

# FORUM

Summer 1974  
Volume 16  
Number 3

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# FOR THE DISCUSSION OF NEW TRENDS IN EDUCATION

## Going Comprehensive

**England lags behind**

*Caroline Benn*

**Comprehensive education in Wales**

*Kenneth Donovan*

**Where are we now in Scotland?**

*Ian Findlay*

**A New Town goes comprehensive**

*Jim Attfield and Ken Coram*

**From grammar to comprehensive upper school**

*J S Dodge*

**Comprehensive from scratch**

*Derek Roberts*

**Inner city comprehensive**

*Patrick Bailey*

**Comprehensive education within a Community Centre**

*Ron Mitson and Malcolm Holder*

**Countesthorpe College: an observant study**

*Ann Riley and Kathy Stamatabis*

**Some Notes on Black Studies**

*Ken Forge*

**Reviews**

*J Walton, D Boydell, A Finch*

# Conference

run jointly by

**FORUM and the Campaign for  
Comprehensive Education**

# School and Further Education:

**The Comprehensive Solution  
for the Education of the 16-19  
age group**

Saturday, 15 June 1974

10.30 to 16.30

Friends' Meeting House, Euston Road  
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Malcolm Skilbeck (Professor of Education, The  
New University of Ulster, Coleraine):

**A Common Curriculum for the 16-19 age group**

Peter Lineham (Director of Studies, Barnstaple  
Reorganisation Complex):

**The Tertiary College: a new educational  
climate?**

Timothy Rogers (Principal, The Bosworth  
College, Leics):

**Perspectives for the 16-19 students at school**

*Afternoon* **Co-operation between Schools and  
Colleges**

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College of Further Education)

B H C Robinson (Headmaster, Henry Box School,  
Witney, Oxon):

**The Oxfordshire consortium**

P G E Griffin (Principal, Queen Elizabeth Sixth  
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# Advice to Reg Prentice

In assessing where Britain now is on the road to comprehensive reorganisation, **Forum** offers a timely reminder to the new Secretary of State, Reginald Prentice, of the size and urgency of the task he must now tackle in his avowed determination to 'make the fastest possible progress towards ending selection for secondary school places'. We were pleased to note his immediate invitation to the new local authorities to resubmit proposals rejected by Margaret Thatcher, and his decision 'to consult the local authority and teacher associations in advance on the terms of the new circular' rather than simply reissue 10/65 and 10/66 which proved inadequate in certain respects. We therefore welcome **Circular 4/74** for its promise of a tougher line towards those voluntary aided schools which refuse to participate in comprehensive reorganisation, and call on the new Secretary to fulfil his Party's promise to end the anomaly of the 175 direct grant schools which have, along with voluntary aided schools, so far prevented many areas from reorganising along fully comprehensive lines.

The new circular alone, however, is unlikely to achieve a fully comprehensive system from nursery school to sixth form. The previous Secretary's abuse of certain clauses of the 1944 Act, which we detailed in our pamphlet **Indictment of Margaret Thatcher**, the problems encountered by Edward Short and the anomaly of the direct grant schools are evidence of the need for a new Education Act along the lines we were discussing five years ago (**Forum** vol 11 no 3). The Labour Party's Green Paper last year also contained important proposals which would require legislation 'to extend the true concept of comprehensive education' beyond the age of statutory schooling—an aim with which our June conference will be concerned.

Moreover, the transformation of a selective into a comprehensive system requires adequate financing. We warn Reg Prentice of the grave danger of undermining his own policy if he fails to secure the necessary funds. As our contributor, J S Dodge, points out from experience, genuine comprehensive education is costly. The new government must will the means.

Reviews of the extent of comprehensivisation throughout Britain are given in our first three

articles, which show England lagging seriously behind Wales and Scotland. That most of the direct grant schools are in England has been one hindrance and accounts for some pseudo comprehensives. Following their 1972 conference the Labour Party's **Programme for Britain** promised to end the direct grant. Despite the evasive omission from the election manifesto, we expect the new Secretary of State to honour that earlier commitment in carrying out his promise to end selection.

Our fourth article, describing a New Town's steady progress in reorganising its secondary schools into comprehensives, is followed by four case studies which discuss the curriculum, grouping of children and other aspects of internal organisation in different kinds of comprehensive school—rural and inner city, all-through and tiered. It is evident that, while progress towards reorganisation has been patchy, experiment within comprehensives has been resourceful and imaginative.

Successful extension of individual opportunity and curricular innovation in caring schools require more generous staffing than has been widely available. This improvement now begins to be possible provided teacher training is not cut back. While appreciating that it was probably too late to restore the cut of about 3,500 student teachers imposed for the 1974 intake to the colleges, **Forum** is dismayed at Gerry Fowler's public endorsement of the 1972 White Paper's future cuts amid hints that he is considering reducing teacher training places below the target of 60,000 for 1981. Last year, in a detailed criticism of the White Paper, he warned that lack of qualified teachers would undermine the nursery school programme, 'that intake to secondary schools reaches its highest point in the middle of this decade', and that the policy involved 'losses of pupil/teacher ratios of smaller classes' (**THES** 12/1/73).

**Forum**, however, takes heart from Reg Prentice's assurance that he will await advice from the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Training of Teachers before deciding future teacher training targets. To meet his commitment to the schools he must resist DES and Treasury mandarins—and, apparently, his ministerial colleague.

# England lags behind

Caroline Benn

England is the least comprehensive of the major areas of Britain. Both Wales and Scotland can probably claim to have nearly three-quarters of their 13-year-olds in comprehensive schools today (although this would mean classifying far more Scottish schools as 'comprehensive' than many could agree to). England, however, still has to reach the 50% mark.<sup>1</sup>

Not only is England lagging in overall progress, but its existing reorganisation pattern is more polarised. Table I shows that when England's reorganising local authorities are divided between those with less than the national average of 13-year-olds in comprehensive schools and those with more, that the average of those below the line is very low indeed, while the average of those above it is very high—although still lacking the final 20%—the 'grammar' percentage, as it were. In Wales and Scotland a similar division would show many more local authorities clustering around the mean—in other words, a more even rate of progress between authorities, rather than a picture of two extremes. Thus in England a child's chances of equal opportunity through access to a comprehensive school are much more arbitrarily dependent upon the authority in which the parents happen to live and whether or not it is an authority with only token progress or one which has made substantial headway.

Table I. Average percentages of 13-year-olds in English Comprehensive Schools

Divided between LEAs above the national average of 40% and those below.

	Greater London		English Boroughs		English Counties	
	No. of LEAs	Av. %	No. of LEAs	Av. %	No. of LEAs	Av. %
Average % in comprehensives in LEAs with more than 40%	10	80%	31	81%	17	70%
Average % in comprehensives in LEAs with less than 40%	11	9%	35	7%	28	20%

Source: DES Statistics, 1972, Vol I, Table 40. This Table I omits 14 LEAs with no reorganisation.

Another problem England faces more acutely than other areas is that its existing comprehensives are obliged

to co-exist with grammar schools far more often. A recent survey found less than 1 in 10 Welsh comprehensives, for example, had competing selective schools in their areas, compared to nearly 2 in 5 English ones.<sup>2</sup> Thus the English comprehensive has much more of a struggle to develop as a 'genuine' comprehensive rather than a re-named secondary modern; and English 11-year-olds face some form of 11 plus selection much more frequently than pupils elsewhere.

Yet another problem English comprehensives face more often than others is where comprehensive schemes are comprehensive in name only, but where divided education is still pursued. The most well-known version is where 11-16 comprehensives exist alongside ex-grammar schools whose new age range is 13 or 14 to 18. Their pupils are chosen by 13 plus and 14 plus selection from within the comprehensive school, while the majority of the age group remain behind in the 'comprehensive'. The DES classifies these schemes as 'optional' transfer comprehensive schemes, and although the percentage of schools involved in these schemes has fallen since the school leaving age was raised,<sup>3</sup> Table 2 shows that some 8% of all English comprehensives still were involved in 1973.

Less clear-cut are those areas in England where two types of school are both called comprehensive and can seem much alike in age range or intake, but where they are not yet able to offer comparable education. The ex-grammar schools tend to specialise still in academic pupils while the ex-secondary moderns, although with a widened range of courses, and a wider intake, still cater for the average and slow learners. Decisions as to which pupils go to which type of comprehensive are often left to the process of guided parental choice—'guided' because only certain parents' choices—certainly for the academic comprehensives—can be honoured. This is also the case in the 'choice' systems which operate in the optional transfer described previously as well as in many areas where grammar schools themselves remain.

Many think all these schemes misuse 'parental choice', and it is important to distinguish between two types of parental choice. The first type, used in areas where schemes are genuinely comprehensive, permits all parents a chance to register their preferences for schools and lists all the factors relevant to school entry, including catchment areas or policy about siblings, without any one type of school or one set of parents having built-in advantages. The second type of choice is guided, and favours some

parents rather than others; in other words, the second type of 'choice' is often used as a substitute for the 11 plus or 13 plus mechanism.

Preoccupation with parental choice is particularly English too. There is much less agitation about parents' school-choosing rights in most of Scotland, for example, where the local school is automatically attended by most of the local children. In 1968 a survey of methods used by local authorities to determine comprehensive school entry found that while some 20% of comprehensive schools below the border used some method of parental choice as the main method, no Scottish comprehensive school in the survey reported choice methods were used at all.<sup>4</sup> Catchment area entry is the traditional Scottish method, and it is used very extensively in Wales as well.

parental preferences, it is, paradoxically, in England that agitation about the neighbourhood nature of comprehensives is more frequently registered. Nor do the paradoxes end here. Agitation in England about uniformity of comprehensive education also tends to be greater, yet it is in England that variety of comprehensive models, and certainly of schemes, is much the greatest. The Leicestershire form of re-organisation is almost exclusively English; so too are middle schools of 8-12 and 9-13, with their great variety of post-13 arrangements shown in Table 2. Lastly, almost all the sixth form college developments, as well as almost all of the further education college amalgamations for ages 16 to 19, are English-grown. And more varieties—particularly the consortium models developed by Birmingham—are still appearing.

Paradoxical too is that large size is frequently a worry in England, while size variety is more evident in England than elsewhere, and England's comprehensives are not, on the whole, the largest. Only 31% of English comprehensives are over 1,000 in size, for example, compared to 43% of Welsh ones.<sup>5</sup>

What all this really points to is that controversy over reorganisation is greatest in England, and it is greatest because the hold of selective education—particularly fee-paying education—is greatest too. Almost all direct grant schools are in England; and 8% of all English schools are independent compared to only 3% in Wales.<sup>6</sup> Since so much of the anti-comprehensive agitation comes from those associated with the preservation of selective or fee-paying schools, the temperature is bound to be higher, and the criticisms of comprehensives greater, in England.

It is also probably true that England, and particularly the south of England, is more consumer-conscious, which tends to encourage English education users to be both more demanding and to be more preoccupied with 'choice' questions. It may also explain the more volatile swings in the English reorganisation picture. Table III illustrates one of these, for it shows the main forms of reorganisation and how these divide today. Just about half of all comprehensive schools in England are 11-18 all-through schools with sixth forms attached; while just over a quarter are short-course schools without sixth forms, and a fifth are tiered schemes with breaks at 13 or 14. But when we look at the comprehensive schools which opened in the one year, 1972, we see that a far greater proportion of comprehensives—2/3 in fact—are all-through with their own sixth forms and that there is a marked 'drop' in the two other forms of reorganisation.

**Table II. Types of Comprehensive School in England, 1973**

Age range of school	Number	Percentage
12-16	40	2.5
12-18	30	1.5
13-16	13	1.0
13-18	111	6.5
14-18	1	0.4
Open sixth form college	4	0.5
Selective sixth college	2	0.5

(The DES classes all schools listed above as schools operating middle school systems.)

11-16	280	17.0
11-18	860	51.0

(The DES classes the two categories above as all-through schools.)

11-13	28	1.5
11-14	96	5.0
11-16* 13 plus	100	5.5
11-16* 14 plus	44	0.5
13-18*	29	1.5
13-18	6	0.5
14-18*	1	0.1
14-18	54	3.0
Open sixth form colleges	11	1.0
Selective sixth form colleges	5	0.5
Totals	1675	100.0

(Source: DES Classified List of Comprehensive Schools.)

(\* Schools where transfer at age 13 or 14 is optional only.)

But although English comprehensives are far less neighbourhood-based overall than those in Scotland and Wales, and probably pay much more attention as well to

Table III

Type of scheme	Main forms of reorganisation in England				Comprehensive schools opening in England in September 1972	
	1972		1973			
	No. of schools	% of total	No. of schools	% of total	No. of schools	% of total
All-through (11/12-18)	713	51%	890	53%	177	67.0%
Short Course (11/12-16)	399	28%	437	27%	38	14.5%
Tiered (11-13/14 and 13/14-18)	285	20%	326	19%	41	15.5%
Sixth form colleges	14	1.0%	22	1%	8	3.0%
Totals	1,411	100%	1,675	100%	264	100%

(Source: DES Classified Lists of Comprehensive Schools, 1972 and 1973.)

Yet comprehensive schools opening in the previous year—1971—had been markedly different again.<sup>7</sup> For example, in that year over a third were short course schools with no sixth forms, thus the yearly swings and roundabouts in English reorganisation are very sharp and wide indeed. Although the English comprehensive is often less likely to be as fully comprehensive as comprehensives elsewhere—and this is a very real problem—it is probably also true that internally English comprehensive schools are often more comprehensive. That is to say, fewer major barriers operate within English comprehensive schools. Very rarely are they divided into academic and non-academic 'sides', for example, and only a minority operate selective sixth forms, where pupils are

required to qualify for entry. In Wales, by contrast, most comprehensives do operate a selective sixth form system within the school.<sup>8</sup> It is also in English comprehensive schools more than others, perhaps, that school democracy—for pupils and staff—has made most headway, and where parental involvement within the school life has been encouraged most often.

When genuine reorganisation eventually gets under way, the wealth of experience and practice in the English comprehensive school—to say nothing of the variety of its models—will be both the best asset and the clearest argument for this long overdue change to a completely comprehensive secondary system.

1. The percentages in this paragraph are estimates which assume that the rise in percentages of pupils in comprehensive schools for the years 1972/3 and 1973/4 were much the same as the rises in the two previous years. Official statistics available only up to 1971/2, but the numbers of comprehensive schools started in the last two years is much the same as in the previous two years.
2. C. Benn, *Comprehensive Schools and Coexistence*, (to be) published by the NUT and the CEE, 1974. Only 7% of the Welsh comprehensives in the survey reported grammar schools co-existed, while 56% of English ones did.
3. The 1972 DES List of Comprehensive Schools for England and Wales showed 12% of schools in these schemes.
4. Benn and Simon, *Half Way There*, 1972, Table 20.1.
5. This is in 1973, figures calculated from the DES Classified List of Comprehensive Schools.
6. DES *Statistics*, Vol. 1, Table 2 (2). Both primary and secondary schools are included in this calculation.
7. CEE, *1972 Survey of Comprehensive Schools*, p. 1.
8. See Benn and Simon, *op. cit.*, Table 12.1, showing only 27% of Welsh comprehensives actually operated an 'open' system of entry compared to 67% of English ones; see also The Headmasters Association, *Directory of Comprehensive Schools*, 1969, where the figure for open sixth forms for the Welsh comprehensives was 34%.

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# Comprehensive education in Wales

**Kenneth Donovan**

From teaching Classics, Kenneth Donovan went to the Welsh Office of the National Union of Teachers in 1972 where he is Senior Technical Assistant. Here he surveys how far comprehensive reorganisation has progressed in Wales.

When Lord Aberdare's Committee, which was set up 'to inquire into the present condition of intermediate and higher education in Wales . . .', reported in 1881, it found only 13 boys' grammar schools in North Wales and 14 in South Wales. It also discovered that in South Wales there was no provision for the secondary education of girls. Pressure for the establishment of intermediate schools led to the passing of the Welsh Intermediate and Technical Education Act in 1889. In the following ten years 64 intermediate schools were opened in Wales.

The ethos of these schools and those established later reflected the high regard for academic qualifications and distinction which existed in the community, and the aspirations of parents for their children. That such attitudes still exist may be seen in the fact that in January 1971 four Welsh counties appear within the first ten of those English and Welsh Authorities with the highest proportion of 17-year-olds still at school expressed as a percentage of 13-year-olds four years earlier and also in the fact that in 1972 the percentage of 16-year-olds in Welsh Secondary Schools was higher than that for English schools apart from the percentage in Greater London.

**Pupils aged 16 years as a percentage of those 13-year-olds 3 years previously**

	Boys	Girls	Total
<b>England</b>			
Greater London	43.6	42.9	43.3
County boroughs	31.4	29.6	30.5
Counties	35.9	36.1	36.0
Total	35.6	35.0	35.3
<b>Wales</b>			
County boroughs	37.2	39.4	37.3
Counties	35.7	38.8	37.2
Total	36.0	38.4	37.2

(Statistics of Education, Vol 1, 1972.)

The possession of these opinions on the part of parents led to a relatively generous provision of grammar school places in Wales—the admission rate in 1967 averaged 33% and was in no way to act as a bar to secondary reorganisation. Indeed such provision might well have had a stimulating effect in that it exposed the fallacy that only a limited percentage of an age group was capable of an academic education. Although in some areas where the

reputation of a particular school has been esteemed highly in the community there has been evidence of some reluctance on the part of authorities to reorganise secondary education, generally speaking there has been a more open attitude towards reorganisation in Wales than in England. Consequently the progressive change from selective to non-selective secondary education which was apparent before Circular 10/65 has been accelerated during the last eight years. The latest figures published by the Welsh Office, which is responsible for primary and secondary education in Wales, show that of the 17 local education areas in Wales 12<sup>1</sup> are completely reorganised—Anglesey since 1953, when all primary school children passed into the neighbourhood comprehensive schools without any form of examination or selection test<sup>2</sup>.

Of the other authorities, Cardiganshire has over 90% of its secondary pupils in reorganised schools, Carmarthenshire 22.6%, Glamorganshire over 91%, Monmouthshire 60% and Pembrokeshire 54%. In September 1973 the Glamorgan local education authority established 20 comprehensive schools in the county, bringing its total to 46. There remain 12 unreorganised schools within the authority—six in the Rhondda and six in Aberdare. Carmarthenshire with the smallest percentage of secondary school pupils in reorganised schools has 18 unreorganised schools, Monmouthshire has 22, Pembrokeshire six and Cardiganshire one. The overall percentage of pupils in reorganised schools in Wales is above 85%<sup>3</sup>.

An examination of the reorganisation of Secondary education in Wales indicates certain marks peculiar to the Welsh scene. Perhaps the two most distinctive features are firstly the comparative uniformity of the schemes adopted and secondly the size of the reorganised schools. By far the most prevalent scheme adopted has been that of the 11-18 school. Of the 199 reorganised schools in Wales, 129 are of this type.

**Number and type of comprehensive schools, September 1973**

Middle 9-12	11-13	11-14	13-18	14-18	11-16	11-18	6th form college
1	19	4	14	2	29	129	1

This is in contrast with developments in England where a significant number of sixth form colleges feature in current programmes. Working Paper 45 of the

Schools' Council reports that in 1972 there had already been established in England 14 sixth form colleges and that there were plans in about 30 authorities for the establishment of 57 more.

In looking at the size of schools it is discovered that of the 174 reorganised before September 1973, 113 contained less than 1,000 pupils, while only ten had over 1,600<sup>4</sup>. Of the new schemes brought into operation in September 1973, 12 schools had under a 1,000 pupils and 13 between 1,000 and 1,600 pupils. It has been estimated that of comprehensive schools in Wales nearly 50% have a first year intake of less than 100 pupils. These figures, together with the predominance of 11-18 schools, highlight an area of some concern for educationists, namely the 11-16 schools. It is argued that these schools exist because a sixth form would not be a viable proposition in such schools because of their size. But the figures show that the majority of schools in Wales are small and one is led to the conclusion that there are reasons other than educational ones for the establishment of these schools.

The achievement of Welsh education authorities has been impressive in that over 85% of all pupils of secondary age are in reorganised schools. The complete reorganisation of secondary education in Wales will soon be achieved either because authorities are committed to such a change or because they do not wish to be seen dragging their feet when so many other authorities have reorganised their systems of secondary education. But it is at the moment of success that the questions arise about the quality of education in our schools. Welsh grammar schools had a reputation for high academic standards; reorganised schools must be seen to have in diverse ways similarly high standards. That questions of quality are exercising those who are concerned with education in Wales is signified by the fact that much of the last parliamentary debate of the Welsh Grand Committee was taken up with speeches on this issue. Perhaps the question which was put by Mr Caerwyn Roderick to the Secretary of State for Wales summed up this concern: 'Is the Minister satisfied that the aims of creating comprehensive schools are being achieved, or have we simply joined together types of schools in one area—I will not say building—and called them a comprehensive set up?'<sup>5</sup>

This concern revolves around the existence of 11-16 schools, the mode of entry into sixth forms and split-site schools. There would seem to be a need to investigate whether the opportunities open to these pupils who attend 11-16 schools are as great as those in 11-18 schools. In many instances it cannot be argued that such

schools exist because school numbers are small. It has been pointed out that generally in Wales schools are small. It is significant that most 11-16 schools are situated in Cardiff and Glamorgan, are normally housed in former secondary modern schools and serve catchment areas which, it might be supposed, would not throw up a good sixth form stream. This has created for these schools a somewhat less prestigious position in the eyes of the community than for the neighbouring 11-18 schools. That they should seem to suffer in comparison with these other schools is sufficient cause for concern; but when the situation is aggravated by the fact that in some areas the curriculum policy of the 11-18 school, in which the sixth form is situated, controls what happens in the 11-16 schools because of subject restrictions in the sixth form, then the constriction placed on those schools to teach a meaningful curriculum becomes serious. This is likely to prove particularly irksome when 11-16 schools feed into a school which was formerly a grammar school and in which entry into the sixth form is still subject to academic considerations.

The question of the 'open-access' sixth form is one which needs to be considered in Wales. Caroline Benn (*New Society*, 24th June, 1971), reporting on a survey made in 1968, showed that only 27% of comprehensive schools surveyed in Wales required no qualifications for entry into the sixth form. She suggested in her article that this might well be a reason for the fact that at that time while Wales had a far higher proportion of secondary age pupils in comprehensive schools the rate of staying on in these schools, amounting to 47%, was below the national average of 52%.

The third area of concern involves the siting of schools. The relative speed of reorganisation in Wales coupled with the shortage of finance has led to the establishment of split-site schools where parts of schools might be separated over a distance of many miles. It is possible to find an 11-14 school which at present operates on four different sites and another 11-18 school which has its first two forms housed in two separate schools, each containing a first and second form, one school more than three miles from the senior section and the other five miles away. The recreational facilities for the three schools are centred in the senior section. Apart from the administrative inconvenience caused by such an arrangement, the cost of transporting children is enormous.

There can be no doubt that such problems are affecting adversely the quality of education which children are receiving under these conditions and sometimes

# Comprehensives—Where are we now in Scotland?

Ian Findlay

On the staff of Aberdeen College of Education since 1962, Ian Findlay has been particularly concerned with international and comparative aspects of education. Here he reviews the evolution of comprehensives in Scotland. He is author of **Education in Scotland**.

'One point requires to be emphasised. The situation has been and remains extremely fluid'. This unchallengeable observation is to be found in the introduction to the Scottish Education Department's 1972 publication **The First Two Years of Secondary Education**.

Not only does this describe the situation in the early years of the Scottish secondary schools, it could be applied with confidence to the whole process of comprehensivisation in Scotland, and it affords the writer his perfect opportunity to point out the difference between Scottish secondary patterns and those elsewhere in Britain. The two years in question, for short S1 and S2, are the age 12-14 stage of the normal 12-18 Scottish 6 year secondary (which follows a 7 year primary in a pattern opposite to that in England and Wales). Hence the secondary of the north has a discernible 2/2/2 structure. The first phase is officially a 'Common Course' intended to provide a period of orientation, the second (S3 and S4) shows a range of academic, non-academic, 'bridging' and other options leading to varying numbers of Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) O Grade passes, to none or in a few areas, to local certificates, and the third (S5 and S6) is characterised by the acquisition of SCE Higher Grade passes (either all in S5 or over two years) by those staying on. In addition, a post Higher qualification known as

Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) is available in many subjects in S6, this being comparable in academic standard to the A level of the south. Though not officially intended to relate to University entrance, it is being 'taken into account' in various ways.

Despite the evident differences of the Scottish structure, the national movement towards comprehensive education dates from a Circular of 1965 as elsewhere in Britain—in this case **Circular 600**. This does not of course imply that no comprehensive schools existed in Scotland before that year. In fact some of the urban areas, and in particular those of Glasgow and the central industrial belt, could show comprehensive secondaries of a well developed kind long before then, and these are in the forefront now as examples of structural, organisational, curricular and guidance possibilities to the rest of the country. One could add that in the Scottish rural secondaries (or 'omnibus schools'), ranging from the large to the very small (200-400) it was always the case that a mild kind of 'comprehensiveness' brought a farflung intake of academic pupils under the same roof—if not into the same classes—as a more local catchment of the non-academic. It is against such an historical canvas that the trends of the last 9 years and the position in 1974 can be more fully understood.

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authorities, having created comprehensive schools, have seemed to ignore this question of quality. To have provided the rooms in which all children of secondary age in a particular area can be housed is not to have created an institution which can be called a comprehensive school, or indeed even a school. Such an attitude on the part of the authority was responsible for a dispute in Glamorgan which resulted in the suspension of teachers at Cwrt Sart Secondary School, Briton Ferry. The authority failed to see that teachers were acting professionally in refusing to teach a full timetable in the school which in the first term after reorganisation was ill-equipped with specialist teaching rooms because of the failure of contractors to meet a building completion date. The action of the authority was a failure to realise that the very essence of good secondary education is to be found in specialist teaching. Secondary reorganisation

is far advanced in Wales; it is now the quality of education which ought to be the vital concern of those responsible for, and those who teach in, our schools.

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1. Anglesey, Breconshire, Caernarvonshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merioneth, Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Swansea.
  2. Benn and Simon, **Halfway There**, page 46.
  3. This figure is derived from Welsh Office data which give the pupil number as at January, 1973, the latest available date. It is estimated however that in September, 1973, the pupil number increased by some 16,000 because of the raising of the school leaving age.
  4. The number of pupils in September would cause some variation of these figures because of the accommodating of pupils affected by the raising of the school leaving age.
  5. Parliamentary Debates: Welsh Grand Committee, Wednesday, 5th December, 1973, column 22.

The Scottish Education Department (SED) has provided some useful signposts for the development of the curriculum in those years. Two publications in 1966 and 1970 have been devoted to the topic of raising the minimum leaving age to 16, and have laid out suggestions for the expansion of social/moral, leisure-based and work-oriented curricula for the less academic 14-16 group, and in general for the expansion of the non-examinable segment of S3 and S4 in the teeth of a strong Scottish respect for the examinable, the certificate-oriented and the academic. It is generally true that, while there is a growing body of support for the comprehensive secondary school in Scotland, it would fill the cup of happiness for many if it proves to be amongst other things a maintainer of the academic standards so traditional to the system.

Two other documents produced nationally within the last 7 years form an important part of the context of the present situation: (a) Curriculum Paper 2 of the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC) entitled **Organisation of Courses Leading to Scottish Certificate of Education**, produced in 1967 under SED auspices and popularly known as the 'Ruthven Report' and (b) the SED survey (mentioned above) **The First Two Years of Secondary Education** which appeared in 1972.

The Ruthven Report covers all 6 years of the secondary school in the familiar 2/2/2 way, and makes recommendations which have been reasonably influential in the schools: (a) in S1/S2 better liaison with the feeder primaries, a common but not 'unduly heavy' range of subjects, more integration across subject barriers, an orientation period of 2 years, the discontinuation of initial streaming in S1 and fairer grouping methods (the headmaster being the judge of the most appropriate method) use of ability-setting on a subject basis at times judged appropriate by departments: (b) in S3/S4 parallel and flexible course possibilities including 'RSLA 1966 type' suggestions, certificate, non-certificate and hybrid programmes, the use of 'minority time' for broader personal (especially social/moral/religious) education, and an emphatic recommendation that no pupil should spend more than 75% of curricular time on examination subjects: (c) in S5/S6 the concept of 'minority time' is re-emphasised, independent study and research is commended, and community involvement suggested as a growth area—all this as a qualitative improvement on the S5/S6 pattern described earlier in this article.

The 1972 survey on S1 and S2 tends to look at progress so far rather than urge future development. It (a) sees

great need for improved primary-secondary liaison, and politely deplores the rarity of visits by primary staff to secondaries together with the uninterest of secondary staff in primary curriculum information; (b) indicates a definite trend towards mixed ability grouping in schools of all types, difference of view over the length of time such formations should be retained both overall and with regard to particular subjects, a tendency to keep pupils with difficulties separate in remedial classes from an early stage, an increasing use of the 'withdrawal technique', great expansion of modern language offerings for all, the melting of the sex barriers in technical subjects and home economics; (c) finds growing interest in continuous forms of assessment and in guidance; (d) detects an absence of concerted policy, however, on main matters of organisation and guidance perhaps attributable to the isolated nature of headmasters' experimentation with these; (e) suggests that in the long run, the answer will not lie in organisational uniformity throughout the schools but in discreet and fair adaptation of the initial intake arrangements to the needs of the area.

Official initiatives were taken in 1968 and 1971 to foster counselling and guidance in schools. Space does not permit elaboration of these here.

However, as implied earlier, study of national initiatives has limited value in the assessment of 'where the Scots are now' in comprehensive policy. It was with this in mind that the writer undertook a small scale, informal and reasonably representative survey of education authority, school and other views in January 1974—with, it must be added, a very high degree of co-operation from those contacted.

Those taking part were asked to estimate, firstly in the broadest terms, how far the movement towards comprehensive education has gone in their own areas. The general picture which emerges is one of completion or almost total completion of the structural reorganisation process, as far as the principle of 'area intake' is concerned. It is difficult to estimate the degree of awareness in all Education Offices of actual developments in the schools, of course (and such a thing certainly varies from 'reasonable' to highly informed) but as far as the external structure is concerned information can be regarded as accurate. A predominant pattern of six-year secondaries, with Highlands and Islands variations of two-year feeder 'junior highs' (a solution dictated by island geography but claimed in some cases to be 'half way there' to total concentration in six year schools) and four-year 12-16 schools in some more industrial areas of

the centre, emerges in answer here.

Next, on the question of the reality in practice of a 'Common Course' in S1 and S2, the following appeared fairly true. The picture, as one Director of Education put it, is 'patchy'. Some schools operate a full Common Course for two years, some for one, with variations from one pattern to the other within the same authority area. Particularly in large urban areas like Edinburgh and Glasgow is this the case, quite understandably in view of the latitude accorded to a large corps of headmasters and headmistresses with a wide spectrum of conservative or progressive views. In the northern and island counties, the move towards a two-year common course seems further advanced, especially in Orkney and Zetland, with a progressive policy taking shape in the same direction in NW mainland areas such as Sutherland. There are also, however, if one reads between the lines of some guarded comments, schools here and there in which the old streaming system is preserved despite policy pressures both from local and central levels.

## New 15-16 curricula

Correspondents were asked to comment on curricular change in S3 and S4, especially in the light of RSLA. Some areas were unable to give much detail under this heading. But others present an account of much experimentation with the courses of the type foreshadowed by the RSLA pamphlets of 1966 and 1970 in the areas of work, leisure and the like. Options, choices and bridging courses are being introduced, and in the case of Glasgow a great deal of concerted work has been done by Working Parties and other groups to urge and implement a highly flexible and individualised system of timetabling for the 14-16 group in many schools. The intention is to make the range of possibilities much wider than the basic three (certificate, non-certificate and bridging) which tend to be the rule in most other areas. This, it should be pointed out, is happening in one of the three Scottish authorities beset by terrible problems of teacher shortage, but which nevertheless manages to lead the way in many things educational. Another feature which stands out is the use of linkage courses between school and further education centres at this stage of the curriculum. Thus both a measure of freedom and courses more relevant than the secondary can provide are available to RSLA pupils in particular. Perhaps it could be added that the flexible

curricular possibilities are beginning to cause a blurring of the categorisation of such pupils implicit in the last sentence. Lastly, some authorities like Fife and Dumbarton are already in possession of resource and development centres where work is in hand on materials and aids to assist with programmes for Common Course, RSLA and minority time studies. It is reasonable to suppose that the nine larger Regional Authorities after 1975 should take this process further.

Questions on the class organisation of S1 and S2 specifically produced evidence of a strong preference (in the writer's limited survey) for mixed ability with remedial class separate, and a tendency to extend this pattern gradually from S1 to S2. This can possibly be slightly clarified and corrected if set against the wider SED survey of 1972 where a slightly larger percentage (29.3%) are said to be totally 'mixed' and those with 'mixed and separate remedial' run a close second (26.8%).

The last major area covered was that of Counselling and Guidance 'as it actually is'. A divergence of opinion obviously still exists from area to area as to vertical and horizontal structuring of the school. That, however, appears to be a less vital issue than the extent to which authorities are giving a clear lead to the development of the system in schools. Some have produced commendable reports outlining aims and objectives, duties of staff at various levels etc., while some are perhaps doing less than they should in this direction. A good indication of the 'progressiveness' of an authority is the trouble taken in some cases to hold conferences and courses for the teachers involved. An interesting dimension is added by two headmasters of very small secondaries in various forms of the observation that school is sometimes too small for a structured system of guidance staff, and that the national policy in fact implies in such a case pastoral care by the headmaster—who still knows all his pupils.

Some individual enquiries to secondary schools of varying sizes and different social backgrounds (rural or urban) produced some additional insights similar in quality to the last mentioned. A limited range of ability in a very small school was seen as a difficulty in proceeding towards full comprehensivisation. On the other hand, in Highland schools, the old tradition of an above average percentage taking certificate courses (this has been called 'education for export' in the past) obviously continues, the implication being that the organisation of 'RSLA' and non-certificate courses is on a much more limited scale than in the large urban school. But the rural

group also produced (this time in a very *large* and very vital island secondary with wide and varied pupil intake) perhaps the most compelling example in the survey of a 'rolling reform' towards the full comprehensive ideal. Observations like 'we regard the S2 arrangements as requiring re-examination and we are looking at possible improvements for next session' and (under the heading of Guidance) 'allocation of time to staff is slowly improving but it is clear that more is necessary' are signs, one would suppose, of a healthy and progressive concern to render the secondary school as effective an instrument as possible for the 'education according to age ability and aptitude of the pupils'.

## **New forms of assessment**

If one thing impedes more than any other the development of comprehensive education in Scotland, it is arguably the lack of new and appropriate forms of assessment over the four-year 12-16 period. But changes of certain kinds (both national and on individual school initiative) have appeared.

Nationally, the O Grade certificate (introduced in 1962, taken by an ever increasing number in the years between then and RSLA and designed as a goal for the top 30% of the ability range) has been transformed in the last year into a certificate with five gradings from A to E, aimed now at 70% of the age cohort. This has come in for much criticism in the Scottish educational press as: (1) too great an adherence to a watered down version of the old Scottish pride in academic standards; (2) the devaluation of the examination itself; (3) no real solution to the problem of a satisfying goal for the less academic pupil; (4) a shelving of the problem of the remaining 30% of lowest ability.

At individual school level, there exists an isolated example in SW Scotland of a secondary whose head is trying to solve the problem by presenting candidates in 1974 for the CSE Mode 3 of the North (it does not seem 'north' from this end!) Regional Examination Board in Newcastle. He claims that he detects signs of other schools following his path, but this view must be balanced against growing feelings elsewhere that the CSE does not constitute the signpost to Scotland that it might once

have been supposed. Therein lies the advantage of observing the earlier experiments of the southern partners!

An interesting and possibly significant beginning was made in 1972, however, on the question of future forms of internal school assessment. In that year the Headmasters' Association of Scotland formed a Working Party, drawn from all levels of the school system, from administration, industry and the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) to examine the assessment question. It is reported in the November 1973 newsletter of the SCRE that, as a result, a project has now been initiated (with the title of 'Pupil Profiles') which is designed to produce 'a reporting procedure giving a comprehensive picture of a pupil's aptitudes and interests at 16+ that would be understood and generally recognised'. It is thought likely this will involve two stages: (1) continuous assessment by teachers, in consultation with guidance staff, over all the secondary years; (2) preparation of a final 'profile report' when the pupil leaves. The ratings given in this profile would be on a five-point scale, not only in subjects but also in general areas such as numeracy and speech and personality characteristics such as reliability and perseverance. In the more academic area of subjects, composite scores would be used as well as individual subject assessments. The Newsletter pinpoints as the probable difficulties to be overcome: (1) comparability of schools within such a 'generally recognised' assessment pattern; (2) the teacher's problem of avoiding sentimentality and aiming at objectivity; (3) variations in content and level of courses; (4) acceptance of the structure by the teachers. Finally, the situation to be met by any successful system of assessment is described as a 'majority of pupils... leaving school without any recognised assessment of their abilities for their own guidance and that of employers and educators' and the need for national standardisation of some sort. By the time this article appears in print it is possible that some interesting interim results will have appeared from this experiment.

A concluding comment? Perhaps it is fitting to underline the fact that, although there are obvious differences between the Scottish school system and its neighbours, the thrust of policy (towards a secondary school developing *every* kind of ability to the full and assessing it justly for appropriate social purposes and outlets) is felt in the north as much as it is in the south.

# A New Town goes comprehensive

**Jim Attfield and Ken Coram**

Headmasters respectively of a primary and secondary school in Stevenage, Ken Coram and Jim Attfield together examine the gradual transition to comprehensive provision in a New Town. Ken Coram is also on the Editorial Board of **Forum**.

Under the scheme of secondary reorganisation introduced in Stevenage in 1969, all twelve schools in the town became 5-form-entry, all-ability schools covering the 11 to 18 age range. Previously the schools consisted of 7 secondary modern (all mixed) 3 grammar (one mixed, one boys', one girls') and two denominational schools (both single sex) whose transition to comprehensives was phased over a five year period.

In September 1969 some 1,350 children transferred from the primary stage; 5 of the secondary modern schools were at that time able to accept a full 5-form-entry of pupils over the whole ability range, the remaining county schools still taking a more restricted entry of pupils.

In September 1972 the twelve schools accepted a five form entry over the whole ability range, and they have done so again in 1973.

In many ways the town offered very favourable conditions for the change. The growing school population meant that schools could grow naturally to their new size and status and gave the authority the opportunity to provide building extensions and additional facilities. Plans to build new bipartite schools for the growing school population were cancelled and the money was used instead to improve existing schools. There was widespread support for the scheme in the town generally, among parents and in the schools, and a high degree of co-operation between the heads and staffs of the several schools themselves and with the local administration, all determined to make a success of the scheme.

Thus the last five years have seen a steady growth towards all-ability schools with no dramatic changes but causing widespread satisfaction in the town. However, aspects of the development of the scheme give rise for some concern about the future. These centre chiefly round the difficulty of achieving parity of entry among the different schools.

The Hertfordshire Education Committee attach great importance to parental choice of school and in this the scheme has been markedly successful. Parents are asked to list four schools in order of preference and in 1972 94.7% of parents were given their first or second choice and in 1973 this figure was increased to 97.3%.

The individual schools in Stevenage do not serve a particular neighbourhood area, rather they are situated in clusters around the town, and one large newly-developed residential area in the north of the town has no nearby secondary school at all. Parents can and do choose schools away from their home area and a pattern of parental choice is developing whereby some schools are heavily oversubscribed and others are undersubscribed. As a result of this there is a disparity in terms of ability between the entries to the schools with some schools receiving more and others less than their fair share of the more able children. This is bound to affect the examination results achieved by these schools (though by general agreement these are not publicised) and the size of their sixth forms. This last point is of crucial importance with the first all-ability intakes entering the sixth forms next year and with the relative size of the sixth forms in its turn affecting parental choice. Thus there appears to be a danger that the system will develop into one with first and second class schools. In comments about the scheme this last point is made strongly by some of the former secondary modern schools.

To the former grammar schools the transition has presented particular difficulties in maintaining a full range of academic courses in the upper school for their selective pre-1969 entries while introducing a broader based curriculum at the lower end to suit pupils over a wider ability range.

The expectation of most parents is for a good, sound, traditional education with emphasis on traditional virtues particularly in relation to qualifications and examinations, and it is against this background that any changes in organisation and curricula must be viewed.

## Nonstreaming

All but two of the 10 county and 2 denominational schools have mixed ability classes in their first year and 3 schools have mixed ability classes for the first three years.

A former grammar school has since 1969 deliberately

created all-ability classes. Class groups stay as class groups for the whole five years; they are also the teaching groups for all subjects in the first year. In the second year limited setting is introduced for Mathematics and French. In the third year limited setting for Science is introduced. In the fourth year pupils begin the two year courses for which they have opted, mostly leading to CSE and GCE. At the beginning they do not aim at a specific examination and a pupil can move from one group to another at any time during the first year.

In the case of English, pupils remain in their all-ability form groups until the end of their fourth year.

In Mathematics in the first year the all-ability classes use worksheets and individual copies of text books, instead of the usual set of 30 grammar school books. Amongst the new subjects at 4/5th form level are Drama—internal Mode 3 CSE which is in process of acceptance—and Design, covering design and manufacture in a variety of materials.

A denominational boys school which changed from a two-form grammar school to a five-form all-ability school in 1968 had a number of interesting comments to make. They had tried and discarded banding for mixed ability groups for the first three years with remedial withdrawal in very small groups. Environmental Studies as an integrated area of study in the first two years had been tried and found wanting. The Cambridge Classics project as an integrated experience involving the Departments of Classics, Music, Art, Drama, Remedial and History had been found very successful.

Unlike other schools in the town they were able to trace their first all-ability intake which numbered 132 through to examinations. There were 7 transfers out during years One to Four, 15 Fourth-year leavers with two more transferring in the Fifth year. 108 boys reached the end of the Fifth year—of these 103 entered for CSE in a total of 457 subjects and only two failed to get any CSEs at all. At the same time 68 candidates entered for 'O' level and recorded an average of 3.4 passes each. Counting CSE Grade 1, it is possible to say that 75 candidates shared 289 'O' level passes which is almost 4 each. Under the old scheme the school would have been pleased if 45 boys out of 60 had averaged 4 to 5 'O' levels each. This means that a considerable number of boys who would not have been eligible for the school in its former state have achieved good 'O' level results. Sixty of the boys have moved into the Sixth Form.

Most schools considered there were significantly

greater expectations by both parents and pupils over the whole range of ability for higher academic standards and for consideration of paths to Further and Higher Education. This is an interesting movement towards equality in educational opportunity, in that the previous built-in advantage of having middle class parents will tend to weaken.

All the schools who were previously secondary modern report a much improved self-image by the majority of pupils, but one school was disappointed at the lack of ambition amongst girls who could have undertaken further education to a higher level, but could not wait to get into clerical work in local industry.

Another school, previously a grammar school, commented that obviously the pupils do not feel selected any more, and the change to secondary school is less marked because they find themselves in an all-ability class similar to that of the junior school which they have recently left. Possibly also there was less rivalry than before and less need to keep up with the next person. Overall this school considered that the atmosphere was less academic but that the enthusiasm for activities carried out by the school as a whole remained unabated.

All schools have improved their remedial departments. The Stevenage infant, junior and secondary schools have co-operated on an enquiry into reading standards in the schools which has increased interest in the problems of the less able.

One might question what would be the results on reading standards and English generally throughout the secondary schools if the remedial department was rated as highly for salary purposes and promotion prospects as perhaps the Science or Mathematics Department, for it is clear that remedial work in English extends far beyond the bottom 5%.

The Hertfordshire County Council plan has been described as a compromise with the comprehensive system, with the smaller all-ability schools because of their size (5-form-entry) being available in greater numbers and consequently offering to parents greater freedom of choice.

This plan is an exceedingly costly one in buildings, materials and staff. When the various schemes for reorganisation were being actively discussed, one of the criticisms of the plan was that the 12 sixth forms in the different schools would be very wasteful of highly qualified staff particularly in the specialist fields of science, mathematics and languages. It now seems



# From grammar to comprehensive upper school

J S Dodge

Lutterworth Grammar School for 500 selective children, to which Mr Dodge was appointed Headmaster in 1962, became a 14-plus Upper School under the Leicestershire Plan in 1967. Here he recounts the school's responses as it developed to a fully comprehensive Upper School for 1200.

The first simple effect of re-organisation was to deprive us of an 11 plus intake and to offer admission to all those pupils of 14 plus in the area's secondary modern schools who wished to continue their secondary education to 16. The fourth year curriculum and time-table seemed the main problem. We were, I think, even more naïve in those days than now. We acknowledged the injustice and inaccuracy of selection at 11 plus but felt, I seem to remember, that at 14 plus it could be more just and accurate, and we may have been right up to a point. At any rate, we decided to institute a banding system to cater for the needs of over a hundred 11 plus selective entrants going into their fourth year and being joined by rather more 14 plus secondary modern pupils opting to join us. The 'year' of 250 covered the whole ability range but, because of the lack of 'early leavers' was unduly weighted towards the middle and upper end. There were to be two bands with up to 120 pupils in each, basically four sets in standard subjects like English and Mathematics. The 'Y' band followed mainly 'O' level courses, but with an underpinning layer of CSE courses, the 'X' band mainly CSE courses, but with a layer of 'O' level options. By this means we could, we thought, accommodate the varying needs of the individual pupil, guard against inefficient selection of pupils who were new to us, and cope with development of unforeseen potential during the fourth and fifth years. We felt that selection with such safeguards and at 14 plus was reasonable and justifiable, and I think it was at the time. Far less reason-

able, and potentially disastrous, was our decision to separate off an 'S' group of about a dozen who, undoubtedly in need of remedial provision, would function as a distinct group under the care of a 'father-figure' and with access to 'special' courses in the other departments. A fair example, one would say now, of starting not with a philosophy but with pre-conceptions.

Within the bands choice of courses was as flexible as possible: English, Mathematics and French were compulsory in the Y band; English and Mathematics in the X band, with French surviving as an option. Beyond these courses, the choice was as open as time-tabling would permit and made after consultation among child, parents, high and upper schools. Obviously the concept of 'forms' disappeared and a different pastoral/administrative pattern was required. Tutorial groups, composed almost randomly, and with no relationship to the curriculum pattern, were formed, about twenty-three pupils being allocated to a tutor with responsibility for their immediate needs.

By July 1967 we were a grammar school of 600 pupils. At the end of July buildings were completed to bring us up to standard for that type and size of school. In September 1967 we became an upper school of 700 (and a Community College to boot). But we felt well off.

In retrospect the transition went smoothly enough, although all we'd claim now is that the planned arrangements effected it without coming close to many of the real issues involved. The approach was, and remains,

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that these criticisms may have been well founded, particularly as the ex-secondary modern schools will be building up their sixth forms over the next 2 or 3 years in a time of great financial stringency. Although the schools are already co-operating in the field of sixth form activities by holding common afternoons for games and general studies, only the most tentative steps have so far been taken towards saving staff by co-operating in academic subjects, etc.

To sum up; the first five years represent a most encouraging and successful start for the scheme, but

the next few years will present some additional problems.

Finally, the comment by an ex grammar head epitomises the nature of the challenge that a truly comprehensive school makes to its staff. 'There is much less feeling of rivalry . . . but one big problem is dissuading the very able boy from the ordinary home from taking the ordinary boy as his model for work rate . . . and some of the ordinary boys from taking the slowest as their model'. The staffs of all the secondary schools in Stevenage would claim with confidence to have met that challenge successfully.

empirical, my feeling being that comprehensive re-organisation to a large extent defines itself as it develops.

I remember with some mild shame our surprise on finding the 14 plus entrants indistinguishable from the 11 plus rump—simple and silly, perhaps, but a lesson that has to be learnt wherever the formal patterns of one arbitrary system are to give way to another hopefully less so. The isolated 'S' group was the first mistake we recognised. More than divisive, it seemed to impugn the integrity of the whole school. That three years later one of its members left with three 'O' level passes and an excellent CSE record might seem both to justify and condemn it. What we could not accept was its creation of an identifiably disadvantaged group, the 'spastics' as their contemporaries rapidly named them. The problem was, clearly, to remove the stigma without ignoring the needs that remained. Comprehensive re-organisation that achieves equality by a change of label and either retains previous divisions or *ignores the real individual differences that underlay them* must be anathema. We were not at the time quite ready to see that the banding system itself, which seemed to be functioning smoothly, was similarly divisive. Our first reaction, therefore, was to revise the banding, creating three bands (Y, X, W) and reducing the numbers in each. Our main attention was directed to the needs of the less able (the W band), frankly, I think, because it was here we felt least adequate. Consequently, it was here that consistent curriculum development really began. The group Mode III syllabuses adopted for the X band showed their inadequacies particularly in the W band, both in their content and implied methods and in their reluctance to adopt thorough-going continuous assessment techniques. First, History and Geography departments combined in developing a single-school Environmental Studies syllabus designed to operate flexibly as an examined or non-examined course. (We have never liked any distinction of this kind, preferring first to develop a course relevant both to pupils and to the importance of the matters under study, and then to offer it for the CSE Board's approval for examination purposes as they seem advisable.) This course took, as its starting points, social, political, moral and environmental issues that seemed to us relevant to pupils' experience and to their future influence on society. Its environmental sections started in a study of rural and urban Leicestershire but expanded outwards to national and international studies. A little ponderous, perhaps, when put like that, but not when in the hands of young and perceptive teachers. In the Technical department the development was towards the teaching of basic craft

skills in this band through a link course with the Hinckley College of Further Education, where facilities for building crafts were available. A little patronising, perhaps, unless one accepts a natural vocational inclination in pupils of this age, which we'd think as foolish to frustrate as to ignore their wider human aspirations.

## Self-fulfilling opportunity

The movement towards single-school Mode III syllabuses was also effective in the X band, but more subject-based and less radical. At the same time we watched examination results carefully and, I think, naturally. In these terms the figures for 1969 and 1970 for us hammered the last nail into the 11 plus coffin when 30% of the 'O' level passes gained came from 14 plus entrants in the X band. More impressive, however, was a dramatic rise in the number of applicants for 'A' level courses—25% up on the previous (exclusively 11 plus) year. By 1971 we had a 100% increase with no decline in 'A' level achievement. (Prior to re-organisation we had had never more than four sixth form applicants from the secondary modern schools.) At the same time pressure for staying on after 16 grew from pupils with no wish to attempt 'A' levels, and a first-year 6th now admits 150 entrants to 'A' level, 'O' level and non-examination courses and combinations of all three. Although one has more than a suspicion that some at least of the staying-on is inertial, the comprehensive sixth form begins to emerge as a reality, placing, it must be admitted, strains on a school taking over much of the responsibility previously exercised by Colleges of Further Education. We'd identify this area as one of the major problems at the moment. For some years prior to re-organisation we had had a sixth form centre in a large country house adjacent to our site and the sixth form had developed an atmosphere closer to that of a college, having a measure of self-government and a real corporate sense. It does offer a step beyond 'school' but its development needs not only more thought but an allocation of resources that seems unlikely in present circumstances. I do not think anyone has yet honestly assessed the financial cost of providing truly comprehensive secondary education.

Developments like this, however, served to emphasise the artificiality of banding and we have now discarded it, without accepting the conclusion of mixed-ability grouping. Our yearly intake of about 500 is now split into two parallel divisions, each aiming to give a wide

flexibility of options within a pattern of ability sets.

The most recent, and probably most radical, influence in our thinking has undoubtedly been the raising of the school-leaving age. For some reason ROSLA appeared to have more emotional impact than re-organisation. The optional system of transfer at 14 plus had given us about 65% of any one year's pupils throughout the catchment area, the remaining 35% staying in the high schools and leaving at 15. Thus we faced an intake half as big again by the advent of those previously uninterested in what we had to offer. We obviously needed to take another good look at ourselves. Discussion and planning occupied three years and involved the whole staff.

## Radical curriculum review

The immediate effect was the production of radically revised courses across the entire range. And again they were offered for approval as single-school Mode III CSE syllabuses, but only when they had been discussed and described solely in terms of the pupils for whom they were devised. The Environmental Studies syllabus was intensively re-thought to form the basis for a Humanities course embracing History, Geography, English and Moral Education and working integrally with a fully developed remedial unit. Team teaching was introduced here, as it was in a similar development in the Mathematics department. (This was made physically possible by the building of a new block giving twelve teaching areas but with flexible walls so that they could be opened into two very large spaces or any permutation between two and twelve. Re-organisation of the school library and the establishing and staffing of a resources unit also became possible and necessary. Again one must emphasise that facilities and resources are central to re-organisation—it has to be paid for.) Science courses were not so much re-thought as re-founded and the Technical department link course was extended and tied in to Housecraft. Music and Health Education courses, previously limited in time-table terms, were introduced for the whole school.

It is far too early to measure the success of these developments, although quite extensive modifications have already been found necessary. Vague pointers at present, perhaps, are that, out of 190 fifth year pupils legally entitled to leave at Easter, only 40 elected to do so, and that the previously consistent number of 150 applying for sixth form admission has this year risen to 200, although we suspect that this is an inflated figure.

## On-going and demanding

Re-organisation 'took place' nearly seven years ago, but I see no sign of its completion. The pastoral system instituted in 1967 does not satisfy us. The tutorial group pattern remains, but a deputy head now oversees the high-upper school, and another the fifth-sixth, transition. The fourth and fifth years have two division 'heads' each, as has the sixth form, and I think pastoral care and guidance is more thorough than it was in the grammar school. But once the comparative homogeneity of the grammar school is lost, problems of guidance, care, discipline and simple contact and understanding become much more insistent. I confess to some mistrust of formal answers to these problems.

I think most of us have, over the past seven years, come to see what a school can be, even to have some inkling of what it ought to be. We are still in transition. We have, for instance, yet to face fully the implications for the whole school of the re-thinking that admitting the 'non-selective' majority incurred. We have no blueprint, but rather some pointers to and some experience of what re-organisation must mean. And despite a liberal and beneficent LEA, my conviction is that such improvements as have been achieved so far have been dependent on the goodwill, and to some extent have occurred at the expense, of the staff of the school. But I see and fear a limit to the resilience of teachers and ancillaries simply because, having come to see and respond to the possibilities, they can neither see nor expect any real improvement in staffing ratios.

# Comprehensive from scratch

**Derek Roberts**

From Geography Master in two Grammar Schools, Derek Roberts was in charge of the Upper School at David Lister under Albert Rowe for three years before his appointment as Head of the new Campion School at Bugbrooke in Northants.

Self description is notoriously difficult. Many applicants for new posts must be aware of the conflict between self-advertisement and modesty. Writers of case studies involving their own school are similarly afflicted. We share Robert Burns' desire to see ourselves as others see us but so far have had to be content with the attempts of a perceptive caretaker to remedy our deficiency.

In September 1973 Campion School began its seventh year of existence. The nine hundred and fifty children and fifty odd Staff live and work together in a community which is still evolving but which owes a great deal to the hundred and fifty children and nine Staff who originally settled in the new and incomplete buildings on top of Bugbrooke hill. The Caretaker's wisdom led to lots of advice; he assured us that schools were like babies and a good start was all important. He used to quote the caretakers' version of the Jesuits creed, insisting that if we sorted things out in the first seven years, we should not be easily put off course. Our early days appear to be worth some attention.

The area of the twenty-two rural parishes which the school was to serve had not been over-troubled with local secondary education. Once the 'all age' schools had disappeared from the villages older children had been 'bussed' to more distant secondary modern or grammar schools. A school set amidst the parishes had much in its favour; for many parents a local new secondary school, be it comprehensive, was better than a distant one. The distant schools, swelling with their local population explosion were happy to hand over the rural children. We escaped the ill feeling generated by juggling of catchment areas and the border raids which often accompany the establishment of a new school. Co-operative parents produced co-operative children and our first intake obviously appreciated the new facilities and opportunities which had been provided; they brought with them the easy, friendly relationships of the village primary schools where teachers were obviously 'people' and 'friends'. To the good buildings and generous facilities, which well-supported children enjoyed, was added another bonus. We had several school governors who were deeply involved in the comprehensive ideal. They knew the villages intimately; they knew most of the pupils and they were more

concerned to join in the normal work-a-day activities of the school than to sit on the Hall platform. They produced an atmosphere of goodwill towards the new school and they were flexible enough to accept slightly unconventional ideas about discipline and relationships within our society. They were prepared to support a mixed ability teaching system even though some at least believed we were attempting a very difficult task.

The first intake of the school was 'creamed' and selection did not end until 1970. Because we began with the firm intention to develop as a comprehensive school for eleven to eighteen-year-olds, we staffed the school with teachers who were interested in establishing the teaching patterns, methods and structures of a fully comprehensive school. We could offer children a richer diet than they had had in the secondary modern schools and we continually reminded them of our increased expectations. The children's standards improved; their own increased expectations influenced parents and they worked with the involvement which is typical of pioneers. The early 'success' was important because it reinforced parental support, added fact to comprehensive ideals and made parents of able children content enough to see selection finally disappear.

## Initial advantages

Local conditions were more favourable for the start of a new comprehensive school than we had any right to expect. In addition the gradual increase in size with each annual intake meant that problems came in a gentle trickle and we had time to isolate each one. The small number of staff and children of the early days were able to develop exceptionally close personal relationships and these relationships ensured that the reaction to problems was co-operation rather than confrontation. Everyone was known, everyone counted. Children and staff were keenly aware that they were starting a new school and knew they all had something to contribute.

The guide lines on some of the basic issues were reasonably clear to me before any staff were appointed.

The staff who did join, did so, presumably, because they were committed to similar ideas or at least were flexible enough to give them a try in practice. The ideas themselves were the result of crossing almost too many years of selective academic experience with three years of Albert Rowe's David Lister school. Academic excellence and generally raising academic standards were still important but I absorbed enough of Albert Rowe's teaching to believe that a school must provide the opportunity for every child to achieve specific excellence. The School was to be a school for every child rather than a place which distilled the essence for a group which was internally selected and favoured. We accepted that children's abilities on all manner of functions and processes would differ but hoped we could avoid judgment on children based upon our school masterly regard to certain academic abilities. If selection at eleven did not make sense between schools then there was a compelling logic to reject it within the school; if individuality had any virtue, we had to foster it; if expectation was a powerful motivating force for both children and staff we had to develop an atmosphere which made it positive and all pervasive. Out of this came the decision to have parallel forms in the first year of our existence. We were committed to unstreamed groups and to mixed ability teaching. This was probably the fundamental decision about the new school and its effects were to influence almost every sphere of school life.

The children in the first unstreamed year had a curriculum which was conventional; the fundamental change was in the methods of teaching it. Every member of staff had experience of teaching in at least two schools and every one had the expertise of subject specialists. A great deal was to be demanded of them in establishing their methods and the 'subject' based curriculum gave them the anchor of familiarity when much else was changing. We had a reasonably precise idea of our targets in lessons and we could concentrate on developing the methods and techniques needed for mixed ability groups. Integration of subjects might come later but we were concerned to take one step at a time in order to concentrate our effort and facilitate evaluation of the new and more easily isolated innovation. Our maths was 'modern'; French was predominantly audio and visual. History and Geography were geared to film, slides, tape and individual programme of work; English became a spoken language to a much greater extent than in our previous experience; and Science, Craft, Home Economics and Technical

Studies were essentially practical and individualised. The Staff-room became a market for exchange of teaching ideas; classroom doors were usually open as an invitation to staff to go in and learn or criticise.

## Nonstreaming extended

As expertise grew in both children and staff we prepared to take the first intake into their second year still in unstreamed groups and still with the conventional subject areas. In the third year some departments planned to set and were given a timetable structure that would allow setting or reversal to mixed ability groups. In the event only two departments used sets and then modified their arrangements, but the important decision to extend unstreamed teaching then came voluntarily from within the department. In the fourth

## Newly Qualified Teachers

A new scheme for newly qualified teachers has been started. Teachers in their first year of teaching may take out a subscription to **Forum** for half the normal price, fifty pence (50p). Students in their last year at Colleges of Education (and those in University Education Departments) who wish to take advantage of this concession are asked to fill in the form below.

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and fifth years pupils followed their own choice on an option scheme for almost two-thirds of the school week. Groups were now self-selecting for individual subjects and generally the choice reflected the pupil's own recognition of his strengths and weaknesses. There was no prestige course and there was no 'pecking order' of subjects; this helped to avoid distinctions of superior and inferior students. Over sixty per cent of our unselected intake remained for a fifth year and every one entered for either CSE or 'O' level examinations. They were surprisingly good at collecting passes after five years without any of the competitive paraphernalia. Thirteen out of the original ninety odd first year pupils have now secured College of Education places or University offers for Autumn 1974. 'Staying on' was established as the norm and the second intake remained for a fifth year in even greater proportions.

Discussion amongst the advocates of unstreaming has, in recent years, been concerned with the establishment of a rationale of unstreaming. There is a division

between those who primarily adopt mixed ability groupings in order to raise educational standards, in the traditional sense, for a greater number of children and those who welcome unstreaming for its social values and possibilities of social engineering. We began by following the narrower educational path and this is still our primary intention but we have enjoyed an apparently inevitable bonus in the quality of social relationships within the school. If we can teach without competitive marks and orders of merit, without confusing evaluation with selection, then we stand a better chance of convincing children that they all matter in our class. We are more likely to be believed when we try to emphasise co-operation, tolerance, sympathy and good neighbourliness in our communal life.

After seven years of unstreamed existence most of us for most of the time take it for granted. Our present major concern is to preserve the relationships and the personal involvement of pupils and teachers in a school which now has the progressive problems of increasing size. Greater size seems to foster complications of structure in responsibility and communication, and often we are uncertain whether we are creating channels or labyrinths. New staff, we fear, might have to become role takers rather than role makers. Our discerning caretaker, conscious of all our early advantages, used to comment that 'only a fool could mess up this one'. Perhaps the second seven years will be the worst: certainly they will make very different demands upon us.

If self description is difficult, self evaluation is next to impossible yet we should include in any case the study of not only what we try to do but how well we might be doing it. Certainly we can make favourable comparisons of examination certificates, of voluntary staying on, of high attendance rates of both pupils and staff, of staff-turnover and the like. One of my own criteria is the frequency with which former pupils of modest academic attainment return on their half-days off to spend a couple of hours 'inside' again. Identifying the important factors in the creation of our situation is similarly difficult. The way we have grown, the quality of staff who have joined us, the home influence on children and the variety of local employment opportunities all undoubtedly contribute to our situation but we believe that the veterans of the staff would put the original decision to avoid streaming very high on their list. Unstreaming allowed us to make the most of all the other advantages this new school was blessed with.

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The next **Forum** will include:

Critical analyses of the sociology of knowledge in its application to the school curriculum, by Olive Banks and Joan Simon;

'Community involvement in Chinese Education' by Peter Mauger;

'Classroom Observation Studies' by Eric Linfield;

'The Primary Curriculum' by Ernest Choat;

A report of the **Forum/CCE** June conference.

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# Inner city comprehensive

## Patrick Bailey

Patrick Bailey describes and comments upon developments at the Sidney Stringer Comprehensive School and Community College in central Coventry during its first eighteen months of operation. He wishes most particularly to acknowledge the help given by Geoffrey Holroyde, Head of Sidney Stringer, and members of staff in compiling this report.

Coventry was one of the first major British cities to adopt a comprehensive form of secondary education. For reorganisation purposes, the city (population c 335,000) was divided roughly into twelve wedge-shaped areas radiating out from near the centre to the suburbs, and an inner area. Comprehensive schools were established in each of the peripheral wedges before the inner city area, with its many problems, was tackled. This inner area is designated an Educational Priority Area and for the past five years it has been the scene of a Home Office Community Development Project. This is the catchment for the Sidney Stringer School and Community College, which opened in August 1972.

Sidney Stringer was formed by the amalgamation of the Frederick Bird and Broad Heath Secondary Modern Schools, together with the Priory School, Coventry's principal centre for teaching English to immigrants. Each of the Secondary Moderns had about 700 pupils and 35 staff. At reorganisation, the two staffs were transferred almost *in toto* to Sidney Stringer. Both schools were streamed, and may be said to have had strongly conventional forms of curriculum and organisation. Immigrants, predominantly of Asian origin, accounted for seventy and fifty per cent respectively of their populations. The Priory School, whose staff was also absorbed, had about 80 pupils and ten specialist teachers, and provided English language classes for recently-arrived immigrants, both adults and children.

The new school was planned as an eight-form entry 11-18 year mixed comprehensive, with about 1,200 pupils. A six-acre site was obtained not far from Coventry Cathedral, and here a complex of outstandingly well-equipped buildings was erected at an initial cost of c £750,000. Unfortunately, the site is only large enough for the buildings themselves; there is very little recreation, and no car-parking space. From the first, the new school was envisaged as a full-scale community operation, and some of the money to pay for sports facilities, a community lounge and other items, available to the whole community after school hours,

came from funds not normally available to secondary schools.

From the very beginning, it proved necessary to depart from the original plan for the school. Almost inevitably, the school opened with the new buildings unfinished. More serious was the fact that the population of the catchment area proved to be larger than had been anticipated, so that an annual entry of twelve, instead of eight forms, had to be accommodated. This was done by retaining the buildings of the former Frederick Bird School as an annexe, inconveniently situated one mile from the main site. Staff have to travel between the two units, though this movement is kept to a minimum. The annexe is used to house years one and two of the comprehensive intake. With present numbers and the need for senior pupils to have specialist facilities available on the main site, it is difficult to avoid this arrangement. The old Priory School building houses the Faculty of English for Immigrants, and overflow workshops and laboratories for the senior pupils. It is separated from the main site by a very busy main road.

On present showing, it is anticipated that numbers at Sidney Stringer will rise to at least 1,800, with a sixth form whose size will depend very much upon the curriculum offered. There is therefore no prospect of an early end to the school's accommodation difficulties. Currently, a staff of 120 caters for the needs of school and community projects.

## The school environment

The inner area of Coventry served by Sidney Stringer, mainly the districts of Hillfields and Foleshill, consists almost entirely of Victorian terrace houses, demolition sites and new, 'high-rise' flats. Many of the old houses are still without indoor lavatories and baths.

A primary task of the new community school is to establish contact with, and identify the needs of, the local community it serves, and then to find ways of meeting these needs. Many staff work both in the school and with the community, and it is the Head's

intention to develop the closest possible integration between the two sides of the enterprise, at all levels, including an involvement of pupils in community work. However, the first and absolute priority is to establish the school itself as a going concern, accepted and if possible respected by the community. Only then can it hope to provide an effective springboard for a wider community contribution. Accordingly, the Head and his staff have so far concentrated much of their effort upon the school, and school developments are the subject of this report.

## **The school and its problems**

The problems and drawbacks of neighbourhood comprehensive schools are well known, and Sidney Stringer is no exception. Inevitably it has inherited the effects of social and economic processes which have been at work in the Inner Ring at Coventry for half a century or more. Over the years, many of the more enterprising inhabitants have moved out, leaving behind those who are on the whole less able to cope with their environment and are often beset by family difficulties. Lately there has been a major replacement of the local population by immigrants, mainly of Asian origin though with some West Indians. In consequence of these changes, the distribution of ability among the Sidney Stringer population appears to be heavily skewed towards the lower end of the range. However, it is difficult to assess the real ability of pupils whose grasp of English is poor. As their English improves, Sidney Stringer may well develop a strong academic and technical side and a substantial sixth form. But this will not happen if selective outward migration continues, as it certainly will unless drastic improvements are made quickly to the physical environment.

Clearly, a crucial problem for Sidney Stringer is to devise a curriculum which takes account of the life and conditions the pupils see around them. This curriculum must appear worthwhile to those many pupils whose future seems to lie in working on the assembly lines of Coventry's car factories; and it must also open their eyes to wider opportunities. Geoffrey Holroyde has defined the objectives of the curriculum as: to help pupils to learn (1) how to survive in the environment in which they find themselves; (2) to understand that environment, so that they can work effectively to improve it; and (3) to come to terms with themselves, and to develop a concern for others. Personal develop-

ment is thus seen to be a principal purpose of the curriculum; the problem is, as always, how to achieve it.

The distinctive contribution of Sidney Stringer, so far, has been to insist that forms of organisation are just as important as curriculum content in conveying the message of a school, and to devise a form of organisation which involves the whole staff, and potentially, all interested members of the community, in solving the hard problems of curriculum.

## **An organic form of school organisation**

Geoffrey Holroyde points out that evidence from industry and elsewhere suggests that hierarchical forms of organisation are characteristic of industries with a low rate of change and relatively low levels of technology. Such organisations deprive their junior members of the opportunity to make decisions, and may cause the more enterprising to leave. In contrast, some of the most dynamic and innovative industries, such as those in the electronics and aerospace fields, are markedly non-hierarchical and involve as many of their staff as possible in fundamental debate and decision-making. The staff is seen not as a labour force but as a community of people with ideas; and ideas are recognised as the most valuable resource any enterprise possesses.

Sidney Stringer faces formidable problems; therefore the Head insists that it is essential to establish a school organisation which taps the reserve of talent, experience and initiative present in the staff, and which involves many members (ideally, all members) in active discussion, experiment and decision-making. The concept underlying this organisation, which would be termed 'organic' by organisation specialists, is that staff have the responsibility for directing and guiding groups of pupils through a network of learning experiences provided by a number of broadly-based and closely co-operating Faculties.

To this end, the 360 or so pupils in each year are divided into three mixed-ability 'mini-schools' or Houses, each of which is a community of about 120 pupils and seven staff, with a House Head as leader. The House teams have the task of designing and modifying a learning programme, appropriate to their pupils' needs, in consultation with Faculty staff. A Deputy Head, who has the title of Director of Personal Development, co-ordinates the work of the Houses. His task



is to lead and advise upon the complicated process of steering the House groups through the learning facilities provided, and to suggest modifications of those facilities to Faculty Heads.

The curriculum is provided by five Faculties: Mathematics and Science, Language and Communication, Humanities (Upper School) and Interdisciplinary Studies (Lower School), Art and Design, and Physical Education and Recreation. In addition there is a specialist Faculty of English for Immigrants. Remedial services are provided from outside the Faculty organisation, and the whole learning operation is supported by a co-ordinated services team, including the library, resources centre and office staffs, and a careers advice service, based in a purpose-built centre. Catering and other ancillary staffs are regarded as integral parts of the total staff team. An important aspect of the whole organisation is that many staff are involved in Community College work, as has already been noted.

Viewed as a timetabling exercise, the organisation means that the House groups of 120 pupils and seven staff are taken as the basic units. Faculty staff exchange with members of House teams to provide the different learning experiences required.

All staff, apart from the Head and his Deputies, are members both of House and Faculty teams. Staff members are therefore in an excellent position to identify curriculum requirements from the pupils' angle, and to discuss curriculum design and implementation from the subject and resources angles. The organisation is also designed to give as many staff members as possible the opportunity to plan and carry through significant parts of the curriculum. In fact, as a Faculty team member taking over part of the programme of a House, every member will sooner or later plan a unit of work of his own. Sometimes he will be called upon to plan and lead a team-teaching operation. Clearly, this form of rotating team leadership might pose problems of status for some teachers, but it does not appear to have done so at Sidney Stringer.

The Head also believes that an important function of any enterprise is to train its staff for leadership. A school ought to be training future Heads, Deputies and senior staff. The organic form of organisation at Sidney Stringer provides far more opportunities for the gaining of leadership experience, and for the exchange and development of ideas than is possible in an hierarchical organisation.

## Discussion

This is a first interim report on an experiment in progress, and it would be wrong to make more than a few tentative comments. However, a number of questions immediately arise, which are of the widest possible importance.

(1) First, one is bound to ask, how far can the form of an organisation affect classroom practice? Will it be possible at Sidney Stringer for some teachers to carry on much as they did in the old Secondary Modern Schools? Certainly experience in industry suggests that organisational change alone is never enough. It may facilitate change, but it is unlikely to cause it. Therefore we wait to see what additional conditions need to be fulfilled if the new school is to achieve its extremely ambitious objectives. It will also be useful to know what conditions, if any, make their achievement difficult or even impossible.

(2) The success of the House teams in identifying the curricular needs of their pupils clearly depends upon effective 'market research'. Can this be done, and if so, how? Traditionally, schools tend to be product-oriented, ie subject-based, enterprises in which subject specialists mainly provide what they believe their pupils ought to have. Peter Drucker and others have pointed to the grave perils of clinging to product-oriented forms of thought in times of change. Many commercial firms, including some large and highly prestigious ones, have gone bankrupt for just this reason. They continued to make what they were good at making long after people wanted to buy their products. One suspects that bankruptcy in more subtle forms affects many schools. So, the crucial question for Sidney Stringer must be, can the staff really find out what their pupils and the community want; and then, can they supply what is wanted?

(3) Following from this point, it seems likely that the market research operation will emphasise that schools alone cannot solve the deeper problems of curriculum; that in fact only a concerted effort by the whole national community can hope to produce satisfactory answers. In order to design a curriculum which really involves that sizeable proportion of pupils for whom school seems to offer nothing worthwhile, it may for instance be necessary to enlist the active help of employers and trades unionists, and to change the insurance laws. If Sidney Stringer can identify some of the changes that need to be made, it will perform a most valuable service.

(4) It is also well known that the performance of an

# Comprehensive education within a community centre

Ron Mitson and Malcolm Holder

The Principal and Deputy Principal, the latter being responsible for resources and in-service training, portray the thinking and planning behind the creation of Abraham Moss Centre in Manchester.

The Abraham Moss Centre is a purpose-built community centre in the north of Manchester. It includes: an eight-form entry comprehensive school; a College of further education; an adult education centre; a shared-use district sports centre and district library; a creche adjoining the children's library; a performing arts centre, including theatre, drama studio and music suite; a youth club that will double as a students' union during the day; an aged and handicapped people's club, and a small residential wing that will house up to twelve students. Main entrances to all public facilities lead off the Centre's pedestrian rights of way, on which three shops have also been established. Meals cooked

in the main kitchens can be blast-frozen and sent as required to regeneration kitchens throughout the Centre.

The Centre will have a full- and part-time student population of between three and four thousand, with a day population of something like two thousand, and a staff, full- and part-time, of two to three hundred.

On the one hand, such size demands a separation into units. Lower School, for instance, is designed for 480 11- to 13-year-olds as an almost self-contained school, with its own entrance and its own head teacher, largely but not entirely autonomous. It is this easily identifiable section that the pupils first join, and from its comparative security they can begin to adapt gradually to life in the whole of the Centre, finding a meaningful place for themselves in relation to that whole.

On the other hand, the integrative functioning of all the elements within the Centre will depend upon the efficient build-up of a network of services. The administration, for instance, must emphasise the interdependence of all in the Centre by bringing together what is common to all in terms of records, finances, clerical, maintenance and caretaking support, at the same time as serving the particular needs of one section where those needs are specific.

The overall policy of the Centre will be worked out at regular meetings of the senior representatives of each corporation department within the Centre, at which the one question 'How effectively are we fulfilling our function as a community centre in serving the needs of the local community?' will be implicit in all our discussions.

Community is a matter of relationships, and within a community school the relationships between teacher and pupil are fundamental. The teacher's purpose may be to help the pupil develop in many directions. The pupil on his part may need to recognise that he is at least sharing in that purpose, with the teacher working with him and helping where necessary. He should not feel that he is merely fulfilling the teacher's purpose, doing the teacher's work because the teacher has told him to. The vast majority of teachers who adopt the traditional stance of teaching from the front of the class, using mainly exposition and exercises would undoubtedly agree with this.

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*Continued from page 87*

organisation depends upon the personal and professional qualities of its members. Organic organisations like Sidney Stringer are particularly demanding, because they require all members to achieve very high standards of competence, initiative and dedication. This may happen in one school under inspirational leadership; but can it be done generally? This question must be asked of every new system, and honest answers are badly needed.

(5) The organisation at Sidney Stringer requires staff to attend many meetings of House, Faculty, teaching topic and so on. An average member is likely to attend about four meetings a week, many out of school hours. Fundamental curriculum improvements cannot be made without meetings on this scale; and meetings, to be effective, have to be prepared for and followed up. One is led to ask, can this kind of organisation be established at all widely unless important changes are made in teachers' terms of employment? Unless, in fact, teachers become used to being in school for considerable periods when their pupils are at home? Clearly, such a change would have to be supported by salary improvements. Meanwhile, it can be argued that a major obstacle to curriculum reform is the short day worked by teachers *in school*. No other major public enterprise tries to do most of its fundamental planning in its employees' spare time.

They may even emphasise it explicitly in various ways to their pupils, yet their usual posture conveys the opposite. Moreover, their normal practice of revealing to the pupil each day what work he has to do, the teacher being aware of future development of the course and able to plan ahead, but the pupil not, indicates with regular persistence to the pupil that it is the teacher's work he is doing.

## Resources and teams

The essential need is for a major shift towards the creation of a learning environment in which the pupils are not entirely dependent upon the teacher for their learning. Instead individual pupils are provided with structured materials at their level of understanding, which they are able to approach and work on independently of the teacher, who is still available to work with them, providing encouragement and stimulation, helping where problems arise, and keeping a close watch on their progress. This would not be to the exclusion of a whole range of other experiences, from being part of a large or small group listening and watching, taking part in some activity, working or discussing together, or being guided or tutored by a teacher.

The Lower School at Abraham Moss is divided into four team areas: Humanities, Art and Craft, Science/Mathematics and Communications/Modern Languages. Each area, open plan to a greater or lesser extent, accommodates a whole half-year of 120 pupils and a team of staff. Much of the pupils' work is geared to short two or three week units on particular themes, each unit structured at a variety of levels of understanding. A whole group of items covers the core of the subject, and is extended to provide special aids, educational games, simple richo-synchrofax coverage of essential knowledge, taped assistance to difficult sections for pupils whose level of literacy is low, and more difficult 'depth' and enrichment units for pupils who are capable of high-level work.

The materials are created by teams who meet together regularly, decide on their objectives, and pool ideas for themes and units. They plan future units, hold briefings on those about to be used and debriefing or reappraisal sessions after working on a unit, and generally adopt a highly professional approach to learning from each other, supporting each other, and sharing the work that has to be done.

Where possible a team is timetabled for workshop time together on the timetable, and may release a member at other times to work on the production of materials for the team as a whole. Most of the team's activities are organised on the team's behalf by a coordinator, but the 'team leader' figure is avoided so that all members may feel they can make an equal contribution. Teams produce minutes of all meetings to let other staff know what they are doing.

The teams include senior teachers in particular subjects, but these are designated consultants rather than heads of department to emphasise that they have an expertise which all staff who need help may call on, and to de-emphasise subject or departmental boundaries.

The main aim of curriculum in Lower School is to develop in the pupils the skills of learning and an ability to use resources which will serve them well during the rest of their time in the Centre, and afterwards in association with it.

## Autonomous learning

Whilst they continue their studies at the Centre it is intended that the units the pupils have available to work on independently will become longer, and that they will know what they are aiming at even further ahead, and take more responsibility for the organisation of their own work. Again there will be no lessening of teacher involvement and support as a result of this. The teacher will more often be working with the pupil, helping him to know how to cope with the work he needs to do.

In the long run, however, if young people are to make efficient use of private study, and of their time at college or university, and if 'education permanent' is to be a feature of the lives of the whole population, not just a comparative few who are more academically inclined, as it is now, then a greater independence in learning, and ability to use resources for one's own needs, must be a central feature of the training our schools give.

In the Middle and Upper School and College at Abraham Moss, the curricular structure is only just beginning to take shape. It will inevitably include a range of courses leading to a variety of educational qualifications from CSE Mode 3 to 'A' level and OND. It will also include, whether to CSE Mode 3 or otherwise, courses related to the personal, moral and social development of the pupils, based on a concern about the life around them, whether in the family, the country or the

wider world, and their relationship to it. Such courses will be developed gradually in discussion amongst those involved in the Centre, and a Curriculum Consultative Committee has been established for this purpose. It is hoped that the curriculum will be concerned with the future, as well as the past and the present, and that it will be empirical and organic in its development, encouraging the evolution of education alongside the evolution of society. It should undoubtedly exploit the excellent potential the Centre offers to blur the distinction between school and community, education and life, young and old, by involving parents and the community in the Centre and the students in the community.

## **Communal resources**

Providing such a learning environment and developing such a range of courses will not be easy to accomplish. Fortunately, access to the wide variety of resources the staff and students are likely to require should be helped by the fact that the school, college and adult education centre have no separate libraries of their own but are dependent upon the district library incorporated within the Centre. Such an arrangement promotes a centralisation and sharing of resources. Whatever is available to the community becomes available to the school, and whatever would normally have been available to the school is made available to the community also.

Much of the audio-visual equipment will be centralised within the library also, and available on a shared basis to be taken and used in any part of the Centre or to be used by students or members of the public who come and study in the library. It is hoped to widen the use of audio-visual aids within the Centre, to enable more effective learning to take place. This should benefit not only those whose level of literacy is low, but those also who, whatever their ability, learn more effectively through one medium than another. It should allow the fact that some topics may be taught more effectively; through one medium than another to be exploited. If our pupils come to regard a library as an information centre where information is accessible through a variety of media, those whose level of literacy is so low once they have left school that a library entirely devoted to the printed word could be a somewhat forbidding place might still retain their links with it.

For centralisation to work as it should and encourage the users of the Centre to pool their resources so that they

become accessible to all, including student and adult learners, an effective storage and retrieval system has to be established, enabling anyone in the Centre to discover what is available and where it is available. To an ordinary school, relying upon a teacher librarian and comparatively little administrative support, this is a mammoth task. It can be achieved, but at great cost in terms of time and energy. Without the district library it would be virtually impossible within the Centre, but with their help and expertise it may be possible to provide a far more adequate service in that respect than could otherwise have been hoped for.

Resource availability is only half the picture. The creation of the learning environment structured so that students of whatever age discover these resources and make effective use of them is a much more difficult matter, and one that teachers have only just begun to cope with professionally.

In order to structure the appropriate units that will do this, teachers need ancillary and technical support, adequate equipment and, above all, in-service training.

## **An educational continuum**

In Abraham Moss, because the approach adopted by the school, college of further education and adult education needs to be a consistent, integrative and not divisive one, the whole area of teaching method and approach, including resource provision, technical support and in-service training throughout the Centre is considered important enough to be the responsibility of a Deputy Principal.

The Centre has an in-plant print room, linked to a staff workshop, with a full-time technician providing reprographic services for the teaching staff and the Centre's administrative and community needs. Offset litho facilities are included, and generally services enable the staff to provide material which will stand comparison with commercially produced material. It is essential to avoid pupils being reinforced in their view that school is third-rate in comparison with life.

Adjoining the reprographic room is a staff workshop where a range of facilities for the production of multi-media materials from overhead projector transparencies and tapes to synchrofax audio pages and slides is available with technician help to organise and maintain the equipment and provide services to staff where possible. An IBM golf-ball typewriter makes a range of type face

# Countesthorpe College : an observant study

**Ann Riley and Kathy Stamatabis**

Tim McMullen, the first Principal of Countesthorpe College, wrote two articles for *Forum* (vol 10 no 2 1968, vol 14 no 2 1972) where he discussed his objectives and the conditions which made possible a new school embodying radical innovations. The results of an observational study at an early stage of the school's development, undertaken by a group of students, are summarised here by two of them, both now teaching in Leicestershire Upper Schools.

Countesthorpe College, at the time of the observational study (Autumn term 1971), was an 11-18 comprehensive school in Leicestershire. It is now a 14-18 Upper School with a separate 11-14 High School on the same campus. It is a 'progressive' school which embraces participatory rather than authoritarian decision making and a blurring of the lines between the school and the community. The staff of the College approached the University of Leicester School of Education as to the possibility of conducting a piece of research at the College. It was decided to carry through an observational study focusing specifically on the fourth year (14-15 year olds).

The aim of the research was to provide a 'quantitative description of the processes within the school in order to assess the present situation and to obtain information for future decisions'. Fifteen postgraduate students from the School of Education, with tutorial guidance, began the task of constructing the observational pro-

gramme, ie developing a technique and method of observation, designing an instrument appropriate to the study, collecting recording and collating data. Over a period of six weeks half the fourth year pupils (a total of 140) were each individually observed for a half hour period by the trained student observers. A detailed record of their behaviour was kept, coded and summated for analysis.

In a forward looking educational establishment, what is actually happening may not be immediately apparent to an outside observer. If the pupils sit in the recognisable ordered class situation of rows of desks facing a blackboard, with the teacher standing between the two, there is generally little confusion as to what is supposed to be in progress. The pupils are learning. If, however, conceptions of learning and the most effective method of achieving this are altered, if the whole aim of the school and of education is expanded, then it may be found desirable to move away from

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available, and full-time secretarial services are included in the support provision for staff, so that teaching units are effectively laid out and typed.

The staff workshop is also the focal point of the in-service training developed within the Centre. The majority of teachers have little if any experience in the creation and structuring of materials, and initial training and later in-service training is less helpful than it might be. For this reason we have established within Abraham Moss a central organisation for the development of in-service training geared to meet the specific needs of our staff. Where possible we release small groups of staff from timetable, on the first occasion for a two and a half day introductory course, but subsequently from Wednesday to Tuesday with an intervening weekend.

The in-service courses are arranged by the Deputy Principal and the resource centre staff, and range from courses for the whole staff on particular occasions to

provide an introduction to new equipment, tape slide sequences, photography in the classroom, etc, to workshop weeks where staff are released to produce materials on behalf of a team of colleagues. Two experienced staff working with the Deputy Principal are responsible for liaising with various teams, and staff needs are expressed at another level by staff representatives on the resource centre committee. One of these is also responsible for developing a close liaison between the Centre library and the teaching staff, ensuring that the librarians are fully aware of the thinking and the needs of the latter.

We are perhaps still in the early discovery stages of establishing a network throughout the Centre's educational services that will inform, integrate and give professional support. Such a collaborative environment is as essential in the development of education in the life of the Abraham Moss Centre as it will be in the eventual fulfilment of the Centre's purposes as a whole.

traditional didactic teaching methods. Indeed, in many educational establishments (not only the 'progressive'), there are areas where methods other than class teaching are being adopted. For the visitor to a school employing such methods, the picture may not be clear; this is one of the reasons why systematic observations may be of great value in assessing or analysing different situations within a school.

As a result of confusing appearances, certain myths or beliefs may arise concerning such schools. It may be useful to consider some of the opinions which do evolve in the neighbourhood of these schools, and to examine them in the light of the factual data which was collected during the research programme. It may, then, be possible to evaluate the validity of these beliefs. Each belief may be considered as a hypothesis which may be either partly or wholly supported or refuted by the data.

The main foci of the observation included:

1. The degree or level of involvement of the pupil and degree and type of interaction between pupils.
2. The movement of pupils in a resource-based learning situation. (The school is open plan and purpose-built for resource-based learning.)
3. The number and types of contact between the teacher and the pupil.

## Chat or work?

The first hypothesis is that students do little or no work in such a relatively 'free' situation, where there is an apparent option to work. The first problem encountered by such a claim is that notions of what does and what does not constitute 'work' are constantly under review. Learning by rote is now seldom or never applauded as a useful or productive form of work: methods which encourage the development of an enquiring mind, the ability to analyse critically and assess so as to formulate opinions are increasingly finding support. These methods may include individual or group research, dependent largely on the availability of a wide range of resources, together with a considerable amount of discussion both with the teaching staff and fellow students. It may be useful at this stage to consider the second and closely related hypothesis which is frequently put forward—namely that a great deal of pupil time is wasted in idle chatter.

If both these suggestions, ie that pupils talk rather

than work, are considered in the light of the data collected in the research project, then these points of view start to lose their appeal. Involvement in work and disruptiveness of individual students was recorded by the observers; but in spite of the fact that the observers' judgment was necessarily to some degree inferential or subjective, the results at least indicate positive trends. The spread of involvement in work (high and low) was found to be fairly even, the proportion of pupils displaying disruptive tendencies (and presumably, therefore, not working) was only one quarter of the non-disruptive pupils.

Further, observers recorded the amount of conversation which took place during an observation session, and also, 'listened in' in order to ascertain the nature of 'idle chatter'. It is true to say that the majority of the pupils did participate, to a greater or lesser extent, in some conversation during the observation sessions. However, despite the fact that there is a considerable amount of talking, the topic of conversation is more likely than not to be related to the teacher approved task. In fact over four-fifths of pupils' conversation related at least in part to their work, while 53 per cent of all conversation was *dominated* by discussion of the work in hand. Thus whilst there is evidence to substantiate the view that there is a considerable amount of chatter, closer examination of its character reveals that it is much more closely allied to work than might be supposed by the unsophisticated visitor. In addition there is no evidence to support the idea that pupils do little or no work at Countesthorpe; what is much more apparent is that old concepts of learning and working will have to be examined in the light of the new methods and approaches, which are currently developing in the schools.

## Aimless wandering?

Comments have frequently been heard from visitors to the college that there is an unusual amount of movement on the part of the pupils: this has given rise to the belief that pupils spend much of the school day wandering aimlessly about the buildings. To find out how true this is the observers recorded much factual information relating to movement-analysis of the total time spent moving and of the reasons why pupils moved gave some interesting results.

Compared with a conventional class situation, where most pupils sit still for the duration of the lesson, there

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# Some Notes on Black Studies

**Ken Forge**

Ken Forge has had 20 years' experience of work in education in Nigeria, as well as four years' secondary teaching in Ghana. In addition he has taught—for some 25 years—in primary and secondary schools in Britain—mainly South London. He is a member of Teachers against Racism.

These notes are based on two years taking Black Studies as a sixth form General Studies option with ten black students in a South London boys' comprehensive. I was in touch with two other London schools also having sixth form Black Studies courses, and one school in Birmingham with an 'ethnic reinforcement' course that began in the first year. With my limited experience, therefore, much of what follows must be subjective and anecdotal—a tentative offering only.

At the end of the first term of our course, in December 1971, I asked the class to write their views on whether a fourth form boy, offered Black Studies as an optional subject, should opt for it. The answer with which all ten students were in agreement went like this:

'I think all boys in Form 4, whether black or white, should know a little about black peoples.

'If he is white, he should be taught the way the black peoples have suffered in history. By learning this he has the right to think anyway of the black peoples, whether they are equal to the white; and he can learn that what he has heard from his parents, friends, newspaper, television, was often wrong.

'If he is black he will find it interesting to know more about his ancestors' struggle to get equal rights. He should not be taught that whites are his enemies, or to hate them.'

The class were also agreed that for better race relations in the school, all the teachers should know more about the background of black students and Black Studies should be taken by all students, both black and white, in forms 1 to 3.

Faced with the problem of planning a Black Studies course for the first time and at short notice, I needed the advice of someone who knew from experience where the shoe pinched and what black students really needed. I have never regretted choosing Malcolm X's *Autobiography* and his *Teaching Afro-American History*. With this help I made a list of possible subjects for study, and of other possible activities, and the students chose the subjects we should study and decided the order in which to take them.

They agreed to start with African pre-history and African history before the Portuguese arrived on the coast in the 15th century, following Malcolm X, 'Just as a tree without roots is dead, so a people without history or cultural roots becomes a dead people.' We knew we had in the upper school intelligent black students so brainwashed by British education and its talk of 'darkest Africa' that they insisted, 'But *we* are not African!'

We also followed Malcolm X when he said, 'When you select heroes about whom black people ought to be taught, let them be black people who died fighting for the benefit of black people. We were never taught about Toussaint, Christophe and Dessalines. It was the Slave Revolt in Haiti, when slaves, black slaves, had the soldiers of Napoleon tied down, that forced him to sell one-half of the Continent to the Americans. They didn't teach us that: that is the kind of history we want to learn.' White working-class children suffer a parallel deprivation: on a Black Studies course, one said, 'One thing I've learned from Black Studies is that we white working-class kids are the blacks of this country.'

It so happened that the rape of Africa at the end of the 19th century coincided with the coming of compulsory education and the popular press, and both were armed with quotations from Stanley and Livingstone and harnessed to the drive of finance and industry for support for their colonial invasions and conquests. Much distortion and suppression in British-controlled history teaching stems from this.

In planning the Black Studies discussions, the following remarks seemed relevant to the needs of a multi-racial community:

'Public opinion in an ex-imperial country like Britain is prone to wash its hands of the former colonial countries now that they have their freedom: yet our standard of living is still rooted in colonial exploitation.'

[*The Guardian*, 29.8.72]

'Children are not free in any way that matters if they are not free to know the price in pain and exploitation their lives are built upon.'

[J Kozol, quoted in *Ramparts*, July 1972]

'A cultural revolution is desperately needed to un-brainwash the entire . . . people, black and white . . . as my grandmother used to say,

'Ah! Lord, honey, the half ain't never been told.'  
[J O Killens, *The Black Man's Burden*, 1965]

'Any analysis which does not acknowledge the colonial status of black people cannot hope to deal with the problem.'  
[Eldridge Cleaver, 1968]

We concentrated on the Atlantic Triangle—Africa, Britain and the Caribbean—partly because half of the black students in the class and most of the black students in the school were of African or Afro-Caribbean origin, but mainly because since the 16th century the history of Black Africa and the Caribbean have in fact been closely intertwined with the history of this country: as Marx said, 'Slavery has given value to the colonies; the colonies have created world trade; and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry.' Black and white cannot hope to live here on terms of mutual respect if they cannot come to terms with their common past around the 'Wide Sargasso Sea', and with what Basil Davidson is calling, in his new book for British schools, *Our African Heritage*.

This ABC scene around the Atlantic can show us the five faces of colonialism: invasion and genocide; the 'world's most monstrous crime', the slave trade; our enclosure system, born in England and extended to Scotland and to East, Central and South Africa; the forced labour in the Congos and the Portuguese colonies; and finally, in West Africa, after the slave trade, the system of unequal trade, imposed in colonial times and still widely prevalent under neo-colonial conditions.

One of our first tasks is to enable our students to answer the taunt, still heard from old-guard Oxbridge historians, that Africa has no history. We have to put Egypt back into its true African context, and to recognise the social, political, technical and artistic achievements of Black Africans, in Africa and the New World, since Africa became a 'cradle of the human race'.

It is crucial to establish, and this especially for white students, a true picture of the slave trade and plantation slavery (Malcolm X says of this, 'we want history, not racism . . . only the truth can set us free') and the real extent of the economic, political, and cultural effects of slavery and the slave trade upon the slave and upon the slaver and planter, and upon the whole of black African, European, and Caribbean development from the 15th century onwards.

The difference between plantation slavery and the customary slavery of Africa has to be established. Whereas, for example, planters were heard to argue whether it was more profitable to work a slave to death in five years or seven, Richard Lander, himself a servant, found slavery in the interior of West Africa in the 1820s (as opposed to the more brutal slavery that, nearer the coast, had resulted from the slave-trade) more humane than parallel 'paid' service in England.

On such subjects, Eric Williams, C L R James, Kenneth Dike, Walter Rodney, André Gide, and Basil Davidson have written much that is helpful, and E D Morel's *Black Man's Burden* and Mark Twain's *King Leopold's Soliloquy* have recently been reprinted. Much research, mainly by black scholars, is going on in Africa, the US, and the Caribbean and making possible the much improved new textbooks slowly seeping into African and Caribbean schools.

From such resources students should be able to see the extent to which the English-speaking West Indies are our 'Southern States' and to realise the justice and relevance to their own situation here of Mahomet Ali's remark about the US—'This is my country—my people have invested 400 years unpaid labour in it. I'm going to spend it.'

One fringe benefit of Black Studies is that students read more books. School libraries have to be persuaded to purge the considerable element of racist material—fact and fiction—they nearly all abound in, and to obtain and display more of the now widely available relevant fiction and non-fiction material of interest to black secondary students, especially material written by African, Afro-American, and Caribbean authors. It is the greatest pity that we do not take a leaf out of the West African Examinations Council's book and choose far more of these as optional set books for English Literature 'O' and 'A' level.

It is important, and again especially for white students, to get some sense of the effects of conquest and colonial rule on people's lives: to most black people these are only too obvious. Sir Thomas Monroe wrote this in 1818 to the Governor-General of India, and I copied it into a notebook because it reminded me so much of Nigeria when I worked there before Independence:

'Foreign conquerors have treated the natives . . . often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we; none has stigmatised a whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, as fit to be employed only where we cannot



do without them.' Read, for example, Edward Blyden or Africanus Horton, and the difference between pre-conquest and post-conquest race relations is clearly seen .

## Language

There is need for discussion of language. In the USSR, secondary students are taught in their own languages—59 of them. In Africa there are still schools with 'It is forbidden to speak the vernacular' over the entrance (nb, verna: home-born 'slave', COD). Too few students realise that West African and Caribbean English are important languages in their own right, created by the people out of their needs, their feelings, and their historical and geographical backgrounds, using English words and African structures, just as English use French and Latin words and the echoes of German structures. Learning or teaching BBC English for examination and international use is much easier if the student is helped to compare the structures, the pronunciation, intonations and rhythm of the *two* forms of English he or she uses, whether he or she is African, Asian, Caribbean, or English working class. Too few teachers realise how difficult their BBC-style discourses may be for African or Caribbean students who habitually speak their own English outside the classroom—even in the sixth form.

Experience in London, and in some New York schools (as reported in the **Guardian**) is that a fruitful approach to Black Studies is by way of dealing with current affairs which attract the interest of black students whether they concern the home, the street, the school, the nation or the world at large. Once the students' interest in a subject is alive they can research it, and dig into its history, as deeply as their interest and the importance of the subject will carry them.

Many objections are raised to Black Studies. The 'let sleeping dogs lie' argument has rather faded since David Milner researched the attitudes to their own identities of 400 children aged five to eight, many of them certified by their teachers completely innocent of racism, and found that whereas 100% of the white children liked being white, 80% of the Afro-Caribbeans and 65% of the Asians wished they were *not* black, and 72% of the Afro-Caribbeans and 65% of the Asians thought black was 'bad' or 'ugly', and chose black for the 'baddies' and white for 'goodies' in their stories.

As for the objection, sometimes raised, to the word

'black', read the COD article under the headword 'black', and notice the constant misrepresentation of Black Power, of movements like the Black Panthers, and of black leaders like Malcolm X right across the mass media: it's not surprising that this objection is for many people a gut-reaction, like the common preference of 'blackleg' for 'scab' or 'black' for 'boycott'.

A much more valid objection is that Black Studies should not be just one more subject on the timetable: we should rather, throughout the curriculum, show proper respect for, and provide adequate access to, the culture of *all* the ethnic groups in every school (not forgetting various white ethnic groups in these islands). This, however, involves so complete a revision of syllabuses, textbooks, and teacher-training, that it is clearly a long-term project.

*Meanwhile*, an optional Black Studies course can be fitted into the General Studies scheme of the sixth form, or from the fourth form upwards, with CSE Mode III and the General Studies 'O' level project as possible exam targets. This, though obviously far less than we urgently need, can (and I believe other Black Studies teachers will support me in this) be of some value.

## Widespread effects

Students, black and white, taking the courses, soon begin to take an active part in the work; to put forward opinions and suggestions with growing confidence and with consideration for others' views; to give increasing attention to the needs of fellow-students and of the local community; to join or initiate social clubs and political organisations, and (as noted above) to read more books.

The need for courses is shown by the fact that boys and girls in various parts of London have been forming their own Black Study groups, and at least two school courses have grown out of such groups.

The effect of the courses is felt well beyond the classroom. In two South London schools the students ran weekly social-cum-studies clubs which admit (in our school by a membership-card system devised and administered by the students) boys from other classes and boys and girls from other schools (in our case about 20 girls, from two schools).

Activities include listening to records, dancing, debates, discussions led by visiting speakers (black preferred) and film shows.

These clubs, with their speakers, films and other resources, and the books used by the Black Studies group, attract the attention of that 20% or less of the teachers who are conscious of the need to face up to the new multiracial situation that confronts the schools and the country: so the Black Studies has some influence on the work in Drama, History, English, Social Studies, etc.

A problem that often comes up in club discussion (besides, eg, difficulties with the police and with racist teachers) is the low expectation many teachers show of black students, especially Afro-Caribbeans. Boys and girls who want to be teachers, for example (and this also happens to white working-class pupils) are told their English isn't good enough and are pushed into CSE and out of jobs when it has been clear (and some have subsequently proved it) that they *could* have taken 'O' levels and gone on to qualify as teachers.

It is urgently necessary for black students' own expectations of themselves that there should be not

only black teachers in charge of Black Studies but also black men and women in other positions of power and respect in the education hierarchy—black heads of schools and departments, black members of governing bodies, black inspectors and education officers, all of whom can contribute to building an education system fit for a multi-racial society.

The truth is that Black Studies lead nowhere unless they lead towards a pretty complete restructuring of our whole education system to meet the needs of a multi-racial society in which the democratic right of every citizen to play an active part in determining the conditions of his or her own living is fully recognised. The scope of this restructuring is outlined in a Birmingham Branch 'Teachers against Racism' statement that is based in part on the experience of the four schools mentioned above. It can be summed up as aiming at a school where all ethnic groups feel equally welcome and equally valued.

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### **Countesthorpe study**

*Continued from page 92*

is a considerable amount of movement at Countesthorpe; on average each pupil spends 1.8 minutes in each half hour (ie one observation period) actually moving. In modern languages, where there is more class teaching this figure drops to 0.2 minutes, which suggests that it is the teaching situation itself that leads to movement, rather than an abnormally high 'propensity to move' on the part of the pupils. Further to this, when the reasons for movement are examined, two-thirds of the moves made were directly related to work—either seeing the teacher or fetching or working with resources. On the one hand the hypothesis of much movement is substantiated, but the implicitly associated idea of time wasting is clearly refuted by the findings.

Another criticism which is often levelled at the College is that the teachers spend very little time actually teaching, that pupils are consequently left too much to their own devices—and presumably to wander about and chat idly! The reasons why this point of view is held may be similar to other misconceptions relating to teaching situations which have already been discussed. It was found that, on average, each pupil spends approximately one eighth of lesson time in direct contact with a member of the teaching staff, and the majority of

contacts are in fact initiated by the teachers. Concepts of the teachers' role and function clearly require reconsideration; guidance, direction and resource compilation are today increasingly assuming importance.

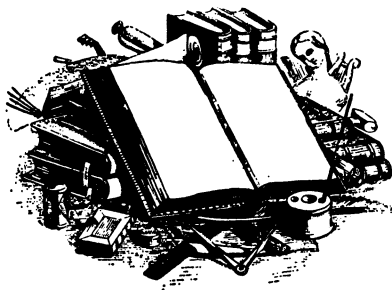
Although the results of the observational research programme are far from conclusive, they at least serve to indicate, in a fairly objective manner, some of the trends appearing in 'progressive' teaching establishments; what is apparent is that concepts of both teaching and learning must be re-examined and re-defined in the light of the newly evolving situations described in the results of this research project.

The achievement of this programme was threefold. First, the data provided was of some practical use to the staff of Countesthorpe College in their decision-making process; second, it provided a useful point of reference for any further study; and finally, for those who participated in the project, a valuable and unique opportunity was provided to experience the practical aspects of conducting a piece of educational research.

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NOTE: A few copies of a full report of this study are available, price 40p (post free) from the Editor, FORUM, 11 Pendine Road, Leicester.

# Reviews



## Curriculum for autonomy

**Beyond Curriculum**, by D Holly.  
Hart-Davies, MacGibbon (1973).  
190 pp. £2.95.

The number of publications considering the various problems associated with the curriculum is increasing. Not infrequently they tend to cover old ground and add little to the current debate. **Beyond curriculum** is significantly different. It is basically concerned with alienation in the secondary school and pursues its argument with purpose, clarity and humanity.

The curriculum development movement is examined in the earlier chapters, particular attention being paid to the various national projects. The criticism of these projects will be of interest and value to all concerned with curriculum change. Nuffield Science emerges with some credit, the work of the Goldsmith laboratory as vague and self-legitimising. Of the Schools Council projects, that established at Keele University School of Education is considered as the most radical and one which fully laid 'the ghost of Newsom dualism'. Holly's criteria of criticism is based

on the extent to which any innovation offers a really radical alternative, and is measured by the degree to which the teachers themselves can develop their own rationale. However, it is the succeeding five chapters in which the author more clearly develops and defines his own criteria of curriculum reconstruction.

Holly's argument really begins in chapter 5 with his examination of the significance of language, and proceeds to a consideration of thought and conceptual development. These later chapters seem to have more power than the earlier. Possibly this is the result of their more constructive characteristics. For the teacher in the classroom they offer a panoramic view of the work of eminent contributors associated with various aspects of the field of cognition. Apart from one or two instances there is—possibly quite naturally—a strong linguistic and psychological emphasis. Vygotsky, Labov and Bruner loom very large. The analysis of their contribution to an understanding of the thought processes of the student subjected to compulsory education is interesting and helpful. The virtue of Holly's analysis is the obvious link it creates between theory and practice. It is not merely a theoretical exercise. Teachers in the secondary classroom will find that it offers something which will illuminate the reality of their everyday experiences. The commentary on Bruner, for example, is perhaps one of the most helpful that I have read.

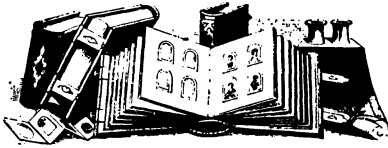
Any major criticism that can be made is the over emphasis given to Labov's work. It may be that Labov is correct in claiming that the elaborated code as described by Bernstein is deficient in logical power. One wonders, however, whether Labov has produced sufficient evidence to back such a claim and also whether the well-known and much quoted responses of the negro boy, Larry, possess the intellectual dexterity which is claimed of them.

The weight of Holly's argument is revolutionary rather than evolutionary. Like many people he finds the divisiveness and resultant alienation in secondary schools produced by the curriculum abhorrent. However, he does not accept the solution of the de-schoolers or the child centred progressives. Their proposals are criticised for their lack of reality and for the lack of support they give to the student. Holly is no 'dove' advocating light and sweet reason. His is a tough line. His argument, whilst recognising the illogicality of separating the affective from the cognitive, is an intellectual argument. He wishes the curriculum to assist the student to develop his autonomy by internalising those concepts which will enable him to create a new political reality. The teacher's role in this process would be authoritative and creative.

**Beyond curriculum** is an interesting and positive book which may quite naturally not be universally approved. However, its case is well argued and it addresses itself to our present secondary dilemma with power and understanding.

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*University of Exeter*





## Within the classroom situation

**Classrooms observed. The teacher's perception and the pupil's performance** by Roy Nash, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1973), pp 138, £2.50 cloth, £1.25 paperback.

The fact that children from low social class backgrounds often perform poorly at school is a well ingrained part of teaching folklore. That the causes lie largely outside the school is another widely accepted tenet of the conventional wisdom. In a lucid, essentially non-technical account of his own research Roy Nash challenges the validity of this explanation arguing that schools may also carry some of the blame. He does not dispute that working class children do badly nor that factors like lack of encouragement at home and language difficulty are partly responsible. However he also believes that teachers' expectations for their pupils play a key role in their performance and that these expectations take the form of self-fulfilling prophecies which are transmitted to children (probably unconsciously) during the ongoing flow of classroom interaction.

What were his findings? Drawing on information collected in a progressive unstreamed primary school he found that children had a fairly precise knowledge of their relative class positions which corresponded closely to their teachers' opinions even when there were no obvious clues like streaming by group within the

classroom. It emerged that neither class positions nor reading quotients were related to the children's social class. However they were both related to the favourableness with which the children were perceived. In other words, if it is assumed that the observed correlations reflect causal links, then the way children are perceived may be a more important influence on their attainments than social class. In later work children were followed as they made the transition from five feeder primary schools into a single comprehensive school. One interesting finding concerned the children who found themselves in the remedial class at the end of their first term at secondary school. Not only were they of low ability but they were far more unfavourably perceived by their teachers than a matched group of children of comparable IQ and class position who were not placed in this class.

Roy Nash's research is in no sense definitive because it is not a rigorous scientific enquiry in the conventional sense: it takes the form of case studies, illustrated by references to interviews and field notes on children's and teachers' classroom behaviour. Herein lies its greatest merit: by probing beneath the surface of classroom life through the imaginative handling of data and concepts some fascinating material has been thrown up which is of great interest to the classroom researcher and practising teacher alike. However the approach has limitations, not least of which is the speculative nature of the interpretation of the findings. It is, of course, perfectly legitimate to tie results together with a plausible story and Roy Nash's account makes good reading although he nowhere explains in detail how teachers' perceptions militate against working class children in particular—is a relationship between the favourableness of teachers' perceptions and children's perceived social class taken for granted? Another criticism

concerns the treatment of correlational relationships as causal links. It is going far beyond the evidence to assume that correlation necessarily means causation. Two factors can be highly correlated without one determining the other. There is a high correlation between leg length and arm length in human beings but no one would argue that long arms cause long legs or vice versa!

Having sounded some notes of caution I have no hesitation in recommending this book to anyone interested in what happens at the flashpoint of the teaching-learning process, that is to say in the classroom itself. The book may provoke disbelief, disagreement or disapproval. It will certainly not bore.

DEANNE BOYDELL



# Exceptional educational comparisons

**Case Studies of Educational Innovation III: at the school level** (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1973). 326 pp. £2.00.

It has become a commonplace to say that the 'wind of change' is blowing through all human affairs nowadays. We have technological change, economic change, social change, cultural change, change so rapid that large numbers of people find great difficulty in adapting to it. Educational change is an integral part of this phenomenon, both resulting from it and also helping in the long run to shape it.

In this book the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation publishes descriptions of planned educational change in five innovative secondary schools in five member countries. Canada is represented by Thornlea School, Ontario; Denmark by the Roedovre School near Copenhagen; Finland by the Tapiolan School near Helsinki; Norway by the Experimental Gymnasium, Oslo; and the UK by Countesthorpe College, Leicestershire. Each account is contributed by an educationist belonging to the country represented, and all make absorbing reading, although the English style is not always completely idiomatic.

The practising teacher may well open the book in the hope of discovering some formula to guide him in distinguishing between the different kinds of innovation which are constantly being urged upon him in his professional life. He will be anxious

to identify and respect innovation that is the worthwhile outcome of genuinely creative thinking; but he may well be suspicious towards what he perceives as irrelevant or even harmful innovations which are undertaken purely because it is considered fashionable to be novel, or else because of the need to be seen riding (albeit with maybe a total lack of conviction) some creaky, cranky bandwagon which may or may not be roadworthy.

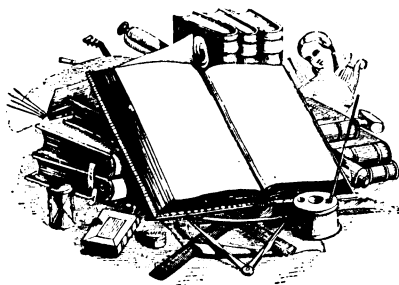
There is here no easy formula, but plenty of fascinating material on which to reflect. The five schools are quite different in certain obvious ways: only two of them cover the full secondary age range; only two of them have a comprehensive intake; only three of them are maintained by the state or the local authority. Nevertheless certain themes recur with an air almost of inevitability: school democracy; a less formal teacher/pupil relationship; a flexible organisation giving more scope for pupil choice; non-streaming; individualisation of learning; the collection and production of resource materials; interdisciplinary work; team-teaching. Most of these reforms, familiar enough to **Forum** readers, appear in most of these accounts. There is a striking similarity, too, between the passages which describe the various limiting factors seen as posing problems for the reformers in the different schools: a rigid examination system; the anxiety of parents and others that new methods should not detract from 'results' as measured in conventional terms; a too rapid increase in school size; inadequacies and cutbacks in financial provision; and with all these the inordinate stress experienced by teachers once they are wholeheartedly committed to the idea of experiment and change, exposed as they then become to an extraordinary burden of work and to excessive demands on their time and energies.

The exceptional nature of these schools is emphasised in more than

one passage, with sobering implications for the overall state of educational advance in the OECD generally; on the other hand it may be felt that this emphasis does scant justice to the much larger number of schools in which changes are indeed occurring all the time, perhaps more spontaneously if with less publicity, according to the developing educational philosophy of heads and staffs. The difficulty of evaluating 'progress' in education is repeatedly mentioned and no formal assessment is attempted in this volume. A future publication, **Strategies for Innovation in Education**, may put forward some conclusions and recommendations. Meanwhile it is true, in an ideal sense, that no experiment is really a 'failure', for experiments if treated with respect and constructive criticism can only lead to further development (p.247), but not all parents, and not all teachers, will be content to leave it at that. In particular we can detect deep and even irreconcilable differences of opinion according to whether one regards the transmission of knowledge through intellectual/academic education, or the development of the whole person including also the social and emotional aspects, as being the proper aim of the school.

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