

Autumn 1976

Volume 19

Number 1

85p

FORUM FOR THE DISCUSSION OF NEW TRENDS IN EDUCATION

In Defence of Education

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Future Numbers

The next number, Vol 19, No 2, (January 1977) will be a Special Number focusing on the crucial question of **Remedial Teaching** in the comprehensive and primary school mixed ability context. This issue arose, as a key one, of direct concern to teachers, at the FORUM conference on mixed ability teaching held at The Woodlands School, Coventry, last April.

A number of teachers and others experienced in this area, will be contributing. These include Ray Pinder, a London primary school head, Mr MacColl, Coventry's adviser in this area, Dave Thomas of Leicester Polytechnic, Barry Chisholme, until this term head of the Remedial Department at Countesthorpe Upper School, and others.



The following number, Vol 19, No 3 (May 1977) will be a Special Number on **Primary Education**. This will focus on contemporary controversial issues, including those arising from both the Bennett and the Tyndale Reports.



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Forum is published three times a year, in September, January and May. £2.50 a year or 85p an issue.

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In Defence of Education

FORUM has not generally taken a polemical stance in education. When the journal was founded – nearly twenty years ago – we declared our objectives and have stuck to them since; these were quite simple – to promote the development of comprehensive education and to encourage the modification of rigid forms of streaming in both primary and secondary schools. Our aim has always been to put *educational* considerations first, to encourage discussion and exchange of information and practice on these issues, and on the related new trends which these structural changes necessarily brought with them.

These twenty years have brought gains in both main issues – and, in the 18 volumes to date we have published a great deal of material covering the transition to new forms of education, some descriptive, some analytical. In so doing we have made our contribution to the changing educational scene in a way which has not set out to be strident, or to hit the headlines. Our approach has aimed to be quietly constructive.

But today, education is under sharper attack than at any time since World War II. This attack is not only economic – although that is serious enough. It is also ideological – and administrative. In this issue we deliberately set out to confront those approaches and practices which are having a seriously deleterious effect on the whole perspective for educational advance.

Caroline Benn's article, with its ironic title, takes a cool look at the existing situation as regards comprehensive reorganisation. The author shows both how much has been done, and how much remains to do before this single reform can be said to have been completed. But it is the level of advance so far reached that is under attack from the Black Paperites and other critics. What is the nature of the arguments used – the 'level of debate'? This forms the subject matter of Gabriel Chanan's article, as also, in a different *genre*, that by Joan Simon. Then we are glad to include an article by a visitor from the United States, Professor Lowe, who feels strongly, as a result of experience in his own country, that a stronger fight-back should be made against what he calls 'reactionary criticism' of the schools. In a real

sense, the Editorial Board can be said to have taken Professor Lowe's advice in planning this number.

But, in addition, we are particularly glad to include an article by Michael Harrison, Sheffield's Chief Education Officer, on the new system of 'corporate management' which came in with local government reorganisation. There can be no doubt that education – and by that we mean the schools, pupils and teachers – are suffering all over the country as a direct result of this system of management, as has been made clear by a number of CEO's in public pronouncements recently. The issues arising are very clearly analysed in this article, which we welcome as an important statement by one of the leading Education Officers in the country.

The number also includes another cool appraisal, this time by Norman Morris, Leader of Manchester's City Council, of the much publicised voucher system; whereby those inimical to the maintained system of education (especially comprehensive education) hope to bring market forces into play so that education can be bought and sold like fish and chips. It is past time that this philistine proposal was subjected to a critical analysis by someone well qualified to do so, and Norman Morris makes clear its precise significance.

Finally Don Proud, head of a comprehensive school, makes a detailed case for maintaining good pupil-teacher ratios in these schools. This is particularly apposite at present, when thousands of students prepared for teaching are unable to find employment. The opportunity now exists to *improve* pupil-teacher ratios in the schools which now have enormously varied demands on their staff, as Don Proud makes clear. The defence of education implies the fight for this objective also – indeed, as a first priority.

Education is a complex social phenomenon and its defence takes – and must take – many and varied forms. Some of the issues arising in the current attack on education are examined in this number; others will be later on. The watchword may be taken from a warning given by R H Tawney 40 years ago, when education was threatened by a similar attack: 'Keep your eyes open and your powder dry'.

The Comprehensive Reform: All over but the Reorganizing

Caroline Benn

Caroline Benn is Information Officer of the Campaign for Comprehensive Education and joint author of **Half-Way There**. Here she analyses the present phase in the transition to comprehensive education.

The comprehensive reform is at a critical stage because the government – like all governments before it – tends to ‘maximise’ progress towards the goal of reorganisation. This is understandable but it can be misleading and cause effort to flag just when it should accelerate.

The latest available DES figures (Table I) show 70 per cent of the maintained school population in comprehensives. Admittedly this is a long way on from the 9 per cent of 1965, indicating – correctly – the support the reform has had. But it is a calculation which includes (1) all pupils whether the schools have only just got their first year’s comprehensive intake or have been comprehensive for a decade (always an occupational hazard in an ongoing reform); (2) all middle school pupils (some of whom would be only 9 or 10); (3) both selective and co-existing comprehensives (see below); and (4) lastly, the maintained school population alone. Table II shows the national picture when fee-paying schools are added (and secondary age only is considered): the percentage in comprehensives is smaller, the selective sector a good deal bigger, and the still divided nature of Britain’s secondary education fully apparent.

But neither Tables I or II show the picture from the local authorities’ point of view, which is even more disturbing. As of January 1976 only 23 out of 97 authorities had reorganised according to the only proper definition of ‘reorganising’ (that in the new Education Bill): *all* their schools of comprehensive status.

What a difference there might have been in the pace and success of reorganisation had this definition – and a Bill – been introduced in 1965 rather than a Circular and a definition of reorganisation which merely defined any

authority with a comprehensive school – even if it had only one – as a ‘reorganising’ authority. By this inadequate criterion, of course, 99 per cent of authorities are now reorganised (since only Kingston refuses to have any such schools); yet we know how far we still have to go. Reorganisation has dragged and shuffled and been reversed (and re-reversed) in many areas, so that in 1976, just when we could have expected to have dealt with the reform’s first stage problems and be able to go on to solve those of the second stage, we find we are grappling with both at once.

First Stage Problems

The major problem is disparity of opportunity between schools and schools, authorities and authorities, regions and regions. Scotland is nearly 90 per cent reorganised (at least in outward form), but some areas of England are still under 50 per cent. If the critics of comprehensive education are right, of course, we should be able to show that in these slow-to-reorganise areas – compared to areas almost reorganised – attainment is higher in GCE or university entrance or percentages remaining in full time education at 17 or 18. East Anglia, for example, is only 45 per cent reorganised and might be compared to Wales which is now over 80 per cent; yet statistics will not show East Anglia out in front on many of these scores.¹ If anything, they show reorganised areas ahead on some. Nothing to be proved either way directly, perhaps; but certainly nothing to show that areas which have stuck with selection at 11 can be shown to be superior.

TABLE I
THE MAINTAINED SYSTEM OF
SECONDARY EDUCATION

Percentage of pupils in different types of schools

1965

1975

28% ←	GRAMMAR & TECHNICAL	→ 9%
63% ←	SECONDARY MODERN, ETC	→ 21%
9% ←	COMPREHENSIVE	→ 70%

Source: DES STATISTICS – Comparison of Numbers of Secondary Schools 1965-1975.

What can be shown, however, is that opportunities are not so freely available in many schools which are not reorganised. There are 1,216 secondary modern schools left still. Not all of them will be narrower in their courses or equally less well equipped than comprehensives (a few will have broader courses and better facilities than some of the schools designated 'comprehensive') but many will be. No-one can justify a system which retains such a wide disparity of opportunity as a matter of organisational principle as is inherent in a partly finished reform. Nor does anyone any longer doubt that most secondary modern schools wish to develop to comprehensive status as soon as possible.

What stands in their way is what has always stood in it: local reluctance to change and missed opportunities to plan available expenditure to ensure adaptation of all existing schools; and in some areas the opposition of grammar schools to adapting in the same way. Grammar school opposition would be serious enough if the grammar schools were only preventing secondary modern schools from developing as comprehensives; but it is worse when in so many areas it is preventing comprehensive schools themselves from developing as fully comprehensive.

It is intolerable that over ten years after an official policy of reorganisation was set in motion that so many comprehensive schools should be labouring in 'co-existence' situations still (some of them for over 20 years). Co-

TABLE II
THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Percentage of all Secondary age pupils in different types of Schools

1974

19% ←	INDEPENDENT AND SELECTIVE
57% ←	COMPREHENSIVE
24% ←	SECONDARY MODERN, ETC

Source: DES STATISTICS, Vol I.

existence also calls for a re-evaluation of progress, for if the level of co-existence is still as high as it was in the late sixties and early seventies (when three separate studies found it to affect one out of every two comprehensives and nearly two out of every three 11-year olds),^{*} then a very strict definition of comprehensive – indeed, that of the Education Bill itself – would require the 70 per cent now claimed to be in comprehensives to be reduced to 35 per cent.

Co-Existence

The case against co-existence of grammars and comprehensives is now as fully understood as that against the co-existence of grammars and secondary moderns, for in one important respect it is the same case. Where grammar schools remain, there must be selection; and it is selection which 'creams', and it is 'creaming' which affects the non-selective schools' work – call them secondary modern or call them comprehensive, it matters not for this purpose. Nor does it always follow that the smaller the percentage creamed, the less damaging. It entirely depends upon the degree of selectivity involved. The highly selective 3 per cent can be just as damaging as the 15 per cent which is less selective.

Nor is co-existence, as we now know, a static state of affairs. It almost always works against non-selective

schools in that in time they get less comprehensive in their intake and therefore less so in their provision – because the selective schools get more and more selective.³ Meanwhile these comprehensives are judged as if they were fully developed comprehensives, even though no-one would think it fair to apply the same criteria – for example, does the school have the ‘national’ percentage of leavers with five or more O levels – to a school still secondary modern in status, no matter how many GCE courses it had started? In many ways, comprehensive schools have only themselves to blame for not having been firm from the first in refusing to allow any of their number – when in an area still served by grammar schools – to be called a fully developed comprehensive and to be judged as if it were.

But it is not only in academic matters where we’ve done comprehensive schools no service by glossing the truth. Where grammar schools remain – with their power to reject and select on social as well as on academic grounds – any area’s social problems will naturally be over-represented in comprehensive schools. This is one of the comprehensive schools’ greatest complaints.⁴ If grammar pupils become a social problem in mid-course, as many a comprehensive head in many a big city knows, they (are asked to) leave their grammar schools and the local comprehensive schools must take them in. But the general public does not see this double standard mechanism at work. They see only what looks to them like a greater concentration of problems in comprehensives.

Second stage problems

Having to cope still with first stage problems like co-existence or regional disparity or reversal of local plans means less time and energy to give to second stage problems no less urgent. For fully reorganised comprehensive systems have disparity problems of their own that should be tackled now.

The first is the outright selectivity of certain comprehensive schemes – namely those which select pupils from comprehensive schools in mid-course (usually at 13, see Table III, 3 and 4) and transfer them to local grammar schools, leaving 75 per cent or 80 per cent of the age group behind in the ‘comprehensive’ until 16. The upper schools have often been renamed to make them appear part of a new system; the DES euphemistically calls the schemes ‘optional transfer’ schemes (sometimes they are called Guided Parental ‘Choice’); but critical observers and users know them for what they are: secondary school selection.⁵ Under the new Education Bill upper schools

in these schemes are as ‘illegal’ as any grammar school, but whether the Secretary of State will call upon local authorities operating these schemes to submit new ones in the same way as he will call upon other authorities, remains to be seen.

A second problem is much more widespread and far less easy to characterise because two areas can look to be organised exactly alike, while one will be offering comparable opportunities in all its schools and another will not. This kind of disparity can occur when all comprehensive schools are of the same age range (the problem of hidden selection) but it is much more likely when different types of comprehensive schools operate in the same area. Less than a quarter of all local authorities have the same type of comprehensive throughout their areas, some having as many as nine different types.

This is not the argument that says all-through comprehensives are ‘more comprehensive’ than middle school schemes or that sixth form college plans are ‘better’ than all throughs. Any one of the basic forms of reorganisation is capable of being run fully comprehensively; alternatively, any can be run selectively. This problem, however, is that disparity within a comprehensive scheme could develop without anyone really wishing it to happen.

Disparity in comprehensive Systems

Table III looks at the scope of this problem by dividing comprehensives into the ages at which they receive their first intakes. Under each age is shown how long the intake remains and whether or not selection takes place subsequently. It is encouraging that the proportion of comprehensive schools which are selective is less in 1975 than in 1971, but the proportion which ‘end’ before the age of 18 is greater. For example, of all 1975’s comprehensives which take in at age 11, only 61 per cent go through to 18. 32 per cent go only to 16, and 7 per cent end at 13 or 14. In both latter cases, some or all pupils have to transfer. In 11-16 schools this transfer is frequently to all-through schools in the area.

There is nothing to say that automatic transfer schemes, or systems where short-course comprehensives run alongside long-course ones, need have liaison problems, or too many hurdles, or develop great disparities between schools. But we have had enough experience to know that since so many of the lower and the short course comprehensives were originally secondary modern schools and as some of them start in positions of possible inequality

more care needs to be taken with them to ensure equal opportunities for all inside them. For example, authorities have to work hard to ensure that 11-16 schools have comparability in staffing, facilities, subjects, and pupil intakes with the 11-16 years in the all-through schools in their areas.

Entry for short-course school pupils to all-through sixth forms has to be on an equal footing too – a problem when sixth forms develop ‘academic’ or selective entrance policies. The DES recently told local authorities it was worried about 11-16 schools, particularly those existing side by side with long-course comprehensives, and warned them not to try to develop covert sixth forms. We should view this warning as a warning in itself, telling us of second stage disparities which point to the urgent necessity to look at provision for the 16- to 19-year olds in each area as a whole and to be sure it is provided on an equal basis for all. Just to criticise short-course schools for trying to do A levels when they ‘shouldn’t’ be doing them, is an inadequate response to the larger problem of inequality of provision of, and access to, continuing education in this age group.

Need to look at system as a whole

Examining secondary education as a whole – particularly for the 16 to 19 years – means looking at further education and schools together on the same footing. Eventually it means looking at the private sector too. For the private sector is another second stage concern (as is voluntary status in some areas).

Both main political parties (for different reasons) have tried to avoid bringing the private sector into reorganisation but there are several reasons why this cannot be avoided any longer. The first is the new Education Bill which gives back to the Secretary of State the right to ‘vet’ arrangements whereby local authorities pay for places for their pupils in independent schools. This means the Secretary of State must approve all arrangements to ‘buy’ day and boarding places, including those in the ex-direct grant schools.

The extent to which public money has been underwriting direct grant schools is known, but the extent to which it has been underwriting the rest of the private sector has only recently been brought to light. The Campaign for Comprehensive Education, for example, has shown what large sums of public money go to pay fees in these schools* and the recent report of the Select Commit-

TABLE III
Analysis of comprehensive reorganisation
by percentage of all comprehensive schools
by age of intake

	1971	1975
1. Intake from age 11	82%	79%
Of these 11 plus schools		
(i) % which continue to age 18	63%	61%
(ii) % which continue to age 16	28%	32%
(iii) % which continue to age 13 or 14	9%	7%
2. Intake from age 12	5%	7%
Of these 12 plus schools		
(i) % which continue to age 18	17%	51%
(ii) % which continue to age 16	83%	49%
3. Intake from age 13	9%	9%
% of 13 plus schools selective		
by ability	24%	9%
4. Intake from age 14	3%	3%
% of 14 plus schools selective		
by ability	35%	1%
5. Intake from age 16	1%	2%
% of 16 plus schools academic/ selective	33%	22%
	100% (1373)	100% (2596)

Sources: DES classified list of comprehensive schools, 1971; DES, Number of types of comprehensive schools, 1975.

tee on Charities has given information about indirect subsidies to schools classed as ‘charities’.⁷ To these must be added the indirect subsidy in some forms of income tax relief which some parents can use to pay fees. The exact sums involved in indirect subsidies are not known, but Professor Maurice Peston put them in the ‘tens of millions’ recently,⁸ while CCE has shown that by the end of 1977 the total national bill for direct payment of private fees by public money could reach £50 million a year.

This ever mounting expenditure on subsidising private education, which the option for independence by so many ex-direct grant schools only increases – comes at a time when state schools are facing severe cuts in services and facilities. At the very least there will be pressure to see that public money spent on private education is scrutinised in the same way as that spent on state education; at

most there will be pressure to adopt comprehensive-compatible criteria in approving or disapproving all place-buying. Either course brings private education into public policy making.

There will also be pressure to develop a coherent boarding education policy in view of known boarding needs arising in comprehensive schools and of the knowledge that nearly £25 million a year from the central government already goes to pay fees in private schools for the boarding of military and diplomatic personnel's children. The schools which get this money are directly subsidised and this brings us to another reason why private education cannot be ignored any longer. Some of these schools probably need state money to survive. Inflation, combined with improved state education, has meant that the overall number of private schools have been dropping steadily since the early 1960s⁹ and although there is now a small rise in secondary day-school numbers, some boarding schools are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet or to get pupils.

Some of these schools – like ailing firms in the industrial field – need and want injections of public money in order to keep going; and more and more has been spent in this direction, hidden from view until recently.

It is unlikely that all these funds would be withdrawn, although there could well be pressure to do so. What is more likely is that two opposing points of view will develop about how they should be deployed. From the political right could come pressure to increase financial support for private education and policies which offer to certain selected schools the chance to join a new classification of schools which the government of the day would aid. This is unlikely to be exactly like the old 'direct grant' model, for there has been criticism of blanket payment of pupils' fees regardless of parental income. What is more likely is sliding scale assistance for the few less well-off parents whose children the schools choose to admit. In boarding education some sort of 'Fleming' solution – a small percentage of intake of state-supported pupils – is a possibility. But whatever the precise policies, the objective will be to allow private schools to remain private in their government, privileged in their position, both legally and socially, and selective in their education.

From the left, the policy which is likely to develop is one of requiring greater control over the money going into private education so that schools receiving it are made more accountable to national policy and more responsive to local needs in return for it. This could mean redirection of money spent on fee-paying only to schools which can agree in the long term to 'integrate' – that is,

to accept 100 per cent of their pupils on a 100 per cent comprehensive basis. In the short term it could mean prohibition of local authorities' place-buying where authorities already have suitable places of their own; and where they have not got enough places of their own, a policy that entries must be on a comprehensive basis, decided by the authority and not by the independent school.

Thus the final stage of the comprehensive reform requires decisions which in turn make policy for the private sector and this is true even if the present Secretary of State's decision is to do nothing at all about many of the existing place-buying arrangements in local authorities. For these arrangements are largely 11 plus, 12 plus and 13 plus selection. If he makes no changes in them, he will be approving a policy for the expenditure of public funds within the private sector which is in direct contradiction to the non-selective policy the government is developing in the state sector.

The Education Bill

The new Education Bill will also force the Secretary of State to decide – in respect of still unreorganised areas and schools – if a local authority, or a body of voluntary school governors, should be asked to send plans to complete reorganisation. He will also have to decide how long to allow them to do so and the dates by when he would expect their plans to be in operation, assuming they are acceptable. Many stages are involved in this process and many authorities and schools could well revive old arguments about why they 'cannot' reorganise, why they will have to delay.

We should be wary of these arguments, since we know so many of them to lack support. Take the problem of enlarging or amalgamating schools in a 'new' school, for example. This is far less evident now when so many have watched far greater reorganisational problems being solved, and far more complex amalgamations taking place in the further and higher sector with the recent college mergers. When reorganisation schemes of the greatest complexity have been successfully completed within 18 months, it is decidedly difficult to say still that it will take eight years before High Street Grammar and Canal Street Secondary Modern can begin to work together.

Lack of funds has always been a popular excuse, yet, ironically, it is also less heard now when funds are far tighter than in the days of relative plenty. This is because we know the process of adapting schools now, and the

approximate 'cost' of it. No longer do we accept those earlier 'exaggerated estimates' which were produced as a subtle way of diverting the reform.

We know too how building money can be spent without coordinating with comprehensive development. Much ROSLA money, for example, was spent to provide technical and domestic facilities in schools which had enough 'non-academic' provision already and really needed better labs or libraries or a sixth form. In other areas existing comprehensives were enlarged when falling population meant they would be too large almost at once, while next door grammar schools had no expenditure because they were 'refusing' to reorganise. So now the majority of schools getting adaptation money under the latest £25 million grant are grammar schools and voluntary schools. They have to catch up.

Other excuses are that a school must be purpose-built before it can start to be properly comprehensive, again an argument that cannot be accepted when our experience has shown us so many adapted schools which are infinitely better prepared for their comprehensive purpose than some of the purpose-built schools of earlier years. We know that different areas require different reorganisation patterns because of their different school sizes and situations. But today there are 20 different age ranges of school and endless combinations of these within the four main forms of reorganisation: the all-through, the middle, the concentrated sixth, and the co-operative or consortium scheme. No school can use the excuse that there is 'no way' it can adapt to an all-ability intake. Some schools might not be able to adapt by next year, or the year after, and a few, perhaps, because of special problems involved in planning, might have to wait a further year or even two. But there is no school in the country – if the Education Bill can ensure it starts planning by the end of 1977 – which could not be receiving its first comprehensive intake by 1980. Even then it would be 1987 before it would be fully developed.

Will the bill work?

Will the Education Bill get this planning done when of itself it makes no requirement of anyone to reorganise? Clause I merely states that in doing any planning, authorities should have regard to the principle that all their schools should be comprehensive schools. But when must they be? What criteria will be used to judge them as such? Or judge place-buying in private schools? Will it be only a few areas or schools which get asked to plan (the 'worst' offenders) or will all those with incomplete

planning be asked to complete it, and be given dates?

All these decisions are left entirely to the Secretary of State. Only time will tell if it has been a mistake to leave so much initiative for completing the reform to the DES and so little to the authorities, and to let guiding criteria develop out of case law rather than writing into the law of the land the principle of equality of educational opportunity which lies at the heart of the reform. Time has already told us through the Tameside decision – like Enfield before it – that it is dangerous to rely on the obsolete 1944 Act for the legal powers needed to complete this reform. Unfortunately, as of writing, the 1976 Bill has no real powers of its own and depends on using the 1944 Act. Will it be given powers – and will they be used in time?

Completing stage one by 1980 is urgent – not just because all schools need a fair framework of completed reorganisation in which to develop fully, not only in order to be able to tackle the second stage problems which come with the type of reorganised system Britain has chosen to develop, but most of all because both stages need to be passed so that everyone can give more time and energy to what really matters: what goes on inside the schools themselves.

July 1976

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Coping with Reactionary Criticism of Schools – suggestions from the U.S. experience

William T. Lowe

William Lowe, a Professor of Education at the University of Rochester, USA, spent last year here as visiting professor at the University of Hull. He has published several books and articles on education, and gives here his reaction to the current scene in this country.

Schools in Britain today are under an intense barrage of criticism from the far-right.¹ A strikingly similar attack was waged in the '50's in the United States.² This article is written in the hope that British teachers can profit from America's mistakes in dealing with reactionary criticism. It will briefly summarise the reactionary position, identify some of the probable reasons why it occurred, point out the major difficulty with the US response to it, and offer some suggestions for counteractions in Britain. Although sorely tempted to do so, no effort to refute the right-wingers will be made – space won't permit a refutation and, besides, thoughtful readers will already have made up their own minds.

Before turning to this analysis, however, there are a few introductory and general comments that should be made. First, the writer has some very serious reservations about the often heard claim that in recent times Britain seems to follow the States by a decade or so on educational matters in some kind of inevitable sequence. No doubt there are many examples of US impact on the UK, but just as clearly, there are influences operating in the other direction. (The integrated primary school and the teacher centre are two very significant such examples.) Further, regrettably, there are numerous instances in which we seem to ignore each other, failing even to be aware of the assets and liabilities of our counterparts. Thus, the argument that the UK necessarily follows the US is rejected. Still, the parallel on this matter of a right-

wing assault on the schools seems to invite your consideration of our experience.

Also we may need to be reminded that, despite the often overstated and faulty reactions of the moment, it is desirable, indeed, essential to have critics. Obviously, it is a measure of the strength of our respective political systems that people speak out when they are dissatisfied. In addition it is a sign of the importance of schools that so much comment is directed toward them. Further, given the size of the schooling enterprise and the pluralism of our societies, continuing debate is inevitable. We need to encourage, not try to stifle, open dialogue.

Although we have used the words 'strikingly similar' and 'parallel' and we believe the evidence will bear us out, it should be emphasised that there are differences among these critics. For example, the topic of teacher education and the issue of the culpability of teachers for the 'decline of the schools' are matters that sharply divide these right-wingers.

In addition, we need to emphasise that spokespersons for the reactionary point of view do not have a monopoly on criticism. In the US since the 50's there have been recurrent waves of criticism from the new-left³ – the 'Romantics' – and from those whose writings have suggested that schools really don't matter very much.⁴ There has also been a vast number of centrists or eclectics who have offered countless suggestions for reform.⁵

Finally, although this writer believes that the reaction-

aries are imbalanced and often specious, they nearly always have at least a grain of truth. Emphatically, there is plenty of room for improvement in the schools on both sides of the Atlantic and the right-wingers can and often do help to point the way. The writer, for example, in another publication has attempted to identify the legitimate challenges facing the British comprehensives that are, in part, illuminated by the Black Papers.⁶

The Reactionary Position

Turning now to the analysis of the reactionary criticism, the major points of agreement between the American critics of the 50's and the British ones of the 70's will be identified. Three points of reference will be employed: views of human nature, attitudes on the curriculum including both the goals and the content or the substance of what is taught, and beliefs on pedagogy or instruction.

On Human Nature. . . 'Children are not naturally good'.⁷ This is the first line of Black Paper 1975. It is so very apt. It captures the theme, the heart, the gist of the polemic. Added to this, is the belief that modern schools are failing to cope with these 'bad children'. And, of course, since schools are failures, it follows that most adults are lazy, mean, selfish and thoroughly lacking in intellectual curiosity. Rickover in his paternalistic way sums the point nicely in one of his many appearances before a Congressional Committee when he said, 'I think we must be realistic and face the fact that most people do not like to work with their minds. . .'.⁸ And the educational establishment – teachers, educationists in colleges and universities, school administrators, and state and national educational officials – are a particularly sorry lot. Not only are they base but they are also ignorant. James Koerner has been probably the leading spokesman for this view in the States, and he even charges that many teachers can't read or write.⁹ Thus, while it has always been true that human nature is seedy, it seems to be more true every year. Intellectual skills and interests are on the decline, rudeness and violence are on the increase, more and more of us have less and less faith in our institutions generally and in our schools particularly as each day passes, public morality declines continually and all of our woes although based on the animal state of human nature are encouraged and abetted by our dysfunctional schools.

On curriculum . . . Rhodes Boyson says that 1930 was the peak year.¹⁰ American reactionaries want to go back a bit farther. In either case, in the 'good old days', virtually everyone was literate, and nearly everybody had respect for schools and intellectual rigour. There were stipulated

standards; we had order, discipline, authority and traditional disciplines; there were unquestioned examination results and people 'knew their place'. There were few counsellors and no 'integrated' or 'multi-disciplinary' studies. There was a national curriculum determined in large part by university scholars and inspected by external authorities. Schools were schools, not welfare centres. Basic skills were really taught in those days, and the few truly promising young people went on to study the fundamental disciplines of knowledge. Oh, to go back. . .

On Pedagogy . . . How should schools be operated and what kind of teaching do we need in order to go back? These words are the most positively and most frequently used by these critics: competition, order, control, selectivity, streaming (or ability grouping in the US), examinations, standards, teacher accountability, inspections, economy, efficiency. Put the adjective 'rigorous' in front of these notions and you have the ideal. The schools must emphasise these 'virtues' and people who don't like them should leave – pupils and teachers.

Classroom teachers with all of their faults are better than administrators and supplementary personnel in schools. Pupils should revere teachers; no-one else should. Big classes are fine. Drill, repetition, practice, external motivation, class-teaching, corporal punishment and homework are touted. Permissiveness, adjustment, values – education, creativity, activity and movement, discovery, involvement, pupil and teacher rights are very worrisome if not fearful ideas. Business-like training is an appropriate summary concept.

Motivation for the Attack

After reading and re-reading the current British and the earlier American critics from the far-right, the writer has arrived at five generalisations that might explain the assailment.¹¹ Probably none of the critics who have been identified herein would be motivated by all five, but these seem to be the major factors:

First, there is scapegoating based on the social ills of our cultures. Almost any daily newspaper or newscast can be used to document the social, economic and political problems of the 50's in the US or the 70's in Britain (or at any other time in our recent histories). People are searching for the reasons. The schools provide a dandy whipping boy. After all, what institution reaches all of the people? We seem to have a basic need to project the blame, and the schools are readily available for this purpose.

Then, there are those who honestly and earnestly dis-

believe in publicly maintained schools for all. They may prefer that other institutions assume most of the responsibility – the church, private bodies and private foundations or the family to name the most obvious. They may be élitists who fear enlightened masses or they may be élitists who firmly believe that most of us are disinterested in and incapable of coping with the world of ideas. In either case they emphasise only the barest essentials for the masses. Advanced thought for all is either dangerous or impossible.

Some of the critics seem to be motivated by the desire for personal or collective power. Academics can get prestige and status among their peers by attacking 'sacred cows' such as the schools have been. Some political leaders at the local and national levels have discovered that there are votes to be had for attacking schools. Also, some of the critics seem to be largely motivated by a desire to save money. Obviously, it is true that costs for schooling have gone up tremendously since World War II. Further, some of the money has been wasted. Some critics want to stop this increase regardless of the long term consequences. Others want to save money and doubt that the results will be dire. In either case, economy and efficiency are the major incentives.

Many of the critics are actually supporters of maintained schools, but they are beset by a wide range of personal frustrations. These right-wingers may have unrealistically high academic aspirations for everyone. Or they may want everyone to have tastes and interests that are identical to theirs. They may want a simpler, less crowded, easier to understand world; or they have idealised remembrances of their own childhood. (There is, fortunately, a tendency for all of us to do this.) They may be insecure teachers from higher education who need a 'fall guy'. They may want the schools to do for their children what they have been unable to do at home, that is, they may be suffering from their 'failures' as parents. This hodge-podge of motivations pushes toward striking out at the familiar but rapidly changing institution most of us have experienced. (However, it is also true that many of the most intense critics in both countries have not experienced the publicly maintained schools intended for the majority – they are products of private and/or highly selective schools.)

The US's Error

When the orgy of reaction hit the States in the 50's with magazines (scholarly and popular), books, newspapers, radio and television bombarding us, we were

much too complacent. The writer's personal experience may be illustrative. He was a graduate student in education at the time in a university that contained one of the most influential right-wingers. One might expect him, therefore, to be at the centre of counteractions. But, alas, while we discussed and analysed the attacks in our cloisters, most of us took no public stand. We sincerely thought that despite the outpouring, few people were taking the movement seriously. We were wrong. In the writer's judgment the schools retreated from many gains made in the pre-war and immediately post-war periods and it took the riots of the 60's to get us back on the track again. Don't let that happen to you. Beware! Be active!

Suggestions for Action

Here are some firm, although rather trite-sounding, recommendations for action:

1. Every teacher needs to be clear and certain about his or her goals for teaching every lesson. Obviously, there are limits to what even the best lesson can accomplish. It is essential that you have realistic and firm expectations for your teaching, not only to cope with critics, but, more importantly, because your goals should provide the foundation for the content, approach and resources you select. A pointless lesson is a tragic waste and fodder for the critics. Having a strong and thoughtful commitment to one's sense of direction may be both the best defence from attack and the most vital element in successful teaching.
2. Be informed about your profession. Obviously, this involves keeping track of the research developments in the field, but it also means knowing what your pupils, their parents and the public think of what you are doing. Seek criticism and reflect on it.
3. Be fully aware that progressive, humane, individualised teaching is harder work than drill and chalk-talk. Be prepared to make the necessary commitment, or don't try to be that kind of teacher. Better yet, don't try to be a teacher at all.
4. Be a militant professional. Speak out individually for what you believe, and make your associations speak out. Strive for a strong united profession. Don't let your headteachers run your societies. Don't let 'bread and butter' issues be your only professional concerns. Demand that money spent in your school is well-spent. Provide the kind of

political leadership necessary to see to it that debacles such as Tamesides and Tyndales don't happen. Informed, thoughtful, committed, united, militant teachers are clearly necessary to combat negative, defensive and potentially destructive criticism. Having pupils, parents and the public on your side will be and has been achieved when this sort of professional leads the way. We didn't cope very effectively, but you can.

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Corporate Management and Local Authority Education

Michael Harrison

Michael Harrison, who writes here on one of the major problems arising from reorganisation facing education in local government, is Chief Education Officer for Sheffield.

Local government in Britain has an honourable record of achievement in the provision of public services throughout the twentieth century: and in spite of a few recent blemishes in the more corruptible parts of the country (these, however, confined to narrow questions of land and buildings development) the recent record is not dishonourable. But not a few people interested in local government and what it is required to do are beginning to ask, in these latest years since local government reorganisation, whether it is performing as it should. Among the more anxious questioners are education officers and heads of schools and colleges.

The particular irony of the question is that the reorganisation, following the Redcliffe-Maude Royal Commission, was expected to produce a greater efficiency. But as we all know the two-tier solution finally arrived at (functions divided between shire counties and county districts in the predominantly rural areas, and between metropolitan counties and metropolitan districts in the mainly urban areas) has had the result of confusing what was at least clear before. Even if we had cause to criticise them we did at least know the difference between a county and a county borough: and in particular we knew that both were authorities of equal constitutional status in the administration of the public education service. Try now to draw a chart for a foreigner showing the position of education in the local government service, among shire counties, metropolitan areas, the GLC and the London boroughs! The irrationality of the result beggars description and is a fairly clear indication of the low regard given to the coherence of the education service as a national structure at the time when the decisions were made on local government reorganisation.

Further than this however the reorganisation was

characterised by a leap in the growth of the local authority bureaucracy. The student of social and governmental change in the post-war period may perhaps be able to link this growth with the general bureaucratisation of our society that Jo Grimond has remarked upon. Perhaps it is not unconnected with the tendency of decadent systems to obsess themselves with secondary questions of mechanism and organisation forgetting their primary aims and purposes (compare the comment of Professor G C Allen in his Institute of Economic Affairs paper 'The British Disease' on the feebleness of British industry similarly obsessed throughout the last century). But in specific terms at any rate management in local government in the late 1970s is dominated by that concept called 'corporate management' derived from the Bains Report (The New Local Authorities - Management and Structure), 1972. Since the practice derived from the theory causes some anguish to educationists, corporate management deserves some examination by them. It is probably fair to say that it has not yet had anything but largely unquestioning absorption by local government, or if questions are asked they are not well or publicly articulated (except again by those same anxious educationists).

An outdated theory ?

Let us accept that the theory of corporate management started out as a well-intentioned quest for greater efficiency in local government management. Simply expressed it said that local government should aim to provide services in the most rational and coordinated fashion possible, in order to serve best the needs of the local population, and that the planning of provision should be corporately, that is to say inter-departmentally, dealt

with. There could be little to complain about in such high-mindedness. Even the educationist, then as ever criticised for his separatist tendencies, could see that if the plans of education and social services departments came together the under-5's and their families would be more effectively served.

The flaws however were present from the start. For the theory of corporate management was derived from an industrial model which even in the early 1970s was outdated in the better industrial practice. It is no doubt true that organisation theory still draws heavily on industrial experience and that academic analysis of organisation is most heavily concentrated on the industrial world, but it was a pity that the Bains Committee when it was doing its work did not look, alongside its Weberian view of rational bureaucracy, at the more modern analysts like Burns, March and Simon who wrote of the dysfunctions of bureaucracy. Indeed the whole nature of local government deserved more thought than it received when organisation theory was being applied to it, somewhat superficially. This may seem a rather harsh judgment on Bains and his committee. They were after all men experienced in local government and the administration of organisations. What was lacking in the exercise was perhaps the depth of academic interest and examination of the working of local government which might have informed the discussion with some respectable argument.

The fact is surely that the local authority as we know it in this country is not a corporate organisation except in the very general sense of its political constitution. In no way can its political corporateness be transferred into a view of its management as a unitary organisation. Yet the term 'corporate management' has extended itself from the base of the undoubted corporateness of a single body assembled politically under statute to represent the interests of a local populace, into unjustifiable assumption about the nature, indeed the practicalities, of administration of services. For by no stretch of the imagination can for example the planting of flower-beds in parks, the disposal of the dead in crematoria or the provision of day nurseries for 2-year-olds be seen as anything other than a plurality of services. Indeed the separate integrity of certain other highly important and technically complex services is recognised by the regrouping for example of what used to be police, transport and water services run by individual local authorities into the new passenger transport, police and water authorities for which the main principle is their own internal consistency.

What can in fact be argued to link such disparate services in management terms is the element of means of

provision. It is possible to cross-reference many aspects of different services to the alternative axis of resources required to carry out programmes of activity, and then to organise the management of those resources across the board. But the common management of resources, which is what corporate management is said to mean, does not add up to the management of services. The management of resources is subservient to the aims and objectives of services and these are more than, and beyond, the scope of corporate management.

A secondary activity

Corporate management can, therefore, mean only a secondary activity. The current hoax is that corporate management is the primary activity and unfortunately the pressure of financial crisis hardens the illusion into reality. The result is that administration of what should be the support activities of finance and personnel departments come to dominate the administration of operational services, with the inevitable result of a centralisation of management. This coincides neatly with centralising tendencies in the political life of the authority and with the creation of 'policy and resource committees' in the first place to monitor but ultimately to control, by intervention between the service committee and the council of the local authority.

It can be readily seen that the education service sits uneasily in this format of management. I have deliberately held back from particular reference to education in local government in order to make the general case against corporatism. If I have succeeded in making it the argument has these special additional forces in the field of education.

In the first place, the centralising movement described above is quite opposite to the devolving nature of the English and Welsh education system as laid down by the 1944 Education Act. The distribution of power in our education system is carefully engineered, to lie in different degrees with the central government which lays down the guidelines for the national plan for education: with the LEAs that provide the appropriate part of the system for their area and in turn are overseen in this task by central government (so that in shorthand terms we can say we have 'a national system of education locally administered'); and with the educating institution represented constitutionally by its governing body. The respective functions of the three levels of operation are embodied in the law and the conduct of the school or college is provided for in articles of government which are statutory

documents. The purpose of this distribution of function is quite clear. It is to secure for teachers and students exactly that quality of unfettered association which makes for fearless and uninhibited teaching and learning. In these post-war years, and after 100 years experience of providing public education, we in this country have produced a constitutional means of educating young people at the behest of the State that Socrates would have found perfectly easy to use. But our devolutionary mode of action is now under attack and an unhappy syllogism is completed if we remember how the forces of the Athenian establishment finally dealt with Socrates. Perhaps the present threat is rather less dramatic than the hemlock, but the numbing of the life of the system is not dissimilar.

The deadening effect takes three main directions. First, in the context of the teachers, corporatism manifests itself in a centralised control, to one degree or another, over standards of manning and physical resourcing in such a way as to tie down educational development. Our system depends for its vitality on freedom to move in different directions, in ready response to new situations in a constant flow of curriculum development. Especially now, when the character of our schools and colleges has achieved a maturity that is at last making them fully adequate to deal sensitively and in a modern manner with the needs of young people moving into an increasingly complex and demanding society, the utmost care is needed to allow room for such development, in our comparatively new primary schools, our very new comprehensive secondary schools, in brand new higher education publicly provided in polytechnics, and in our 16-19 tertiary system yet to emerge from its chrysalis. The heavy-footed approach of corporate management, blundering about in unseeing ignorance, seems likely to crush the still fragile structure of education that the nation has so laboriously and slowly built.

Secondly in managerial terms a school or college is a complete entity, with its own integrity of aim and objective. This becomes the more difficult to state and achieve with every increase in oppressiveness of external constraint. The purpose of modern educational administration has been to minimise such constraints, to protect institutions from intrusive controls and to devise systems of resource provision and of monitoring which encourage good housekeeping yet are relaxed in their effect. The early development in Hertfordshire of the individual school bank account and the more recent 'alternative use of resources' scheme of the ILEA are examples. A similar intention for colleges of further and higher education is signalled by the 1968 (No 2) Education Act and the

establishment of college governing bodies with very considerable autonomy. But the insertion of levers of functional control by generalised corporate management techniques goes directly counter to such developments and is likely only to fracture the previously integrated management of institutions – whose tasks moreover will become more difficult in a period of financial squeeze. It is possible to demand more and better education within schools and colleges for the same amount of money or even less money, but only if the institution is free to develop and adjust its internal systems to meet changing priority and emphasis.

Finally we need to remind ourselves again that the constitutional gift of power to governors over the aims and conduct of educational institutions is a political act of will. It expresses a particular manifestation of our democracy that is more subtle than the rough machinery of representative government, that is highly sensitive to community need and involvement, and is capable of engaging popular effort in the working out of educational development in support of a free, strong and happy society. School and College are thus embodied in the political and social intent of the nation with very great potential influence and in a manner peculiarly British. The pressure of the new corporate bureaucracy is, therefore, directly in conflict with the intended direction of our community development and in proportion as it interferes with the carrying out of this intent it is inimical to the involvement of the people in their own education and to the social values implied in that process. And insofar as the political force of a local authority allies itself to corporate management that character of local politics is hostile to the real involvement of the people in their own future. So it is not fanciful to perceive tendencies of totalitarianism in the corporate management theory, however benign its inventors and practitioners naively believe themselves to be.

Small wonder then that educationists in local government are earning themselves among their colleagues and employers a reputation for waspishness. The sting however is carried by others as I have tried to show. It would be no mean achievement for local authority education, strong in the knowledge of its 100 years of public service, to draw the poison.

Discussion

The Case for the School Counsellor in Schools in Britain

We have all gasped with horror at the increase in gymslip mums, and at cases of suicide and delinquency in some of our secondary schools. The list of children 'at risk' is increasing, for instance, vulnerable children may be categorised as:

- (a) the sexually active unmarried,
- (b) immigrants with problems,
- (c) fringe delinquents,
- (d) drug takers,
- (e) children in care.

It is possible to complete a very lengthy list, but the few quoted serve to illustrate the point that teachers, in addition to academic demands upon them to meet 'the qualification spiral', are being faced with a growing number of personal and social problems which (a) take time (b) present a level of counselling which can be beyond the teachers' scope and training.

It was once thought that a counsellor was a luxury in a school, but as the traditional supports of church and family crumble, schools are having to assess their guidance roles and what was once a luxury has now become a painfully obvious necessity. Moreover it clearly should be national policy that LEA's should have counsellors for each of their secondary schools to cope with levels of unmet need, provide a service for the pupils and make necessary links with outside agencies, eg Child Guidance Clinics etc. Some LEA's appointed counsellors some time ago, who have at present well defined roles within the educational system. Other LEA's have taken a more dilettante attitude to the whole question and have adopted the 'let's wait and see' approach with disturbing outcomes.

If our young people are to benefit

from the educational and training opportunities available to them they need to have the support of a guidance system which helps them chart a route through the school's courses and 'sees' them through the 'normal' adolescent problems. What is required of us now is not simply to teach subject matter, but also life planning skills for a world that is rapidly changing, and in which unemployment is a reality. As value systems in society present confusions and divorce rates creep up, for some of our children, school can be the one positive experience in their lives. Surely we have a duty as a nation to equip pupils with the skills to make an even better world for themselves and their children in which to live.

Of course, counselling and any one counsellor, is not the complete answer to such a complex problem, the onus is on all concerned with education to keep on aiming at reform and better conditions, however perfect some situations might seem. Yet, in my opinion, a guidance system in our schools with a team approach, led by a counsellor, goes part of the way in alleviating stress for both pupils and teachers. It would help maintain too, that balance which Britain has traditionally held between the pastoral and academic, whilst at the same time inject this old concept with new life.

One of the greatest compliments one individual can pay to another is to give them their undivided attention. Obviously, in a group situation, this is no easy task for a teacher. Without destroying that delicate relationship between pupil and teacher, a counsellor should have the time to listen to pupils and do much in the way of preventative work so that headlines about sad youngsters committing suicide are fewer. There may come a time when the sentiments first expressed in the 1963 Newsom Report might at long last come true! 'In large schools it may not be fanciful to look forward to a stage where there is a full time counsellor available to advise pupils throughout their school course and to

prepare them for going out into the world.'

Thirteen years on, we have made slow moves towards the suggestion in that official paper, through largely individual effort, and the National Association of Careers Guidance and Teachers. There have, since that time, been dramatic changes in society. It makes good sense now for there to be a national policy on the role of the school counsellor and counselling and really do something which will help young people make the fullest use of their education and lives.

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The Economics of the Voucher System

Norman Morris

Norman Morris is Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester. He is also Leader of the Council of Manchester Metropolitan District which is, of course, responsible for its own education system. As an historian of education and practising politician he is well qualified to take an astringent look at the much publicised 'voucher system' for financing schools.

It is hard to be serious about the voucher system.

Although the concept has been on the table for discussion in this country for at least fifteen years there are as many different versions of what it means and how it would operate as there are writers on the subject. Apart from doctrinaire agreement that a free market ought to be as desirable in education as in other aspects of the economy, there is so wide a divergence as to how this might be achieved as to make reasonable discussion impossible. Even more remarkable is the fact that no single scheme has as yet been subjected to close definition or detailed examination even by its own advocate. The justification for each version is couched in generalisation and peppered with slogans which beg more questions than they answer. Latterly, the advocates of vouchers seem to have become aware of this themselves. The current line is not that vouchers are self-evidently beneficial but that experiments should be set up so that their validity can be scientifically tested, and those who are sceptical about the point of going to such trouble are reminded of the words of Mao Tse-Tung that 'complacency is the enemy of study' and that we should be 'insatiable in learning'. This is a useful political ploy – to obfuscate by shifting the ground from one subject to another; it is easier to chastise opponents for refusing to allow controlled experiment than it is to deal with the original argument. Nevertheless, before an experiment is mounted, with human as well as money input, we ought at least to have some ground for believing that it is worth while.

Despite the assertion, almost as a throw-away line, that vouchers will improve the quality of education, the proposition is essentially economic.

Briefly, it is claimed that vouchers will accomplish two

ends. If parents are encouraged to use some of their own money to buy school places investment in schooling will escalate without increase in public expenditure; secondly, by modifying the present system so as to permit the private purse to operate in selecting the school to which a child is sent, parents will have greater freedom of choice than they now enjoy, and power of control over education will flow back from the State to the family. All this is the language of a certain type of economic philosophy and the purpose of this article is simply to examine the economics of the argument.

The first voucher systems put forward in this country were based on the principle that all parents should be issued with a free basic coupon, fixed at the average cost of schools in the local authority area. This would entitle them to a minimum standard place at the school of their choice but those who could afford to do so would be free to supplement the basic voucher out of their own pocket and shop around for a more expensive place. This implies two types of provision – the 'minimum price' school place and the 'more expensive' school place where the education might somehow be 'better' or glossier or more exclusive. Those receiving minimum education would simply continue to receive it free out of taxation without the presumed advantages which would accrue to those who paid more.

It has never been clearly explained how this is supposed to work. If the two types of school place were to co-exist in the same school we would have a return to the situation reported to have flourished in some endowed grammar schools in the 1860's where, according to the Schools' Enquiry Commission, all pupils were taught reading but when it came to picking up a pen a large proportion remained motionless 'because their parents did not

choose to pay the writing fee'. More likely, however we would end with two types of school – the standard price school for the majority and the more expensive school for the better-off minority.

This simple model, with its emphasis on enlarging social stratification, is so patently crude as to be itself a politically unsaleable product in the present state of public opinion. More recent voucher advocates have, therefore, introduced a modification, designed to disarm opposition by appearing to limit the power of the purse as the sole arbiter of school choice.

Supplementary vouchers

In current versions a new factor is inserted between the minimum-value tax-provided voucher and unrestricted private payment. This takes the form of a supplementary voucher, available to all in the same way as the basic voucher. In some versions only the supplementary, in others both basic and supplementary vouchers, would be subject to a means-test. Although there would be no limit on the fees charged in independent schools which would, as now, respond fully to market forces, the amount of school fees chargeable in the public sector would be subject to a limit set by government. This means that supplementary vouchers paid for out of taxation could be supplied on demand to any value between the amount of the basic voucher and the ceiling imposed by authority without risking an open-ended run on the public purse.

A system of this sort, it is claimed, has several advantages. It has an appearance of fairness in that those who can least afford the fees required receive the greatest subsidy from taxation. How fair this would be in practice would, of course, depend on the income scales used and their adjustability to income variations, as they occur. Schools would have a more flexible income than they now have, in accordance with their ability to attract customers at the required prices. Because parents above the income scale would be paying privately up to the level of their choice there would be less reliance on taxation as the sole source of investment in public education and, depending on the level of public input, a possible increase in total resources available.

The important factor is the size of public investment. The fact that additional money comes from the private pockets does nothing to pre-empt possible cuts in subvention from taxation, with a consequent shift of input from the public to the private sector. It is therefore an exaggeration to claim that vouchers lead inevitably to an enlargement of resources; all that they make certain is a

sharing of resources whilst leaving the door open to changes in the ratio of public to private input.

There is no doubting the tendency of a capitalist economy to demand frequent cut-backs in public expenditure, which have their greatest effect on the lower paid without ensuring equality of sacrifice amongst the better off. The present situation exemplifies this. Whilst central and local government are being pressurised from outside to reduce public expenditure as a means of rescuing the country, the only significant saving in private spending has come from the voluntary sacrifice of the lower paid through the social contract. In times of diminishing public expenditure the gap between the comparative purchasing power of lower and higher paid would enable the latter to supplement their vouchers with relative ease at the same time that education for the masses was reduced.

In periods of expansion, however, the system could have the reverse effect. If total available resources rise as a result of private input, undistributed over the service as a whole, growth is to the advantage of the better off. There will therefore be constant pressure from below to force up the rate of input from taxation in order to keep pace with the developing private sector. The emergence of a growing proportion of well-backed schools, which is one of the avowed aims of the voucher system, means, by definition, that other schools will be left behind, in buildings, resources and staff. The down-town school becomes more down-town in inverse proportion to the elevation of middle-class schools. As opportunity arises this will be politically rejected and public expenditure escalated in an attempt to keep up with the Jones's. Voucher economists talk a great deal of the value of competition in keeping costs down. They should recognise, however, that one of the outcomes of competition might well be to generate such a sense of public outrage as to provoke still greater public input. From the educational standpoint this may be no bad thing but do we really need to arrive there via the voucher road? Do we have to bang our heads against a wall in order to experience the relief of stopping? There are more straight forward and fairer routes to public expenditure increases.

If recipients are to be progressively taxed or means-tested in respect of both the basic and the supplementary vouchers it is difficult to understand why two different types of vouchers are required. Parents could obtain a single coupon entitling them to buy a place in any school up to its particular cost and subject to their own willingness to meet whatever private payment might be required after assessment. In such a system double vouchers are an unnecessary refinement and are probably just a thought-

less carry-over from prior proposals to apply means-testing to the supplement alone. Under that scheme the basic voucher would have been available to everyone, irrespective of means, and marketable in private as well as state schools. Exchequer subsidy to private education is clearly not a good sales point and now seems to be out of favour. But if the basic voucher is means-tested in order to reduce exchequer assistance to private schools the supplemental voucher is left to enjoy a somewhat pointless vestigial survival so long as the basic voucher can also be used as part payment for a place in a non-state school.

A free market ?

The nub of the economic argument, however, is the response which parents, as customers, make to the offer of school places for sale at different prices. In thinking that this will encourage competition between schools and enlarge the area of choice, proponents of vouchers rely very much on the experience of an entirely free market. In the private sector they are no doubt right to do so; in this area parents will, as now, be free to shop around and pay their own price irrespective of whether they have to find the whole cost themselves or receive a portion of the cost by way of subsidy. The vast majority, however, will continue to use the state sector, where schools will be provided out of public funds and operate, as now, within capital and revenue cost limits fixed by public authority. The inability of governing bodies in this sector to market a product in excess of the official ceiling is itself a severe restriction on competition. For most of the nation schools will battle for customers in the narrow range of prices between the fixed minimum and maximum under normal conditions of public accountability.

This is not the only way in which a free market will be eroded in the public sector. Compulsory attendance, which we are assured will not be tampered with, assures the schools a sufficiency of captive customers. Parents cannot decline to purchase; they can only choose between brands. Much, therefore, depends on the amount they have to find from their own pocket.

Most of the cost will be borne by taxation, the parent being required only to pay a marginal supplement. There are two possible ways of determining this amount, one related entirely to the parent's income, the other to both his income and the actual fee at the school of his choice. Under the former, the government would in effect lay down a notional proportion of family income as being the sum which could reasonably be expected as a private

contribution to education. This would be regarded as the 'fair' contribution and would take the same proportion of income from everyone. Unless a parent chose to pay more than his official 'fair' contribution (which could not often happen) he would be limited in choice to those schools whose fee fell within the sum of the free minimum voucher plus his own 'fair' contribution. That is to say, the lower his personal income, the more restricted his area of choice.

The other, more socially acceptable, method would be to adopt the technique at present in use in assessing parental contributions to student awards in higher education. Here, the amount of public money paid to the student is related not only to family income but also to the cost of the place at the institution where the award is to be held, the parental contribution being the difference between public grant and total cost of the fee. Under this method, the grant increases with the cost of the institution chosen but parental payment stays more or less the same. This being so, the parent has no financial inhibition about his choice of school; all institutions in the public sector are within his reach. Voucher advocates assert with some pride that this gives parents the opportunity to make their choice on educational rather than financial grounds, although this is precisely the opportunity they already enjoy in most authorities without the clumsy complications which voucherists would induce into the system.

The proposition that a voucher system with built-in safeguards for the needy brings market competition into public sector education falls down on two counts. Since the schools will be subject to both a cost ceiling and public accountability their ability to market significantly varied products is limited. If the 'fair' contribution required from the parent remains much the same whatever the asking price it is, at best, naive to suppose that parents, as a group, will purposely eschew the higher cost schools and make their purchase on the basis of value for money.

The likely results of a system organised in this way are that parents will go for the top price on the reasonable assumption that, since schools are publicly inspected and audited, the top price must also be the best. At the same time, if price is a marginal factor in consumer choice, governing bodies would automatically go for the ceiling; there would, in fact, be no incentive for them to do otherwise; as now, they would find ways of spending up to the allowable maximum in a protected market.

Attempts to manipulate the value of vouchers so that all parents have equal access to all public sector schools is, therefore, patently counter-productive to the objectives

sought and it follows that market forces can only be given a part to play in school selection through a system of differential fees to suit different pockets. Efforts to coat the pill by equalising capacity to pay destroys the very reason for the exercise. The voucher system must either be a crude attempt to allow those who can pay more to buy a 'better' education, or it is nothing.

But even on this basis, so far from saving public money it would lead to incalculable waste if allowed to operate freely.

If consumer preference is to be based on price, schools have to be pushed into a price war and it is immaterial whether the battle is fought with the weapons of hucksterism or genuine qualitative differences in the product. The market has no place in education unless those who run the schools feel the customers' bite in the form of fluctuating demand, as the charisma of one school grows and another declines. But demand has to be followed by supply in terms of capital programming and finance, bricks and mortar, staff and equipment.

The Alum Rock experiment

In his account of the voucher experiment at Alum Rock (T.E.S. 21.5.76) David Mandel reports that one school lost 17 per cent of its previous enrolment in the first year and another had to rent portable classrooms to accommodate the excess demand. Changes of similar proportions were still taking place in the third year, shifts of 10 per cent being common. In this experiment, since vouchers represent personally disposable property, switches out of one school into another can take place at any time and as often as parents wish. This places the public sector in the impossible position of pouring out taxpayers' money to balance a continuously moving see-saw.

As one school attracts pupils from another there is an imbalance of provision which has to be adjusted. One side of the see-saw is moved up or down by consumer preference while public expenditure struggles to restore equilibrium by activating the other. But it is inherent in the system that the see-saw never stays still and swings unpredictably. In any school area there will always be idle plant alongside over-used and inadequate plant, together with a continuous drain on capital to keep up with demand. Nor will government, the source of capital input, have any means of forecasting demand in order to forestall raids on the public purse. If it were possible to know in advance what parents are likely to want from

education over any reasonably long period of time there would be no need for a voucher system at all.

The inherent unpredictability of the market place provides another difficulty. It is a basic principle of public finance, to which even right-wing economists subscribe, that central government has the right to determine the level of public expenditure. Central control of the total amount of public borrowing permissible at any particular time is the corner stone of forward planning and allocation of resources between the various public services, as well as enabling the state to choose a balance between public and private expenditure. Any erosion of these powers by the intervention of unrestricted market forces into public operations diminishes the capacity of the government to keep taxation in hand.

The fundamental contradiction of allowing the market into the public expenditure field, together with consequential waste of resources, has not passed unobserved by voucher advocates. To make the system viable they now talk about operating a restricted market. Parents should only be permitted to cash-in their vouchers (ie influence the type of school provided by exercising consumer preference) up to the limit of available supply. They would be given three choices. So long as a school has the capacity it would be required to admit all first-choice applicants. Children failing to obtain places at the school of their first choice would then be allocated, subject to their second and third preferences, to schools with vacant places. It will not escape notice that this is precisely the system which has been worked for many years by a great number of local authorities without the complication and extra administrative cost of vouchers.

This article began by pointing out that voucher propagandists have never published any close analysis of their proposals or followed them through to a logical conclusion. To the charge that a free market in education extends the already over-large opportunity differentials between rich and poor, they insert a compromise which destroys the free market they advocate. Since their proposals lead to obvious waste of resources, they add restrictions on choice which make the voucher system unnecessary.

Perhaps, however, the concept remains what it always was – a plot to ensure that the wealthier can obtain a superior education at the expense of the disadvantaged and the tax-payer, and the so-called economic theory in which it is clothed is just a sea of words designed to delude.

With apologies to Matthew Arnold

Joan Simon

Joan Simon, who discusses here a recent book opposing most 'new trends in education', has written widely in the history of education and translated and edited A R Luria's seminal **Speech and the Development of Mental Processes in the Child**.

One way of considering an essay on the ills of England's education is to imagine its impact on a visitor from another country, one who has studied the intricacies of our educational system but finds it more difficult to grasp the niceties of English educational discourse. Matthew Arnold, surely an impeccable guide, once did something of the kind.

The subject is the editorial introduction to *Education, Equality and Society* (1975), a collection of essays by five men who have negotiated the shoals of the traditional educational system with some academic success. They are a somewhat old-fashioned Oxford philosopher, J. R. Lucas; the late Professor Sir Cyril Burt who was *sui generis*; G. H. Bantock, a professor of education who entered the field from the area of 'Eng. Lit.'; and a one-time comprehensive school head now conservative member of parliament, Rhodes Boyson; the editor being Bryan Wilson, a reader of sociology in the university of Oxford.

* * *

Foreign Questioner: You say this critic of equality in education in general, and especially your comprehensive schools, is a fellow of the College of All Souls?

Answer: He is.

FQ: He dislikes the comprehensive school, no doubt, because of bad students entering that college?

A: No, no. This college hasn't any undergraduates, though immensely wealthy, the richest in Oxford I believe. A university committee has suggested the funds be shared with less well endowed colleges to extend, or equalise, opportunities – just within the university of Oxford, you understand, nothing revolutionary.

FQ: The proposal will, assuredly, be taken up?

A: Not to any extent that I know of, though there is pooling on a small scale among colleges I believe. All Souls may well be free of tax too because the fellows,

though comfortably housed and fed from all accounts, rank as a charitable object.

FQ: In democratic England all is possible! What has the essay on the concept of equality as applied to education to say of this matter?

A: It isn't mentioned. But the author does deplore that this concept 'has been applied at various points in continental universities' which let almost anyone in. And he strongly deprecates, as selection 'by virtue of certain primary biological data', the practice of some American universities of admitting members of 'various vociferous social groups – women, blacks, chicanos most conspicuously'.

FQ: Some help to one or two of the most poor and excluded is so much feared by one so privileged? As sociologist this man certainly recognises how far his attitudes are formed by the institution in which he finds himself after his own education?

A: He doesn't make the point.

FQ: What has he to say, then, of your costly 'public schools', which are not public, from which I think the Oxford university has almost half its students – a powerful system reserved for those who 'most conspicuously' have and 'vociferously' call to keep?

A: Nothing. His main concern – the publisher puts it neatly – is 'the social costs of doctrinaire egalitarianism in education as a threat to our social values and the framework of social order'.

FQ: So – but with your All Souls College in your Oxford University and your 'public schools' Hitler so much liked, how is it 'egalitarian' your education system? Ha, ha! Has this man any works of scholarship besides opinions?

A: He is noteworthy, it is said, for publishing 'widely on the sociology of religion'.

FQ: Now I see it. Always there is trouble in England about religion which makes for difficulty in thinking

about education. This man of All Souls may be of some special sect?

A: Not that I know. But he does think about society somewhat in terms of popular religious teaching of about a century ago. And his views on women tend to be Miltonic.

FQ: Please?

A: Oh, you know. 'He for God only, she for God in
him:
His fair large front and eye sublime
declared

Absolute rule'.

FQ: In simple English, what has this to do with the question we discuss?

A: It is the function of women to minister to their lords and their offspring. So long as family life continues – and there is a biological imperative here, as he perspicaciously remarks – a great many must perform 'simple maintenance activities – shopping, cooking, cleaning and caring for others'. This requires 'low skills but high degrees of commitment and devotion' and those who must do such work will be less frustrated if they have no expertise 'which they are prevented from exercising'; in other words, 'if their educational background has prepared them' for their role by giving them 'personal creative and cultural interests which harmonise, rather than conflict with it'.

FQ: Marry a graduate wife and repent is it? He wishes, then, this Oxford fellow for special housewifery schools for girls?

A: He doesn't say so. Just goes on to explain that 'housewives are of course not the only section of the population whose roles require low specificity of skill'; a lot of men must do mere maintenance jobs also unrewarding and evoking little dedication. He points out that we have dangerously interfered with natural selection, by diminishing death from disease, so precipitating the fearful problem of over-population. 'Were we to eliminate social and educational selection, an analogous result might follow: a society the continuance of which was jeopardised because insufficient people were prepared to undertake menial social roles because they had been educated beyond them, and could find no joy in them.'

FQ: Do you try to tell me that this English religious sociologist wishes ordinary schools should breed those to take joy in being *Untermenschen*?

A: Oh no, that is expressly denied. Everyone, except a handful of over influential ideologists, agrees what schools are for, he says. I expect he means ordinary schools. 'The intention is to cultivate lively and enquiring minds in

responsiveness, sensitivity, the ability to criticise constructively, an appreciation of culture, and, with all, a sense of civic and social responsibility'. Which, he explains – to counter ideologists who misrepresent almost any term – means 'an awareness of the needs of others, and a willingness to share in collective effort as well as in social benefits'.

FQ: He preaches then for others what his uncharitable college is unwilling to practice even to benefit its own university collective! What is this than what I say in all the conditions of England. He does not want the children of all to learn but to cultivate housewives and maintenance men?

A: 'We have no choice but to transmit knowledge', he says, 'and to inculcate civic responsiveness and disinterested goodwill' (sorry, he does tend to repeat himself, only this bit ends differently) 'a process in which until perhaps two or three decades ago we were steadily becoming more expert and effective'.

FQ: Ah, he wants back to yesterday and three schools early selected by intelligence tests, as in no other country, and much streaming from infancy though most children end in a school going nowhere?

A: He doesn't actually mention modern schools, nor seem to know that intelligence testing broke down; he says streaming was 'an attempt to teach pupils in accordance with their actual differences of ability'. But it's all very conceptual, deploring 'the assault on categories'; categories

'which it has seemed useful to construct, which corresponded to observable and testable differences, and to which sensitive and discriminate facilities could be matched'.

FQ: Was 'sensitive' that 80% of 11-year children were dumped? Was *indiscriminate* which, if logical, he should dislike! Once more the idea out of connection with social reality, so strange in a sociologist. Or is he *so* little informed about the simple facts?

A: He believes that 'three levels of competence . . . were recognised by the 1944 Act' and that the comprehensive school was conceived of as mitigating the 'social implications' of this 'intellectual discrimination'. He thinks it is necessarily and always very big. And has 'eliminated in favour of mass provision' those 'fine discriminations' (sorry, but there is an extra refinement coming this time) 'and interpersonal differences which had been steadily elaborated and which had been employed in the attempt to make more appropriate the treatment and facilities for individuals'. And to what end? 'The celebration of uncertainty, the deliberate destruction of categories, and

the emphasis on everyone being equally "valid" as an individual'.

FQ: The syntax is not of the clearest, I think. How to 'elaborate' an 'interpersonal difference'? When is an individual not an individual – when she is a housewife, perhaps, cooking and caring for a more valid man?

'Take but degree away, untune that string

And hark what discord follows'

I, too, quote from English literature! It is venerable this idea about 'destruction of categories' and the danger, always at times of social change which finds reflection in schools. But all your education authorities nearly make comprehensive schools, also your rightwing ministers. Do *they* then undermine all that is so educationally appropriate to maintain social order, does he really think?

A: One gets a picture of subversion by 'ideologically-committed votaries of new theories of learning'.

FQ: Now I am interested. How does he characterise these new theories?

A: He doesn't. After the bits about the slippery slope from single school to non-streaming, by way of 'subtly shifting assumptions', the rest of the essay is about the evils of big schools. He thinks they were purposely propagated by people 'ideologically committed' to the 'concept of equality' with the political end of diminishing 'differentials in social status'.

FQ: This, for him, is not what schools are for but the other way around, this much repeated point I have. Also that supposedly one handful of men have upset all your school system by wrong thinking! But still nothing about education for which I wait?

A: I don't seem to find anything. I don't think he's ever taught in a classroom, just went to a university and stayed on. Nearly everyone, he says, wants to maintain the social order as it is, except the 'concept of equality' men who lead on to chaos. He says he's read about the faults of comprehensive schools in the 'daily press'. You're right about Shakespeare having said it, by the way. Here, actually, is a bit about the 'egalitarians who wish to destroy the whole social apparatus of order, gradation, status, distinction and categorisation'.

FQ: And what about the social sharing he says he wishes, and how to foster in schools instead of placing children apart, especially those of moneyed men most needing to learn to share alike with 'disinterested goodwill'. But you are not fair to this sociologist, I think. Give me the book to see.

Here now, is of learning – to control 'impulse-ridden and instinctive behaviour' – does he speak of the nursery – no, it seems, the school. Here now is what is necessary to

learning, the obverse of equality, he says: 'superordination and subordination; authority and obedience; the gradation of attainments, and the privileged status of mastery'. Well, well – and here we find that conspiracy theory which I think you invent. It is 'a subtle device of those attacking traditional educational methods that they contrive to make neutral terms into negatively-loaded emotive language; words like *discrimination*, *discipline*, *loyalty*, *patriotism*, *duty*, have with many others, undergone this process'. Since when, I ask, is 'patriotism' neutral? Ill-judging of terms this man for one who reads sociology to Oxford students. Take it now back and tell how all this ends?

A: With what the other four contributors say, it seems. 'The case for complete equality in education is shown to rely on inherent weaknesses in philosophical argument, to depend on fallacious psychological assumptions, to have unintended and deleterious cultural consequences, and to face insuperable problems to its practical realisation'.

FQ: Certainly so fallacious was the psychometrics of Burt, that I know. But never in a comprehensive school do I meet men, or women neither, shouting 'complete equality in education' – who can these be?

A: Well, he specially dislikes what some radical sociologists write. But 'equality in education', as the publishers summarise again, is the watchword of some politicians and publicists 'and even some educationists who might have been expected to think a little harder about the application of this abstract principle to the complex and sensitive activity of training the young'.

FQ: Only a principle when *not* applied is 'abstract' – and such is equality in English education as all the world knows! And what may be the watchword of this would-be sociologist who when he talks of education does not observe the basic principle of the discipline, to see the society whole? And who so covers up his argument. He *wants* that all should not be educated to keep the stable society. Yet pretends to worry about schools which by unstreaming lose sight of cultural values – but this should please him?

A: Don't forget the problem of chaos and the need for superordination, authority, discipline, duty and all the things in which the young ought to be 'trained' if they are to be happy in their proper place.

FQ: Other people's children isn't it? Brought up by such happy captive women themselves uneducated the better to perform this unskilled work? Enough is enough, no more! Let us now talk seriously, of children and how they learn, of education and humanity.

Levels of Debate and Levels of Control: Research and the Black Papers

Gabriel Chanan

Gabriel Chanan, who deals here with some aspects of the Black Paper phenomenon, has, since 1969, been editor at the National Foundation of Educational Research. He has taught in Further Education, Teacher Education, and English as a Foreign Language. In 1974, with Linda Gilchrist, he published *What School is For*.

A fifth Black Paper was promised as soon as the findings of Neville Bennett's research on teaching styles hit the news-stands. The relationship between these two events is not simple. It was largely because of the Black Paper movement that the *Teaching Style* findings obtained the extraordinary amount of publicity that they did. The educational crusade of the right has drawn certain kinds of research nearer to the centre of the ideological stage.

Any attempt to explain these developments purely as shifts on a left-right or trad-prog spectrum are not merely oversimplified but misconceived. The terms of debate are as much at issue, and as critical for the future of education, as the content.

We must understand the Black Papers as attempting several things at once: not merely (1) the propagation of certain educational views, but also (2) the legitimization of a very generalised level of argument on educational issues, (3) derivation of decisive significance from fragmentary evidence, and (4) greater centralised control over the work of schools.

Distorted treatment of research sources by Black Paper writers has often been remarked. It is also documented, but perhaps not in places where most Black Paper supporters would have to confront it. For example, a review of *Black Paper 1975 in Educational Research* 18:1, November '75, by Bruce Choppin, repudiates in detail four of the main citations of NFER research. In the present case, anyone who actually looked at Bennett's study will have seen major disparities between it and the immediately succeeding statements both of Black Paper supporters and of many of the journalists who made it so widely known. A small but illuminating instance: as soon as the report appeared, Stuart Froome, retired Surrey Headmaster and Black Paper contributor, was reported thus: 'Mr Froome . . . says the report reiterates the views expressed in his book *Why Tommy Isn't Learn-*

ing and also his note of dissent to the Government: backed probe into reading standards . . . Said Mr Froome—'The sickness of our society stems from progressive education . . .'" (Slough *Evening Mail*, 26/4/76). The ludicrous point here is not the content of Mr Froome's views, but the fact that within his report Bennett specifically repudiates any idea that his findings support the well-aided theses of Mr Froome, mentioning him by name. The substance of the matter is that Bennett found only a small minority of 'progressive' teachers, so Bennett's findings as a whole cannot possibly mean that progressive methods, whatever their faults, are responsible for the ills of society. Had Mr Froome actually read the book when he claimed its allegiance to his cause?

A close look at the mechanics of publicity shows that Mr Froome's reaction is merely an exaggerated instance of a phenomenon that is quite fundamental to public reception of research findings. Table C1 on page 177 of the *Teaching Styles* book¹ contains typographical errors in the figures given. This is quite a different matter from all the issues surrounding the research which have been written about so copiously. The major error occurs in the section giving gain scores for English. It is a very simple table. Anyone who adds it up will find that the highest gains were made under mixed style teaching. This is directly contradicted by the corresponding graph in the chapter on pupil progress, Fig 5.8, which shows formally-taught pupils doing best. This difference happens to tip the balance of the general conclusions decisively one way or the other. If table C1 is correct, figure 5.8 is wrong, and so are the entire conclusions on teaching style. They would show that mixed style, not formal style teaching produces the best results. We are told, however, that the errors, unspecified, are in Table C1, and the general conclusions hold.²

My point does not merely concern the fact that this

error occurred. That is certainly serious enough, for if one crucial error may occur in a simple table, how many more might not have occurred in the much greater number of calculations made in the process of arriving at that table, and not accessible to public scrutiny? But it is the fact that this error – the contradiction between the table and the figure – passed unnoticed in the entire initial wave of dissemination and comment, and so never entered the mainstream of publicity about the book, that is more revealing of the relation between research and general public consciousness. It means that almost no one, even of those who initially disseminate research, looks closely at the evidence. Anyone who can add up **must** have spotted the crucial contradiction if he had bothered to check back from the graph to the table. It was, in fact, spotted by three or four of the scores of second-wave commentators, who expressed their doubts in the form of ‘puzzling elements in the statistical procedure’ or ‘insufficient evidence of the statistical technique’. These crucial reservations were shrugged off as ‘nit-picking’ by people who evidently made it a point of honour *not* to check the evidence. Yet the entire claim to public attention of this kind of research is based on its presentation of *evidence*, as distinct from the impressions or opinions which anyone could produce at the drop of a hat.

Research procedures

Any open-minded reader of the various analyses which followed Bennett’s research (as distinct from the welter of summaries and comments which masqueraded as analyses) must by now conclude that there are very serious doubts about what it shows. But Dr Bennett’s research may be no worse in quality than most social research. Most research is not exposed to as much attention. Many of the weaknesses of conventional research method stem directly from the rather desperate aim of *justifying nationally generalisable conclusions*. This is the principal point of connection with the Black Papers. In reality, general conclusions can only be drawn where the whole field has been surveyed, with its competing and conflicting findings. There are reams of unread research on the library shelves and in archives. Funds are rarely given for the purpose of critically coordinating existing findings. Most of the ‘reviews of research’ that do exist are not critical – they merely report what researchers say they have found. One statistically critical study that has been done in the field covered by Bennett concluded that few studies could be effectively compared, because their

terms of reference, methods and scope were so different⁵. This suggests that there are no generally agreed scientific procedures and criteria in the field of educational research. The only thing that might provide such a basis would be a thoroughgoing theoretical investigation of the status of various kinds of evidence, and of the possibility of developing new forms of evidence. Why, for example, are collections of isolated, straitjacketed individual statements so widely used, and critical group discussion almost never used, in educational research?⁴

Any genuinely searching survey of research would have to concern itself not only with criteria already found in the field but with the inherent conflict of human self-concept between the methods of social science and the methods of culture criticism. It is not good enough to criticise the field only from within. For, as Hannah Arendt noted about the mass of ‘scientific’ data that surrounded White House decision making during the Vietnam War, the jargon of social science has a mesmerising, self-validating effect which screens out all the aspects of reality which it does not itself define.⁶

An interesting contradiction of the Black Paper campaign is that its own most sophisticated contributor, Professor Bantock, is one of the few people to have written specifically criticising educational research from this point of view.⁶ His chapter in Black Paper 4, like most of his writings, does not cite research as evidence. It is culturally and historically based. Yet he does *rely* on a climate created by research simplifications, as when, in a crucial footnote, he refers mysteriously (and damningly) to ‘what we know concerning the potential of the low-achievers’. Nevertheless, he has rumbled the research mystique, and one wonders how he manages not to feel troubled by the increasing, and increasingly crude, use of research by his fellow campaigners.

Psychometric research (the prevalent style) is particularly suitable for Black Paper purposes because of its tendency to screen out the emotional life of both pupils and teachers (even when claiming to deal with their ‘attitudes’ and ‘values’). In looking back at the last Black Paper in general⁷, it will be seen that discussion of the organisation of schools (comprehensives, streaming, exams, selection) is conducted almost entirely in terms of content. The emotional experience of being in school, of working or learning in a certain institutional climate, is given virtually no attention. The intention is to give the impression that the declaration of national goals for education is the same as ensuring that learning takes place. Seeing the teacher purely as a passive instrument of national policy, the writers have no interest in discover-

ing what specific factors bring about or prevent the achievement of learning in classrooms. School ethos, teacher morale, working conditions, staffroom relations, distribution of responsibilities, deployment of resources, feedback effect of exams on the curriculum, teacher-pupil relationships, and above all pupil morale and motivation – all these are pretty well non-issues to the Black Paperists. The problems of *implementation* (which is what most progressive theory is in fact about, not ideological goals) are beneath them.

Content and structure

But observe how this neglect of the effects of institutional structure allows massive *prescriptions* for structure, as if they followed inescapably from considerations of content: because content is so important, the underlying argument goes, it follows that there must be rigid selection, intelligence and personality labelling, non-common curricula, streaming, arbitrary discipline and minimal teacher initiative.

The Black Paperists cannot afford to consider the educational effects of these structural features. For what they would then confront is the fact that the crisis in our schools, many of the separate symptoms of which they accurately observe, is precisely the eruption of the long-gathering crisis in *traditional* education. For, as Bennett's and other research appear to show, and, more important, as ordinary teachers know with respect to their own schools, traditional methods and relationships are still in essence the dominant ones in schools today. All that has happened is that, as the failure of these methods has become increasingly palpable at classroom level, so an ever heavier burden of improvisation has fallen on the teacher. This has sometimes, by enormous personal effort, been turned to good account, and at other times has overwhelmed him. Concurrently, and much exacerbated by the institutional separateness of administrators, researchers, theorists and academics from the life of schools, there has been continual spectacular turnover of euphemism and terminology in the realms devoted to talk about education.

The greatest drawback of progressive theory lies not in its differences but its similarities to the Black Paper approach: it too has neglected structure, not to minimise the teacher but to exaggerate the autonomy that individual teachers really have in English-speaking education systems. It has issued in prescriptions which, whatever their merits or demerits, have not been implemented at any depth because they would have required major

changes in teachers' working conditions and relationships, and these implications have never been systematically confronted by the theorists: teachers should enable all children to express themselves freely, should select content exactly suited to the conceptual stage of each child, should enable children to guide their own learning, etc, etc. Those who have tried to implement such aims have, of course, found themselves brought up against the structural questions: how can you change the atmosphere of a lesson without affecting and being affected by the atmosphere in adjoining lessons? How can you re-define curriculum objectives without seeking changes in syllabus, exams, textbooks, departmental policy? How can you alter teacher-pupil relationships without corresponding changes in school ethos? Above all, how can you pursue *any* strenuous change without substantial time for collective planning and consultation?

Progressive ideas

The potential superiority of the progressive pedagogical ideas over the traditional is that if ever they *were* to be implemented on a large scale, this could only be through a wide increase in local collective teacher initiative (not isolated 'autonomy') and therefore *through a transforming process of criticism and modification*. That teachers have to some extent begun this process of *reinterpretation* is probably the real meaning of the Bennett findings. Few teachers were at the extremes. The various mixtures adopted by the majority were *not* reducible to points on a trad-prog spectrum (to which, despite his own cautions, Bennett reduces them). They consisted in a variety of approaches in which different elements of structure and spontaneity were fused to produce quite new combinations. (New, that is, to theory. How long they have gone on in the privacy of unresearched schools may be another matter.)

It is the relatively decentralised control which permits at least the beginnings of such ground-level responsibility and variety that is the real target of the Black Papers. Bennett's originality was to construct twelve instead of two descriptions of style. At this point, his research gives some idea of the true variety of teaching styles. This part of the research, incidentally, had already been published earlier, without attracting any public fuss. Of course he could, given funds and ingenuity, have constructed twenty-two or two-hundred-and-two styles. Even the styles which he did identify were already coalitions of a variety of individual practices. But then, he was not able to arrive at any *generalised* conclusions without 'collapsing' (apt

word!) even his twelve styles into seven and then the seven into three – which, lo and behold, turn out to be ‘formal’, ‘informal’ and ‘mixed’. From this point onward, all possibility of real illumination was lost, for the reality lay in the variety, but the research method demanded generalisation. There is a smooth continuity between the process of oversimplification which the research begins, Professor Entwistle’s foreword continues and the publicity completes. The conduct of research and the dissemination of research cannot be wholly separated.

Centralised authority

It is precisely the generality of the conclusions which serves Black Paper purposes so well. Centralised authority requires generalised argument. The question at issue in the Black Paper campaign is not so much, therefore, its specific arguments on educational method, which are often worth considering, but its attempts to consolidate and legitimise a crude, centralised authority in education, minimising teacher initiative and variety, abolishing the hard-won space in which real innovation may occur. The use made of Bennett’s research is not merely a bid to change people’s minds about teaching method, but to take decisions on teaching method out of teachers’ hands and place them in the realm of national policy.

In order to discover on exactly what ground to confront the Black Papers, therefore, we should study the question of what functions of school are appropriately controlled by what level of centralisation. The search for a relatively decentralised, non-bureaucratic, non-manipulative form of socialism implies the need for a relatively decentralised, non-bureaucratic, non-manipulative form of education. This does not mean a form of education without standards or goals, but it does mean a form in which the standards and goals are strongly influenced and shaped by those who have to implement them – those who know by their detailed experience what the needs of a particular community’s children are at a particular time and in relation to the common predicament of the whole society.

The way most research is now funded and conducted, the researcher, consciously or unconsciously, is an emissary from centralised government to the individual school, collecting data there which may subsequently be exploited to give an appearance of scientific justification to a national policy even on such detailed matters as how a particular teacher should talk to a particular group of pupils. The major disservice of the Black Papers is not their attack on progressive educational *ideology* but their

attack on teacher initiative, ground-level variety and local (face to face, not just regional) responsibility. In any case, the reality of the classroom prevents even the most ardent of progressivists from implementing their ideology in any thoroughgoing way – though the resulting disillusion may cause unnecessary despair. Many of the progressivist ideas are a form of paternalistic social control, developed precisely out of the selective ethos as realised in colleges of education – i.e., embodying the Black Paper assumption that working-class children must be entertained or kept busy rather than taught, because they are incapable of intellectual achievement. This element in progressivism is indeed an impediment to developing the qualities of citizenship that are necessitated as a common bond by the present predicament of society: a broad knowledge of the state of the world and how it got to be so; an understanding of the limitations and provisional nature of any view of the world – i.e., an understanding of the forms of knowledge; the skills and confidence to be active in public affairs; environmental alertness and technological inventiveness; an understanding of the means of communication to which we are all subject; an imaginative interest in unfamiliar cultures; and so on. However, it is not, of course, from any commitment to such aims as these that the Black Paper campaign draws its energy.

References and Notes

1. Neville Bennett *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress*, London: Open Books, 1976.
2. After the contradiction between Table C1 and Figure 5.8 had been publicly raised Neville Bennett and Noel Entwistle announced, very briefly within a long article, that ‘unfortunately there were typesetting errors here which were not picked up, but it is the appendix table which is in error, not the text’ (*Times Ed Supp* 21.5.76). They evidently did not think it worthwhile to give the *correct* figures for Table C1, which would have taken very little of their space. Thus the research continues to circulate, and many copies of it will be sold long after the correspondence has been forgotten, with a major error and contradictory evidence. Even the figures given in the chapter on pupil progress seem to contradict the verbal conclusions reached in that chapter and the rest of the book – see letter from M A Sterne in *Education Guardian* 25.5.76.
3. Barak Rosenshine, *Teaching Behaviours and Student Achievement*, Slough: NFER 1971. See also the early chapters in Bennett’s own book.
4. My article entitled ‘Science or ideology’ in *Times Ed Supp* 5.3.76 deals with the straitjacketing of language in educational research.

The Staffing Ratio in the Secondary School

Don Proud

Don Proud writes here from long experience on the overriding importance of maintaining a good teacher-pupil ratio in secondary schools. He taught in three secondary schools before becoming head of Greaves School, Lancaster, and is now head of Nelson Edge End High School, with 1,000 pupils.

In their attempts to satisfy the national demand for cuts in public expenditure the government and the local authorities have been looking very hard at investment in education. It is right that schools should be accountable to the society they serve, as they constantly are through the governing bodies with their staff and parent representatives, their district officers, authority advisers and DES inspectorate. What gives some cause for concern at present is the possibility of blanket decision-making by panic policy sub-committees, and ad hoc working groups

set up by local authorities to slash expenditure. Such groups may have elected representatives whose experience of work in LEA education may be comparatively short, dating from the time of local government reorganisation. Members seeking a more positively efficient service may be hard pressed by others who see any reduction in expenditure as a positive gain. In some authorities the voices in teacher consultation may be those of nominees more skilled in points of order, insurance and salary negotiation, than in the exposition of educational prac-

(Continued from page 26)

An interesting by-product of the debate on teaching styles has been the impatience of some correspondents, notably Gordon Miller, with the view that Bennett's research had theoretical weaknesses. Miller opposes 'empiricism' to 'theory' (see for example *Times Ed Supp* 11.6.76) as if somehow a search for facts was a straightforward matter which need not involve the wasteful 'nattering' of theory. In reality, of course, the vast majority of research projects are empirical in conception, and come unstuck precisely because they do not realise that the *hypotheses* on which they rest are in fact theories, and need to be theoretically validated before any questions deriving from them can be seen to make sense. Many, perhaps most, of the questions which comprise educational research instruments, make poor sense, and the answers to them do not amount to facts but to highly ambiguous statements. Hence the phenomenon, obviously so irritating to Dr Miller, that the publication of research findings doesn't settle arguments but aggravates them.

5. 'Lying in politics - reflections on the Pentagon Papers' and 'On violence' in Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, Penguin Books 1973.
6. See 'Educational research: a criticism' in G H Bantock, *Education and Values*, London: Faber and Faber 1965, and G H Bantock 'Literature and the social sciences',

Critical Quarterly, Summer 1975.

7. *The fight for education*, Black paper 1975, C B Cox and Rhodes Boyson, eds, London: J M Dent & Sons 1975.



tice. It is quite possible that in the accident of cooption and election, vitally important sections of the educational service may be unrepresented.

In these circumstances even men and women of good intent may surrender easily some of the most important strategic areas. The first outposts have already fallen, nursery education at the one side, adult education classes at the other. Supplies and equipment to schools have been halved by the reduction in the effective purchasing power of the capitation allowance. For the well-being of children now in primary and secondary schools it is essential that the staffing ratio be improved. What is meant by staffing ratio? It is to do with the number of teachers employed in relation to the number of pupils in a given school. The head teacher and his senior colleagues are included in the figure. Reading of the staffing ratio of one to twenty in a comprehensive school it would be possible for a most public-spirited person to imagine that every teacher had twenty children in his class, and that therefore the school was very well off. This would be to misunderstand what the work of a secondary school teacher is, how a comprehensive school is organised, what the needs of its pupils are, and what are the demands made by society upon it. Those deciding on a sensible staffing ratio should see it as a rough average of all the situations teachers might find themselves in during the school day, and they need to consider the following points:

1. There are times when a teacher should have no pupils at all. The preparation of teaching materials, and the constructive marking of written work, cannot be carried on while a teacher is facing a class of 30 pupils. Discussion and consultation with colleagues is essential if courses and syllabus are to be maintained which continue to have relevance to the needs of our society. This can only be done while colleagues are present under the same roof. Most teachers are already committed outside class hours to a monthly full staff meeting, a year or house group meeting, an academic departmental meeting, some general supervision duties, and a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular school activities. Teachers have been nominated by my LEA to attend courses during the summer vacation. One this summer is on European studies, another is concerned with health education. If they are to be able to stimulate thinking about these areas of curriculum when they return this autumn, they must be able to discuss work on these areas with other teachers concerned during their working hours. I anticipate that there will have to be some commitment of school staff

next year to the development of the European dimension in the school's curriculum. No teacher can think constructively about such projects whilst faced with rows of pupils. Can Britain in Europe afford to defer the development of European studies?

Might a more satisfactory programme of health education be of benefit to our National Health service and improve the quality of family life? Can we afford to neglect this investment of time? Some teachers spend time in planning and controlling the expenditure in my school and it amounted to over £17,000 last year. Others work on the design and construction of the timetable which must always seek to provide the widest possible options to meet the needs of pupils and the demands of parents.

2. There are many occasions when a teacher has to have a one-to-one relationship with a pupil or parent during the school day. Careers advice, examination administration, and tutorial counselling are obvious examples of this. It is not always understood, however, that in terms of the staffing ratio it is a teacher (Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, Head of Year teacher or whoever) who must see the Muslim priest's daughter when she arrives for her first day at school. She speaks no English and he has to explain to her the details of the school dress (agreed with the local Pakistani community) and to her uncle who has brought her along.

It is a teacher who deals with the case of a boy worried because he has been alternately threatened and bribed by a man who wants him to give false evidence in court. He is not likely to learn very well until that little matter is cleared up. Then there is the fifteen year old girl who is suffering from mental depression, and has run off home in tears. She will not come back to learn unless a teacher makes some sort of reconciliation possible.

The above three incidents were a part of one day in the work of one teacher. A definitive description of such work is impossible, the nature and scope unpredictable, but it must be accepted that a high proportion of teacher-time, I would say more than ten per cent, is spent in this sort of one-to-one relationship with pupils. Can we afford to cut out this work?

3. There are pupils whose needs are such that it is impossible to teach twenty of them at one time. They are the most able, to whom we may teach Latin, or Music, or Russian in a group of ten because there are only ten who wish to learn the subject. There are remedial groups with reading difficulty, small groups with behaviour problems, those with the need to learn

English as a second language if they are to survive in school. There is satisfaction with current efforts to deal with adult illiteracy, concern that it was allowed to happen at all. Can we really cut down on the attention now being given to reading in the secondary school which requires that a teacher should hear each student read as often as possible?

4. There are subjects where it is physically impossible to teach more than twenty pupils at a time. Cookery, metalwork, woodwork, and some kinds of practical science become positively dangerous where more pupils are involved.

Availability of equipment limits class size in typing, horticulture, child-care, or vehicle engineering. Field work in geography, geology, and the encouragement of outdoor pursuits need generous staffing. It is traditionally acceptable to find one highly paid teacher taking eleven sixth formers for mediaeval history, but not so to allow a teacher to instruct fifteen pupils in rock climbing for an afternoon. Little wonder, then, if fifteen youths on holiday and discovering a clear rock face may write rude words on it, usually misspelt. Can we afford to cut out those activities that involve physical participation by the student, and education for leisure?

5. The smaller the teaching group the better the opportunities for commitment and participation by the pupil. In all work that has to do with sensitivity training, attitude change, or the understanding of personal relationships, small group discussion is most valuable. Exciting new work suggests that this may go a long way to prevent anti-social behaviour. It overcomes the individual's sense of isolation in a vast organisation and produces a more articulate student by providing more opportunities for communication.
6. The mixed ability grouping of pupils is the corollary of the abolition of the eleven plus. This principle makes it desirable however that class size in the secondary school should not be greater than twenty-four or twenty-five for Maths and English.
7. Current predictions are that 12,000, 15,000 teachers will be unemployed by September '76. The nation has invested, in three to four-year periods of training, an estimated £7,000 for each one of them. Improving staffing ratios will reduce the waste involved in their unemployment. It will produce a more efficient educational service and is likely to reduce future expenditure on other social services which have to cope with the results of inadequacy, incompetence and delinquency.

My own experience has shown me that a staffing ratio of 1-15 is just about enough for an 11-16 comprehensive school, provided that the Head, the Deputy Heads and Senior Mistress each have a class teaching load in addition to their counselling and administrative work. Anything less will produce a poorer service and reduce the quality of life in the future.

A different and more serious consequence for the children is likely to come from cuts in teacher recruitment proposed by DES and from the likelihood that it will be the young, newly-trained teachers who will be unemployed or discouraged from teaching.

Schools need the vitality and freshness of the teacher who is sufficiently near to the pupil in age to be able to recall how it feels to be on the receiving end of the service. They need the involvement of young people who are up close to the current problems of the adolescent in our society.

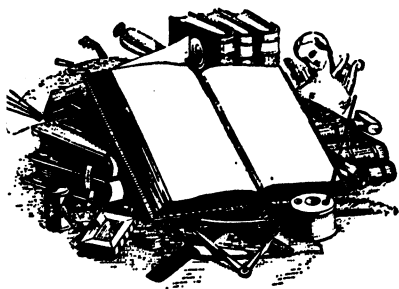
To cut the teaching force at this end is to chop at the very root of the profession and to cause lasting damage to education in this country.

To improve staff ratios now would give immense encouragement and improvement in morale to secondary education which has suffered a good deal of disturbance and uncertainty during the past ten years in the struggle for positive changes. For some teachers, development in teaching method and curriculum brought about by the raising of the school leaving age have made heavy demands. Others have had fears about status and role as they moved towards an amalgamation and reorganisation. Some teachers with twenty years successful experience have found themselves disorientated by being expected to do work they had not encountered before. Local government reorganisation has brought new administrative structures, new relationships to be forged.

Just now a period of steady progress is looked for. An improvement in staffing ratio would be a bold step forward. A deliberate reduction in teaching supply will slowly choke the living and creative work of the last ten years and we could see the beginning of another darker age.



Reviews



Language and Learning

From Communication to Curriculum,
by Douglas Barnes. Penguin (1976),
pp 202. 90p.

Here is a book with which to engage in dialogue, not just to read through. Which is appropriate, for it is a plea for the value of conversation in learning – between pupils and between teachers and pupils.

Douglas Barnes carefully examines the kinds of talking that occur in classrooms, with excerpts from tape-recordings, and relates them to what is being learnt in the hidden and manifest or planned curriculum by drawing attention to how pupils use language to shape their knowledge or make sense of what they are supposedly learning.

In the second and longest chapter he presents and analyses taped material from four groups of twelve to thirteen year olds engaged in discussion on tasks set them by teachers in science, English and history. First the children discuss on their own, then the teachers intervene and Barnes examines the effects of this. The productivity of discussion seemed more related to the teachers' initial structuring of the task than to the supposed competence of the children in the subject, and depended also on group interaction. In

chapter four he presents extensive excerpts from a teacher-directed class discussion in a geography lesson, and a short sequence from another in his final chapter. A short excerpt from a discussion between a class teacher and four top juniors is also included.

From these analyses and his wider debate Barnes demonstrates the function of what he terms 'exploratory talk' whereby pupils try out hypotheses, interact and reorganise their existing knowledge to accommodate new knowledge in 'open' discussion, which often comprises phrases rather than full sentences where meanings are implicit and understood within the context. Such interactive learning is all too often positively prevented by teacher domination, or even by pupils' learnt perceptions of classroom talk which result in 'closed' exchanges within their groups.

Much of Barnes' analysis of children's learning, particularly his emphasis on allowing them to draw on what he terms 'Action Knowledge' or their own experiential knowledge gained from everyday out-of-school life, accords with Piaget-Bruner learning theories on recoding or re-ordering previous knowledge and experience into new schema. His contribution is to show the function of informal, exploratory talk in doing this.

While focusing on language and learning in classroom communication, Barnes raises many other interconnected issues, especially those related to the teacher's view and control of knowledge. He finds teachers tend to divide into those who see their role as that of transmitting information and testing pupils' acquisition of it, or those who are more concerned with the learner's cognitive and personal development and hence ability to interpret and think rationally. These standpoints determine not only the style of oral work and so-called class discussion, but also the kinds of written work teachers set pupils and the purposes writing is intended to serve. Transmission teachers require correct

notes and answers as the product, while Interpretation teachers set more store by the process and the pupil's sense of the purpose served by writing. Basil Bernstein's theory of 'classification' and 'framing' knowledge in the secondary school curriculum is considered in this context, as is interaction theory from social psychology and Nell Keddie's demonstration of how streaming impels teachers to differentiate curriculum content to suit their differentiated expectations of streamed pupils' behaviour.

Theories of working class linguistic deficiency are rejected as unsatisfactory explanations of educational failure. Barnes suggests that interaction explanations have more to offer. Hence he asks teachers to become much more aware of the patterns of communication, spoken and written, that they set going in the classroom.

From Communication to Curriculum is not prescriptive. It offers no panacea. But it does suggest 'that pupils should be given time and encouragement to explore the relationship between new knowledge and their existing understanding.' A short Appendix offers a four-stage model for an admittedly idealised learning sequence in which communication patterns are designed to effect such learning.

Reading this perceptive little book must lead any teacher to reflect on what opportunities for this kind of learning we are in fact setting up, whatever subject or age range we are concerned to teach.

NANETTE WHITBREAD



Too bland

The curriculum in the middle years, by A M Ross, A G Razzell and E H Badcock, Evans/Methuen (1975), pp 240, £2.80.

A project set up 'to consider the whole curriculum appropriate to children in the middle years of schooling' must have had an initial attractiveness to the Schools Council as a sponsoring body and to teachers either involved in discussion groups or visited in their schools. Some of this attraction might have stemmed from connotations surrounding 'whole'. After all who would have been interested in something 'fragmented', 'sectional', 'incomplete' or 'partial'? Eight years later the second and last report of the project has finally appeared but possesses as little attractiveness, vitality and 'wholeness' as a government report written by a group of civil servants desperately anxious to blunt major differences, to play down crucial tensions and to remain firmly non-committal. Working Paper 55 is a disappointing, frustrating, fragmented document.

The preface sets the tone for the report and reveals in large measure why it is as it is. In it the senior author acknowledges 'a particular debt to the members of the Schools Council subject committees who prepared papers'; he compliments the project's consultative committee for providing 'a well-judged balance of *caution*, *encouragement*, *supervision*, *discipline* and, above all, *support*', and he thanks them for managing to 'eliminate most of our *extravagances*' (my italics). **The curriculum in the middle years** is not an original nor a creative document produced by a team investigating curriculum planning and implementation in schools and highlighting its successes, frustrations and problems in the light of theoretical and practical considerations. It is largely second-hand and little more

(except for three chapters) than an edited and slightly expanded version of papers written by various committees. The 'dead hand' of the Schools Council seems apparent throughout, preventing a frank, 'sharp' exposé of the inevitable dilemmas, tensions and problems associated with rethinking the curriculum for this vital period of schooling.

Although none of the fifteen chapters is particularly compelling in its arguments, the first two concerned with aims, content and curriculum planning do make some useful points. They stress the importance of systematic planning by school staffs; they emphasise the importance of a systematic programme for developing basic skills (more widely defined than the three 'R's') including the necessity for built-in periods of practice; they introduce the notions of key concepts and learning sequences, and they do underline the complexity and professional necessity of the curriculum planning process. A four-fold division of content is introduced ('basic skills', 'empirics', 'aesthetics' and 'morality') but this potentially fruitful set of distinctions are not put to work later in the report. Even in these chapters the text lacks bite, urgency or power. Potentially important statements are made rather hesitantly, even apologetically: eg 'Without being critical it would seem that a reappraisal of curriculum planning in many schools is called for' or 'Much, perhaps overmuch, is left to wise decisions being made informally or on an ad hoc basis'. Many important issues are not stated boldly enough but remain embedded, stifled, in a mass of indifferent theorising.

Except for some useful distinctions in relation to integrated studies the remaining chapters on different areas of the curriculum produce no new thinking and report very little interesting practice, but simply summarise current 'established' thinking. For newcomers to the field this is a fair introduction but to those deeply immersed in the problems of

the middle years (and these I take to be the report's major audience) the chapters provide very little guidance, feeling of reality or sense of direction. The report ought to have isolated the issues crucial to any curriculum area, given detailed examples of different courses of action taken by schools in relation to these issues and provided a 'profit and loss' account in relation to each course of action pursued. Instead the blandness and reasonableness of the chapters fail to do justice to the tremendous problems of mixed-ability teaching, the dilemmas of integrated versus differentiated curricula, the abysmal lack of continuity between various stages, the strains and insecurity of establishing new roles and patterns of organisation, the tension between symbolic and concrete modes of experience with older pupils, and many other important matters.

Just occasionally there is the odd arresting phrase, or apt suggestion or interesting allusion to a particular school situation, but such pieces are rare. Perhaps they are all that remains of the 'extravagances' eliminated by the 'hard-reading' consultative committee? Above all, the document is *boring*, and in a series intended to stimulate discussion among teachers, *that* is an unforgivable weakness.

COLIN RICHARDS



Non-Streaming Survey

Mixed Ability Grouping – report of an ILEA Inspectorate survey.

That our major authority has taken time out to examine in some detail the organisation in a growing number of secondary schools of mixed ability class teaching is in itself significant. The report is the result of 'discussions with teachers about problems of the management of mixed ability classes' conducted by Inspectors and Educational Psychologists visiting nine comprehensive schools over a period of two terms. Stress is laid at the opening of the report that it is not a research report. 'The reasons for adopting (mixed ability) include general educational principle, the provision of a better average classroom atmosphere; and the belief about the nature of society. It is likely, therefore, that schools turning to this kind of organisation will be more concerned with the question of how to operate it most effectively than with research reports whose validity they will question.'

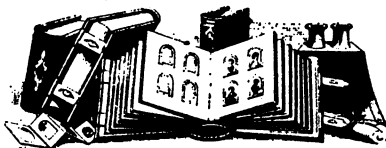
It is a short, crisp report. Terms are clearly defined at the outset. Every effort is made to be objective. Some may find its style rather fragmentary, but, on the other hand, most will welcome the concise comments made on a wide range of aspects related to the subject. Two case studies are included and also a fairly detailed section on resources and the role of the Media Resources Officer (that particular forte of ILEA).

The report is clear that a school should not adopt mixed ability grouping unless the majority of staff are committed. A high level of commitment was found in the nine schools and a readiness to prepare exhaustively for the new organisation.

As a result new levels of co-operative teaching were being achieved. Concern is expressed 'that it was likely to be the more able child that suffered through being held back'. This is a recurring theme of the mixed ability debate and the report does try to look at that particular aspect by suggesting the need for rigorous examination of content, methodology, resourcing, evaluation techniques and 'in the preparation of suitable materials for them'. Considerable attention is given to what the report calls the 'worksheet syndrome'. 'There is a danger that mixed ability = individualised work = assignment cards = very restricted learning experiences'. The Inspectorate clearly feels that 'mixed ability teaching requires the incorporation of individualised schemes with opportunities for group work and some class teaching'. Like most reports on mixed ability grouping in recent years it is able to reach a general conclusion regarding the 'improvement in the social climate of the schools concerned' and suggest that most teachers 'would resist a return to streaming or banding'. On the question of academic gains no positive conclusions are possible.

It is because the report will provoke further discussion that most will welcome it. Many strands are exposed – teachers' planning time, pupils' access to resources, possible arrangements for children presenting particularly difficult problems, 'the place of objective testing in enabling pupil and teacher to estimate progress in understanding and skills', the role of in-service training and many more – that will stimulate department and staff room debate.

ROGER SECKINGTON



School based teacher development

In-Service Education and Teachers' Centres, ed. Elizabeth Adams. Pergamon International Library, 1976, £5.25.

Collections of papers, however learned, do not necessarily make good books; this one, however, has more cohesion than many because of the editorial introduction and summing-up, and the rapid run-through of the history of teacher education at the beginning. It is, what's more, possible to pick out certain themes and concerns which run through most of the contributions; eg concern about professionalism, recognition of the stultifying effect of the external exam system, and the need for school-based teacher development, making suitable use of teachers' centres, and colleges of education.

The contributors to the symposium are lecturers, professors, or researchers in education, an LEA adviser and a teachers' centre warden. One is American and one Australian and these overseas contributions do much to illuminate the British scene as well as their own, particularly in the case of the American chapters. Indeed, the editor's final chapter on the emerging pattern came like a breath of fresh air after the turgid details about the Syracuse conference and vast training complexes. Why is it so difficult to find the right level and language and expression with which to discuss education? I must confess to being beaten by some North American prose such as, for example, 'Although different types of management systems could be used, all the alternatives could be made compatible to a master management system which could be used to guide the implementation, monitoring, and replacement of

components at both pre- and in-service levels'. Is this sort of thing really necessary? On the other hand there is the opposite manifestation of solemn statements of the blindingly obvious, for example 'there are a good many ways of working with groups . . . and some are more effective than others' or 'the danger here is that at times a conversation on the telephone tends to be misleading'.

Another difficulty that educators who write or speak about their work seem not to be able to overcome is to detach themselves from their own professional stance; thus they get carried away and write splendid job descriptions of an LEA adviser, a teachers' centre warden or perhaps, declaring my own guilt, a comprehensive head. However, on the whole these writers do manage to look at the field of in-service education as it impinges on their fields without bias and with some vision.

The proposed new regional committees for the co-ordination of in-service training are hardly mentioned but the well-argued case for college as well as teacher centre provision and school-based schemes seem to point the need for some scheme of co-ordination and clarification. James Porter makes the very important point that in-service education must not be separated completely from initial training and that those institutions which are responsible for initial training should have a share in the later development of their products. He recognises the difficulties inherent in setting up professional centres and professional tutors but suggests that in addition schools should appoint assigned tutors from their staffs. Is it perhaps important here to distinguish between in-service education which benefits the individual and that which benefits the system? For example, if teachers are released to study for a BA or BEd who gains? Sometimes the degree obtained in this way leads the teacher, dare I say 'proudly', out of the classroom.

Concern with professionalism runs

through most of the papers but it is dealt with particularly by Arthur Duckers. Apart from the obvious difficulties of size and variety of qualification, he identifies four impediments to teaching being regarded as a profession in the same sense as Law or Medicine; first the idea of professionalism, secondly the career structure, third the predominance of women, and finally the bureaucratic setting. However he does not think that these are impassable barriers. He makes a strong case for what might be called 'chalk face' professionalism; school-based in-service should help here because the really good class teacher, the true professional, could gain promotion and status as a staff developer without giving up his actual teaching. However, whether a limited professional teachers' association of this kind is viable is doubtful.

The chapter on Teachers' Centres shows how institutions just happen if there is a need for them; nobody foresaw, let alone planned, the great crop of LEA centres which has sprouted during the last decade. The tremendous importance of good communications, not only with schools but with other providers of in-service facilities, is underlined. There are several models of centres with different kinds of control and management and different uses; but they are all evolving as institutions and developing new ways of helping the teachers in the schools. They certainly have a big part to play in the evolving pattern of in-service education.

Public examinations and the Schools Council come in for some healthy criticism in various parts of the book. Examinations are seen as inhibiting curriculum development and the re-education which must accompany it, as they keep too many secondary teachers away from the areas of curriculum change. They also cost far too much money. 'Who will benefit from the 16 plus?' asks Elizabeth Adams pertinently.

The Schools Council gets its share

of knocks, too, for the way it has perpetuated subject and exam-mindedness and has thought in categories of for example 'early leavers', or 'nonexam' pupils and so limited the vision of the projects. However one cannot ignore the fact that Schools Council materials and activity have been one of the sources of nourishment of the teachers' centres.

The book will prove a useful, if not inspiring, addition to the growing amount of literature on this subject, and it should be read by practising teachers as well as other educators; its strong emphasis on school-based teacher development is of great importance.

MARGARET MILES



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