FORUM

FOR THE DISCUSSION OF NEW TRENDS IN EDUCATION

The Middle Years of Schooling

CONTENTS

FORUM and the CAMPAIGN for
COMPREHENSIVE
EDUCATION CONFERENCE

EXAMINATION POLICY IN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

Saturday, 16 June, 1973
10.00 am to 5.00 pm

**FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE
Euston Road, London NW1**

Morning session:
Examination Policy at 16 Plus
Chairman: *Jack Walton*
Speakers: *Gordon Barratt*, Senior Educational
Adviser, Schools Council
Pat Daunt, Headmaster, Thomas
Bennet School, Crawley
Denys John, Headmaster, Nailsea
Comprehensive School, Nailsea

Afternoon session:
Examination Policy at 18 Plus
Chairman: *Brian Simon*
Speakers: *Jim Eggleston*, Professor of Edu-
cation, University of Nottingham
John Watts, Principal, Countes-
thorpe College, Countesthorpe
Walter Roy, Headmaster, Hewett
School, Norwich

Conference fee: £2.00 with meals, etc;
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Editorial Board

The middle years of schooling

Nearly five years ago, **Forum** devoted a special number to the education of the 9 to 13. We drew attention then to the new approaches characteristic of the junior schools, only now becoming freed from the restraints of the eleven-plus, and to the move towards group methods and inter-disciplinary teaching teams then developing as appropriate to the education of the 11 to 13 in secondary schools. It was already apparent, five years ago, that whether or not middle school schemes as such were likely to increase, a new tendency was developing to regard education as a continuous process no longer sharply defined in successive stages labelled primary and secondary. Once the aim is accepted of educating *all* children that they may be full participant members of society, we wrote, 'new operational objectives must be determined with the corollary of recasting the curriculum and developing fresh modes of teaching'. (**Forum**, Vol 11, No. 1).

Events over the last five years have borne out this prediction, as contributors to this number make abundantly clear. Many local authorities have decided on schemes of comprehensive reorganisation that involve middle schools of one kind or another, indeed, as Caroline Benn shows in her authoritative article, these come in all shapes and sizes. The fact that, if and when present plans materialise, some 30 per cent of children will experience one or other form of middle school education stands in sharp contrast to the intentions of the now almost forgotten Circular 10/65, which announced that permission would be given for only a 'very small number' of experiments of this kind. The experiments have become a flood—local authorities have voted with their feet, and the DES has seemingly acquiesced.

A much stronger case can now be made for the middle school as a separate entity than was possible five years ago. We cannot rehearse these arguments here, but among them are a certain disenchantment with the large all-through comprehensive on account of size—a view that **Forum** does not necessarily share—and the administrative advantages of middle schools in terms of utilising existing buildings. Both these are negative points. The more positive are those put forward by the Plowden Council in recommending 8 to 12 schools, which focused on the gains to be derived from extending the primary school approach by one year; the freedom from external examinations (and so constraints) of the 9 to 13 or 10 to 14 middle schools, and the opportunities such schools offer for developing the new approaches in terms of content and methods referred to in our editorial of 5 years ago. These arguments carry a good deal of weight.

The contents of this special number illustrate contemporary developments in this field. One thing that becomes immediately clear is that the establishment of middle schools acts as a stimulus to fundamental rethinking of objectives and procedures. The new 8 to 12 schools at Southampton, for instance, described and analysed here by George Freeland, were established only after intensive planning and discussion by teachers and others. Eric Davies shows that the same can be said of the 9 to 13 schools, perhaps the most radical of these changes. That even a relatively minor change, such as the intake of 10+ children into the Leicestershire High Schools, can stimulate quite new patterns of teaching embodying current thinking and experience is made clear by Adrian Simpson and his team who are among those pioneering this development—gradually to become general throughout the county.

While practising teachers must develop approaches that seem to them appropriate in the new circumstances, much thinking and discussion is going on about the overall curriculum, its rationale and objectives, in connection with the middle years of schooling. This new thinking is represented here by Alec Ross, whose Schools Council project is specifically focused on this issue, and by Jim Campbell who is also concerned to elucidate a rationale for the total educational experience of pupils in these years. So theory and practice march hand in hand, and we may reasonably expect that the new opportunities that middle schools provide to develop more relevant and appropriate procedures will be realised in this sector—and, perhaps partly through the influence of these schools, among schools covering this age range as a whole.

Schools today are experiencing a great deal of criticism in the press—some of it perhaps justified, but much of it exaggerated. It does no harm, therefore, to focus attention, as we do in this number, on one of the most significant growing points in education. Although ignored by the sensation-mongering dailies—and even the educational weeklies which should know better—it is here that we can find some of the most positive new developments which may well have a profound influence on the development of the educational system as a whole.

Middle School Planning Surveyed

Caroline Benn

From the first, middle schools have been popular with planners—and with the public. They did not run into the same kind of opposition as the all-through comprehensives in the 1960s, even though their introduction was just as much prompted by a need to find a way around the 11-plus. In part this was because middle schools did not actually exist until 1968; in another part because they were more often thought of as extensions upward of primary schooling than as a replacement of secondary education's early formative years. Thus their threat to traditional grammar school preserves was less obvious.

Today, the climate is changing and they are becoming somewhat more controversial. It is easy to see why. Firstly, hundreds of middle schools now exist; and hundreds more are being added each year. The latest 1971 DES Statistics shows only 3% of the secondary population in middle schools, but by the late 1970s it is expected that one in every five pupils will go through some form of middle school scheme.[1]

Secondly, as has become clearer over the last five years, the middle school has veered more towards the secondary than the primary end of the spectrum. Table I shows that 70% of existing middle schools are classed as secondary schools, or are secondary schools, if you include schools like Leicestershire lower schools in the total population. Officially, of course, they are not middle schools in the DES Statistics. Official middle schools are those which straddle the age of 11 with age ranges such as 8-12, 9-12, 10-14, 10-13, and 9-13.

But even within this category of official middle schools, where most are either 8-12 or 9-13, it is the middle-deemed-secondary of 9-13 which is still the most numerous. This was the version the West Riding first suggested in 1963, and for some years its merits were compared to the **Plowden** version of 5-8, 8-12, and 12 plus schooling, finally recommended in 1967. Even this blessing did not succeed in making the middle-deemed-primary more popular. The head start in planning of the 5-9, 9-13, and 13-18 version was maintained. Table III shows how much more popular it is now with local authorities than the 8-12 version. Plans for the future show this lead will be retained.

TABLE I

Classification of middle schools

Age range		Numbers
8-12	Middle schools deemed primary	118
9-13 10-13	Middle schools deemed secondary	147
11-13	Middle schools, secondary	46
11-14	Middle schools, secondary	75
		386

Sources:

DES *Statistics*, Vol. I, 1971

DES Classified List of Comprehensive Schools, 1971

Altogether 65 local education authorities—about 2 in 5—already operate at least one middle school, or are seriously thinking of introducing them. This is double the number four years back. Over the next 3 or 4 years, middle schools are expected to be introduced at something like a rate of 250 per year.

The DES defines an official middle school as one which will 'cater for the older junior and younger senior pupils' and then it adds, 'pupils from these schools generally go on to comprehensive schools'.[2] Note the 'generally'. For although middle schools are primarily thought of as ending selection, there is nothing to prevent an authority (like Norfolk, or most of Buckinghamshire) from planning to change its system to first and middle schools, changing its transfer to 12, but retaining selection at this age. In the same way there has been nothing to prevent areas adopting those selective forms of reorganization where selected pupils transfer out of 11-16 secondary modern schools to selective 'comprehensives' at age 13 rather than at 11. Some of these comprehensive schemes intend to develop into *bona fide* middle school systems (e.g. Doncaster) but none has as yet and most have no plans. If many do become middle school schemes, it will swell the population of such schools even further.

In the beginning it was assumed most middle schools would be housed in converted primary schools,[3] but it is now obvious that most are in old secondary schools—especially when 'lower' tier secondary schools are added to the definition (there are few purpose built middle schools). This has obvious implications for the education in the schools—even more important, perhaps, than whether their official status is 'primary' or 'secondary'. An existing primary school, oriented and staffed for primary years, will be different from a secondary school, with specialist staff and facilities—no matter how many other changes are added to cope with the 'new' years in either case. To some it may seem that a secondary status and venue offers more prestige or a better deal in financing. But the middle-deemed-secondary has only a slightly better staffing ratio than that deemed primary (22.3:1 to 24.9:1) and their class size as taught is only lower by one: 30 to 29.[4]

Changing to any form of middle school reorganization —whether with a 12 or a 13 transfer age—is a much more fundamental rearrangement than 'orthodox' reorganization. In the orthodox, big though it is, only the secondary school is asked to expand itself to deal with a full ability range. In middle school reorganization, all schools throughout the age range of schooling must change in some way. Even if the transfer age is only moved from 11 to 12. In addition, of course, some authorities who have adopted a 12 plus transfer have also adopted a 6th form college pattern, adding further to the fundamental changes. At the lower end of all middle school systems the old primary sector must be rearranged. 'First schools' and 'first and middle schools' combined are introduced, and are yet another addition to the existing school types which DES *Statistics* now list. Table II shows how many there are of each, and of what age ranges.

The implications of middle school reorganization for the upper years of secondary education are that each year a greater and greater proportion of the total number of secondary comprehensive schools are upper tier schools of 13-18 and 14-18. These are growing at a faster rate, in other words, than are orthodox comprehensives—although the orthodox 11-18 comprehensive is still 1 in every 2 new comprehensives introduced. About 1 in 5 of existing secondary comprehensives is involved in a tiered or middle school scheme.

There are several reasons for this growing popularity. Firstly, it could reflect the fact that no money has been

TABLE II

Type, age	1971 Numbers	Average size	1972 Numbers
First schools (5-8, 5-9)	507	246	—*
First and middle (5-12)	84	305	—*
Middle classed as primary (8-12)	118	307	—*
Middle classed as secondary (9-13, 10-13)	147	376	—*
Secondary, middle (11-13)	47	352	41
Secondary, middle (11-14)	75	577	90
Secondary, upper† (14-18)	43	587¶	59
Secondary, upper‡ (13-18)	95	538¶	108
Secondary, upper§ (12-16/18)	70		61

1186 (4% of all maintained schools)

* Official statistics for this sector not yet available.

† Including in both 1971 and 1972 schools which still contained a few 5th year pupils, due to phase out under RSLA.

‡ These are with automatic transfer of the whole age group. A further 30 schools of 13-18 age range in 1971, and 32 in 1972, had selective transfer.

§ Including 4 sixth form colleges in each of the years.

¶ These sizes from Benn and Simon, *Half Way There* (Penguin edn.), p.522.

All other sizes from the DES *Statistics*, Vol. I, 1971, or DES Classified List of Comprehensive Schools, 1971; same, 1972.

available to update or replace secondary schools for three years. One of the advantages of tiered systems has always been that existing schools (with adaptations) could be used more easily when going comprehensive, and so many new schools were not so necessary. A second reason might possibly be that this is another sign of a desire to retain the smaller secondary school, for middle school systems do permit schools to be of sizes many teachers and parents are familiar with (see Table II). The average size of the 265 official middle schools in 1971 was about 350, and only 10 were over 600. Of the 11-14 schools only 2 were over 1000. Upper tier schools in middle school schemes are generally smaller than all through schools too. The average all-through is about 900/1000; the average upper tier about 600/700.

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As Table II shows, the 2-year school of 11-13 is slowly being phased out. Another trend can be seen in Table II—even in one year's growth of schools—a tendency to reduce the number of lower schools feeding upper schools within each age range system. In 1971 256 official middle schools fed 136 upper schools: a proportion of about 2 to 1. With 11-14 schools feeding 14-18, as we see in Table II, the proportion is under this, and drops further in 1972, indicating a slow move towards a situation of only one 11-14 feeding one 14-18 in some areas. This reflects the continuing problem of middle school systems: liaison of middles with uppers, particularly for departments teaching sciences, mathematics and foreign languages in the upper schools. If you talk about this problem with schools, many appear to be waiting for the local authority to 'do something'; if you talk to local authorities, their view is that this is something the schools should be tackling themselves. An unfortunate impasse.

Although it was county areas like Leicestershire and the West Riding which pioneered middle school and tiered schemes, the majority of middle school reorganization is urban. Two-thirds of all comprehensive schools in official middle school schemes, for example, are in county boroughs. Middle schools are also an English phenomenon; they are rare in Wales, rarer still in Scotland. Middle schools are 94% mixed, compared with all maintained schools which are 92% mixed; but only 17% are voluntary, compared to 33% of all schools in this sector. The voluntary sector, which lags behind in reorganization generally, is lagging here too.

TABLE III

Middle School Schemes—Areas and Numbers of Schools, 1972

(Numbers of upper schools in brackets)
With transfer at 13 and upper schools of 13-16/18
Merton (11), Hertfordshire (8), Isle of Wight (4), Kent (1), Northumberland (8), Somerset (2), Suffolk East (2), Suffolk West (1), Surrey (2), Sussex West (2), Worcestershire (3), West Riding (4), Bradford (12), Hull (18), Rochdale (3), Wallasey (7).

With transfer at 12 and upper schools of 12-16/18
(*with 6th form colleges)
Surrey (3), Sussex West (1), Worcestershire (1), West Riding (3), Birkenhead (9), Southampton (17) (3)*, Stoke-on-Trent (23) (1)*.

*Further areas due to introduce middle schools—in all or in part of their areas—*1973†
Chester, Exeter, Oxford, Wigan, Dorset, Leicestershire, Leeds.

† From *Comprehensive Schools in* 1972, *Reorganization plans to* 1975, Caroline Benn; and DES Classified List of Comprehensive Schools, 1972.

But adaptable though middle schools are, and enthusiastic as has been the response to them from areas anxious to end the 11 plus and pleased to have a new approach to the middle years, problems do exist. One is the problem of a multiplicity of transfer ages throughout the country. The other is that of finding adequate capitation, appropriate staff structure, and specialist balance for all kinds of work, including crafts and sports, for each of the individual age groups involved. Middle schools have forced us to abandon the crude idea of what is 'primary' and what is 'secondary', and to work out what is most appropriate for each specific age group in the way of learning experiences and work programmes—subject-area by subject-area. This is one reason why they are so welcome to many, but so controversial to some. They have produced a long overdue argument about middle schooling itself—whether it takes place in a school

References
1. See Secretary of State's Speech on 16 April, 1971, 'The Challenge of the Middle School.'
2. DES *Statistics*, Vol 1, 1971, Introduction.
3. See DES *Building Bulletin, No* 35, 1966.
4. DES *Statistics*, Vol 1, 1971.
All other statistics from DES *Statistics* Vol I, 1971. DES Classified List of Comprehensive Schools 1971; 1972.

Middle Schools in Southampton

George Freeland

A founder member of the **Forum** editorial board, George Freeland has recently visited the new 8 to 12 middle schools at Southampton. Here he reports on this development.

Middle Schools in Southampton, for the age groups 8 to 12, are now in their third year of existence and, during a recent visit, I was able to see how plans first discussed in 1966 are working out in practice.

First, what was the context and nature of these plans? They arose out of preparing for the reorganisation of secondary education in response the Labour government's call in the mid-sixties. The local working party set up in 1966 took such schools into account from the outset in formulating proposals, and when the Plowden Report came out in January 1967—with a majority view in favour of First Schools for the 5-8 year olds and Middle Schools for the 8-12 year olds—the policy was confirmed accordingly; with neighbourhood Comprehensive Schools for the 12-16 year olds and Sixth Form Colleges to follow. In this sense, the Middle Schools of Southampton can be seen as a direct implementation of the Plowden proposals.

The relevant recommendation in the Plowden Report runs: 'If the Middle School is to be a new and progressive

especially devised for the age range or in a school of an all-through age range. It is this which makes them controversial.

Even more than this. Having helped to erase the divide in education at 11 plus, middle schools are now helping to call attention to the next divide at 13 plus. This is the age when the national system requires us in every form of comprehensive reorganization to separate the age group into the 20% for the examination which 'counts', the next 20/40% for the examination which doesn't, and the remainder for no recognized course. The growing number of middle schools coming along each year is one of the most important factors forcing sixteen-plus examination reform to a head.

TABLE IV

Local Authorities with Approved Middle School Schemes, 1970. (*Towards the Middle School*, HMSO, 1970)
Canterbury, Chester, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Exeter, Great Yarmouth, Grimsby, Hastings, Holland, Lincs., Lincoln, Northampton, Norwich, Oxford, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Wigan, York.
Cumberland, Dorset, Hants, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Sussex East. Warwickshire, Yorks, East Riding.

force it must develop further the curriculum, methods and attitudes which exist at present in Junior Schools. It must move forward into what is now regarded as secondary school work but it must not move so far away that it loses the best of primary education as we know it now. The extended programme will require teachers with a good grasp of subject matter, but we do not want the middle school to be dominated by secondary school influences.'

Early in 1968, as a first step towards implementing this concept, three study groups, consisting of the heads of Junior Schools and members of the advisory staff, were set up to explore the following areas: 1. Aims and objectives. 2. Planning the curriculum. 3. Organisation (including staffing, buildings and resources).

In the summer of 1969, a year and a term before the date fixed for the actual changeover, the reports of these groups were collated and a document distributed to all schools for discussion and comment by the teaching body as a whole.

This report was seen as Southampton's map for Middle Schools and accordingly set out clear strategic guidelines. On internal organisation the Junior School heads stressed the continuing need for a class to be associated with a particular teacher, and for a breakdown into smaller, more flexible, groupings within the class as the situation seemed to demand. At a later stage, however, one room or teacher would not provide all the help and information required and at this point they envisaged children moving outside the classroom to work in additional areas, planned by the teachers and specially equipped for the purpose. Such areas should be flexible and allow for group work, with or without instruction, and quiet individual work.

In this way the classroom would remain the children's base but they would be able to widen their experience outside it, to establish contact directly or indirectly with other teachers and thus be in a better position to tap the full resources of the teaching staff.

Flexibility in operating this plan was envisaged, with the size of 'teaching and learning' groups varying according to staff and space available and to the needs of the children at a particular time. To describe this practice, the term 'co-operative teaching' was preferred to the more familiar 'team teaching', which could be taken to imply abandonment of the class structure and a surrender to subject divisions—not a relevant approach to children at this particular stage of development.

Some stress is laid on this point. While the Plowden Report emphasises the undifferentiated nature of the curriculum at the younger end of the school, it suggests that some older children may be able to profit from a more direct approach to the structure of a subject. The report of the Southampton heads is chary about introducing specialisation towards the top at the expense of the younger children who are, after all, the main body of the school. On the whole it favours general teachers, some with special strengths capable of giving a lead in certain areas, but above all interested in working as a staff to develop the curriculum within a school.

In this connection the report pointed to the need for schools large enough (i.e. in the 300-500 range) to allow for the necessary width and diversification. While the usual staffing ratio for the 8-11s would be sufficient, the new fourth year would require more favourable treatment, in the region of 1 to 25, supplemented by part time and ancillary help as circumstances allow.

It was recognised that the provision of suitable staff and adaptation of existing buildings to the new needs would be a major challenge to the authority, and it was to see how this has been met, and how schools in being since early in 1970 are working, that I visited Southampton. Every facility was given for assessing the situation. The schools visited ranged from the very solid, no co-education nonsense, three-floor building, so favoured in the earlier years of the century, to a new council house estate school built in the years of post-war expansion before new ideas about teaching had begun to affect layout.

In each case a great deal of ingenuity had been used in adapting accommodation to new purposes. The need for resource areas, working bays, quiet corners, has mainly been met by conversion of old traditional cloakrooms and use of the space so generously allocated to corridors and landings in earlier planning. Naturally the problems of conversion have been greater in the older buildings. The one I saw had third and fourth year children on the top floor and most of the original walls had been removed, to be replaced with moveable screening as the only means of providing the flexible kind of working area desired.

In this building, embedded in an established residential area with no room to expand and the First School in occupation of the ground floor, there was an overall accommodation problem, but this has been eased by providing fabricated hutted classrooms of the familiar kind in the playground. In another school, with more available space, it was interesting to see the same problem

met with a more permanent structure but still allowing for flexibility; that is, two intercommunicating class bases, with bays off, giving onto a common working area.

Obviously adaptation has not been accomplished without some impingement on working conditions. The elimination of an old cloakroom does not remove the need for a place to put hats and coats, wellingtons and bags. An enlarged curriculum may mean that the peripatetic teacher of music has to use the staff-room for instrumental practice. New units to provide more living space will often have to be sited on the existing playground. The school hall will still have to serve multifarious purposes, including use as a gymnasium, as has been usual at primary level, though, particularly in the older buildings, it is likely to be inadequate. Nonetheless the fact that teachers have been involved in planning from the outset, and feel they are taking an equal part in a worthwhile venture, seems to have gone a long way towards smoothing out irritations or difficulties of this kind.

teacher involvement

Teacher involvement also seems to have been a powerful factor in the development of the curriculum and the introduction of new methods. The medium through which it has been achieved is the Curriculum Development Centre, which grew up during initial planning of the middle schools and now operates very much as an instrument for the support of innovatory practice. Housed originally in four huts surplus to the needs of a secondary school, later augmented by a couple of Nissens, the Centre not only remains the focal point for examination of new ideas about the curriculum but has materially helped to create the new teaching force needed by a massive programme of voluntary in-service training.

The change from relatively formal methods to more actively orientated exploration of the environment has stimulated a demand for more information in the field of educational technology, on available aids and how to use them. The Centre is well supplied with a full range of such equipment which teachers can try out and evaluate before taking a decision on what to buy. A full time technician has been appointed in this field and he runs courses which enable at least one expert to be provided, on each staff, familiar with the equipment and able to pass the message on. He also explores new techniques with specially interested teachers and is on hand to supply the technical knowhow and practical assistance for others who wish to make up their own resource material. Those whose needs are less ambitious have access at any time to a wide range of reprographic material.

The Centre's crowning achievement, however, is its role as practical workshop on which schools and individual teachers can call for advice and help in the actual making of teaching aids and purpose-designed equipment. I saw much evidence of this in the schools, ranging from the bulk production of metre measuring sticks to a trolley with built-in safety devices fitted with bunsen burners run off Calor gas for use in experimental science activities. For this service the schools are charged at cost plus a 30 per cent uplift which goes to pay the salary of the two technicians employed.

It is by relying on the unifying influence and practical support of the Centre that Southampton has sought to develop its middle school strategy. The main emphasis in the schools is on exploration of the environment, cutting across subject divisions, backed not only by the reference library but by modern technological aids made easily available to groups of various size or to the individual child. In one school, shelves lining the corridors not only contain books but also trays of cassette tapes and film strips clearly identifiable and quickly retrievable.

The approach is by way of the topic which, again, can be advanced by the individual teacher or by a group working together. This may represent the year group, a distinct unit with a defined leader, or may consist of two teachers working side by side. The head vets the topics to ensure continuity and development, and to ensure that, over a period, a proper balance is kept between different subject fields.

Supporting the exploratory approach there is a structured development in reading skills and basic numeracy. In the schools visited there was also instruction in the art of handwriting with a pen. The children could see the social purpose of this as an important contributory factor to the effectiveness of the colourful recordings and exhibitions of work done, or discoveries made, often covering the walls from top to bottom—evidence of how far an understanding of modern methods has seeped through even to the surveyor's department.

The Ten-plus First Year Base

Adrian Simpson

Leicestershire is moving over gradually to 10 to 14 middle schools in place of the present high schools (11 to 14). Adrian Simpson who, with fellow members of his team, describes this development at one school, taught at Grantham before moving to Belvoir High School in 1970. For the other three members of the team, Alan Cooper, Margaret Jesson and Margaret Benians, teaching at Belvoir is their first teaching post.

The Belvoir High School, Bottesford, opened in 1959, one of the last schools in Leicestershire designed as a secondary modern school. It became an eleven to fourteen High School in 1964. The school is situated in a rural area of small scattered villages in the north-east corner of the county. There are nineteen staff, and 375 pupils drawn from twelve village primary schools in the Vale of Belvoir.

The ten-plus First Year Base opened in August 1970. Simultaneously bases opened at Castle Donington High School and Hind Leys High School and Community College, Shepshed, near Loughborough.

At Castle Donington and Hind Leys purpose-built bases were erected to accommodate the new entrants, whilst at Belvoir it was decided to accommodate the children in existing classrooms. A prefabricated building

For the older children the curriculum has been extended by the inclusion of some general science and home economics, not at all on a mass basis but as part of the integrated working pattern. Moreover the schools visited had opportunities for a wider programme of games and athletics, opened up by co-operation with neighbouring secondary schools.

French is taken from the third year on and for this there is specialist leadership, usually on a part-time basis. Every effort is made to bring the language to life and in one school the whole end of a corridor had been transformed into a French cafe. Southampton is, of course, well placed to take the reality a stage further and last year 600 children were taken over to Le Havre for a working holiday on the first leg of a continuing exchange system. For this the Curriculum Centre, working with teachers, produced study packs and work which came out of the venture has recently been on display in the Civic Centre for all to see.

This turning out to the community is definitely part of the new educational strategy and parents have been drawn into the development of the middle schools at many levels. From a council house estate mothers were coming in on a rota system to run the school library, and in an older building fathers had undertaken the job of ripping out the standing clothes racks in an old cloakroom and preparing it for a new purpose as a craft working area.

In all the three schools visited parents had paid for equipment and at the Centre it was taken as read that they would be willing to apply the paint and the finishing touches to bookshelves and display units made up to school specifications in the central workshop.

In conclusion it may be recalled that the Plowden Report issued a warning: 'The danger of the extension of the middle school course for one year only would be that the change might not provide sufficient challenge to the schools to think afresh about what they provide for the older pupils. The danger of a two year extension would be that the middle school might forget that it was still a primary school. There is a risk either way: on the whole we think that transfer at 12 is more likely to give us the middle school we want to see.'

The risk remains and in the wrong hands the 8-12 middle school could be a device for holding back the 11-12s at junior level for another year thus solving the problems of secondary reorganisation on the cheap. Transfer at 12 could still produce the sharp break associated with the 11 plus, encouraging the attitude that only now does real education begin.

This will not happen in Southampton. By involving the teachers with the administration in planning from the outset, and providing a direct means of support for the schools, the L.E.A. has built a powerful team enthusiastically committed to relevant change.

was erected to release a suite of rooms on the top floor of the main building, which were to comprise one room for resources for Maths/Science and Environmental Studies, and a second room for the library and English resources. A smaller third room began as a craft area but later became a study/T.V. room, to form a quiet area.

This was the accommodation prepared by the three staff responsible before the Base received its first entry of 63 pupils in August 1970.

It would have been simple to have accepted the ten-year-old children into the school and to have used the extra year to dilute existing courses. This was rejected early on in the planning of the curriculum, as we felt that the Base as a teaching unit had great potential as an area in which a group of teachers could work to provide for the children the best opportunities by which they might most benefit from this extra year, both academically and socially.

The statements which follow stem from the original principles defined in 1970 and still form the structure of our organization.

We decided that the First Year child's learning environment should be a link between that of the 'class and class teacher' in the primary school and the 'subject and subject teacher' in the later years of the high school and upper school. We wished to give the children a sense of security, of having a 'Base' which was theirs and in which they would spend much of their time with a permanent team of teachers. Thus whilst they were adjusting to the change from a small village school to a larger high school they could build their confidence. Further security would come from being taught individually, and being in the care of a 'tutor', a member of the team, who would be responsible for the welfare, work and records of a small group.

The decision to teach as a team was made early on and came about almost naturally; indeed we feel now that it would be strange to teach solely within the confines of a classroom but we have been fortunate in our team members. All were appointed especially for the First Year from outside the school. We have had one change of staff and one addition and in each case we looked for someone who could develop an easy relationship with children, who had an open outlook, a frank nature and an outgoing personality. We also hoped to maintain a balance in the team among subject specialisms.

We have found tremendous advantages in team teaching. Each scheme or project is the result of four minds working together, each working 'from' a different specialism, and producing a wide variety of ideas. We have had to learn to work in close proximity, under the gaze of the rest of the team, and must accept criticism without grudge.

We are self-critical too, because the scheme which one person may initiate must be clear in its approach and presentation in order that everyone may operate it.

As well as criticism the staff give encouragement to each other's work. Ideas 'spark off' between the teachers and generate enthusiasm whilst when the spirits flag one person can pull everyone round with a new idea, or a new approach to an old problem.

The children benefit from having different teachers to consult, as someone is always available to solve individual problems; rarely are four teachers totally involved with an activity at any one time. If a child and a particular teacher do not form a good relationship there is always someone else to consult.

An essential feature of our team teaching is the time-tabled planning session each week. Here the preparation is done, news aired, children's and teachers' problems discussed. It is without doubt the most vital element in our organization, without which the team would cease to function as such.

The First Year curriculum is in two parts: 'Integrated Studies' and 'Specialist Studies'. 'Integrated Studies' has many meanings; for us it provides the freedom to bring into our termly 'umbrella topic' any subject discipline which is relevant. Methods of organization differ: the children may be told that they may choose two aspects of a broad topic to study, relating their work to each other by displays and talking at group meetings. This is the most common method, though we may wish the children to cover all aspects of a topic, if in the study of only two they will not acquire the skills which we wish them to learn. Then a circuit is organized, with time limits on the study of one aspect though if a child's interest is captured, he may be allowed to continue further in one area of the topic.

During the daily two hours of Integrated Studies the children must also pursue organized courses in English and Mathematics which are directed by the child's tutor.

Within Integrated Studies we aim to teach certain skills. These include the organization of work and time, the independence to follow individual lines of enquiry, language skills, the social skills of tolerance and the ability to work with other children and adults. We show the children how to make the most effective and discriminating use of resources, especially reference material,

and how to use a wide range of practical, scientific and audio-visual apparatus. We are concerned more with processes than results (though we aim at a high standard of the latter); in both method and content our curriculum is designed to complement the work which follows in the later years in the school.

We have found that to be effective such a curriculum, whilst appearing to the child without great restriction, must be as structured as a formal situation, if not more so. The planning and organization of schemes, and the keeping of pupils' records must be meticulously done. Our First Years keep their own daily record of work, with space for staff to comment and acknowledge work as having been done. We set assignments weekly, and hold 'advice sessions' in tutor groups to discuss with individual pupils their work. The work records go to parents for their signature and comment, to maintain continuous contact between pupil, teacher and the pupil's work. In this way we have so far maintained very good relations with all the parents, many of whom have said that they feel part of their child's education.

Reactions to the ten plus transfer were varied; the local primary school headteachers had mixed feelings, especially in the first year when they lost both their eleven and ten year old children. Most taught the top age group themselves and felt the loss of the more mature age group. Feelings still vary, possibly because the scheme received so much attention within the county, especially in the first year, that it appeared to overshadow the hard work done in the primary schools, working on a small budget often in restricted conditions.

At the Belvoir High School the reaction was one of welcome; most teachers were enthusiastic, but some were concerned about teaching 'little children'. In fact everyone adjusted rapidly, partly because it was difficult to distinguish between first and second year pupils. The older children too accepted the new entrants and the children were soon accepted by pupils and staff as part of the social and academic life of the school. The headmaster and staff who had felt that three years was not long enough for a child to benefit from a school now saw the school begin to develop a new personality and status in which both staff and pupils could not fail to benefit from an extra year together.

Over two and a half years the organization of the school's curriculum has changed. As ideas and methods have percolated down to the First Year, some of our ideas have grown into the second year. There the children receive a morning and an afternoon of team teaching in Humanities, the team including two First Year teachers. Nuffield Science and Scottish Mathematics are begun, taught separately by specialists. In the third year integration is further limited to class taught Environmental Studies; by the fourth year the curriculum is divided into subjects, in preparation for transfer to the Upper School. Thus the school has evolved a 'pyramid' structure of integration of subjects whereby as the pyramid grows up the school subjects become drawn off until the child reaches the fourth year.

There are problems in the First Year which we have not solved, of which one of the most pressing is accommodation. In August 1971 our numbers rose from 63 to 90 and we took over the remaining classroom on our floor. In August 1972 we received 112 children, appointed a fourth teacher to the team, and began for the first time to find our furniture and accommodation inadequate. We found that the rooms, designed for thirty children seated, were too cramped for the continuous movement of children during Integrated Studies. This problem has been partly solved by the installation of new smaller tables after discussion with staff of the Advisory department, at the County Hall Education Department, who have helped us in this and many ways through the last three years.

We find too that the amount of preparation needed, which is more than equal to the time spent teaching, leads us to spend much of our time in the Base. We are aware of the danger of becoming isolated but we do have a small staff, and therefore the relations between teachers are more easily maintained than in large schools.

The most difficult question anyone asks us is 'How do you evaluate your work?' As yet no-one has attempted to reply, firstly because one asks 'evaluate what?' and secondly 'With whom do we make our comparison?' Some internal evaluations of our curriculum are possible, as children move from one year to the next. Beyond the school one might compare our first 10-14 transfers to the Upper School in 1974 with those from a three year High School, though such an evaluation could only be valid if there were a large number of schools of both types, and would need to include judgements of social ability and maturity of outlook, as well as academic achievement.

At present we can only evaluate the success of the scheme as a whole, by the decision of the County Council's Education Committee to adopt 10-14 High Schools, as the future pattern for Leicestershire. We look forward to seeing the next ten-plus First Year Base established in the county.

Nine to Thirteen Middle Schools

Eric R Davies

Eric Davies has taught in secondary schools as well as in various primary schools. He has been head of a village primary school in Devon, and of a large city primary school in Bristol. He is now a lecturer in education at the Leicester University School of Education, where he prepares graduates for primary and middle school teaching. He has visited nine to thirteen middle schools in Bradford, the West Riding and Hertfordshire.

In October 1963 the West Riding LEA made proposals for the reorganisation of schools in some of its divisions in a pamphlet entitled *The Organisation of Education in certain areas of the West Riding*, 5 to 9, 9 to 13, 13 to 18. These divisions did not have school buildings large enough to house 11 to 18 'all-through' comprehensive schools. It was therefore planned to use the existing primary and secondary school buildings with some modification to house non-selective schools covering the age ranges 5 to 9, 9 to 13 and 13 to 18. The proposal was to affect only a few areas and was intended as an experiment. Moreover at the time it was put forward it could not legally be put into practice. The Education Act of 1944 (Section 8(I) as amended by Section 3 of the 1948 Act) stated that there were to be 'sufficient primary schools for junior pupils under ten-and-a-half years of age and for those over that age whom it was expedient to educate with such pupils'. Equally there were to be sufficient secondary schools for senior pupils over twelve and for those junior pupils over ten and a half whom it was expedient to educate with them. Thus pupils were to transfer from primary to secondary schools at about the age of eleven.

The West Riding scheme was impossible while the Act stood in this form. In 1964 a Bill was passed allowing proposals to be made for the setting up of schools straddling the age of transfer established by the 1944 Act. This enabled the West Riding scheme to be approved and other schemes for 9-13 schools, and also 8-12 and 10-13 schools were put forward.

The first LEAs to submit middle school schemes were the West Riding of Yorkshire (9-13, 10-13 and 8-12), Bradford (9-13), Wallasey (9-13) and Worcestershire (9-13 and 8-12). Nine to thirteen was the most popular age range in these early schemes despite the recommendation of the Plowden Report in favour of 8-12

(and it is significant that the Plowden Committee admitted—in Paragraph 385—that arguments in favour of 12 or 13 as the age of transfer were fairly evenly balanced). This trend has been maintained. By mid-1970 schemes submitted by fifty local education authorities had been approved. Twenty-five of these were 9-13 schemes, fifteen were 8-12 schemes, three covered the age range 10-13, one (Leicestershire) was for a 10-14 scheme, and six were mixed schemes including two or more age ranges (eg West Sussex 10-13, 9-13, 8-12).

The purpose of the 1964 Education Act was to allow a small number of experimental schools to develop; there was no intention, at that time, of departing substantially from the existing organisation of infant (5-11), junior (7-11) and secondary schools (11-18). It was only after a change of government and the announcement by the new administration that selection for secondary education was to be ended and the school leaving age raised to 16 that LEAs now began to plan for middle schools on a wider scale. This facilitated reorganisation within existing buildings. On this ground the middle school idea has been criticised as a hasty expedient introduced to meet government pressures. While in some cases this may well be true it seems unfortunate to single out middle schools for disapproval from other comprehensive schemes put forward at that time.

Criticism of middle schools in these terms also seems to disregard the interest in curriculum for the middle years of schooling which arose in the 1960s and was expressed in the Nuffield projects in mathematics, French and science, and has been carried on by further projects under the aegis of the Schools Council. Moreover, it takes no account of the careful planning of some local authorities as in the West Riding and Bradford, where two 9-13 middle schools have been designed and built in collaboration with the Development Group of the Architects

Branch of the Department of Education & Science. These schools will soon have been open for four years and hundreds of interested teachers and educational administrators have visited them without as far as one can judge, impairing in any way the excellent work of the staff and children.

a purpose-built school

Let us now look at one of these schools, Delf Hill Middle School, Bradford. It was built for 420 children (3 form entry) and is designed round a central studio-workshop area. This has facilities for painting, pottery, needlework, home economics, woodwork and metalwork. On one side it opens on to the class bases of the younger children (9-11), on the opposite side to the class bases of the 11 to 13 year olds.

Each of the year groups has a class base or 'centre' consisting of three study rooms, used for registration and general work, each opening on to the shared practical space. Centres 1 and 2 for the 9-11 year olds have a further shared space with facilities for cooking and simple scientific experiments as well as small carpeted rooms for quiet study. Centres 3 and 4 for the 11-13 year olds include a well-equipped science room and a language laboratory with 18 booths. The school library, at present housing over 8000 books, is close to Centres 3 and 4. Elsewhere there is a sound insulated music room and a small music practice room, a hall more lavishly provided with PE apparatus than any junior school and changing rooms with showers. The grounds include a landscaped garden round a stream and pool with a greenhouse and outdoor animal house sited near the science room. The playground doubles as netball and tennis courts and there are soccer and cricket pitches.

The younger children spend much of their time in their Centres leaving them only for PE, music and art in the studio. The older children, following a rather more specialised programme, are out of their Centres for about 45 per cent of the week.

It can be argued that this approaches an ideal situation unlikely to be matched by the conversion of existing secondary or junior schools. This is readily admitted but the middle school idea can only be fairly criticised by reference to such favourable situations—otherwise the criticism is of poor provision rather than of middle schools.

Another objection to the 9-13 school is the likelihood of it becoming two schools (9-11 for juniors and 11-13

for seniors) under one roof. There is no sign of this at Delf Hill. Senior staff who have specialist qualifications are responsible for their subjects throughout the school as 'co-ordinators' and work with all age groups. The French specialist, for example, not only teaches in the language laboratory but also assists the teachers of the younger children with the teaching of French in Centres 1 and 2, while members of staff who have pastoral care of the younger children also work with older children. The teacher in charge of the 10-11 year olds is responsible throughout the school for the teaching of reading, remedial work and all special provision for individual children both gifted and less able.

Detailed curriculum planning is decided within each year group by the teachers responsible for the three classes, often in consultation with co-ordinators of special subjects and presided over by a Year Group Leader who holds a 'scale' post or receives a head of department allowance. Responsibility is thus exercised horizontally through year groups and vertically by co-ordinators for specialist subjects or groups of subjects (eg art and craft).

The atmosphere of the school is friendly and informal like many a good primary school, while the standards of work of the older children and the facilities available are similar to those of a successful secondary school. The ethos and methods of working of the primary school have reached up to the 12 and 13 year olds, whilst at the same time the younger children have had the advantage of the use of far more elaborate facilities than primary schools possess and the help and support of senior teachers with specialist strengths who work throughout the whole school.

The situation may be very different where a former secondary school loses its 14 and 15 year olds and receives a 9-11 intake to form a middle school. If most of the original staff remain it will be very difficult for them, at first, to do other than operate a form of secondary school for younger children. Equally, where a junior school becomes a 9-13 school it will not be easy to create something other than a junior school with an extended age range. Fortunately this is realised by many LEAs and careful preparations have been made for changes of this kind by means of courses and consultations. Where teachers fully recognise that a new form of organisation is required, which may have elements of existing primary and secondary procedures but which is significantly different from both, then it should be possible to create middle schools, even in old premises, as successful as

those in purpose-built accommodation, for the most important factor in any teaching situation is the teacher's attitude.

It is a commonplace that many primary schools in highly unsuitable buildings have improvised and done very distinguished work. This is not to say that proper facilities are unnecessary but rather to stress the paramount importance of the role of the teacher.

staff recruitment

Some doubt has been expressed about the recruitment of staff for middle schools. It is felt that well-qualified specialists will not apply for schools which have less extensive facilities than secondary schools and cannot offer the inducement of sixth form teaching. There is some force in this argument and ten or more years ago it would have been a jeremiad which was only too true, but in the present situation of teacher supply there is less cause for anxiety. Courses for graduates who wish to teach in primary and middle schools are being opened in many colleges of education. In recent years some university departments of education have been running post graduate courses in primary education and there seems to be no shortage of well-qualified applicants for the places offered. Those who possess a degree in one of the usual school subjects and who receive a broad methodological training based on the practice of the junior school will be well suited to the needs of the developing middle school. Not only graduates but those qualifying after three years at colleges of education who have followed a junior-secondary course (now often termed the middle school course) should be attracted to middle school teaching in considerable numbers.

It has been said of middle schools that those most in favour of them are people who will not have to teach in them: educational administrators, inspectors, college and university lecturers. It is claimed that the middle school idea meets with little approval amongst teachers. This certainly doesn't seem to be true of those teachers who serve in middle schools which have been carefully planned and prepared. Here there is a great deal of enthusiasm. It may be objected that these teachers have been specially recruited and are in a very particular situation at a focus of attention; that it is this rather than the experience of teaching in a middle school which produces their favourable reaction. Teachers to whom this very point has
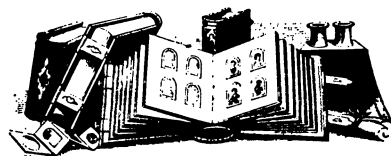
been put could only reply that they enjoyed their new work, finding it less cloistered than class teaching in a primary school and much more flexible than the traditional practice of secondary schools.

The last word must be of the children. In 9-13 middle schools the 9 to 11 year olds seem as well adjusted, conscientious and cheerful as in primary schools and this pattern of behaviour extends to the older children who seem to their teachers to show a greater sense of responsibility than children of the same age in secondary schools. In social relationships the young children seem to have lost nothing, the older ones to have gained. In terms of curriculum content and facilities the older children are at least as well off as their peers in secondary schools and seem to be benefiting from working under the closer pastoral supervision possible in schools of this sort. As we have seen, the younger children have much to gain from the richer environment of the middle school and the presence of specialist staff.

A successful 9-13 middle school seems to have the best of both worlds.

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The Whole Curriculum of the Middle Years

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The project on the whole curriculum of the middle years of schooling which was sponsored by the Schools Council is now drawing to an end. The first report *Education in the Middle Years* was published in 1972 and the second *The Curriculum in the Middle Years* has been approved by the Council and will be published later this year. The term 'middle years of schooling' was coined to avoid putting the project team into the position of seeming to be a middle schools pressure group and it must be said at once that whilst the experience of teachers in middle schools has contributed to the work of the project so too has the work of upper primary and of lower secondary schools. There can be no doubt that the work of middle schools is of particular significance in developing ideas about how best to educate children between the ages of eight and thirteen, but that must not be taken to mean that 'good' practice in primary and secondary schools has not much to offer also to those who wish to develop a curriculum for middle years children.

When, following Hadow, the all-age elementary schools were 'decapitated', some teachers discovered for the first time the capabilities of children of seven to eleven. Today's distinctive primary school ethos would not, one suggests, have emerged had there not been a school which found its focus in the lives of children of that age range. The middle schools have, therefore, a particular responsibility for developing the curriculum of the middle years but even if there were never to have been any middle schools at all, it would still have been appropriate for the Schools Council to have directed attention towards these middling years. These years which move from middle childhood through to adolescence are, as the psychologists have constantly advised us, years in which abilities develop, attitudes are formed and emotions emerge; the shape of the future adult can be discerned at thirteen. At eight so many things are still possible but at thirteen the range has narrowed. Yet, eleven plus apart, the period has been strangely neglected, possibly because it straddles what has become a divide in our system.

The word 'whole' in the project's remit is significant. The middle years are part of the whole cycle of formal education. Even if (as we should not) we leave aside pre-school and continuing education, the middle years are still part (truly a central part) of the span of formal schooling provided for the nation's children. It is clear that the curriculum of the middle years has to be seen in the context of the educational system as a whole and that to arrive at the first principles from which an eight to thirteen curriculum may be derived, the enquirer must identify the characteristics of that wider whole. It is here that the greatest difficulty occurs because, as a nation, we are hesitant about prescribing even the broadest of general aims. We embrace the pragmatic approach, eschew the prescriptive, feel embarrassed if we use the words 'ought' or 'should' and preface all our statements (including the most questionable) with bland assurances which begin 'Everyone agrees that . . .'.

fundamental aims

There is much to be said for the pragmatic approach and the last thing the Schools Council or any member of the middle years project team would wish to do would be to produce a list of precepts of the kind which emerge from the ministries of countries with highly centralised educational systems. Nevertheless there is a case for a good deal less reticence about fundamental aims; it could, for example, be argued that had the aims of comprehensive education been more clearly specified at the start, there would have been less temptation to judge its effectiveness in terms of criteria which were not always appropriate.

The middle years project has had to explore some of these issues and may, perhaps, have helped to encourage teachers to think their work through in terms of what it is they and society at large hope to achieve. There cannot be—blessed word!—consensus but that is no reason for allowing the curriculum to be tradition warped by

successive enthusiasms. If one has a view of what the whole system is for, one is in a better position to make judgements about what can (should?) be done in the middle years. In seeking out a rationale for the whole it is helpful to look back, i.e. to consider what the sociologists call the transmission of the culture, to look forward, i.e. to consider what are the implications for education now of the kind of world our children seem likely to inherit and, quite apart from these, to consider the child himself or herself and the imperative of providing for each of them opportunities for self-development and self-fulfilment so that each may become the best (a word that must be defined) person they are capable of becoming.

Teachers do not take readily to this kind of philosophising; they prefer to express their ideas in the choices they make, the organisational patterns they adopt and in the hundreds of decisions which mark the passing of time in busy classrooms. It was in this more practical area that the teachers provided their most valuable assistance. The project set up a large number of discussion groups in teachers' centres all over the country. These groups, composed equally of primary and secondary school teachers, discussed week-by-week broadsheets produced by the project which posed certain practical curricular problems. The reports from these groups shaped to a not inconsiderable extent the judgements which the project team ultimately were required to make. A 'whole' curriculum cannot be constructed as a result of a majority vote though this does not mean to say that democracy has no part in the making of curricular decisions. It is apparent that in an open society there can be no such thing as *the* curriculum of the middle years; there may be different models though even this may not be desirable if it leads to the adoption of complete curricular 'packages'. Each situation is different; there are local and personal factors which create in each case potentialities and limitations. The existing staff of a school represent a unique gathering of talents. Better in such a situation to seek out principles which can be applied by thinking teachers in the light of the local conditions which only they fully understand.

The rest of this article deals with some of those principles which will be of particular interest to readers of *Forum*. The eight to thirteen curriculum is located centrally within the whole span of schooling; it is the second of the three overlapping phases identified by the Plowden Committee. In the first phase the child is weaned from the home to the school and prepared for learning; in the third he is weaned from school to life and acquires the learning he needs to make that adjustment. Between lie the middle years where the emphasis falls upon developing those learning skills without which full development of the person cannot proceed.

learning and development

Learning must not, of course, be restricted to the cognitive skills; indeed it might be thought that unless the child develops favourable attitudes towards learning, school, people, (especially those who appear to be different) and many other aspects of life, he has been diminished as a person. If the period is one in which attention is directed towards the development of learning skills, the subjects appear in a different light. They are seen as areas of organised knowledge capable of yielding opportunities for practice in the skills of learning. The teacher begins by asking 'What can this subject do for the child?' and not 'What can the child do with this subject?' and if 'the subject' happens not to be a distinct form of knowledge there is no real concern provided that there is a balance across the curriculum. New subjects, integrated subjects and non-subjects may all find their place from time to time provided that they yield rich learning opportunities.

It must, nevertheless, be recognised that the traditional subjects are all capable of providing just such opportunities. Indeed it is remarkable how it is possible to demonstrate that almost any subject can have almost any kind of learning outcome. Physics can teach aesthetics and aesthetics can teach science. The trick is to choose those elements which can provide *many* outcomes and which produce at the same time the base upon which specialist study can be built if that is what the child wishes to do. The pressure on time is such that we cannot give to all specialists the time they ask to develop their subject from scratch. The challenge is to provide in the middle years a sequence of experiences rewarding in themselves but which encompass alternative future possibilities. One child in the class will one day read physics, another will become an agricultural worker and a third will become a seaman. If we are not to segregate we have to provide for the future physicist that network of ideas which by 8, by 10, by 13, he must have if he is to fulfil his potential and at the same time make sure that others, even though in due course they will 'drop' the subject, are left with an understanding of and interest in

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The Middle Years of Schooling: some priorities in curriculum planning

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When middle schools were first talked about their possibilities seemed immensely attractive: the prolonging of good primary school methods, of mixed ability grouping, of children's involvement in their own learning, and so on. Most important, perhaps, was the freedom offered in terms of the curriculum for children between eight and thirteen—not only from the constraints of external examinations, important though that is, but to develop studies not unduly influenced by the conventions of secondary school subject categories. In this connection a minimum expectation is the development of distinctively 'middle years' curricula, for which a prerequisite is some form of overall curriculum design; not, of course, a single definitive design, but rather an approach to curriculum planning which embodies clear priorities and principles. An overall design of this kind is discussed in this article with the priorities it embodies made explicit. There will also be reference to the curriculum design of some functioning middle schools for the 9 to 13 age range.

an area of knowledge of importance to us all. It is tempting to assert that the battle for comprehensive education is won or lost in the middle years of schooling.

The outcomes cannot, however, be known with certainty at this stage. One of them may become a physicist but who knows which one? It is, therefore, important to maintain a balance, i.e. to ensure that all children have rewarding (and that means successful) learning experiences in all sectors of the curriculum.

In this period the basic communication skills are so important that it is worth picking them out as an area in themselves. There is next a broad swathe of the curriculum which, because of the method which typifies it, could be called 'empirical' and which has two sub-divisions (a) scientific and (b) the environmental. Within this area children practice a powerful and highly educative cycle of skills, observing, recording, comparing, deducing and reporting. As they do this they lay down the foundations for the future specialist studies some of them may wish to pursue.

The aesthetic area covers a broad range of the fine, literary and performing arts. The area of ethics, which includes significant parts of the 'hidden' curriculum, as well as moral and religious education, is, perhaps, the most neglected part of our present provision for middle years children.

The aim is to provide experiences in all these sectors of the curriculum sufficiently rewarding to leave the child at least willing to go on with some kind of work in each of these areas. It is here that the concept of 'balance' is most prominent. What middle years teachers owe to their colleagues in the upper part of secondary schools is children for whom the options at 13 are still reasonably open. For too many of our children the shutters have already fallen by 13 on windows on to great areas of experience of significance to life in the last quarter of this century. If middle years teachers focus upon the creation of a planned sequence of meaningful, interesting, rewarding, successful learning experiences in all the main areas of the curriculum, they will keep the curricular options open and may, in passing, have done more to extend the life opportunities of the majority of the nation's children than any post-war reform.

But first some of the problems arising, and the advice to hand may be reviewed.

Two particular problems have been emphasised; the internal 'balance' of the middle school curriculum and its relation to that of 'first' and secondary schools. 'Balance' has been discussed by A. Razzell[1] and A. M. Ross.[2] Neither is particularly explicit about what has to be balanced but the idea probably derives from criticism that some junior schools excel at one or two aspects of the curriculum at the expense of others. As for relations with other schools, particularly the secondary school, the need is to develop the middle school curriculum autonomously, in terms of the children in it when they are in it, without jeopardising progress in terms of the curricula of schools to which they will transfer at 12 or 13. This implies care that, while secondary school subject divisions are not decisive, nor are there 'problems of transfer' such as are recorded by the Plowden Report,[3] by Nisbet and by Entwistle.[4]

Another problem might be mentioned, 'standardisation' across the middle years. This is not to suggest a minimum 'agreed syllabus' but some consensus about aspects of the curriculum—for example, mathematics and modern languages—may be required, especially at a local level. All that would be required, perhaps, is a minimum specification of the skills and concepts that secondary schools could assume in most children entering from middle schools, and this it could be primarily the task of middle school teachers to provide.

Where, then, may one look for the basis of the middle school curriculum? There is no shortage of official and semi-official advice. The Schools Council has produced suggestions for Environmental Studies, Integrated Studies, Social Studies, Physical Education, Scope Stage I; materials and approaches already exist for Science 5-13, Combined Science, Mathematics and French; ongoing middle years projects include 'Language across the Curriculum', and 'History, Geography and Social Science'; the B.B.C., I.B.A., and commercial publishers are producing materials which recognise the separate identity of the middle years age range. In addition, a number of pamphlets have been concerned with the organisational and administrative aspects of developing middle schools.

What we lack, in the face of this profusion of particular advice, are the principles for a rationally developed and balanced curriculum in the middle years of schooling, for most of the published materials and advice seem to be answering questions of a second order, rather than fundamental ones. If one asks: 'How shall I teach French

to 8-13 year olds?' or 'What shall I teach in Social Studies in middle schools?' one finds answers that are both stimulating and imaginative as far as they go. But if one poses the more fundamental question, 'Upon what basis shall I design the whole curriculum, select and reject content, encourage (or discourage) methods of learning?' there are few helpful answers, even tentative ones.

Three publications might be considered as offering some sort of answer; the early and tentative Schools Council Working Paper 22 'The middle years of schooling', the section of the Plowden Report dealing with the curriculum, and the recent Schools Council Working Paper 42, 'Education in the Middle Years'. Re-reading these, one is struck by how good W.P. 22 is, relatively speaking, despite the fact that it is a collection of discrete contributions to a conference held as long ago as 1967, and that some central areas (P.E. and Art/Craft) were not discussed at all. Several speakers showed a refreshing refusal to start from secondary (or primary) school subject categories—notably speakers on Language Studies and Social Studies—and the working paper insisted that middle schools should take their brief mainly from the practices and methods of our best primary schools, and develop curricula that are in some sense autonomous, defined in terms of the needs of the children in them with the requirements of later institutions having relatively low priority.

A fuller theoretical basis for a curriculum model may soon be provided by the Schools Council 'Project on the Whole Curriculum for the Middle Years'. What seems immediately necessary is greater sharing of thinking and practice about the middle school curriculum, and, as a focus, the establishment of a set of 'curriculum priorities' —not aims in the conventional sense, certainly not a list of behavioural outcomes, but an outline of the minimum basic values the curriculum should embody, whatever else is attempted. To make priorities explicit provides a basis not only for curriculum planning, but decisions about staff appointments, purchase and use of equipment or resources and so on. We have enough evidence about children in the middle years, and enough ideas about their needs, to attempt approaches commanding a general consensus.

Two assumptions underly the set of priorities I propose to advance here: that we can identify the needs of children at this stage, and that the needs of the majority, rather than an allegedly identifiable minority, should have primacy in overall curriculum planning. The basic priorities are four:
1. Development of children's use of language, in the

spoken and written modes, and in terms of reading skills.

2. Recognition of children's experience of life, in and out of school, as an important source of learning to be incorporated into the curriculum.

3. A significant element of choice on the part of children in their own learning.

4. Initiation into the various forms of knowledge required for understanding the society of which they are members.

These priorities are obviously not all of the same order, though all have implications for the content of the curriculum. The first is of prime importance in that it is a prerequisite for all other learning. The second and third are more concerned with children's attitudes, and preventing alienation from schooling, whereas the fourth takes some account of the arguments of Hirst, Peters and others. Each of these priorities may now be taken in turn, to examine some of the implications for curriculum planning.

1. language use and skills

An essential aim of the middle years of schooling is to ensure reading competence. Whatever the arguments about 'readiness' for reading, and critical stages in learning to read, children still experiencing difficulty at the outset of the middle school need special help. A four year programme, planning for an extended period of systematic and sympathetic help, could be provided without the undesirable separation, of children into 'remedial' classes.

Over and above this more practical aspect there should be a language development programme for all children, with appropriate differences for those with special needs. The best primary schools encourage children's talk in all its variety, as a basis for their learning generally, in a way that seems difficult for secondary schools. It is therefore a matter of the highest priority for middle schools to develop powers of language, both spoken and written, a matter often left to chance or nature, on the assumption that language use develops 'naturally'. Research over the past decade[5] has made this position untenable, and there are models and examples of workable language programmes both for development of the mother tongue, and for second language learning in respect of immigrants acquiring English. Possibly among the most useful for teachers are material from the various Schools Council projects,[6] the 'language games' approach of the Gahagans,[7] and the techniques developed in recent modern language courses.

Complementary to a *systematic* programme of language work within the curriculum, there must be a more *informal*, though equally explicit, programme of language development 'across the curriculum'. This is less easily specified, since it relates to ways in which all teachers should, as a central aspect of their role, encourage children's talk as part of the way they learn, and develop awareness of the appropriateness of different language expression to different contexts of learning. Ultimately this is a task for the colleges of education, but ideas advanced by the National Association for the Teaching of English[8] provide a basis for the middle school curriculum policy.

What might be hoped for here, is a Language Area in the school, akin to the Art/Craft area, where the equipment, materials, language laboratory (if there is one) and techniques, were not used solely or even mainly for teaching a modern language, but were available for the sort of teaching outlined above. I imagine that this sort of scheme could only arise out of an agreed policy on language development in the particular middle school, and an agreement among the staff about the priority of language over other aspects of the curriculum.

2. validity of children's experience of life

Recent developments in social and environmental studies[9] have helped to draw attention to the validity of the child's own social context as an important source of learning and understanding. There is a sense in which some may be seen as rather divisive, as merely carving out new boundaries in the curriculum (this belongs to Environmental Studies, that to Social Studies, etc.). There is also a confusing proliferation of titles and definitions (Integrated Studies, Integrated Humanities, Local Studies, I.D.E. and so on). What seems necessary here is emphasis on the need to help children reflect upon and understand the social relationships they experience. These relationships are threefold: those in their home, in their school, in their wider community. Sensitively treated by teachers, these relationships may become in part the 'content' of children's learning. Although I am not primarily concerned here with methods, it may be said that at present children's reflection upon, and expression of, these relationships is commonly encouraged in such activities as 'creative' writing, drama, art and craft, and 'projects' centring on the neighbourhood. Perhaps it

should be stressed that children should bring to bear upon their experience of society, the power of their imagination as well as the skills of investigation. Also, we might note that middle schools have an opportunity to promote and unify this sort of learning, at a time in children's development when it seems crucial,[10] in a way that hitherto separate schools could not.

3. children's choice about what they learn

One of the problems here is a tendency of educationalists to take things to extremes. It is clear from what has been said that I do not envisage a middle school curriculum arising exclusively from what children happen to be interested in; it will become clear below that there are valid arguments for accepting that, some knowledge is more worthwhile than other knowledge. Nonetheless, a major problem must be recognised, that the contemporary school curriculum tends to alienate many pupils; that for some this process is well advanced by the time they transfer to secondary school and accelerated after the transition. One way of counteracting this tendency is to have a relatively 'open' area of the curriculum in which children actively participate in decisions about what they learn. This proposal is not, of course, new. It has been realised in some primary schools, the 'Orbital' area of James' four fold curriculum[11] envisages something similar, and there are 'Hobbies' periods in some secondary schools, even if restricted to last period Friday afternoon.

The choice element might be of two kinds: choice from a limited number of 'options', a variety of team games, of hobbies and activities for example; or times set aside for children to choose very freely indeed. Taking the latter, the choice for some might be as simple as reading quietly on their own, for others continuing existing work, for yet others an opportunity to take further a hobby or start a new one. The common element, very difficult to maintain in practice, is (a) that children should feel the choice really is theirs; and (b) that teachers should feel that activities pursued in this area of the curriculum are as valid as others, though possibly for different reasons. Perhaps the nearest thing we have to such an area is the practice, in some large secondary schools, of devoting half an hour at the end of each afternoon to 'house' activities, discos, indoor games and so on. But my scheme envisages the 'choice' element as a more integral part of the curriculum. The greatest

practical difficulty is the degeneration of such activities into boring time-wasting trivia, seen as such by the children, and they can only be successful if the second of my priorities, valuing children's own experience of life, is realised.

4. initiation into forms of knowledge

Most early comment on the curriculum of middle schools saw it as a means of making the transition from the allegedly undifferentiated primary school curriculum to the subjects of the secondary school more gradual and less traumatic. It thus emphasises the gradualness of the transition rather than questioning the nature of the secondary curriculum. Accordingly the cynic could see middle schools as merely postponing for a couple of years the tedium of the conventional secondary school curriculum. if it did that, it would be an achievement not to be underrated, but we are now in a position to be rather more positive. This is so because of three mutually reinforcing developments in curriculum planning. One is dissemination of the ideas of Hirst and Peters, about the discrete nature of forms of knowledge, distinguished by their processes and concepts. A second is the emergence of a variety of curriculum projects characterised by a concern with the concepts relevant to their curriculum area; all seem to lean heavily on Bruner's work, good examples being the Schools Council Science 5-13 Project, and Working Paper 39 on Social Studies 8-13. The third element is the construction of curricula in some schools around a number of 'cores', loosely approximating to forms of knowledge, and differentiated from each other by the concepts and skills they are trying to introduce to children.

How many concept-based cores a school develops would depend on a variety of factors, not least perhaps the staff's view of the validity of the Hirst/Peters position. A possible design on these lines has been proposed by Lawton[12] comprising five 'cores': the sciences, mathematics, humanities, the expressive arts, and moral education. This design might be attractive to middle schools chiefly concerned to ensure their pupils' success in conventional secondary schools, especially if a selection scheme is operating. To my mind the disadvantage to the school is that it does not allow for the 'free choice' element, and under-values language as a separate element.

An alternative possibility could rest on the interesting

idea advanced by Ross (in Schools Council W.P. 37), that middle schools should provide opportunities to 'sample' the different disciplines so that children experience many subjects, though they do not 'cover' a full four-year course in any one. Teachers might devise two cores, tentatively 'Understanding Things' and 'Understanding People'. The former would be concerned mainly with concepts and skills from maths, science and physical geography (observation, measurement, recording, etc.) with the sequence of learning very carefully thought out. The latter would comprise samples from the humanities, expressive arts (including P.E.) and social studies.

It may be noted that this is not intended as an arbitrary re-alignment of part of the middle school curriculum into a sort of microcosm of Snow's two cultures. The intention is to initiate young children into the broad differences between skills and concepts concerned with exploring the inanimate world on the one hand, and their social world on the other. There will be links between the two 'cores', and the children should be enabled to discover them; work in human biology, and environmental and social studies, are examples. But the links are more likely to be comprehensible, after the initial differentiation has been established. Thus work integrating the two cores might appropriately characterise parts of the 12 plus year. As for emphasis, time allocation, organisation of learning, decisions on these rest with teachers in school.

What has been proposed in this article is a form of curriculum design deriving from a set of explicit priorities. The design arrived at has, in turn, four elements— language, a 'choice' element, 'science' and 'humanities' cores—all variable in terms of emphasis according to the perceived needs of children in the middle school.

There is some evidence that thinking along these lines, in particular in relation to cores, is shaping the curriculum of middle schools. Milefield Middle School, in the West Riding, divides the curriculum into five broad areas— maths/science, English/modern language, P.E./music, arts/crafts, social/R.E./environmental studies—with organised 'sampling' of the staff's specialist interests by the children as an addition.[13] Two schools which I have had the opportunity to visit have other patterns of work. Delf Hill Middle School, Bradford, has an excellently designed building, a DES prototype, which has influenced the 'cores' of the curriculum. These are laboratory work in science and a modern language, art/craft/design/home economics, 'withdrawal' activities in small enclosed rooms (remedial reading in small groups, private individual study in maths and English), P.E./drama/music, all within a structure emphasising year group identity.[14] Augustus Smith Middle School, Berkhamstead, has four central cores: mathematics, science/environmental studies, art/design/home economics, and humanities.[15]

Detailed argument about the merits of one set of 'cores', as against others, is uncalled for. The surface structural arrangements of the curriculum may be relatively unimportant, by comparison with the values implicit in such arrangements. What is important, however, is to make explicit recognised priorities in terms of children in the middle years of schooling, and to plan for their realisation in the curriculum offered.

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15. I am grateful for the opportunity to visit this school and discuss its work over the past two years with the head, Mr C Kefford.

The Middle School— Experiment?

Brian Gorwood

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That experiments are taking place within middle schools is indisputable, but that the middle school itself is 'an experiment' is difficult to accept, yet this is what seems to be implied by the very title of a recently published volume in the Students Library of Education series: Reese Edwards, *The Middle School Experiment*. Surely, Mr. Edwards has tongue in cheek as, in his final paragraph, he extends best wishes to this 'illegitimate offspring of exceedingly doubtful parentage in the troublesome years which lie ahead,' for, by his constant casting of doubt on the middle school as a viable educational institution, he leaves us in no doubt of his opinion that middle schools should never have been established.

'Experiment' connotes something tentative, something provisional; there is surely an implication that the testing of a particular hypothesis will result either in its confirmation or its abandonment. Yet one cannot imagine that those many middle schools already established will be converted within the forseeable future into other types of educational institution; there will be no abandonment. 348 middle schools were listed by the Department of Education and Science as being in operation as at January 1971; no doubt the number has increased considerably since then for in July 1970 there were only approximately 140 such schools. Such a rapid development seems to suggest that the middle school is establishing too strong a foothold to be considered to be an experiment. National Foundation for Educational Research findings seem to confirm this impression, for, in comparing 1968 with 1971 statistics, it is stated that 'the one type of system which has clearly increased in popularity is the middle school three-tier system.'[1]

The middle school as such can no longer be considered to be an experiment but within middle schools many experiments are taking place; indeed, most individual middle schools are experimenting in detail. But surely this is a desirable state of affairs, given that the teaching profession is sufficiently responsible to ensure that pupils

do not suffer in the process. The concept of an ideal which we are seeking to attain—an ideal which having been discovered will be crystallised into immutability is an outdated one. Yet in speaking of 'fundamental educational values'[2] is Mr. Edwards not displaying a propensity towards Platonic idealism out of character with the age in which we live? I feel that the middle school's freedom to experiment—its seeking after ways of teaching and organisation appropriate to the latter half of the twentieth century is its very strength.

Over twenty years ago, the Council for Curriculum Reform[3] insisted that there should be a positive relationship between curriculum and the needs of the society in which we live; the concept of a permanent body of knowledge as the basis of curriculum was rejected in place of that of a curriculum which reflected ever-changing attitudes in society. Yet in spite of minor reforms, secondary education continues to be dominated by the pressures of external examinations—examinations predominantly based on the pupil's acquisition of 'bodies of knowledge'. So many attempts to provide relevant courses for secondary school pupils seem to founder because a school's organisation is inhibited by the need to provide for a subject-bound external examination syllabus. The middle school is comparatively free from external examination pressures, although one must note that, as Plowden feared, there has been some downward influence of secondary school attitudes towards learning in the nine to thirteen middle school.

In mathematics and other subjects which demand a sequential approach, no doubt the middle school needs to work in fairly close liaison with its first and third tier schools, but in other respects it extends into the secondary sphere freedom from external restraint hitherto inconceivable.

No longer need the twelve to thirteen-year-old study the history of the Egyptians or the geography of South America because these form part of 'the syllabus'. One

would hope that within his middle school learning, a pupil would be introduced to concepts, skills, attitudes and values which would allow him to study later such differentiated subjects as history and geography should he so desire, but with history and geography on his doorstep, it should be possible to provide such a foundation within an all-embracing environmental study which the pupil himself can recognise as being more relevant to the life he is living at this moment.

One can readily understand any mistrust of those middle schools whose raison d'être for determining curricula seems to be integration for its own sake; there have been some very strange bedfellows with subject amalgamations taking place according to contingency needs rather than in response to some reasonably formulated blueprint. But the Schools Council Middle Years of Schooling Project in its first report[4] is surely pointing the way to a more rational and a workable approach to curriculum. We certainly cannot label as 'gimmickry' their carefully reasoned approach in which the specialist teacher initially determines the kinds of interests, skills, awarenesses, attitudes and values he hopes to foster and later works out in a 'curriculum team' those areas of the curriculum in which an interdisciplinary approach is the most appropriate and whether the whole curriculum is likely to produce a balance of learning experience.

innovations

Mr. Edwards speaks of team-teaching techniques, the integrated day and other innovations 'it is proposed to utilise in the middle school' almost as if it were part of some written constitution that middle schools should adopt these forms of organisation. It may well be that such innovations will be seen to be appropriate in order to achieve the sort of flexibility necessary to provide for the curriculum needs of the middle school child, but it is surely not pre-ordained that they should occur as part of some 'middle school charter'. As Working Paper 42 points out, the important principle to establish is that the school organisation should be determined only after a serious examination of the *whole* curriculum. In the secondary sphere of education, we have grown accustomed to acknowledging that learning experience just has to fit into the limitations of an inflexible time-table. Organisation has been determined first; curriculum has been made to fit into the set pattern of seven-period day—five-day week or whatever was established as the organisa-

tional mode in a particular school. Such an organisation may suit the teacher working in isolation within his own subject field but the perpetuation of study in the conventional disciplines which this promotes is unlikely to satisfy those who look for relevance within the curriculum. One can hardly accuse those who advocate middle school experimentation with new forms of organisation as slowly subjecting the educational system of this country to a process of Americanisation for the sake of Americanisation as Mr. Edwards seems to suggest.[5] The crucial point is surely that there may well be modifications of the traditional approach to organisation, but these will not be made for their own sake but rather in response to the necessity to satisfy the curricular needs of pupils in the middle years of schooling.

a period of transition

'Mr. Reese Edwards contends that the Middle School proposal is one which has mainly resulted from expediency rather than from sound progressive educational reform', his publishers tell us. Surely it is axiomatic that the middle school is administratively convenient; were it to be administratively inconvenient—were it to demand more of our economic resources than we could possibly afford to expend on its development, it could never evolve. But the voice of those who have to balance the budget is but one of several advocating middle school development. There are those who favour a 'child-centred' as opposed to a 'subject-centred' approach; another group may be attempting to repair some of the inadequacies of the traditional subject-bound curriculum; others see in the middle school an opportunity of creating a comprehensive system whilst avoiding schools with extremely large populations. And, of course, there are those who advocate that children in the middle years of schooling require other than 'primary' or 'secondary' education because they represent a readily identifiable, homogeneous group:

> "This is a period of transition so long and so varied that children need consistent guidance through it in order to establish their future intellectual development. This time of comparative social stability and fundamental intellectual development would suggest that the education of children between these years is most appropriately conducted in a middle school which concentrates upon this stage of their growth."[6]

Any transition from one stage of education to another is a crisis in a child's school career. A move from a 'model' primary school in which heuristic methods are established to a traditional secondary school in which much of the teaching will be didactic must indeed be a traumatic experience. The child who has been accustomed to learning by discovering for himself, who has been used to handling materials and working with real objects is suddenly plunged into a verbal world, a representational world—a world in which it is assumed that merely to read about something or to have it explained in the abstract is to understand it. For many children the transition will not be as radical as this, but for those who move from the 'class-teacher, integrated-day' approach to that of specialist teaching within a rigidly time-tabled system, the effect must be similar to that of taking an icy cold shower after an extremely warm bath. Some, no doubt, will find the experience invigorating, but for many it will be so distressing as to encourage total rejection of the educational system from that moment on.

Sir Alec Clegg's West Riding Committee[7] suggested that within the middle school a child might continue the type of work he had been pursuing in the primary school but that there would be a gradual weaning towards a specialisation in preparation for secondary school work in which specialisation was a proper feature. The middle school would then offer its pupil a gentler approach towards rigorous, disciplined study than he could achieve without such a transitional stage in his education. I would count this as a 'sound, progressive educational reform' and I would accept that this was my value judgement.

criteria for success?

Mr. Edwards would seemingly accept the middle school only after its proven success but can we really establish criteria on which to base such success? How can we determine what are 'fundamental educational values'? Inevitably at some time value judgements have to be made about the form secondary reorganisation shall take. Of course such judgements will be inadequate if they take novelty as the criterion by which to judge an educational innovation; but it is just as inadequate a response to reject an innovation because it is new. Those who look to established tradition for the criteria by which to measure educational worth have surely not conceded that the society in which we live has changed and is ever changing. Reese Edwards asks: 'Have we really been misled about infant

and junior school education for the last forty-five years following the Hadow Report on the work of the primary schools?' Forty-one years ago, the Hadow Report on the Primary School added its weight to official recognition of streaming.[8] Were the Hadow Committee to report now in the context of the times in which we live, would it recommend segregation of bright children into 'A' classes and retarded children into 'C' classes? I doubt it; yet in the 1930s and 1940s such organisation of the primary school was seen to be of fundamental educational value. Surely we consider education in relation to the times in which we live.

Unless we have come to some fairly inflexible conclusions about the nature and purpose of the educational process, must we not reconcile ourselves to the fact that all education is 'experimental'? Surely, the middle school does not represent a volte-face; we are experimenting from a fairly substantial basis of knowledge of children, curriculum and methods of organisation. 'The Middle School Experiment' may be right for the 1970s and 1980s; certainly, many of the middle schools that I have seen seem to be developing an entity of their own—seem to be affording a worthwhile educational experience for their pupils. But of course, I concede that this is merely my value judgement.

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The Community College

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The origins of the Leicestershire Community College are clearly to be seen in the ideas of Henry Morris and the Cambridgeshire village colleges.

Morris in 1924 wrote his memorandum on village colleges in which he sought to create a new educational institution, single but many-sided, to serve the needs of the communities in which the colleges were set.

'In these Centres,' Morris wrote, 'the isolated elementary school as such, with all the narrower conceptions associated with it would be abolished, it would be absorbed into a larger institution.' Further the college should be seen 'not as a senior school with special facilities for further education, but as a rural community centre, within which is housed the secondary school.'

As well as a practical manual Morris provided a philosophical basis for education. 'The great task of education is to convert society into a series of cultural communities where every local community becomes an educational society . . .'.

These ideas were brought to Leicestershire with Stewart Mason and embodied in March 1949 in his *Memorandum on Community Education*. Mason saw the job of the local education authority as one to provide the opportunity whereby the social, recreative and cultural needs of the community are met, whether the community be a village, a group of villages, small town or a district within a town. This principle of diversity accounts for the fact that in addition to sixteen community colleges there are also in Leicestershire 33 evening centres and eleven neighbourhood community centres based chiefly on primary schools. The five Further Education/Technical Colleges also make arrangements for some community education in addition to career education.

The first Leicestershire Community College opened at Ashby-de-la-Zouch in 1954. In those days the school element of the college was a secondary modern school. The school was furnished with additional resources in the form of an adult wing. Professional staff for adult education joined the college, the warden/headmaster who came from Bottisham Village College, in Cambridgeshire, had overall responsibility for the whole college.

Today there are sixteen colleges, all of which are associated with comprehensive schools. They represent a pragmatic development brought about by the need for new buildings, changes in staff, pressures from local communities—different opportunities seen and grasped. A clear philosophy is evident, its expression being diverse simply because communities are so different. Uniformity in practice is not evident. There is no model for a community college.

It was many years later that the first community college planned as a whole from the beginning came into operation at Countesthorpe. Previously colleges had been adaptations with additional pimples added, one adult pimple and sometimes a youth spot!

In Countesthorpe money for the 'sixth form centre' and the 'youth centre' and the 'adult centre' was pooled and one integrated unit designed providing opportunities for social meetings noisy or quiet, places for study, a coffee bar and a restaurant.

Here we began to see emerging a college, as a resource for the community.

staffing

Stewart Mason's memorandum of 1949 stated clearly 'there should be no diarchy of authority over school use and community use of the buildings. If the institution is to teach community living it must in itself illustrate that harmony and integration which is the job of education to give to each individual. This in practice will only be achieved if one man is ultimately responsible to committee not merely for the proper use of the whole set of college buildings but for the success of the community centre as much as for the success of the school. It will therefore be necessary to appoint a warden of the college who will

combine in the office the duties of headmaster and warden of the community centre.' The first pattern of staffing was then a Warden/Headmaster and this dual title indicating the duality of role. Duality has become less evident over the years and many wardens now see the college as one unit developing an integrated approach to education for the community. This growth in development is evident not only in the Countesthorpe College building but also in the new title—Principal—recently adopted for the Head of all Community Colleges. Again this integrated approach is evident in the single title of these educational institutions, for example Countesthorpe College, Bosworth College, Desford. The old duality of use, of educational ideas, of a split personality, has now almost gone.

community education professional staff

The Colleges began as schools with adult education facilities and consequently, staffing reflected that approach. There was a senior adult tutor and a second adult tutor who provided and administered a class programme and serviced local groups of societies. Following the publication of the Albemarle Report on the Youth Service, youth tutors were added to the staff to administer and organise the newly provided youth centres.

With the desire to develop a more integrated approach together with the growing experience and confidence of staff a new structure was obviously needed. The new buildings which were being designed to promote the idea of a 'school for the community' added to this the need for a more community approach to staffing. So with the opening of Countesthorpe College a department of community education was established. The head of Community education was to be assisted by two community tutors, to work either with young people and adults or certainly to blur the edges of 'youth work' and 'adult education'. Eleven of the sixteen colleges now have Community Education Departments.

The future will most likely see an enhanced status for the Head of Department as Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal of the College.

It is hoped as soon as practical to introduce the opportunity for specialist Heads of Departments in the College, for example, in Languages, Design, Music/Movement, to work say 70/30% or 80/20%—the larger proportion of the time within the school in the college, and the smaller proportion of the time devoted to the community element in the college. In this way it is hoped that a more uniform, a more integrated approach, to education will be established.

Certainly these new staffing ideas will be built into the proposed new colleges which are now on the drawing board, where clearly we are no longer thinking about a school and pupils, and a Community College and adults, but rather about a college for all people with a Principal in charge of it. It, therefore, follows that any new college of the future should not look or feel like a school, indeed the design should reflect the new educational ideas which are emerging. That is a problem for any architect!

The idea of continuity of education has been one of the foundation stones of this approach and obviously many young people have continued in the college for class meeting, for society, for affiliated group, or for just social meeting. Often there is a mixture of 'school', club or society and adult class. The growing response from young people perhaps indicates that we are beginning to break through in that the image that these institutions, community colleges, are beginning to have an identity of their own different from a school identity.

What the Community College in concept and practice is now mapping is a future in which the boundaries between types of education will merge and the unity based upon the needs of the community will at least be a possibility. That a college should operate from say, 9 o'clock in the morning till 11 o'clock in the evening or even later; that weekend use should be normal; that it should be staffed and equipped to provide educational and cultural and recreational opportunities for all people. Some of the people will be young, others older. Now young people supplement and continue their education in the evening. There is no reason why the general sixth form, for example, should not be programmed 7 to 9 p.m. There are already examples of adults working alongside sixth formers during the day. The point is that the isolated school experience of 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. needs to be abolished. Once we get rid of the idea that school is something which happens to young people only, segregated and special, then there is a chance to create a new educational institution. This we are beginning to do. Nearly 50 years on we begin to see the possibility of Henry Morris's concept of an educational society.

participation and government

If democracy is to have a chance to succeed we need as many opportunities as possible to involve people significantly. Mason wrote in 1949 'a positive attitude of enthusiasm, pride and affection towards a Community Centre can only be achieved if the day to day government of institutions is in the hands of the people who use it. If real success is to be achieved it must be Committee policy to encourage true democracy in these institutions by leaving the daily management to the people themselves and by throttling down officialdom to the minimum. It is hoped that like a wise friend the Committee will stand unobtrusively in the background and grant the utmost delegation to the people on the spot.'

The principles are therefore clear; government by a council representing students, youth centre members, affiliated societies, clubs, teachers and governors. This Committee elects a Management Committee of twelve to sixteen people to run the day to day affairs of the college, two members of the Management Committee must be young people.

There are real problems to iron out. Problems of relationship between school 'Governors' and college 'Councils', between school councils and management committees. The dynamic tensions themselves point to constructive changes already. What has been set in motion significantly involving people with a block grant of money for the day to day affairs of colleges, now has a momentum of its own and there are real growth points here.

range of work

The College provides for a wide range of experience; 200 different subjects were on offer last year; combined studies were available; and social meeting was clearly evident. Perhaps we need a real evaluation of the exciting educational happenings of planned social meeting. Certainly amongst young people in community colleges it is sought out. Educators generally tend to look at those occasions when 'nothing is studied except the girls' and find it difficult to compare with other educational experiences. Youth workers however are personally convinced of the decisive importance of this kind of experience, and the value community colleges place on

a social meeting for all people is there to be seen.

There are musical occasions from the pop group to the classical concert. There are Day Schools at weekends, summer play schemes in the holidays. The diversity is as wide as the community and the differences reflect the needs of diverse communities.

Physically a Community College in Leicestershire is a Secondary School with additional facilities to meet the educational, social and cultural needs of adults and young people. What we see in buildings underpins a philosophy of education. It is this philosophy which at this point in time is poised upon exciting possibilities and it is clear to me that a radical breakthrough in education for all is about to take place.

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Developing Contexts for Autonomous Learning: Problems and Possibilities

Ivor Goodson

Ivor Goodson taught in a polytechnic before joining the staff of Countesthorpe College—as a member of the 'Individual and Group' department—when it first opened in 1970.

The concern of this article is to explore ways of providing contexts for autonomous learning and, by way of exemplification, to describe some of the work of the Social Studies department at Countesthorpe Community College in Leicestershire. The Social Studies department was designed to embrace 'the student's understanding of himself, of his relationships with those he works, plays and lives with both past, present and future'.* Within this broad content area the department aimed to offer the student maximum opportunity to direct his own learning. To begin with the interdisciplinary activities of the department were built around themes such as 'education' or 'class' or 'urbanisation'. Alongside these teacher-initiated activities was encouragement of those activities in which the student expressed interest: normally these took the form of projects of one kind or another.

Of the two types of activities the thematic approach suffered from certain basic difficulties. Although the themes were devised as stimuli for the student to find things out for himself at times they acted in precisely the opposite way. To some students, especially those least involved to begin with, themes were seen as artificial teacher inventions. Consequently themes like 'education' or 'class' became as subjects to be got through in a certain block of time. Themes often had a similar determinist effect on teacher strategy: one found oneself saying 'I'm finishing off urbanisation with most of them this week, then we'll do education'.

If themes could hinder the student's autonomy and the teacher's spontaneity pupil-initiated projects suffered from neither of these deficiencies but here too there were problems. Most project work offered the student initial autonomy, for instance, when a student conducted and set up his own local study. As the work developed this autonomy was often seen by the students to have been withdrawn. This could happen by the way in which a teacher structured the student's chosen study or insisted upon a regular output of work or wished to see the work

*Tim McMullen's introductory paper on the school

brought back into the classroom for inspection. Thus although autonomous and liberating for the student in the beginning project work often proved a very hollow promise.

In summary, for different reasons both thematic work and project work failed to give the student a sense of autonomy that stimulated self-directed learning. In thematic work far from directing his own learning the student was covering work that the teacher introduced. In project work although the student was initially in control the teacher took over later and in the end brought the work back into the classroom for inspection. So in neither case did autonomy for the student mean that in his learning he could choose whether to consult the teacher or not, or whether to use the classroom or not.

What was still needed was a context where the student could sense his autonomy was real and stimulating because basic choices inherent in any meaningful autonomy, such as those about teacher and classroom use, were available. For the teacher this would mean a context where roles, such as structuring a student's work, could be, not ignored, but exercised in a way complementary and not obstructive to the student's autonomy.

a possible solution: urban studies as an example

From the beginning of the school, in August 1970, individuals and pairs of students had expressed interest in and completed projects on the urban environment in Social Studies periods. The work which began in September 1971 from the first involved a large group of fourth year students for one afternoon of Social Studies time each week. The work started when the City Archivist visited the school to talk to the Social Studies staff. Some of the students heard about this and came along to talk to him themselves. They arranged to visit the archives and after their visit we decided they would undertake some

sort of urban study. Although I was not able to accompany the students in classtime since at this time only a minority of the class, about a dozen, were involved, after school the archivist and myself spent a good deal of time sorting out relevant maps and documents and discussing subjects and activities that might interest the students.

After several sessions at the archives searching through the maps and documents the students decided to concentrate on one area of Leicester: the Saint Matthew's parish, an area of slum clearance and re-development. At this stage students, individually or in pairs, began to select aspects of the area that they wished to investigate—health and housing, education, religion, entertainments and social life, and so on. As would be expected with a group that chose to work in archives most of their work initially was historical. But soon their projects began to broaden and throw up demands for information that was not historical and hence not available to them in the archives. In turn this led to requests from some of the students for help in acquiring more information, especially about the area as it stands today.

The requests for help sometimes came to me but were also passed on directly to students in the Social Studies class still working at school. Members of this latter group now began to ask if they could join in the work going on in Saint Matthew's. As a result I decided to take this group on a visit to the Saint Matthew's area. The feature which most interested them was how much the area was visibly changing, the commonest question was: 'What was it like before?'. In the course of the visit and in the following lesson at school students came up with a variety of activities that they wanted to undertake. Some were interested in the industrial archaeology of the area, others wanted to do practical sociological work, such as interviews, visits and surveys, others wanted to try mapwork and photography.

At first the work of the second group remained separate from the work at the archives. But there was a clear basis for interaction since both groups were seeking to know how and why an urban area changes. Consequently the two groups began to merge. Within a month all of the second group had visited and worked in the archives to find out what work had already been completed on the area. New groups were formed and projects redefined and broadened. For instance, the two students who had listed the pubs currently in the area and had interviewed some of the publicans joined the student at the archives who was defining the entertainments of nineteenth

century Leicester and were soon as involved in music halls as they had been with pubs. The merging of groups ensured that over a period of time each student tried both archives work and work in the area and became aware of the difficulties and rewards of both methods.

For the moment all students in the class had found an activity they wanted to pursue. The constraint they now complained about was that one afternoon a week was too short a time for the work and made it seem disjointed. Consequently the English department was approached and agreed to use the urban study as a way of developing English skills. This co-operation meant two things. Firstly, the students could now use the whole of Wednesday for their studies. Secondly, one teacher could always be available in school to help those who wanted to work there for writing up their work, drawing maps or developing films. Thus on Wednesdays the students might be working at the archives, or in the Saint Matthew's area, or in school.

A report of this kind seems almost inevitably to read as if everything went smoothly; this was certainly not always the case. The first few weeks did run smoothly as a result of excitement at working out of school and interest aroused in discovering a new area (all the students live outside urban Leicester in suburban or rural surroundings). After this honeymoon period problems began. Some students said they felt that they had begun projects that were not leading anywhere. Normally this was a result of their inability to work out a 'plan of campaign' with which to attack their chosen topic. With advice and encouragement, all the students but one were able to pass through this crucial stage. Other problems were posed by students who got on to a project which led them outside the Saint Matthew's area and hence to the point where they had to consider abandoning their original plans. For instance, a group of girls became so interested in visiting schools, as part of their study of education in Saint Matthew's, that this became their overriding concern. We decided that they should abandon the original plan and begin visiting schools elsewhere in Leicester. After this survey of schools had been conducted they finally settled on a primary school in the main immigrant area of Leicester and for several months each attached herself to one of the classes in the school. Each student kept a detailed journal of events in the school.

In general visiting the Saint Matthew's area seemed to offer so many possibilities for the student that even those who, like these girls, found their interest in the original urban study waning discovered other projects they

wanted to do. The only exceptions were two boys who 'skived off' on several afternoons and one boy who decided after looking at Saint Matthew's that he would now do the theme work on Urbanisation at school.

After the first month, apart from the few who re-directed their work, most students had so much work and interest invested in their projects that the main problem was in locating sufficient sources to provide the answers they sought. One student, for example, wrote over fifty letters, made twelve 'phone calls, and carried out ten interviews. His project emerged as a fascinating micro-cosmic study of one of the main streets in the area. Other students visited private homes, Evergreen Clubs, old folk's homes, local factories, the vicarage, the Town Hall, Radio Leicester and the local community centre in search of information. Sample surveys were carried out on traffic, health, housing and religion.

For all the students involved work which began with the urban study lasted throughout the fourth year. In the summer term most students organised their work into some sort of finished product, comprising extended essays, maps and photographs, cassettes of interviews, reports and surveys. This final organisation was deter-mined partly by their own desire to have a finished product to show people, partly by the demands of the exams for project work and partly because they had agreed with the people who helped them at the museum to set up a small exhibition of their work.

urban studies as a context for autonomous learning

The urban study of Saint Matthew's seemed to offer students something out of the ordinary. To have students working on one project for a whole year is clearly unusual; to see consistent enthusiasm together with a high work rate renders the study exceptional. I believe that the Saint Matthew's study and associated work gained high student involvement because real autonomy was seen to be provided. Student autonomy was real in a sense that it was not in other Social Studies work for the following reasons:

1. The students demanded, initiated and helped organise the study.
2. The students were allowed to plan their own strategies for investigating their chosen topic. In this respect individual activities went on alongside considerable interaction among students.
3. The urban environment provided a perfect open-ended stimulus to investigation and learning. No tasks or

subjects were prescribed.
4. The student covered subjects or themes and learnt skills as they became relevant to him and not as the teacher introduced them to him.
5. The teacher was employed by the student for his advice or expertise. This took the form of advice on pos-sibilities, eg 'have you thought of doing a survey' or even 'have you thought of doing something else' and on methods, eg 'you could plan it this way' or 'these are the maps and documents I would look at.'
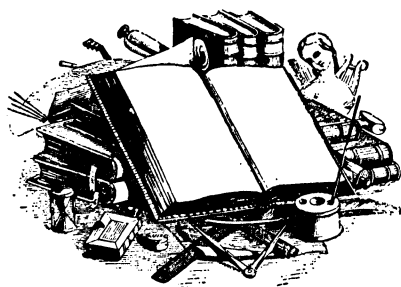
In short in the Saint Matthew's study the student was placed squarely in the position of directing his own learning. Work still went on in the classroom at school and there was still a good deal of contact with the teacher. With one big difference. This time when the student worked in the classroom he had made the decision to, he knew what he was going to do there and he knew why he wanted to do it. Similarly, the student knew why the teacher was there and what he wanted from the teacher. In fact both the school, the classroom and the teacher were serving the needs they were designed to satisfy and this time the student understood.

conclusion: the evolving curriculum

The urban study described is an instance of the possibilities that are opened up when a school curriculum is allowed to respond and evolve as the students' ideas manifest themselves. The school has just set up an 'urban workshop' in the Saint Matthew's area at the community centre as part of this evolution. There are plans for activities ranging from street theatre to studies of pollution in the area this year but, of course, there may be years when no urban studies are wanted.

A school curriculum may start as an expression of the teacher's analysis of the student's learning needs and interests, this analysis will continue to be a factor in the curriculum, but the curriculum must surely respond and change as the students express their needs and interests. It is the hypothesis of this article that such student expression will only take place in a situation where the student senses his autonomy is real and which offers him basic choices about the school and the teacher. Autonomy without such basic choices would be a meaningless and unproductive sham. When real autonomy is offered and student involvement in devising learning contexts enlisted then possibly the fate of the teacher-initiated curriculum will be analogous to the 'withering away of the state'.

Reviews

Determinism and the codes

Language and Class, a Critical Look at the Theories of Basil Bernstein by Harold Rosen, Falling Wall Press (1972), pp 23, 12p.

'Whereas in the fifties, children had their IQs branded on their forehead, in the sixties more and more of them had the brand changed to "restricted" or "elaborated".' Harold Rosen's crisply argued case against the new determinism was originally delivered as a lecture to the Ruskin History Workshop in May of last year. It will probably rank as one of the most important turning points in British educational theory. For what is remarkable about it is not simply that it introduces a note of *linguistic* caution into the consideration of Bernstein's 'theoretical elegancies' but that it exhibits very considerable awareness of the *sociological* deficiencies of that theoretical edifice. Rosen tries to be fair in avoiding hindsight: all of us have been remarkably slow to notice the emperor's suddenly apparent nudity. We have all been beholden to Bernstein in that he was first in the field in moving sociology from its demographic fixation upon 'social mobility' and 'equality of opportunity' to much more fundamental questions about educability.

Unfortunately the conceptual tools which Bernstein brought to his analysis have proved inadequate, and it is this inadequacy, particularly in the area of defining 'social class', that Rosen demonstrates so economically and effectively. At the same time he quotes the American linguist Labov to show the unsatisfactory nature of the methodology employed by Bernstein in examining language context.

The paper advances the proposition that Bernstein's basically unsatisfactory structural analysis prevents him from revealing the relationship he is aiming at: that between socially-significant language use and intellectual performance. Because Bernstein—in spite of recent nods towards Marx—does not identify the concept 'class' clearly enough within the structure of power relations in society, he is unable to pursue fruitful lines of enquiry about language use by members of social groups in different contexts—working class people in trade union activities for instance. The essentially static and deterministic notion of 'code' is inevitably bound up with implication about the *constitutional* superiority or inferiority of people's speech—Bernstein's protests to the contrary notwithstanding. What Rosen has done in this pamphlet is to indicate the intrinsic limitations of Bernstein's theory, particularly for working teachers. As he himself says, the true relationship between language and class has yet to be demonstrated. Criticism of Bernstein is not enough. Neither are the hints contained in the work of Labov and others. We need careful study of how the dialectic between language and social relations *works*.
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Rebel teacher?

Fifty Years of Freedom, by Ray Hemmings. Allen & Unwin (1972), pp 218, £4.35, paperback £2.25.

The austere formality of Scottish schools has thrown up rebel progressives from Robert Owen and David Stow to A S Neill, R F Mackenzie and Ben Morris, whose influence has often been most apparent in England.

Neill felt his way into the early twentieth century progressive camp which tolerated rather than welcomed his criticism. He came not as a disciple of the neo-Froebelians, Dewey or any of the other established progressives, but was drawn to Homer Lane and later to Wilhelm Reich whose thoughts were in tune with his own. He tried teaching at King Alfred School, but 'had to leave the freest school in London because it wasn't free enough to tolerate me'. He soon fell out with the *New Era* and New Education Fellowship groups whose principles were too high-flown and ultimately respectable. Nor has he ever been involved with movements to reform state education for the mass of children. Indeed, he has criticised modern child-centred and discovery methods as merely conning children into learning what teachers want children to learn.

More concerned with upbringing than education, and hardly at all with teaching, he has been impressed by psychiatry rather than educational theory. Learning theories and teaching methods are irrelevant to his perspective. His preoccupation has been to create an environment of freedom for children, to abolish authority whether of parents, teachers, received morality or of the adult world in general. He admits that this leaves unresolved 'the problem of *the individual vs. the community*'.

Ray Hemmings traces the devious evolution of Neill's ideas through his experiences with children at Gretna,

his international schools in pre-war Germany and Austria, and finally at Summerhill's three homes in Britain. Woven through the biographical theme are discussions, some of them speculative, about interaction between Neill's and other contemporary educational pioneers' theory and practice. The meeting points are often negative—criticism and rejection of the stultifying and authoritarian features of schools and established morality.

It is Hemmings rather than Neill who makes the final link with the de-schoolers, describing Summerhill as an insulated 'deschooled society' with 'the essential structure for an open education'. This interpretation highlights the contradiction that Hemmings is too sympathetically committed to recognise. It concerns a perspective for education in a society hostile to its aims. Most teachers must face constraints that Neill has contrived to ignore. He may help us to determine our function, but he has not given the answer. In his penultimate chapter Hemmings presents findings from a questionnaire to assess Neill's influence on the heads of nearly eighty schools selected for their generally progressive reputation. It seems that Neill has had most impact on primary schools, on dealing with problem children, on general teacher-pupil relationships and in promoting questioning of traditional assumptions without necessarily winning support for his views.

This is a book that raises more questions than it answers—and in this it mirrors Neill's own contribution.

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A national curriculum?

The Future of the Sixth Form, by A D C Peterson. Routledge and Kegan Paul (1973), pp 85 £1.50
The problem of the sixth form is not, strangely, its future, but rather its past. And many of the problems of its

past lie in the myths that have surrounded it. They are three, as Peterson points out. The myth of the curriculum, the myth of teacher objectives and the myth of pupil objectives. It is probably true to say that the sixth form, far from being a uniquely English contribution to educational practice in the 16 to 19 age range, is in reality as valuable a contribution to education as the *Librum Veto* was to the political stability of 17th century Poland: both are institutionalised chaos.

Part of this situation can of course be ascribed to the decentralised nature of English education and the degree of control individual schools exercise over sixth form education. The author has consistently made this point over a number of years. Now however, those criticisms, first mooted in the aftermath of the Crowther Report, are even more relevant with the coming of comprehensive reorganisation and the consequent structural changes in the sixth form itself.

There has been considerable debate over the future direction the comprehensive sixth form should take. Should it be integrated with the ability range in the school beneath? The open access sixth seems certainly to be moving in this direction.
On the other side, however, the sixth appears to move, architecturally at least, into a totally separate area, with far more in common with further than with secondary education.

In examining the future of the sixth form, the author correctly diagnoses one of the major obstacles to be the question of curriculum. How to create a type of education, suited to the majority of sixth formers, that is nonetheless compatible with the needs to the minority who might enter higher education?

He concludes by suggesting setting up a pilot scheme, involving perhaps five schools, to work out a national curriculum at sixth form level that would perhaps please all parties. This, however, is not the main problem.

There are a mass of 'experimental' schools in this country. Indeed, localised education and individual teacher responsibility for sixth form curriculum means that effectively we have hundreds of 'experimental' schools already. The problem is getting such a curriculum accepted, and more to the point, being prepared to acknowledge the educational and political implications of a national curriculum. The Lockwood Report of 1963 on the composition of the Schools' Council showed how deeply rooted is the idea of autonomy in the education system. A national curriculum means more central control.

In the long run, this may be the only solution. The fate of the factious Polish nobility was to be taken over by Russia, Austria and Prussia, a takeover made easier by the *Librum Veto*. This may well be the case with the sixth form curriculum.

GUY NEAVE

Subjective views

John Foster, **Discovery Learning in the Primary School** and Reese Edwards **The Middle School Experiment.**
Routledge and Kegan Paul (1972), (Students Library of Education).

Although this series 'has been designed to meet the needs of students of Education at Colleges of Education and at University Institutes and Departments', I would not suggest *The Middle School Experiment* as useful reading, until at least the second year of a course which has involved a great deal of practical work in Middle Schools. Reese Edwards states very clearly the pitfalls encountered, the lack of coherent policy, and the expediency of the sudden implementation, of middle school schemes, following DES circulars 10/65 and 13/66. While he appears to be objective, as one reads the book, a derogatory, if not cynical impression of middle schools is insinuated via the use of sentences such as: 'It was not really surprising that LEAs which adopted the middle school proposal sought to explain their decision in ideological terms.' (p 28). 'To them' (the slower pupils), 'the integrated day will consist of a continuous but disconnected sequence of events in which they find themselves confused and bewildered. Interdisciplinary studies will be a patchwork of unrelated ideas.' (p 49). 'Unreserved tribute must be paid to those who are prepared boldly to experiment in the cause of educational progress, knowing full well that failure as well as success could follow their efforts. On the other hand, it could be argued that the introduction of new and experimental patterns of education without previous systematic trial and evaluation is not only unwise but completely irresponsible.' (p 93). This last quotation follows a chapter in which the various, successful research

programmes such as the Nuffield Projects on the teaching of mathematics, science and French, are discussed in the light of their relevance to the middle school age range. One gains the impression that Reese Edwards has not been in any of the successful middle schools, to see for himself the outcome of some of these 'irresponsible' experiments.

John Foster falls into the opposite trap. He is so enthusiastic about the advantages of discovery methods in schools geared to adopt them, that he does not feel the need to support his examples with comparative evidence. There seems to be very little evidence of this sort available, perhaps because it is so difficult to make sense of research results, as the initial report *French from Eight* showed. This report raised as many questions as it tentatively answered.

The second problem about evidence in this area arises from the assessment of the peripheral advantages claimed for discovery methods. For example, one result of these methods could be that every eight-year-old is able to use a telephone. Clearly, it would also be possible to drill children in the use of the telephone, following the lines of the formal 'needle threading drill' (to be found in Clegg and Megson, 1968). But while Reese Edwards would probably support the latter method, John Foster would intuitively claim the former to be more effective in the long term, and more fun.

For those interested in what is involved in discovery methods, John Foster's book contains many first-hand examples of how certain stimuli led, under teacher direction, to individual, small group, and class projects; as well as an introduction containing his own prescriptions for success. He acknowledges the difficulties and some of the potential dangers inherent in such methods. With Reese Edwards' book as a constant reminder of the economic expediency and the possible academic inferiority of new methods, student teachers reading both books may be able to steer their own course

between over-pessimistic and over-optimistic assessment of the new middle schools and the discovery methods some of them are using, some of the time.
IRENE FARMER
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Teaching reading

The First R: yesterday, today and tomorrow, ed by Joyce M Morris, Ward Lock Educational, (1972), 248 pp. £1.30, paper. £2.60, cloth.

Literacy at All Levels, by Vera Southgate, Ward Lock Educational, (1972), 220 pp. £1.90, paper. £3.50, cloth.

The Teaching of Reading, by Donald Moyle, Ward Lock Educational, 3rd edition (1972), 240 pp. £1.10, paper. £2.25, cloth.

Reading: Problems and Practices, ed. by Jessie Read, Ward Lock Educational, (1972), 415 pp. £1.30, paper. £2.60, cloth.

In recent years there has been a growing concern at the apparently stubborn nature of the reading problem in our society culminating in the decision taken by the DES last year to set up a Committee of Inquiry to investigate standards of literacy amongst the nation's children.

According to the latest survey made by the NFER (*The Trends of Reading Standards*, 1972), the ability to read as measured at the age of 11, after

making good the expected deficiencies of the war and its aftermath, has made no further advance in these past 10 years and this despite our growing understanding of what is involved in the mastery of the skill with the development of new approaches to match.

In practice this means that one in ten children leave our schools less than literate and at the other end of the scale not a few undergraduates find difficulty in coping with the nature and extent of reading involved in a degree course.

All teachers ought to be concerned about this and not least those committed to the comprehensive ideal for the reading skills are surely an essential factor in the full development of individual potentiality.

By the nature of our traditions we have been slow to see reading in the total linguistic context or even to appreciate the wide range of skills involved in its effective use. In schools reading has been too often equated with the struggle to decode as experienced in the younger classes of the primary school whilst teachers in the older ranges have not understood their role in the developmental nature of the process. Until very recently it has been granted insufficient attention in our training departments and on coming out into the schools newly qualified teachers have encountered advisers in everything under the sun except reading, the key to it all.

Since its inception in 1961 the United Kingdom Reading Association has sought to remedy this. As well as campaigning with some success for national action on the level demanded it has played a foremost part in focusing professional attention on the complex nature of the reading process, the aspect of their work which is recorded in two of the books under review.

In *The First R*, Joyce Morris, an honoured founder member of the Association, has performed the valuable service of bringing together a selection of papers from Association conferences

in the mid-sixties, some now out of print or well on the way to being so. There are contributions not only on various aspects of work in the early stages but also on the intermediate skills which have to be acquired if reading is to develop. This is followed by a very useful section on the ideas behind new media like ITA, Reading in Colour and SRA laboratories now available to teachers and, after an all-round look at the remedial situation, the book concludes with some accounts of research work which will be helpful in the classroom. All in all, a nice balance between theory and practice.

Literacy at All Levels, edited by Vera Southgate, includes all the main papers given at the 1971 conference which, as the title implies, was intended to take things a stage further and to encourage an all-through view of the reading process. Here papers cover the development of the skill from outside the school to its use for the purpose of individual study and personal evaluation at an advanced secondary level.

Busy teachers in all fields with only time to spare for a quick occasional dip will find their thinking widened by both these books. Anyone who has anything to do with the immediate teaching of the subject should by now know exactly where to lay hands on a copy of *The Teaching of Reading* by Donald Moyle. Having placed his subject firmly in its historical, linguistic and psychological setting he gets down to the question of choosing approaches and the day-to-day organisation of work in the classroom. This is the third edition and significantly it has been updated to keep in step with 'the expansion of our understanding of the reading process'.

Not the least of Mr Moyle's services is the provision of a glossary of technical terms at the front of his book defined in the sense in which he intends to use them in the text. This not only makes for better all-round understanding in his own book but helps more generally in the process of cracking the researcher's code so

widening the potential influence of books like *Reading: Problems and Practices*, an Open University set book obviously tilted towards those who wish to go on to pursue the subject at that level. In it the editor, Jessie Read, has brought together a very valuable collection of papers from many sources probing at depth the individual and social factors which go to make up reading failure and describing the ways in which we are using and can use our new understanding to combat it.
GEORGE FREELAND

Small school, large school?

The Comprehensive School: guidelines for the reorganisation of secondary education, by Elizabeth Halsall, Pergamon Press (1973), 248 pp.

This volume was published just before *Forum* went to press, so it is not possible to do more than draw attention to it at this stage. Elizabeth Halsall is well known for her studies concerning the viability of the small comprehensive school, but here she deals with many issues confronting comprehensives—with streaming and non-streaming, guidance and counselling, the problem of the 'culturally deprived child', as well as the curriculum generally. Four of the ten chapters are, however, devoted to the question of size which is tackled from many different angles.

The author is familiar with the latest research findings on all the issues she tackles, and her stated object is to relate these to practical problems 'as they are encountered inside the schools in the course of administration and policy making'. The book is well written, stimulating, and up-to-date— it should certainly be of great value in planning developments in comprehensive schools.
B.S.

FREEDOM AND EDUCATION

James Breese
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Written for both students and the general reader, this book is intended to stimulate discussion amongst those concerned with such issues as the acquisition of knowledge, examinations, values, dependency and religion. Based on topics which arose in seminars between the author and his students, the chapters include: Facts are unimportant – Examinations are the end – Society's conditioned us all – It's all the fault of the system – Free us to do what we like

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Frances Stevens's books on education are well-known. *The Living Tradition* was said to be one of the **"most profound books on education written"** by John Vaizey in *The Guardian; The New Inheritors* **"a most important contribution to educational thinking"** *(T.L.S.)* while *English And Examinations* **"should be compulsory reading"** *(Research In Education)*

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