven framework. After all, it had worked in *Walter Mitty* and *Billy Liar*. Homework for the weekend was to write a story about a schoolboy or girl who day-dreams during a lesson. No rules were made; the pupils had not to feel themselves inhibited by thoughts of whether their stories could or could not be filmed. That consideration would come later.

Out of the heartening variety of situations that resulted, the class chose a story about the French Revolution as being the most promising. The dreamer would be a boy and in his dream he would become the Scarlet Pimpernel. The girls suggested he should have a crush on a form-mate and should see her as an imprisoned aristocrat whom he would gallantly rescue in his dream. One of the girls had some hazy knowledge about a person called Marie Antoinette. I set her to find out all about the lady and she turned up with the details of her life and the date

of her execution. But if Marie Antoinette was executed, how could the Pimpernel rescue her? The answer of course was that the framework of the dream freed the writer from the limitations of historical truth. Our Pimpernel could do what he liked.

The story evolved over several lessons as a class effort and they all took down copies as we worked it out. The Pimpernel would rescue Marie Antoinette from her prison cell by disguising as a priest coming to hear her confession and knocking the gaoler out with a heavy bible. He would then pass on his priest's robes to Marie, disguising himself now as the gaoler. Together they would pass through the prison gates and flee. When their escape was discovered, they would be chased by soldiers and a grand fight would ensue. The outcome of the fight was determined by the necessity to effect a smooth transition from the dream back to reality, the reality of the classroom. We thought the boy ought to be rudely awakened by the teacher, and, since the film was to be silent, by action rather than words. A boy in the class came up with the suggestion that the teacher might poke the boy with a ruler, and it struck us that if we had our Pimpernel helpless on the floor on the point of being stabbed with a sword, we could cut quite acceptably from a picture of the soldier doing the thrusting to the teacher doing the poking. A story like this had the advantage of involving everybody in some capacity, if only as Parisian citizens and of offering several pupils important roles. Since the film was to be in colour, the period setting afforded glorious opportunities for dressing up.

The next stage of the production was the writing of the scenario, the translation of the story into film terms. What we did was to work out a draft of what we thought would work and then modified it as we went along. The camera we used was an eight millimetre with a zoom lens. We decided to shoot all the classroom scenes first. This in itself was a revelation to the members of the class who had failed to grasp the mysteries of editing. One of the girls borrowed an academic gown and some horn-rimmed spectacles and took the part of the teacher. She stood before the class holding a large book specially backed for her by another girl and with the title *The Scarlet Pimpernel* on it in bold lettering. The camera took

a long shot of her from the point of view of the class itself as she read the story. We zoomed up on the title. Next we singled out our dreamer, had him turn his head wistfully and followed his eyeline to the girl he admired sitting across the gangway. His mental transformation of her into Marie Antoinette we showed by fading into a shot of her sitting in her desk in precisely the same pose only this time with a period costume on. But how, it was asked, would an uninitiated audience *know* that she was Marie Antoinette? Someone suggested the teacher should write the name on the board. From the point of view of strict probability, one might query whether a teacher reading from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* would be likely to break off to write 'Marie Antoinette executed in 1793' on the blackboard, but the point was not raised at the time and has been raised by nobody who has subsequently seen the completed film.

The final scene of the film began where the dreamer was poked awake by the teacher. We showed his vision of his laughing classmates by making the camera rock to and fro as it panned across their faces. The teacher put an end to the hilarity, looked at her watch, and, with a stylised gesture, bade the class stand up. End of the lesson. As the class filed out, we placed the camera in the doorway so that they had to loom past it in turn. We only showed those boys and girls whom the audience would recognise as principal actors in the dream. This was what they were like in real life – just ordinary schoolboys and girls. Next to the last was the girl who had been Marie Antoinette and last of all, trudging bashfully past the sighing teacher, came the Pimpernel. On the table lay the closed copy of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and it was on this that we focused our final shot.

For the all-important middle section of the film we needed a cobbled yard, a prison cell and a stretch of open country for the chase. In our particular area of Liverpool, this seemed a tall order. By a stroke of luck, however, I found the ideal place, the local park. In the middle of this was a cobbled yard enclosed by a high wall, with old stables, a high arched gateway and a small door let into the studded gates. I obtained permission for us to spend a day there and that is where we went.

In the film, we decided to burst in upon the Parisian scene in a dramatic way by showing an upward shot of a guillotine, poised to strike. For this, we had a model made and showed it against bare sky, thus creating the illusion of size. The next shot was a downward picture of a bloodthirsty mob, apparently at the foot of the platform, but actually at the foot of the cameraman's ladder. The guillotine descended, the mob waved and cheered

and the next shot was an upward shot of a hooded executioner holding a papier mâché head. Back to the mob again, we zoomed up on the Pimpernel, unnoticed among the citizens, shaking his head in reproof and then shouldering his way out of the crowd.

As we had planned to mock-up a prison cell in the school at a later date, using old flats from last year's play, we proceeded to shoot the chase next. We had to go from the point where the Pimpernel emerged from the Bastille through the little door in the main gate. We showed a guard on duty outside. Suddenly, he turned and opened the door, letting out Marie Antoinette in a hooded monkish outfit we had managed to find and the Pimpernel dressed as the gaoler with a black patch over his eye, a clever idea suggested by a boy in the class. This patch would firstly improve the disguise and secondly, once it had been seen on the gaoler, remind the audience that this was now the Pimpernel disguised as the gaoler.

We cut now to a shot of the fugitives running through open country, and then cut back to the Bastille gate from which were issuing three armed soldiers to set off in hot pursuit. I had provided two fencing foils for the final duel, but we had planned to have the first two soldiers shot by the hero. For this, I was learnedly informed, we would require two separate pistols. One girl's mother was due to bring two old-fashioned pistols to the park to lend us for the duration of the filming, but she failed to turn up. We solved the problem by allowing each soldier to run up in turn and be killed before the next one arrived. Thus, although there appeared to be four swords in use, in fact the three soldiers used the same one each time. To get inside the head of the Pimpernel, as it were, once he had tripped and fallen, the cameraman substituted himself for him and allowed the sword to be driven in just below the lens. As we had done the same with the teacher's ruler in the classroom scene, it should now be easy to cut from the one to the other and create the Pimpernel schoolboy's double vision.

The film was shown at an Open Day and I have used it several times since in talking about film to other classes. Its very faults are illuminating. Pupils have pointed out how the cut from the writing on the board of 'Marie Antoinette executed in 1793' to the guillotine and the severed head misled the audience into thinking that it was she who had been beheaded.

This was a matter of technique. It was when the artistic conception and the acting were called into question that the valuable discussion arose. While the audience admired the deftness of the deceptive montage with the swords, they considered the fighting at the end,

Degrees for Working Teachers

D J Johnston

The number of Diplomas and Degrees for teachers grows year by year—and the day of an all-graduate profession seems as far off as it ever was. David Johnston, Adviser to Teachers at London University Institute of Education, gives an up-to-date guide to the qualifications that are available.

The privileged position of the graduate in education has never been more obvious than today. Salary differentials of £100 for general degrees and £220 for good honours provide incentives for non-graduate teachers to find study facilities and to sacrifice time to gain these academic distinctions. At every stage of education promotion prospects to headships, to departmental responsibility and to graded posts seem to persuade teachers into similar activity.

These tendencies owe much to Burnham departmental arrangements, derive from the post-1945 urgency to provide secondary education for all, and reflect, in one way, the new sense of adventurous and stimulating purpose in primary education.

The national spread of interest has heretofore been based on the availability of London University External Degrees and the too consistently undervalued College of Preceptors Licentiate ship. Institutions of Further and Higher Education have often with approval provided courses leading to London first degrees in Arts, Science, Economics, Law, and Divinity. Correspondence tuition extended facilities to remotely placed village teachers: instalment plans for the payment of tuition fees and the readiness of some LEA's to bear correspondence tuition charges also helped teachers. In general, facilities for

part-time study leading to degrees have increased and they have been modified by the intervention of bodies such as the National Extension College. The disappearance of the National Diploma in Design, which suitably qualified teachers could obtain by part-time study, has not been matched by any part-time provision for the new Diploma in Art and Design. Many teachers are also saddened at the closure of the LSE Evening Department, which has removed one way through to a BSc. (Econ).

The key positions of LEA's in facilitating degree study can be seen from the use of day release as a means for raising non-graduate teachers to graduate status, especially to meet the shortage of science specialists. This LEA role was eased especially when the LEA's fostered External Degree studies in their Technical Colleges.

Hundreds of teachers have enjoyed the advantage of being admitted to Birkbeck College, an internal college of the University of London, and reading part-time but internally for London degrees. In 1968/69 almost 900 out of Birkbeck's 2,200 students are teachers. Part-time degree courses, mainly for external degrees, have also been a feature of the teaching at many London Polytechnics, Sir John Cass College and at Goldsmiths' College.

But in more recent days other developments are

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where the Pimpernel so easily runs two of his opponents through, an unlikely feat. But surely in a wish-fulfilment dream, the romantic exploits of the hero were bound to be unlikely? In that case, then, the acting wasn't good enough, as it had been played too naturalistically. Fair enough. Was the boy dreamer himself a sufficiently good actor? Possibly not, as those pupils who saw the film without prior preparation were not absolutely clear that it was the boy's dream. Some thought it was Marie Antoinette's! If the film was to have the satirical flavour we had intended, some more exaggerated effects both of acting and camera-work were called for.

But uncompromising though the criticisms were, the stimulus provided for the audience by the fact that the film was the work of their fellow pupils was great. Everybody wants to make one now. The participants have the satisfaction of seeing their work presented to an audience without the intensive drilling of the school play and enjoy a genuine corporate creative experience.

For those who want to try their hand at film making, the following two books are useful:

Film Making in Schools and Colleges, British Film Institute, 7/6.

Film Making in Schools by Douglas Lowndes. Batsford, 42/-.

notable. A change has appeared in the interpretation of university admission regulations in London University for teachers who have completed a three-year course of training. A paragraph headed BY ADMISSION UNDER REGULATIONS FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS reads 'A person who is admitted to a first degree course as an Advanced Student under the Internal or External regulations for Advanced Students will be deemed to have satisfied the general entrance requirements.

[The holder of a degree of a University, or of a Diploma in Technology, or of a Teacher's Certificate gained in and after 1962 at a Training College in England or Wales after a three years' course of study, is entitled to apply for consideration under the regulations for Advanced Students].'

In addition the Council for National Academic Awards has agreed to the establishment of a part-time course at Enfield College of Technology for the degree of a BA in Sociology of Education for teachers.

A big immediate potential is that for the extension of B Ed facilities to practising teachers. Throughout the country there is on paper the chance for the degree of B Ed, here as a pass, there an honours degree, in every College of Education: a few colleges at present have no students, and do not anticipate having any students reading for B Ed. Many colleges may well have relatively small numbers of candidates. Fewer colleges will have large groups of students in many academic fields. The effect on the profession as a whole seems twofold. Firstly, in the first full year of these facilities (1969) about 3,500 new entrant B Eds (10% of the 1965 college admissions) may be added to the 6,000 trained graduates likely then to complete training and to about 1,200 untrained graduates, the regular annual entry to schools: the 3,500 B Eds may well represent an even spread of new graduates at every stage from nursery school onwards. Secondly, theoretically at least, practising teachers will wish to secure admission to further courses, either full-time or part-time leading to B Ed. For their part, the Universities of London and of Lancaster have drawn up regulations offering both full-time and part-time facilities to practising teachers: the admission requirements may be held by teachers to be initially very exacting. It may, without

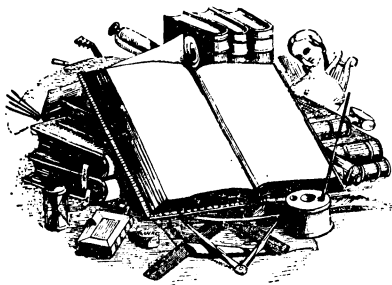
unfairness, be argued that other agencies, the Department of Education and Science included, have not matched this university willingness.

Some teachers have found ways of proceeding from confirmed non-graduate status to higher degrees. This has tended to be effected for a relatively small proportion of teachers through adding an Advanced Diploma to a first professional qualification. There are many Advanced Diplomas and there may be a technique in choosing the most useful for later bargaining for University admission. Now many Advanced Diplomas require full-time attendance normally for one year and this needs secondment. Some Advanced Diplomas are also obtainable by longer part-time study. Diploma holders may find both full-time and part-time facilities available for higher degrees such as MA, M Ed, M Phil. Thus in some cases Diploma holders may use one-year of secondment for their Diplomas and follow this with two or three years of part-time study for a degree. Others may complete a Diploma by part-time study and secure a full-time secondment for a Higher Degree. Others still may complete both Diploma and Higher Degree by part-time study.

These facilities are not evenly spread. Thus Birmingham, Cambridge, Essex, Exeter, London, Oxford, and Reading, are universities that do not permit the non-graduate to proceed to a higher degree. Bristol, Durham, Hull, Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield, Southampton, Sussex, and the University of Wales may do so very exceptionally. Bath, Bradford, Keele, Lancaster, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, and Newcastle, *appear* to do so less exceptionally.

The Open University may well proceed to the establishment of a School of Education. The existence of the College of Preceptors, already offering high professional qualifications to teachers at home and overseas with the additional service of home study courses, seems to suggest that the Open University could find here a ready made instrument to service the Open University School of Education. In the existing zoning of the country into various Area Training Organisations it appears that another national organisation like the College of Preceptors may provide the best type of liaison with the Open University.

Reviews



Parents and Teachers

Learning Begins at Home, by Michael Young and Patrick McGeeney. Routledge (1968), 21s. Cloth, 14s. Paper.
Parents and Teachers, Partners or Rivals?, by Lawrence Green. Allen and Unwin (1968), 21s.

The involvement of parents in the work of the schools is now a major talking point. Several years ago, the Advisory Centre for Education tried the unique experiment of an 'Education Shop' in Ipswich, where parents could seek answers to questions about education, and this has since been tried in other cities. A Home and School Council bringing together ACE, the Confederation for the Advancement of State Education, and the National Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations has been established. Articles on parent-teacher relations have appeared in the DES publications *Trends and Reports on Education*; and there have been courses and conferences up and down the country involving LEA's, the Inspectorate, Colleges and University Departments of Education, and other bodies.

Is this movement for closer relations between home and school merely part of the contemporary reappraisal of the structure and organisation of our

educational system – the experimentation in curricula, in ability grouping, in secondary organisation, and in the government of higher education? And is this overall re-assessment a response to our continuing political and moral concern for freedom and equality, and for efficiency and economic survival? Or is the home-school movement in some way distinctive? There seems little doubt that its roots lie in broader social, political and economic trends; but the *influence* of the home-school movement on our conception of the teacher's role (and therefore on school organisation and on teacher training) may be very significant in the long run.

These two books represent the experimental phase in home-school relations. Both describe research and innovation that arises out of a decade's work by sociologists into educational opportunity in Britain, and out of the successive enquiries of the Central Advisory Council, all of which clearly related 'home background' to educational achievement and which isolated the particular importance of 'parental interest'. In both these books the authors describe how they attempted to generate parental interest in junior schools, and to measure its effect on children's performance.

Young and McGeeney initiated a programme of open meetings, discussions on the curriculum, staff-parent interviews, and home visits and measured the children's achievement before and after. But shortage of time and other resources and an inadequately controlled research design produced equivocal results; the children's work did improve where parents became involved, but was it because of greater parental interest, or was it the effect of too frequent testing, or because of the enthusiasm of the teachers? The authors are frank about the study's limitations, but there is no doubt that it was a valuable and very worthwhile research fully justified by all the studies preceding it. Lawrence Green's study is an account of practical innovation in the junior school of which he is headmaster. He devised a new report

form with a section inviting parents' comments, he invited parents to come to the school to talk about their children's work, he organised a PTA and a variety of functions at which parents were welcome participants, and encouraged his staff to make home visits and to foster informal neighbourhood contacts. Mr Green is convinced that closer home-school relations helped the children's progress, and offers some evidence to support his contention.

Each book is written with conviction and humility, and both parents and teachers will find them readable, well illustrated with concrete examples and most rewarding. A particularly valuable aspect of each is the attention given to the special problems of immigrant children; this alone should secure each title a place on College of Education reading lists, for there is much yet to be done in preparing young teachers for work in deprived and multi-cultural areas. As Lawrence Green says, such teachers are in many ways social workers and he gives examples of what amounts to *community development* in the work of his staff – involvement in the social problems of the neighbourhood as well as in the personal problems of children's families.

This element is less emphasised by Young and McGeeney who tend to stress educational problems and only discuss welfare aspects in their accounts of home-visiting. But can one always separate out 'educational guidance'? And if not, should schools appoint specially trained *teachers* ('counsellors' or 'teacher/social workers') or specially trained *social* workers ('school social workers', or 'education visitors'), to cover the whole field, or is this a task the existing school staff can shoulder? Neither book enlarges on this.

To return to the central problem, research now underway in Liverpool, the NFER and the EPA's will undoubtedly help refine the definition, measurement, and transmission of 'parental interest', (and, of course, its accessibility to teachers) as have many

studies included for example in Elizabeth Goodacre's recent bibliography for the Home and School Council, *Home and School Relationships*. But though it may be many years before we have an adequate theory of parent-teacher relations, these two books are worthy additions to the growing literature.

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(*Home and School Relationships*, compiled by Dr Elizabeth Goodacre, is published by the Home and School Council, Derwent College, University of York, 5s.)

Linguistic Strategies

Social Class, Language and Education, by Denis Lawton.
Routledge (1968), 25s.

Starting from evidence of the immense wastage of working-class intellectual talent, Denis Lawton examines the role of a subcultural tension as one of the main causes. 'Apathy to education is a realistic form of behaviour', when a school's middle-class ethos is alien to normal working-class socialisation, says Dr Lawton. He goes on to relate the class tension, and any resultant educational underachievement, to linguistic inadequacies. These he discusses in chapters on 'Language and Thought' and 'Language and Background'; in a critique of Bernstein's work; and in an account of his own experimental study of speech and writing. Finally, he examines some 'intervention programmes' in the USA

and here, and concludes with reserved optimism.

As the book is in the form of a continuing argument, many people will be more interested in the conclusions and their implications than a detailed account of how they were derived. The chief conclusions involve the need for further research, for the 'right' teachers to extend the linguistic range of working-class children beyond Restricted Code, and for the kind of programme by which they could do so.

The 'right' teachers will have, according to Lawton, a knowledge of sociology to help their understanding of children's likely difficulties with language. They will need a respect for the values and traditional pursuits of the working-class, on the one hand, and the ability to differentiate between 'what is of cognitive importance' from trivia such as etiquette, on the other (the middle-class) hand. They will have to make close contact with parents 'and to be able to communicate with them'.

These last two claims sound abstractly pious to me, and something like them has been included in governmental reports anyway. But Lawton seems to me to be making an overwhelming case for more teachers from working-class backgrounds. Though obviously not a pre-requisite of valuable teaching (nor an insurance against bad) similar accents and experience, for instance, can be obvious aids to a trusting teaching-pupil relationship. I think, too, that teachers may need to be made aware of a whole range of linguistic strategies they could use in order to approach Restricted Code users meaningfully, before trying to extend pupils' linguistic range.

In terms of educational programme, Lawton reaffirms the need to start with very young children, so his book is further ammunition against the present absurd neglect of Nursery and Primary Education. He stresses the need for more teacher-individual pupil communication, though, again, without suggesting how it could be effected. And he repeats that we must

aim for a concept of appropriateness with language.

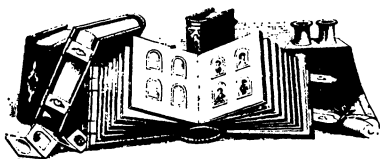
This concept would lead to an emphasis on situational rather than inductive language-teaching. I know of four ways in which this is already being investigated or practised: in the emphasis on drama and talking in such books as *Growth through English* and Diana Morgan's *Living Speech in the Primary School*; in schools making their potential for language-teaching obvious to teachers of *all* disciplines; by bringing the outside, especially people, inside school; and by making the whole neighbourhood a 'school without walls'.

Deriving from this last is the primacy of getting parental co-operation, by schools working out what Lawton calls 'areas of action for parents that they can perform'. A participatory society must start here!

Much of this will sound modest and obvious to an educational *avant-garde*, though Lawton's balanced and critical case provides a firm basis for future argument. And it's not as if any of his suggestions are universally implemented at present. So it'll be a sound primer for the numerous B Ed candidates who will, justifiably, be recommended to use it.

What is more controversial, and disturbing, is the number of times Denis Lawton is able to reveal, quite convincingly, the inadequacies of past research and reports. For instance, the lack of definition of phrases like 'culturally deprived', and the lack of control groups in some research, means that their findings become 'interesting' rather than 'conclusive'. Especially provocative are his implication that 'free talk' situations are not helpful for working-class children and his assertions about Plowden: one, that its advocacy of a 'free day' organisation for schools is not supported by research; two, that its concluding advice to teachers about growth and development is 'positively dangerous'.

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Exploring Experience

Growth through English, by John Dixon. National Association for the Teaching of English, 9s. 6d. post free from W T Spouge, 5 Imperial Road, Edgerton, Huddersfield.

This book is for any teacher – not just the English specialist – who wants a coherent theory of learning and language which links recent thinking by linguists, psychologists and sociologists to actual classroom practice, and provides a rationale for the most promising language teaching and learning now to be found increasingly in primary schools and sometimes in secondary schools.

This sounds like the last word, but it isn't: John Dixon declares in his preface 'my aim has been not to make an end of discussion . . . but rather to propose a new starting point', and this he does, in keeping with the spirit of the celebrated Dartmouth Seminar (1966) of which this book is one man's personal report. What is remarkable is that in so little space as a hundred and twenty pages he has not only cogently set out, with constant reference to children's work, the reasons for the revolution in English (useful for teachers with heads and colleagues still to convince) and made articulate what is for many

teachers a confused set of hunches; but he has also provided helpful suggestions and talking points (useful for teachers' centres and curriculum planners), especially for research in areas where teachers are uniquely placed to make a contribution, for example by observing and recording the varieties of children's language. Dixon calls it 'the border country between scholarship and the intuitive understandings of observant and sympathetic teachers', though he does not underestimate the importance of a conceptual framework drawn from linguistics and related studies. It is on this question of what knowledge *about* language is necessary to a mastery of language that least is known. It is clear that the teacher needs at least some of this knowledge, but not so clear when the pupil does. As Dixon puts it, 'we need to seek a clearer definition of the circumstances in which conceptualising of linguistic awareness is likely to arise in class.'

For the view of English put forward here is one of activity and process rather than a set of skills ('its ideal pupils might well be copy-typists') or transmitting the cultural heritage where pupils are rarely users of the word but receivers only. 'Language is learnt in operation, not by dummy runs. In English, pupils meet to share their encounters with life, and to do this effectively they move freely between dialogue and monologue – between talk, drama and writing; and literature, by bringing new voices into the classroom, adds to the store of shared experience. Each pupil takes from the store what he can and what he needs. In so doing he learns to use language to build his own representational world and works to make this fit reality as he experiences it.'

The centrality of talk and drama to this view needs no stressing. 'Drama, like talk, is learning through interaction.' Dixon recognises that 'behind language lies the force of social relationships and where these are critically limiting, language is too.' And if 'the classroom is a place for taking on new roles, facing new

situations – coming to terms in different ways with new elements of oneself and new levels of human experience', as Dixon believes, then the teacher too has new roles to play, and must step down from the dais.

Growth through English does not flinch from the two most taxing questions in English teaching: how do I integrate the four basic activities – talk, drama, reading and writing? And how do I find the underlying pattern of development, the right sequence? How heartily will teachers agree with Dixon when he says, 'what we want is something less specific than a curriculum and more ordered than chaos'. In chapter 3 – *An analysis of activities in the classroom*, and in chapter 5 – *Continuity – in what sense?* he tackles these questions with penetration and suggests lines of approach which may well be fruitful.

In chapters 7 and 8 Dixon draws out the implications which the approach he presents has for school organisation (for example, with regard to streaming, team teaching and departmental planning), classroom equipment (the English workshop), and for teacher education, both initial and in-service.

Finally, in considering the movement towards a 'discussion culture' with its emphasis on 'public exchange of ideas rather than private writing and reading', and the domination of popular culture by the audio-visual media, Dixon defines the English teacher's task in this way: 'First he has to learn for himself and develop with his pupils the full potential of discussion methods, with their emphasis on interplay of ideas, dialectical exchange, shared experience, group learning and understanding. And, second, from the very start of reading and writing he has to look beyond the minimum possibilities of literacy to the profounder possibilities of a considered and extended exploration of experience, permitting slower realisations and more individual, personal growth'.

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Educability

Who Can Be Educated?, by Milton Schwebel. Grove Press (NY) (1968), 6 dollars, 50 cents.

Here is a book of outstanding interest to **Forum** readers. Published by the Grove Press in the United States, and rather expensive for Englishmen, it should be made available in all libraries used by teachers.

Professor Schwebel, the Dean of the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University, is familiar with educational developments and thinking not only in his own country, but also in Britain, the USSR, and elsewhere, and uses his knowledge and experience to very good effect. His book focuses sharply on the whole issue of educability – on the conflict of theories and of practice. In particular he shows how widespread is the practice of grading and streaming in the States (this came as a surprise to this reviewer), and how far this militates against every kind of disadvantaged group. Ability grouping and similar divisions in the American High Schools are due to continuing adherence to what Schwebel regards as obsolete theories based on psychometry. As in this country we move over, gradually and rather painfully, to comprehensive secondary education, this book comes as a sober reminder that to achieve the outward form of the comprehensive school is only the beginning of a struggle for equality of conditions and opportunity – that is, for a genuinely educative approach to all children.

Schwebel's critique of Intelligence Testing and its use in schools follows similar lines to the critique made in this country also – he has resuscitated,

however, a fascinating passage at arms between the youthful Walter Lippman and Terman in the early 1920's. Lippman was horrified at the claims made by Terman and the like for intelligence testing and wrote a series of articles in the **New Republic** criticising both theories and practice. His most vehement attack was 'directed against the fast-growing belief that intelligence tests were evaluating an intangible and unmodifiable human quality'.

Intelligence testers, he added, claimed that they were measuring an innate and predetermined capacity 'of a human being for all time and that this capacity is totally fixed by a child's heredity'. The way schools in the States use intelligence testing, and group children according to their scores, writes Schwebel, 'shows that the genetic theory of mental ability is basic to the most important educational decisions and practices'.

The major part of the book is a detailed and overall examination of the determinants of educability – biological, psychological, social and educational; a lengthy chapter is devoted to each in turn. In Schwebel's view, recent research in all these fields points to the need for new concepts to replace the old; for new theories of learning which subsume the new evidence concerning human change. 'Such new theories', he writes, 'providing deeper insight into human development, learning and teaching, will enable the schools to serve the children better'. In the final chapter, *Some Questions, Some Answers*, he points the way forward.

I would strongly recommend this book, not only for the light it throws on the problems of comprehensive schooling in the States, but also because of its immediate relevance to thinking and practice in the new comprehensive schools in this country. It complements, in the educational field, J McV Hunt's well-known **Intelligence and Experience**, also a book from the States, reviewed by Eric Lunzer in **Forum** in Vol 7, No 1 (Autumn 1964).

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All Our Past?

All Our Future, by J W B Douglas, J M Ross and H R Simpson. Peter Davies 42s.

All Our Future, a study of the experience of a national sample of boys and girls during the first five years of their secondary education, is the fourth main report of a longitudinal investigation initiated by the Population Investigation Committee in 1945. (Previous reports include **Maternity in Great Britain, Children Under Five and The Home and the School**).

For more than twenty years, Dr Douglas and his colleagues have painstakingly accumulated a mass of detailed information on the health, schooling and home background of some 5000 children born during one week in March 1946. The importance of this investigation, the first of its kind in this country, is to be judged by the frequency with which its research findings are quoted or mentioned in an increasingly wide range of publications. Both substantively and methodologically the investigation has made a major contribution to the developmental study of education.

In view of the impact of the earlier studies, in particular of *The Home and the School*, it is to be regretted therefore, that the latest report in the series is, in certain ways at least, less satisfactory than its predecessors. Like the earlier studies, *All Our Future* is concise, scholarly, carefully argued and well furnished with statistical data and information. In relation to the current debate in secondary education, however (the future structure of secondary schools), it has very little immediately to say.

One major drawback of a long term follow-up study is the possibility that by the time the data have been analysed the findings of the inquiry will already be out of date. In an age of rapid social change the investigation may be overtaken by the events which it seeks to document. For example, as a study of the system of secondary education existing between the years 1957 and 1962, *All Our Future* is unable to throw any direct light on the comparative performance of children in both comprehensive and selective secondary schools. Data of this kind would be extremely useful; but as the authors have to confess, '... the necessary information is not to be obtained from the present study'.

Are we to conclude therefore that *All Our Future* can be dismissed as of only historical interest? The issue is by no means certain. Clearly the battle for the reorganisation of secondary education has not yet been won. Moreover, there is a need for accurate and well attested information about the workings of the selective system if we are to learn from the lessons of the past. Many of the findings highlighted in the report do, in fact, bear upon the objectives of comprehensive education.

The wastage of ability, already identified in *The Home and the School*, is shown both to continue and to increase at the secondary stage. Of those children in the sample of high academic ability (the top 16%), half of those from lower working class homes left school before the age of 16½

(compared with 10% of those from upper middle class homes). Inadequate parental support, inferior schools and social class are again identified as potential educational handicaps.

An interesting finding of the study is that the influence of the home is particularly great towards the end of the period of compulsory schooling when many pupils decide to leave. This is at odds with the finding of Prof H T Himmelweit, who has argued, on the basis of her own longitudinal research, that the decision as to the age at which the child will leave school is made soon after the child enters the secondary stage. A need for further research is indicated.

As the latest chapter in the story of a generation of children who have grown up since the 1944 Education Act, *All Our Future*, though sober and unexciting, will repay careful study. As a commentary on the recent past in secondary education, however, its message is depressing.

GORDON KIRKWOOD,
Furzedown College of Education.

Comprehensive Facts

Comprehensive Education in England and Wales,
by T G Monks. NFER (1968), 42s.

This book gives the results of a NFER survey of Comprehensive Schools relating to the year 1965-66. It is the first stage of a continuing research project, and was carried out by means of a postal questionnaire completed by 331 heads and over 11,000 teachers. It contains detailed statistics on the then current stage of development of the schools, their origins, buildings, intakes, staffing, social and academic

organisations and extra-curricular activities. It is essentially factual, and the facts provided are pertinent and detailed. As the author says, he does not attempt to answer such questions as 'Is comprehensive education a *good* thing?' but rather tries to give the hard facts to others who will.

Unfortunately, the facts which the book provides are of little use for this purpose. The researchers have been admirably painstaking and objective, and the information which the book contains is often extremely interesting. But it cannot greatly help in the task of evaluating comprehensive schools and may, indeed, cloud the issue.

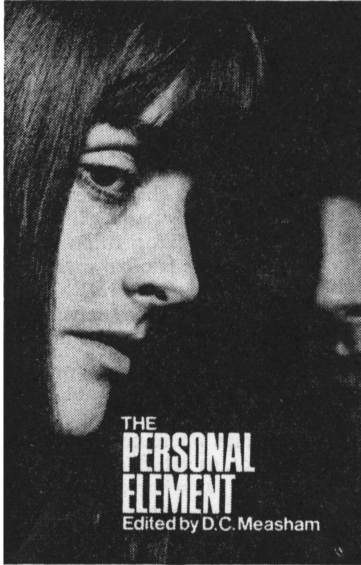
When the survey was made many of the schools were not fully developed, and of those that were, many were in areas where neighbouring schools were not, as yet, re-organised. Moreover of the 192 schools classified in the survey as 'fully-developed' 11-18 schools, only 64 had the expected number of able pupils, while 27.1% had fewer than half (in Inner London this percentage rises to 60.4, a fact which underlines the points made by the late E E McCarthy in the last issue of *Forum*). It is thus

impossible to use this book to evaluate the comprehensive school – too many of the schools involved are comprehensive only in name.

There have, of course, been many developments since 1966 (when the survey was carried out, for example, only eleven of these schools had an unstreamed first year) and the situation is changing term by term, but the second stage of the investigation is already nearing completion, and will almost certainly suffer from many of the disadvantages of this present book. This is, perhaps, the inevitable fate of research in a period of rapid change. Nonetheless the report does have its value, if only in underlining so admirably how far we still have to go in establishing anything remotely resembling a comprehensive system of education in England and Wales.

ROY WATERS,
Inner London Education Authority

The Personal Element



Edited by D. C. Measham

'I'm not like that: I'm this sort of person.'
This anthology tries to evoke exactly this kind of response in the reader by including autobiography, short stories, and poems; some are rare, some well-known, and Mr Measham has provided comprehensive and highly perceptive notes.

10s non net

Turning Points



Edited by Sydney Bolt and Phil Mansell
(to be published in February 1969)

A turning point in a person's life is the moment which highlights his position most starkly. Each extract raises important issues, and the editors have scripted short discussions between themselves to give students a lead.

13s non net

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