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Comprehensive Remedial Provision

Rejection of the segregation and labelling of children according to so-called ability has necessarily brought into question the traditional remedial class while also drawing attention to the special needs of those children who experience difficulty in successfully coping with school work in mixed ability teaching groups. Clearly provision has to be made to give such children the extra help they evidently require for a variety of individual reasons. Remedial education must itself become comprehensive.

Forum is therefore devoting this number to consideration of remedial educational provision in the context of nonstreamed primary and secondary comprehensive schools. We hope that this will both stimulate reappraisal of their remedial arrangements in those schools where anachronistic if euphemistic segregation still prevails, and encourage primary and secondary teachers with experience of making effective provision in nonstreamed contexts to offer further contributions to discussion in this journal.

We begin with a key background article by Dave Thomas of Leicester Polytechnic on causes of retardation in educational achievement and the consequent need for appropriately qualified teachers to provide and advise on suitable remediation programmes. Ray Pinder, head of a London primary school, follows this with discussion of how to try to ensure that children who need special help are identified through a series of 'safety nets' and given whatever support is individually required. Colin McCall of Exeter University then surveys the most common strategies adopted by secondary schools, stressing the importance of instructional flexibility whatever the organisational framework. Three case studies explain how three different comprehensive secondary schools arrange for remedial provision, and there is an extended review of two recently published books on provision for 'slow learners'.

A common theme running through the various contributions is that, while all schools require specially qualified remedial teachers, the provision of remedial help for individual children is a responsibility of *all* teachers, whether they are class teachers in a primary school or subject specialists in a secondary. Remedial teachers have a new and important role in advising and co-operating with their colleagues in the context of comprehensive education.

Significantly, several of our contributors express concern that remedial provision is especially vulner-

able to the effects of cuts in education expenditure. This danger is all the more serious when it is evident from the articles that those who are closely involved in efforts to provide effective remediation programmes are already severely hampered by lack of specifically qualified teachers and by overlarge teaching groups for the individualised help that is required. That there are unemployed teachers potentially available to alleviate this situation, and in-service courses undersubscribed through cutback in secondment, amounts to callous disregard for children in greatest need.

In their current concern for 'standards' the DES, the Prime Minister and the new Secretary of State should be taking urgent steps to secure the teaching resources so evidently needed in the schools to tackle the problem of children who are under-achieving for lack of specific help and support when this is required at infant, junior or secondary stage. The inadequacy is well documented by DES, as our contributors reveal.

John White's analysis of the Tyndale affair appositely draws attention to the democratic Left's proper concern for educational standards, generously conceived in terms far removed from the retrograde demands of the Black Paper brigades. His incisive personal appraisal of that *cause célèbre*, written before the Prime Minister's speech at Ruskin College and the DES 'Yellow Book' as leaked to the press, concludes with a call for the democratic Left to formulate a new curriculum policy concerned with minimum standards of attainment for all children. His arguments merit serious consideration by **Forum** readers and invite discussion of issues far wider than Tyndale itself but singularly appropriate for this journal.

Public expenditure cuts initiated by central and local government will undoubtedly hit educational standards in the nation's primary and secondary schools, and not least opportunities for those children with whose educational advancement this number is particularly concerned. **Forum** articles over the years have produced ample evidence that non-streaming and comprehensive schools offer the most favourable contexts for raising educational standards, but our editorials have also repeatedly warned that progress was impeded by lack of resources. No school system can be expected to raise standards if starved of resources in the manner now threatened.

Suitable Cases for Treatment?

David N Thomas

Dave Thomas is Course Leader for the Diploma in Educational Studies (Handicapped Children) at Leicester Polytechnic and Research Officer for the National Council for Special Education. His previous teaching was in a Residential Special School.

Since 1896 when Morgan drew attention to the existence of reading difficulty in a boy of good intelligence, the problem of reading delay has received substantial attention from workers in the fields of medicine, psychology, neurology – and education, to name but a few. That there should remain a considerable measure of disagreement reflects the complexity of the matter.

Terminology has added to the difficulties. Instead of using words as means of communicating theories, terms which are not acceptable to all have been used as labels by some of the groups concerned in the field. The child with 'special learning difficulties' has become the subject of numerous conferences, conventions, books, articles, and his (more commonly) or her problems concern his teachers, his parents and himself – placed in that order solely for the purposes of this article.

Who is the child with such difficulties? The pupil who belongs to a group which, like many other attempts at categorisation, is easier to describe than to actually define.

There is little agreement among educational authorities over how best to define such attractively simple descriptions as illiterate, reading disability, reading problem, learning difficulty and so on. The recent government report on literacy (DES 1975) noted the problem in attempting to define what is an acceptable level of literacy that schools should aim for in their pupils. The Ministry of Education pamphlet **Reading Ability** published as long ago as 1950 put it succinctly: 'In truth, most definitions of illiteracy amount to this – "that he is illiterate who is not as literate as someone else thinks he ought to be".' Without acceptable definitions, there can be no meaningful statements on the prevalence of disability or handicap. Loose terminology hinders intelligent communication, leads to violent disagreement between people whose opinions may well be identical and fosters overlap of function leading to jealous rivalry between groups which have the same basic aims.

One of the very loose terms employed without a great deal of thought is 'Remedial Education'. Like the term 'Education', it means many different things to many different people – in fact, it can mean so many different things that it is in danger of meaning nothing at all. The term 'remedial' has unfortunate connotations suggesting a medical ambience; the history of the close

association between medical concepts and 'special' educational practices gave rise to the myth that if only one could find the basic cause of a child's problems, then everything from that point would be easy. In medicine, the cause of a disease is usually directly related to its treatment and cure – obviously, it was assumed by analogy, the same process must be true of education. The 'remedial teacher' is not curing anything nor relieving an evil: it is regrettable if, through these weak analogies, he or she comes to think of him/herself as so doing. Whilst various 'consultants' (not only medical) are chasing basic causes, the child concerned may be little better off and the teacher has still to face his pupil at a given time on a Monday morning. Whenever a specialist from another profession, whether medical, psychological or legal says 'This child has such and such condition', the teacher must always ask himself . . . 'So what? Just what does that mean translated into the educational context?' Surely it is the teacher's trade to consider the needs of the whole child, not merely that part of him which appears to confirm 'the label' which has enabled him to be 'classified' in some way. For the person most concerned, the child, there is nothing more valuable than a teacher who is interested enough to look a little closer at his difficulties, to 'chat' a little longer, rather than pushing him into a mental pigeon-hole labelled 'ESN' or 'maladjusted' or 'poor home' or, indeed, 'slow learner'.

The narrower conception of the educational requirements of these 'slower' pupils seems to be symbolised by the term 'remedial'. It may well be that some of these pupils are primarily in need of additional specialised help in, for example, reading, writing and spelling; but it seems to be commonly assumed that this is the need of the majority. This is not so. Any course for the slowest learners that does not, in addition to enabling them to become as literate and numerate as possible, give them opportunities to grow in confidence by the experience of success within a specially designed, integrated curriculum that seems relevant to the world *they* know, will fail to arouse and sustain their interest for long.

The poor achievements of many slow learners are due as much to the limitations of their cultural backgrounds as to limitations of ability. Moreover, deprivations influence not only attainment but also the de-

velopment of abilities themselves. Various kinds of social disadvantage, particularly unstable family circumstances and marked deviations from acceptable standards of child care, affect the progress of more children than we realise. In their study of socially disadvantaged children based upon the National Child Development Study of 10,504 children born in the week 3rd-9th March, 1958, Wedge and Prosser (1973) comment: 'At the age of eleven, the children were tested in maths and reading. Unsurprisingly, disadvantaged children did less well than ordinary children on each test . . . One in six of them was receiving special help within the normal school for "educational backwardness" compared with one in 16 of the ordinary group'. It is a common observation that cultural and social disadvantages prevent some obviously able children from the full utilisation of their abilities, but it is also necessary to realise that in some apparently dull children the consequences of disadvantage may be concealing better inherent potentialities. Though they have a low level of mental functioning, their capacity to learn may be relatively unimpaired when learning situations are carefully organised for them.

A survey of 'slow learners' in 158 secondary schools in 20 local education authority areas carried out by the DES during 1967 and 1968 revealed that the term 'slow learner' was capable of a wide variety of interpretations (DES 1971). Social handicaps were frequently referred to, often as causes of absenteeism. A questionnaire completed with the aid of head teachers included specific questions on the additional disabilities of the slow learning pupils; the following were recorded:

Defects of vision	124 (0.13 %)
Defects of hearing	218 (0.24 %)
Physical handicap	222 (0.24 %)
Epilepsy	82 (0.09 %)
Maladjustment	483 (0.53 %)
Other	603 (0.66 %)

(Percentages refer to the total population of the schools surveyed, 91,527, of whom 12,807, ie 14%, were considered by head teachers to require some measure of special education.)

To quote from the Chief Medical Officer of the DES (1969): 'Every child who has difficulty in school requires physical (including neurological) and psychological examination to discover defects of vision, hearing, movement or speech, or disturbance in emotional or intellectual development that may be a primary or contributory cause of his difficulties.'

Mild degrees of hearing loss, visual defects, clumsiness and ill-health all play their part with other adverse

factors in affecting a child's learning, his attitudes to school and even to life in general. It is therefore essential that teachers should be alert to the possibility of undetected impairments, especially in those catchment areas where parents are less likely to be observant and informed about such apparently trivial weaknesses.

Quite obviously, deviations from normal emotional and social development are liable to impede learning both by affecting the pupil's motivation and attention and by preventing the growth of positive relationships with the teacher and other pupils. Emotional disturbance may, as has been shown, inhibit both mental and language development. Further, we can distinguish those children who have fairly specific difficulties in learning; marked difficulties in perception and attention, in eye and hand co-ordination; in movement; in acquiring language; in integrating and associating what is being learnt. These difficulties may be due to delays in the maturation of specific functions, or due to defects or damage within the central nervous system. Whatever the cause, there is a need for more specialised study as a basis for teaching which attempts to train or compensate for weak functions.

Policy in chaos

It becomes apparent that the majority of the pupils included in the general classification of 'slow learners' have more than one difficulty to contend with and need an education more liberally conceived than just additional work in basic subjects. However, such is the confusing variety of organisation and provision encountered in England and Wales today that, for the pupil with learning difficulties within the 'ordinary' school, the educational future is at the mercy of fortuitous local circumstances which may differ not only from area to area but also from school to school, or even from term to term within the same school. So long as this situation continues, talk of equality of educational opportunity has a hollow ring.

The Bullock Committee (DES 1975) commissioned a special survey which found that 10.6% of children in primary schools were reported to be receiving special remedial help. Usually this remedial help was provided in a group context with one teacher for six children. For the most part (69%), these remedial teachers appear to have been employed on a part-time basis, and very few had had any specialised training. 30% had never attended a course relevant to remedial teaching and a

further 47% had been on relevant courses which lasted for less than six weeks (Bullock Report: page 385). These findings indicate that whereas the schools do make some sort of provision for remedial help to a percentage of primary school children, 'the remedial help probably leaves a great deal to be desired in those cases where the teachers have had no special training for the job' (Yule 1976). The DES Survey **Slow Learners in Secondary School** (1971) reports that . . . 'Fifteen of the 170 full-time assistant teachers in remedial departments had taken one-year courses of specialist study, one had taken a part-time equivalent; 11 had taken one-term courses . . . With such a high proportion of teachers who have had no specific training for overcoming the problems that face them, there is perhaps little cause for surprise that, although goodwill was rarely in question, greater resourcefulness and expertise were often needed . . . and the unfortunate practice of placing young or even probationary teachers in charge of the weakest pupils is still not infrequent.'

Failure reinforced

There is growing concern in Britain about the large gulf which exists between sophisticated assessments and effective remedial intervention. As Williams (1975) has commented: 'Sufficient is known about the perceptual and linguistic sub-skills of the basic learning processes to identify with reasonable certainty, children whose early development deficiencies ensure a virtually certain prognosis of ultimate failure in the communication and numeracy skills. Despite this awareness, however, it is still widespread practice for intervention in the form of remedial education to be delayed and to follow a protracted period of failure'. To the comparatively small percentage of 'slow learning' children who present primary learning difficulties of a psychological and physiological nature must be added 'those large numbers of children who, because they have been denied a relevant teaching programme in the primary stage of education, have acquired emotional problems of a secondary nature consequent upon suffering the effects of long-term failure in school.' (Ablewhite 1968.)

Physical, sensory and mental disabilities are detectable in the pre-school years and this responsibility is being taken seriously by the medical services. However, the adequate early identification of children 'at risk' of educational handicap and the subsequent diagnoses of specific difficulties has been and is being inhibited by

(i) the lack of sufficient numbers of trained personnel within the various professionally based services, which all too frequently results in heavy case-loads and waiting lists of referrals; (ii) poor or restricted channels of communication between the various agencies concerned with care, education and welfare, thus making the full and comprehensive assessment of children's needs quite impracticable; and (iii) the lack of a total and coherent policy for the care, education and welfare of pre-school children and nursery school provision, thus missing the opportunity for routine systematic contact with parents and effective monitoring of children's development. Mild degrees of disability, failure to learn and emotional and social difficulties are more likely to be observed at school – the teacher has an awesome responsibility in this matter. Teachers observe pupils in a variety of situations and activities over a long period; it would be valuable if their observations could be used more systematically in a procedure which directed attention to those children in greatest need. Such pupils are apt to suffer most at the transition stages in their education (from infant to junior or from junior to secondary school) unless systematic arrangements are made to ensure that their needs are known and essential information is available at each stage to those who need it.

Records essential

Our record in this respect does not impress. 'The general impression is inescapable that teachers of slow learners at the secondary stage are not well informed about the nature of the special needs and difficulties of their pupils when they arrive from their first schools.' (DES 1971.) Large comprehensive schools receive pupils from many and varied primary schools. In situations of this kind more formal and systematic methods for passing essential information are needed. The carefully, objectively, completed school record card that can supply invaluable information on special aptitudes, educational needs and parental attitudes assumes great importance.

Tansley (1967) has written that . . . 'by remedial teaching is meant teaching which is based on a differential diagnosis which forms the basis for scientific remedial procedures'. However, whilst differential diagnosis and an objectively recorded past history are of the greatest importance, no teacher can afford to wait for a final diagnosis. Sound remedial programmes designed

Remedial Strategies in the Primary School

Ray Pinder

Ray Pinder taught for eight years in London Secondary Modern and Comprehensive Schools before teaching in primary schools for the past ten years, five of which were with the infant age range. She is now Head of Drayton Park Primary School within the ILEA. The views expressed here are her own and not those of the ILEA.

The basic requirement for developing useful strategies within any school is the largest possible measure of staff agreement. 'School policy' exists only in so far as the staff (non-teaching as well as teaching) can formulate a common approach to the children within the school. If we regard the whole of the school complex as educative, then the schoolkeeper, secretary, dinner helpers and other ancillary staff all have a vital role: their attitudes can help or hinder the work of the teaching staff. The expectations of the teaching staff and the head teacher are crucial; where one teacher's 'average pupil' becomes another teacher's 'urgently in need of remedial attention' difficulties may be confidently expected. No one teacher, whether class teacher or head teacher, should be sole arbiter when a child's education is being decided. Instead there should be exchange of information by all teachers involved with that child. Even more, a system is needed that will either confirm

or deny the subjective judgments we are all constantly making.

The first requisite for any system is mutual confidence and open discussion between staff. The full staff meeting at which policies are hammered out and at which staff can express freely their misgivings is essential. In all probability nothing will ever be solved *at* the staff meeting, but quite certainly *nothing will ever be solved without it*. Secondly, once policies are agreed, a means of dissemination of information and communication of decisions to all school personnel is crucial. Then, following upon formal decisions come the frequent informal discussions between all those teachers involved with one particular child – class teacher, remedial teacher, specialist teachers of music, games etc and head teacher (with, where relevant, E2L teacher) – needed for pooling information, comparison of experience and the working out of the best possible pro-

(continued)

to reduce frustration and apathy and to assist, where necessary, such aspects as visual and auditory discrimination, motor control and language development must be carried on simultaneously with the diagnostic investigation.

A speech therapist, a physiotherapist, an educational psychologist and many other professional workers could fairly claim to be involved in Remedial Education. For the teacher, expertise of this order based upon a sound knowledge and experience of differential diagnosis, curriculum development, management techniques and counselling can only arise from a continuing programme of in-service training. However, in the current climate of 'cut-back' in expenditure, all these supportive services to the young person with learning difficulties are, once again, 'at the mercy of fortuitous local circumstances' which do indeed vary from area to area dependent upon the assigned priorities of available finance. The interests of the children are not best served by enthusiasts and interested parties demanding scarce services for particular sub-groups of poor readers or, indeed, particular remedial programmes. Children need to be protected from charlatans – more importantly, they also need well-qualified, knowledgeable teachers in

sufficient numbers to provide a pupil-teacher ratio which will allow individuals and small groups to receive the special help they need, especially in the vital early years.

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gramme to meet the needs of the child.

Any such system, aimed at speedy identification of the child who, for any reason whatsoever, ceases to maintain or improve upon his or her own progress rate, and begins to founder academically, requires the erection of 'safety nets'. Periodic checks over a wide field from class teachers' observations to regular testing of what has been learned by both class and year tests, through to periodic medicals and inspection of attendance registers all play a part in preventing a child from 'slipping through the net'. Come Secondary transfer we should never suddenly discover that someone is three or four years behind their chronological reading age, or is completely innumerate. The class teacher's observations form the first net and standardised tests provide a second. Since their real value is to point out the child who is falling behind, it is important that they are used early enough for failure to be remedied. Diagnostic tests can then give us information about the causes of failure and medical check-up can identify physical problems for which we may have to compensate. All too often, however, remedial education when it is provided is provided too late. Testing which takes place at the end of the primary school period is of very little use—our opportunities are past, we can do very little to assist our pupil to overcome difficulties which have perhaps been made worse by our failure to match a teaching programme to the pupil's needs.

Continuous assessment

The system should be in perpetual operation; from the first meeting with child and parents, heads and teachers will be making observations on the behaviour and presentation of the child. They will note whether or not the pre-school child is confident or clinging; whether speech is clearly articulated and well structured; whether the child shows normal curiosity in new surroundings and is able to ask questions, which are answered by parents. All these will be indications of the kind of attack the child is likely to show in the classroom. Much valuable information may be gleaned from parents about the child's history; there may be critical health or developmental problems to be discussed and noted. The parents' own attitude both to school and to their child is relevant. The admission interview should never be rushed; not only does it provide information that can alert us to the possible needs of the child, but it is the foundation of the relationship

between the child and the school, and the parents and the school. Worries which linger in the mind of parents or children can cause problems later on.

Informal assessments made from these observations can then be tested during the first few weeks in the classroom. Often the assessment is disproved and the child concerned blossoms forth in the classroom and responds to the opportunities offered by a skilled teacher. It should be recognised here that remedial work is constantly provided within classrooms by class-teachers. The need for extra support arises when the kind or degree of help we judge to be needed by the child, is too difficult to provide within the classroom. *All too often the reason for this is that there are too many children in the class for the specific needs of each child to be met by even the most gifted and experienced teacher.*

Our chief concern is with the child who, for whatever reason, is unable to make full use of the facilities of the classroom and shows a need for extra help which can best be provided outside the classroom in a smaller group. How do we recognise this child? As already stated, the teachers' observations are almost always reliable. They can be reinforced by the judgments of others and by the results of standardised tests. But when is a child 'behind' enough to need remedial help? This must vary from school to school and perhaps area to area but, by and large, the child whose mastery of the school environment, language and numeracy, is in question; the child who begins to feel a gap between his achievements and those of his peers, needs more help. Upon administering a standardised test such as the Neale Reading Accuracy and Comprehension test we may get a score some months behind the chronological average. The score may even be at the chronological average yet remedial help may still be indicated because of our subjective judgment that the child in question is under-achieving. There is no line above which all is well and below which remedial help is indicated. In fact the teacher's subjective assessment is usually borne out by test results.

The child who under-achieves over a long period between five and seven years is in danger of learning to expect failure. It is important that some diagnostic techniques be applied so that specific difficulties may be isolated. Diagnostic techniques may vary from the observations of the teacher listening and watching a child reading, to batteries of tests administered by an Educational Psychologist. For most of our children much can be learned from careful observation. A test

such as the Goodman's Reading Miscues Test can help us to know the child's strengths as well as weaknesses. Discussions with the child, sharing our understanding of the problems he has, are valuable. We do not help the learner by surrounding the learning process with any kind of mystique. If we can verbalise what the child feels at an intuitive level, test our hypothesis with the child as a conscious and co-operating partner, then by structuring the problem we can help him to overcome it. Sharing knowledge with the child is important; it helps the learner to overcome feelings of helplessness which militate against confidence in his ability to learn. The learner usually knows full well what is known and what is not yet understood. The gap can seem very large especially by contrast with the adult expert, the teacher. Open statement by the teacher on what remains to be learned increases the status of the pupil – he is an equal partner in an enterprise. The task of the remedial teacher in this situation is to break the unknown down into bite sized segments which can be digested with ease.

There is useful hardware which can be utilised. Tape recorders and Language Master machines, Talking Books, all have their place. They enable a child to practice in private, to test and re-test his learning against the model. When the child is assured of success he can approach the teacher and demonstrate mastery. He has not had publicly to expose imperfections – something all too inhibiting, as most of us know.

Transition without trauma

The time of transition between first and second and second and third schools, or even departments within schools, can be traumatic for children and even teachers. The 7+ transition is a very delicate one. There is no particular virtue in transition at this age; the reasons for it are no doubt historical. Schooling is the process by which the little child just out of the Nursery is assisted to grow into a literate and numerate adult. There are certain levels in this development at which we consider that changes of organisation or educational techniques will be advantageous. There are certain levels at which new tasks can be presented to the learners. But there is no evidence to show that 'a clean break' at such levels is beneficial. Rather, a gradual transition combining what is known and familiar with new and stimulating material and techniques has been found more useful to the child. All that has

been previously written about the importance of the Staff Meeting, agreed policies and informal on-going discussions between individual members of staff, is relevant here. Perhaps most important is the discussion between this year's teacher of Tommy and Tommy's teacher for next year, so that Tommy can make a smooth transition from the expectations and curriculum of this year to those of the year to come, and so that the teacher to whom Tommy will move knows where to make allowances for differences of teaching styles and classroom organisation. It is not helpful to Tommy to be berated for forgetting to draw a margin when his previous teacher had never set him this task. He will need time to learn what is expected of him in his new class. Continuity of books and equipment is most important at this age. If examples of Tommy's work in various fields are included with his records his new teacher will know what Tommy can do, and understanding where he is in the learning process, will be better able to decide how much new material should be introduced and how quickly. All this will be of great help to Tommy, especially if he is experiencing learning problems to a greater degree than his peers. It is great to make a fresh start, clean slate and all, but it very quickly turns to ashes if you see disappointment and ennui on the face of yet another teacher at the sight of your best work!

At this level, just as earlier, the 'safety nets' should be out. Standardised tests, preferably those where context clues can be used (eg Neale's) rather than word recognition tests, are useful but time consuming. There are various Group Reading Tests (eg Young's) which are quicker but more costly to use. The results of standardised tests will combine with the teacher's observations and the child's academic record to identify the child in need of a remedial programme. Whether this programme should be based on structural commercial material, eg Stott's **Programmed Reading Kit**, **SRA International Language Laboratory**, **Breakthrough** apparatus, **Philograph** apparatus, **Oxford Junior Workbooks** or the **Scope Introductory Course for Immigrant Children**, will depend on the decisions taken by the teachers about particular children. Some children will benefit from such programmes, others may need informal programmes. Some may need individual attention, others may best be taught in groups either small or larger. Some may need to move from one sized group to another at different times.

We should constantly remind ourselves that reading is a continuous process: the child may be only at the

beginning, we ourselves have not reached any mythical end. We should try to communicate this to our children, together with the understanding that we all move at our own pace and the speed is less important than the direction and the moving itself. Nor is progress a steady upward diagonal. We learn by leaps and bounds and many a weary plateau.

I have already referred to the **Scope Introductory Course for Immigrant Children**. The 5-7 year old who has come into school lacking English language experience needs very special help at this stage. The teaching of English as a second language (E2L) has made many advances recently, but there is a danger that staffing cuts and loss of part-time teachers could jeopardise this work. When help is supplied early, when the patterns of the English language are established in this age range, many children very quickly become bi-lingual with all the resultant educational advantages. They are then able to operate fully in the Primary classroom with minimal extra help. Failure to supply the language help at the right time, however, creates greater problems for children and teachers later on when the difficulties are harder to remedy. Children coming to English schools for the first time after 7 must clearly have very structured E2L teaching. Much will depend on their proficiency in their mother tongue. The child who is literate in one language will be able to learn a second more easily and, as with younger children, if they become fully bi-lingual, able to read and write and speak well in two languages, they are going to gain tremendous intellectual advantages.

The remedial specialist

In order to carry out effective remedial teaching every school should have an effective, trained, remedial teacher. A good remedial teacher should be valued above rubies. The work requires intelligence, skill and understanding as well as experience and sympathy for the child, and unbounded patience. The provision of a room suitable for group work, bright and cosy and interesting, together with the books and equipment (tape recorders, etc), is essential. Corridors and tatty bits will not do. Unfortunately these areas of work are most vulnerable when educational cuts come on the agenda.

Ideally, remedial teaching is flexible, adapting itself to the needs of the child at any time. While the work itself might have to be carefully, even rigidly struc-

tured, the situation in which the child finds himself should be fluid, ie when a particular problem is isolated and remedied a child may be able to return to the ordinary class full time if the teachers involved judge this to be best. The remedial group may be drawn from one class or from several classes. It may be streamed, ie children may be selected for degree or type of difficulty. But however it is organised no child should feel he is there for ever. He may visit the group daily or twice-weekly, depending on his need. Some children may need such help only once during their school career, others may need it continually. There is no one answer nor universal panacea. No sausage machine can operate, only detailed and painstaking work, varying from child to child.

Which child is to attend the remedial group? This can only be decided by the teachers concerned. There may be a child who needs constant help because of consistently low attainment, who nevertheless is working to capacity while another child whose attainment is much higher is known by staff to be capable of much higher achievement. Both children need remedial help, of different kinds, perhaps at different times. This is a matter for the teachers involved to decide. The relationships between the teachers and between teachers and children are most important. Mutual confidence is needed for a class teacher to go to the Headteacher or the Remedial teacher and say 'Jane ought to be doing better. I have done all I can. Will you help?'

These relationships may well affect the attitudes of other children to the children in the remedial group. Too much competitiveness in the school will certainly damage the self esteem of children. The respect of teachers for *all* the children will assist the children to respect and help one another. Again, mutual confidence between parents and teachers can encourage the most positive attitudes on the part of parents and other siblings to the child needing remedial help. It is vital that the child receiving remedial help should not be robbed of self-respect by lack of parental or teacher's confidence in their intelligence and ability to overcome what should be seen as temporary difficulties. Anything less than this will serve to inhibit the learner who, through fear of being **WRONG** yet again, may cease to hazard any guesses or do anything which is not absolutely **SAFE**, ie where he is sure that he will be **RIGHT** (which usually means the repetition of something already acquired and ticked) because making mistakes in the past had become equated with being thought silly and a feeling of inferiority has become operative

within the child.

The development of language, the ability to speak, read, understand and reason, are the areas in which remedial help is usually available. Less special help is given in the area of mathematics, of which numeracy is a part. In fact many numerate children and adults may well be unable to function in other areas of mathematics. On the other hand much mathematical competence is developed inside and outside school in practical tasks. Children who appear to fail in school mathematics later become competent as draughtsmen, carpenters, doctors, tailors, designers, dressmakers, builders and even teachers – who all show in their work that they operate those rules about which they seemed ignorant in textbook work at school!

Safety net checks

What of the child who, after we have done everything we could and instituted programmes we thought matched his/her needs, is still floundering, unhappily aware of the growing gap between himself/herself and most classmates? First we can check through our 'safety nets' to ensure that we have eliminated all possibilities for further action:

1. What are the observations of teachers (class, remedial, specialist, head)?
2. Have the medical checks been carried out (hearing, sight, nervous system)?
3. Have psychological problems been tackled (attitude to self; attitudes of teachers, parents, friends and siblings)?
4. Have social problems been tackled (overcrowding, lack of sleep, family difficulties, poor attendance)?
5. What are the child's attainments in the regular testing which has been carried out (class tests, end of term or year tests, standardised reading tests)?
6. What has been learned from diagnostic tests? Has this been applied?
7. What can be learned from the teachers' own records for the child?

Once all these points have been reviewed and nothing has been neglected, we must call in outside help. Referral to the Educational Psychologist is the first step. Perhaps the child needs to attend a Tutorial or Remedial Centre outside the school (ILEA). Or per-

haps the child can no longer develop within normal school, in which case transfer to a school where special facilities are offered may be deemed advantageous for the child. In such a special school the small classes and extra support provided might well facilitate the child's educational progress. It might even be that the child, for health reasons, needs to be placed at an open air school.

Whatever the proposal, the parents must be involved in these discussions from the very start. Their agreement is essential and they should know the problems as the teachers see them and join with the teachers in making the best possible decisions for the welfare of the child.

There is a growing attack on the achievements of Primary Schools, from the Black Paper writers to the writers of the DES 'Yellow Book'. The kind of publicity given to the William Tyndale enquiry has strengthened the hand of the 'Back to formal education' lobby, who quite ignore the fact that what they are demanding never existed in the past. Our schools never turned out 100% literate, numerate scholars. The experience of the military authorities in both World Wars in dealing with thousands of illiterate recruits is testimony to that. Students' passes in 'A' levels alone doubled between 1960/61 and 1973/74 and they have increased tenfold since 1937/38. But there has always been a group, and always too large a group, who do not reach these levels. There has always been a need for remedial education. More is being supplied now than there was in the schools of my youth, but it is still not enough. There is no doubt that if enough teachers were made available all but very few of these children could be helped to overcome their difficulties. Those secondary schools where good remedial programmes are undertaken intensively with new intakes are to be congratulated. These programmes could have been undertaken in the primary schools if teachers had been available. The primary staffing ratio is still considerably lower than that of the secondary schools. Could this explain why so few primary schools are able to carry out such programmes? Instead of Local Authorities welcoming falling rolls as an opportunity to improve the pupil/teacher ratio and to provide opportunities for increased remedial small group and individual work so as to eradicate educational backwardness, the most we can hope for, even from the ILEA, is the maintenance of present ratios. Yet there are 20,000 unemployed teachers who would be welcomed in our schools. The education cuts being made and those yet to come will

Remedial Strategies in Secondary Schools

Colin McCall

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The academic organisation of secondary schools is highly complex. Certainly there are many patterns of organisation to be seen ranging from 'streamed' to 'unstreamed' schools with virtually every intermediate kind of arrangement. This means that remedial provision at the secondary level may itself take on one of several distinct forms. Each form has its disciples and opponents and often the 'fors' and 'againsts' of each particular arrangement are expressed more emotively than rationally. However, only an all-round study of the advantages and disadvantages of particular forms of provision can lead to a just evaluation of the many-sided arguments regarding the best type of arrangement. This article makes a brief attempt in this direction in relation to the more predominant modes of arrangement. Nothing said is intended to express certainty of argument or to dictate one approach over another.

Most secondary schools now have full-time members of staff with particular responsibility for remedial assistance. The use of such members of staff admits many arrangements of which the following are particularly predominant: special classes, group or individual withdrawal, and mixed-ability teaching. In some schools a combination of these three arrangements is to be found: for example, mixed-ability in the first year (often used in this sense as a 'diagnostic year' to allow for a longer period of observation, assessment, etc, prior to some kind of streaming or setting) followed by a special class in the second and third years, or by withdrawal support from the lower classes where a streamed arrangement operates beyond the first year.

Whatever the organisation, each particular style has distinct potentials and problems and an examination of these characteristics now follows. For discussion they are treated from the most segregated arrangement to the most integrated.

The 'Special' Class

Such a class may have one of a variety of titles: 'remedial class', 'compensatory class', 'opportunity class' and so on. Herein often lies its first distinct disadvantage, ie for many teachers and children living within the comfort of the mainstream school community, the title does not disguise the bleak and *uncomfortable* fact that (so far as they are concerned) children of 'low-ability' or 'little academic promise' reside there. Some teachers (admittedly the less sensitive and genuine) are even heard to remark to main class pupils 'Mrs Barker's group for you lad if you can't do better than this', or 'ID for you if you don't pull your socks up' – ad infinitum ad nauseum. Such definite display of marked insensitivity is hopefully declining, but as yet it would not be fair to say that it is extinct. Whilst it remains, in any form, it does much to offset any benefit that might be derived by pupils segregated for remedial support.

The special class has many other disadvantages. Even allowing for integration in physical education, craft-work, music, etc, either in year-group arrangements or whatever, the special-class arrangement still means that some pupils are physically separated for academic instruction for long periods of time from so-called 'more

(continued from page 43)

be made at the cost of those children whose needs are not yet being fully met, but who will be even more penalised in the years to come. Those to whom more should be given will get less.

The present demand for Adult Literacy teaching is great; many of those attending classes are in their thirties, forties or even older. Their deficiencies cannot be laid at the door of 'modern methods'. If the children now in our schools are to be well taught and not to become future adult literacy seekers we need more teachers in today's schools. Our children need the help of their teacher *when* a problem arises. If they have to

wait ten minutes while the teacher deals with earlier arrivals in the queue they have all too often lost interest or forgotten the problem anyway – and the opportunity is gone, perhaps for ever. Those with the greatest need often have the least staying power.

If we are going to help those children who most need our help, we must adopt the most useful strategies and ensure efficient organisation of staff and resources within the schools. But we must have the staff and resources to organise, and we must have more of them. Educational need in this country never has been met. The cuts may ensure that it never will be in our lifetimes.

able children'. Too often the plan can become an arrangement whereby pupils whom the 'regular teachers' do not want, or know little about, are conveniently 'put out of sight'. This certainly becomes the case when most teachers, and particularly senior management personnel, take no interest in the class. Failure is often dictated to the less-academically inclined as much by the ethos, emphasis and organisation of their school as by their own educational restrictions, if not more so.

Added to the problem of physical segregation is the important (but often overlooked) fact that the kind of work done in the 'special class' is often very different in quality and style to that being undertaken by pupils of similar age in the rest of the school. This realistic disadvantage often applies to any arrangement where some degree of segregation is involved and is thus worth looking at in some detail. It is rather well reflected if one considers remedial work in reading. Such support work is often provided by using specially selected 'basal readers', yet there are substantial differences between such reading books and standard text books, project books, etc, used in ordinary curricular activities. The differences are extensive but the most important features may be summarised as follows:

- (a) Vocabulary in textbooks in the subject fields is usually more difficult.
- (b) New words are introduced faster and have few repetitions.
- (c) Each subject presents particular difficulties of its own – eg technical vocabulary, specialised abbreviations, tables, diagrams, maps, etc.
- (d) There are more facts to be remembered from a textbook extract than in a section of similar length from a basal reader, hence ability to retain information is more stretched.

Such differences become acutely obvious when 'transfer' back to normal curriculum occurs. Whatever the criterion used for making the 'releasing decision' (often it is simply that of the child having ascertained an arbitrary reading age of 9 or 10 years on some standardised reading test) the child is by no means equipped with the necessary reading skills demanded by a particular subject and may therefore still be 'all at sea and unable to cope'.

A third major problem of the 'special class' arrangement is that, even given appropriate attitudes and good facilities, evidence tends to suggest that the bulk of children finding their way into such classes come from the lower socio-economic groups. This fact is hardly

compatible with the expressed current aims of education – those of 'normalisation' and 'equal opportunity'.

Have special classes any advantages? The answer is yes. Children with specific learning disabilities, and very immature children who may need intensive, specialised curriculum to learn particular skills, in a relaxed atmosphere with a close one-to-one relationship with an adult often benefit considerably from such an arrangement as a 'special class' or 'unit'. In general, however, the special-class plan is most open to criticism when used with 'disruptive' or 'slow-learning' children. For though put forward for use with such children on the grounds that they need a 'special curriculum', little evidence exists that any has been devised for children with mild behavioural, learning or intellectual difficulties. Additionally, many educational philosophers suggest that this particular direction, ie of 'separate curriculum', is inappropriate.

'We must therefore get away from what can be called a retreat into the arts and practical activities, as being more suitable for the less intellectually able. There is a central place in education for the arts and the practical, and that goes for all pupils. But the educational significance of these is limited, and any retreat from the demands of the many forms of language that are so central to human development is to set barriers to that development for many children.

ADVANCE NOTICE

The next number of **Forum**, vol 19 no 3 (May 1977), will be a Special Number on **Primary Education**. It will critically examine recent research and posit a rationale for informal teaching. It will prepare for the **Primary School Conference** advertised on the back cover of this number.

'How we can best teach abstract, intellectual elements to the majority of pupils, let alone the less able, is not obvious. There are ways of easing the difficulties. But there are good ways of doing this and bad ways, and we need to distinguish between them . . .

' . . . However we accommodate ourselves to the less able, it must not be by losing essential concepts, by losing genuine operations with them, by being uncritical of invalid reasoning, and so on. The necessary elements of knowledge are necessary elements and we cannot evade the implications of that simple tautology, try as we may . . . If the concepts and logical structure of one form of knowledge are necessarily valueless as vehicles for knowledge and understanding in another domain, to narrow the range of a child's curriculum to exclude certain forms is to leave the pupil unhelped in certain whole dimensions of thought and mental development.'*

Group or Individual Withdrawal

This plan means that to varying extents 'remedial' children are integrated more intensively into general education than tends to be the case where a 'special class' operates. The problem is, however, partly for reasons we have seen, that simple 'physical integration' of pupils into the ordinary classes or 'mainstream' does not guarantee adequate school progress or social acceptance by peers or specialist teachers. Under such a plan the amount of 'remediation' an individual child can receive is limited; without 'compensation' on the part of specialist teachers – in terms of teaching style and materials, this system is a little akin to 'seeing a child drowning in the water, initiating rescue, drying him off and providing land lessons in swimming, then promptly tossing him back into rather deep and cruel water'. Where such a plan operates, remediation and compensation are necessary *at one and the same time*. This particularly applies in schools operating this system yet having considerable numbers of children quite markedly educationally disadvantaged. The 'compensation' element calls for inspired genuine leadership at the top of the school management structure, and opportunity for in-service training which enables specialist teachers to widen their skills, particularly in the area of *reading development*.

The teacher acting as the withdrawal agent must see the supportive nature of the role and make considerable efforts to gain acceptance as a consultative sup-

porting teacher working as a 'team member' with specialist colleagues. Additionally the withdrawn group must be a realistic workload and the system must not be allowed to be an 'alternative' to general education. That is, pupils must not be sent to a withdrawal group as a result of 'acting-out behaviour' in the ordinary classroom.

Mixed-ability teaching

Theoretically this plan offers the most integrated approach though it must be accepted that attitudes and restricted teaching skill can still cause considerable segregation, even within an administratively organised integrated arrangement. With pupils demonstrating severe behavioural or educational difficulties mixed-ability teaching may still require some form of support system if the education of the general population of children is not to be abnormally disrupted and if the individual 'problem' child himself is to be given maximum opportunity to develop. Indeed, in reality, most mixed-ability schools do already operate some compensatory arrangement for the small percentage of children with marked educational and/or social restriction. The arrangement of such support needs careful consideration if the overall aim of integration is not to be defeated. Two common arrangements are (a) to give the 'remedial specialist' a base next to an area where 'integrated studies' or 'enquiry study' activities operate – that is, where youngsters are already working in small groups or as individuals, in room arrangements which are physically informal and where it is possible for them to slip in and out of the setting without too much disruption to the lesson, and self conspicuousness.

Alternatively, (b) the second arrangement calls on the remedial specialist to execute his skills within lessons being conducted by specialist colleagues. With such an arrangement the child is not physically detached at all and receives his support via the content and material being studied by his respective peers. This approach requires the remedial specialist to be both confident and flexible.

Given any particular arrangement for support work with the less academically competent child, it must be realised that while he may undoubtedly benefit considerably at a social level from mixing with the rest of an heterogeneous group of pupils, nevertheless he remains most at risk educationally in this setting. Only thorough preparation of teaching staff, resources and general school organisation will minimise this risk. For

example, each teacher in 'managing the arrangement', must be capable of giving appropriate individual help; be prepared to so arrange his teaching style that he permits the possibility of working with groups having special needs (eg the gifted as well as less academically competent child) and to display sensitivity in marking work, which in itself, will reflect a considerable range of competence.

Apart from the exceptional 'brilliant orator' mixed-ability teaching implies a fundamentally different teaching style to that more traditionally associated with secondary education. Each teacher needs to be less of an imparter of knowledge by expounding verbally for long periods, rather he needs to see his role as an 'organiser of a learning situation' in which many events may be happening at one and the same time and work being done by pupils might differ radically both in form and conceptual level. Thus, to be maximally effective for all pupils, a teacher of a mixed-ability group needs to use more than one textbook or single resource. He needs to select reading which varies in difficulty, approach and point of view. Varied resources therefore need to be on hand. In setting assignments he needs to consider differential pupil response, ie everyone need not do the same thing in order to meet the requirements of the assignment. Additionally, he needs to encourage other means of contributing to lessons than reading and writing. Taped comment, models, collages, cartoons, drama, etc, broaden the possibility of the less academically competent contributing satisfactorily, and they may enhance confidence since they reduce the pressure on literacy skills.

Working at a group level seems an essential feature of mixed-ability teaching. The teacher may help one group while another group works alone. Such an arrangement is more likely to meet with success if the classroom is so organised as to permit several centres of interest offering varied resources and challenging various skills. Some materials might require visual inspection, analysis and comment; others listening, group problem-solving, sketching or modelling. Such procedures do not exclude class-teaching, they are supplementary to it rather than alternatives.

In the final analysis the success or otherwise of mixed-ability teaching will reside in teachers' confidence in, and enthusiasm for the system, coupled with a positive attitude toward all pupils of whatever level of ability and achievement and a preparedness to consider alternative teaching styles. It naturally compels teachers to examine more closely the content and format of their

lessons and may well lead to re-examination of what is traditionally taught. The idea that all children should be subjected to the same content at the same time and at the same rate because they are all in the same class and are approximately the same age is already intensively questioned in many quarters. Such an emphasis projects content to be covered rather than the individual learner to be taught. The efficiency supposedly gained from teaching an homogeneous group is more a belief than a proven fact. If the practicalities of widening teacher skill can be squarely met, the social value of heterogeneous groups is undeniable.

Organisational formats do not of themselves remove or compensate for individual differences. If pupils of less academic inclination are to progress in accordance with their needs and aptitudes, teachers must give room to their differences in the 'instructional framework' rather than in the organisational framework of the school. Instruction and organisation are inter-related, progress in one demands progress in the other. Maybe for too long we have sought to answer the problems of the child deemed 'remedial' by considering patterns of organisation rather than instructional flexibility. Remedial classes, withdrawal systems, mixed-ability teaching situations are only as productive as the quality of the teaching method within.

Reference

* Paul H Hirst, **Knowledge and the Curriculum**, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.

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One school's remedial arrangements

Trisha Jaffe

Trisha Jaffe is a psychology graduate who taught for a year at Yew Tree High School, Wythenshawe, before taking up her present post with responsibility for remedial work at Stockland Green Comprehensive School in Birmingham.

The problem of 'remedial' work is one which has come more and more to the fore in the recent past. The transition to comprehensive education, the Black Papers and the Bullock Report have all raised the question of how to cope with retarded readers within the secondary school. The solutions which have been posed are varied. It has been stated by some teachers that literacy is no longer important and that, therefore, specific provision is unnecessary. Others argue that reading is the province of the English teacher with the supplement of a 'remedial' specialist, and not the concern of the 'subject' teacher. The term 'remedial' has become pejorative, losing its original meaning and being seen by many as synonymous with 'stupid'. These ostrich-like positions create and aggravate the problems for anyone attempting to develop a comprehensive education for children with reading disabilities.

Clearly the first practical problem to be faced is how to define those in need of special help within the school. The definitions are so many that this is far less simple a task than it might appear. The choice of test to be used for screening can be crucial, as the results might not be comparable. The alternatives of reading quotient, reading age, or standard reading score become baffling and little guidance is given to the teacher hoping to cope with this. The DES Survey 15 in 1971 estimated that approximately 20% of secondary children are in need of some special help. Within most secondary schools this makes the problem a major one.

I believe that remedial teaching should be based on as thorough a diagnosis of the individual's problems as I can achieve, within the limitations imposed on me. I prefer to use the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability, and thereby gain a wealth of information. There are two reading ages, one for comprehension and one for accuracy. I ignore the speed factor because it seems to be of less immediate importance. At the same time, I am able to record the specific faults which each child makes. Ideally, I would like to be able to give remedial help to those whose reading age is two years behind their chronological age. Unfortunately, this is not feasible, and there therefore remain many who are in need. With the second year, the cut-off point is an RA of 9.6 and for the third year upwards, it proves to be between 10 and 10.6 depending on the degree of written

fluency as well.

The school is a five-form entry comprehensive and has been such for five years. This means that the school has roughly 850 pupils. There is also a Delicate Unit within the school. The first three years are broad-banded, with two upper and three lower parallel groups. In the first year, the lower band follows a foundation course of geography, English and history. The Delicate Unit has responsibility for remedial provision throughout this year. Remedial maths is dealt with by the maths department itself for the whole school. The lower band is screened using Schonell Silent Reading Test B, and the twenty poorest are given remedial help. This situation of arbitrary cut-off is obviously unsatisfactory, as is the fact that there is a discontinuity between first and second year provision.

From the second year onwards, remedial provision comes under the auspices of the English department. This also presents some problems, particularly as the second and third year children undergoing remedial help consequently miss French and have special English. In the fourth year there is no special provision as such, but remedial work continues within an ordinary English group because the year is set at this point. In the fifth year the same group continues to work towards a CSE Mode 3 exam. In the fourth and fifth year the children can, as part of the option system, choose to have extra English; and despite my scepticism, more took this option than were in the special English groups.

A special environment

A first major problem to be faced within the classroom is the fact that after many years of attempting to cover up that they have difficulties, the children remain reluctant to admit these even in the remedial situation. The immediate requirement then, is to give these children an incentive, something which the others do not have. Despite limited facilities, I have managed to achieve a small room painted with bright colours, and into it we have put a carpet and some easy chairs. The atmosphere is therefore immediately different from anywhere else in the building – an austere 1950s secon-

dary school. We have also managed to acquire an electric kettle and an assortment of mugs. As a result we can have coffee while we work, and this helps to set them apart from anyone else. This different atmosphere is important because these children have already failed to achieve the required skills and I do not believe that a mere repetition of formulas previously tried will prove successful on a later occasion. They need relationships which will help make them feel secure about what they can achieve, and that is the point at which one can start building.

The second and third years only have four periods of special English per week – not really enough to achieve very much – and the fourth years have six periods. Within these periods, I attempt to base the work that they do on an analysis of reading and writing skills, using the Neale and the Cotterill Check Lists of Basic Sounds. From this, a programme is constructed for each child. I base most of the work on a phonic approach, as I find that this tends to offer more of a logical schema for the children. But clearly, no *one* approach can be or should be used exclusively. The materials most frequently used for this are: **Sound Sense, Spelling, Domain Phonic Workshop, Remedial Reading Refresher Cards, Remedial Reading Sheets** and a plethora of home-made worksheets and cards which draw in many other ideas. There are around 400 reading books, graded at six-monthly intervals from a reading age of 6.0 (C) to 10.6 plus (L). Each book is clearly marked with the level and the children are assigned to the appropriate shelf at the beginning of the year. I also have a Longman's **Reading Routes**, Ward Lock's **9-13**, and a small amount of hardware with listening materials as well. I am collecting as wide a variety of games as possible, both commercial and home-made.

Each child works independently on their own scheme of work but they come together in small groups for games and for various other activities. This system has many benefits and drawbacks. The groups tend to be fairly large for one teacher – around a dozen – and this obviously creates problems for getting them all settled purposefully. On the other hand, it makes it almost impossible for them to compare the work which they are doing among themselves and this helps challenge their feelings of inadequacy by altering competition from being that of achieving results to whether one is missing out on something exciting or interesting. After a short period of adjustment to the new demands being made on them, most of the children settle to this situa-

tion and form of classroom organisation very well. The situation now is that many of them ask to come when they are not timetabled to do so, and children not in the groups stop me in the corridors to ask if they can join the 'specials'.

On top of the lessons timetabled with remedial groups, I have nine periods a week when I am involved in withdrawal work. This means that all testing can take place without having to cope with a class at the same time, and that smaller groups or individuals can be worked with in a concentrated fashion. Many problems which arise during lessons can be dealt with in this framework. It also allows other members of staff to 'refer' people to me and I can deal with situations on a short term basis.

New supportive role

This only deals with one element of the problem. It provides the basis for the correction of some difficulties, but the children concerned are still left for the other 34-36 periods more or less adrift in other lessons. Much of what is presented to them is meaningless and they have developed techniques for avoiding either censure or a public admission of inability. One of the major roles for a remedial teacher should, therefore, be as an adviser and helper to subject teachers. Working together, they should be able to produce graded worksheets and materials. In order to achieve this, the fear which many of us have of being seen with a class, or of our materials being criticised, has to be broken down. The new approach has to be seen not as a weakening but as a potential strengthening of the work. In many situations, it would also be helpful if the remedial teacher were able to work, during the subject lesson, with the poor readers and guide them through materials. This is hard to achieve, but the first stages have begun at my school.

Coping with poor readers is obviously not an easy question within the ordinary classroom. Most teachers, particularly at secondary level, are given no training in the teaching of reading, and many have no knowledge of the implications of having a low reading age. It would seem that coping with this situation militates against the traditional form of classroom teaching, with a homogeneous body of work to be covered by all. It is important to begin to work towards a situation where programmes can be developed for different levels and where these fit into the framework of a 'topic' or 'sub-

Discussion

A Streaming Experiment in Cyprus

Forum has published a number of accounts of the introduction of non-streaming into secondary schools in this country. In particular, Dr Thompson has described the positive results associated with the introduction of non-streaming at The Woodlands School, Coventry. One problem in interpreting such accounts is the possibility that the novelty of the new organisation may itself lead to greater effort and achievement by teachers and pupils, irrespective of the nature of the reorganisation. One way of checking the extent of this effect – the so-called Hawthorne effect – would be to stream a long-established unstreamed school, but there would rightly be objections to putting the interests of scientific purity above the interests of the pupils in the school.

The streaming of an unstreamed secondary school was undertaken as an experiment in Cyprus, however, at about the same time that The Woodlands School was being destreamed in this country. It seems useful, therefore, to put on record the results of the Cyprus experiment so that it can be compared with destreaming experiments in this country.

The experiment took place, with the approval of the Education Authorities, at the B Gymnasium in Famagusta and was planned and extensively discussed by the teaching staff of the school. It was decided to stream the second form of the school, in the first place, so that the first-form records could be used to determine placements. (In Cyprus, the three

years of the first cycle of secondary education, up to the school-leaving age of 15, are completely unstreamed and all pupils take the same subjects.) The average grade over all subjects was used to place each pupil into one of three streams, each stream containing two classes of approximately 40 pupils, although the two bottom-stream classes were somewhat smaller than the others. It was thought desirable that transfers between streams should be facilitated and that they should be considered every three months.

From the beginning, the top and middle-stream classes made good progress, but the bottom-stream classes were full of problems. At the first meeting to review progress, after three months, there were some suggestions from the bottom-stream teachers that the experiment be abandoned because of the slow progress and problems of discipline and attendance in their classes, which were not normally encountered in unstreamed classes. Nevertheless, the experiment was continued.

Only a few downstream transfers were made and these resulted in protests from parents, and there were even fewer upstream transfers. Upgraded pupils generally worked harder and showed improvement, but downgraded pupils worked less well and in some cases a second downgrading was carried out.

At the end of the year, the progress of the experiment was reviewed, in several meetings, by the teachers in the school. It was quickly established

that there were no unusual problems with the top and middle streams, and discussion concentrated on the bottom stream, where it was necessary to fail an unusually large percentage of pupils. Moreover, the two bottom-stream classes had proved to be the most troublesome in the school.

The experiment was continued for a further year (with the same pupils) and similar results were obtained. Because of the disastrous results with the lower-ability pupils, it was then decided to abandon the experiment and to return to the traditional unstreamed structure.

The Cyprus experiment, then, neatly complements the experiences drawn from destreaming schools in this country. The better discipline and greater achievement of lower-ability pupils on destreaming a school can hardly be attributed to the Hawthorne effect when there is a marked deterioration in their behaviour and learning on the introduction of streaming. It is also worth noting that while some teachers in this country, after years of working with streamed classes, view the prospect of unstreamed classes with anxiety, the teachers in Cyprus displayed a similar conservatism but in the opposite direction. To Cypriot teachers, the problems of dealing with bottom-streamed classes are far greater than those associated with the unstreamed classes to which they are accustomed.

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P Z PAPAZACHARIOU

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(continued from page 49)

ject'. All written material has to be at a variety of levels of complexity so as to be suitable for all children. This involves not just the length of the word, but that of the sentence, the size of the type, the layout, the number of illustrations and also the degree to which specialist vocabulary used has already been presented (possibly within remedial lessons). The teacher should try to supplement written material with large amounts of visual materials and, if possible, with taped versions of the written material. The emphasis should be on communi-

cation rather than accuracy – understanding the ideas and being able to communicate them, primarily through the spoken word and then through the written.

This sounds much simpler than it is. Time and resources clearly affect the degree to which any teacher can put these stratagems into practice. I do not believe that any one teacher can deal with this on their own, and that means that the remedial teacher is going to have to come out from the shadows and become a living resource and information centre. Unless the value of

Reading Crash Course

Inga Corrall

Inga Corrall is a social science graduate who has been in charge of remedial work at Heathfield High School, Leicestershire, for the past six years.

For the past three years, the remedial work undertaken at Heathfield High School has been extended to provide an intensive course on reading and spelling, lasting for approximately eight weeks, for large numbers of first year pupils. We were concerned that 20-25% of our annual first year intake from five feeder primary schools appeared to be weak readers who were consequently unable to cope at all satisfactorily with the ordinary demands of much of their secondary school work.

To undertake secondary school work with a fair chance of coping, we felt that a reading age of approximately ten was necessary. Yet in our probably quite average intake, with a fair spread of ability, about 20% or 50 to 60 children have had a Word Recognition Age of under nine years on entry over the last five years that we have assessed them. We felt it was impractical and undesirable even to consider placing such large numbers in withdrawal remedial groups. We wanted to keep the regular withdrawal groups small for effective remedial work and yet provide help for the sizeable further numbers of children whose reading competence was inadequate.

We resolved to tackle the problem by trying to distinguish between those who clearly needed fairly long-term remedial help in our small withdrawal groups and those whose difficulties we suspected might be more speedily overcome if we could provide some form of intensive short-term help.

Heathfield High School has been non-streamed for six years and has grown from approximately 650 to its current total roll of 840 with an annual intake of nearly 300. All the first years normally work in mixed-ability

'tutor-groups' of about 30 for all their main subjects: English, Maths, French, Science and Social Studies. There are ten first year 'tutor-groups' arranged for time-tabling purposes into two 'populations' each of five classes. There is a withdrawal remedial group for each 'population', two for each of the three years in the school.

This means that pupils requiring fairly long-term remedial support with their reading and writing are taught for their English lessons only by one of the two full-time remedial teachers. This involves five or six 35-minute periods a week when the pupils are withdrawn from English lessons with their tutor group and form a group of up to twelve pupils. In this small group most of the time is spent on improving the basic skills of reading, writing and spelling.

Additional remedial support is made available for first year pupils in Social Studies and Maths – not usually on a withdrawal basis, but on the basis of improving the staff-pupil ratio for the less able and consequently more demanding pupils.

In 1974, twenty pupils were placed in the two first year withdrawal groups for English. Eighteen were placed in these groups in 1975 and twenty-five in 1976. This left us with the problem of a further thirty to forty children who clearly needed some form of extra help to improve their reading competence.

The 'breathing space' to rethink how we might offer this help came with the appointment of a second full-time remedial teacher three years ago due to the school's growth in number and to a recognition that one teacher only could not cope with the numbers of pupils needing help.

remedial work is recognised and given its due, and the stigma removed from both children and teachers, then this type of development will not take place. This also means far wider availability of in-service courses for both remedial and non-remedial teachers. At present, a great many of those engaged in remedial work are not specifically qualified to do so.

The way in which success is measured is not an easy one. If reading ages are used, then the approach I have so far adopted has been fairly successful; the children

have almost all gained during the past year, by more than one year in RA. If success is measured in terms of social adjustment and an ability to cope, then again, the approach seems to have been fairly successful. However, it is important that one should not attempt to create a structure and then believe that this is a permanent, infallible method. Every change and every development must be monitored and analysed, and there must be a willingness to learn and adapt as circumstances change.

A reading crash course appeared to be feasible; it would mean seeking the co-operation of a number of teachers not previously involved in remedial work. Many members of staff were receptive to the idea and were prepared to be personally committed to teaching such a course on a short-term basis.

In addition to those pupils placed in the withdrawal remedial groups for English, 29 pupils in 1974, 41 pupils in 1975 and 45 pupils in 1976 did a 'Crash Course' in reading and spelling.

Organisation

All the pupils coming to the school as first year pupils were given the Burt Word Recognition Test by one of the two remedial teachers who did no teaching for the first four days of term as this was the time taken to complete the testing. This blanket testing has proved each year to be an invaluable 'safety net' or screening test to discover all those children who are weak readers.

The results of this testing for the three years that the Crash Course has been taught are as follows:

Word Recognition ages	1974	1975	1976
11 and over	139	161	169
9-11	70	78	69
Under 9	49	53	58
No. Tested	258	292	296

The 'cut-off' point for being placed on the Crash Course, rather than in a withdrawal group, was approximately a Word Recognition Age of between 8 and 9. A few pupils whose Word Recognition Ages were just over 9 were included as they were obviously not confident readers, and there has been prompt adjustment between remedial withdrawal group pupils and Crash Course pupils if the teachers involved felt that the pupil was wrongly placed. This occasionally occurred with reading ages around 8.

For example, in this year's intake a girl with a score of 7.9 years was initially placed in a withdrawal group and a boy with the score of 8.1 years was placed on the Crash Course. After just two lessons it became obvious that the girl was coping easily and she transferred immediately and successfully to Crash Course. The boy, on the other hand, was clearly floundering with the more demanding pace of Crash Course and was more appropriately placed in the withdrawal group. The Word Recognition Test is obviously not a totally accurate picture of a child's reading ability. It is simply

a very necessary screening device to enable us to identify as quickly as possible those pupils needing help with their reading.

Staffing the Course

In 1974, 17 members of staff at Heathfield out of 37 volunteered to teach the course. In 1975, 20 teachers out of 40 were involved and in 1976 21 teachers out of 43 are involved in teaching the course. It is only fair to add that another three teachers wanted to participate but the pupils had all been allocated.

The teachers volunteered part of their non-teaching time to teach the Crash Course for a period of approximately 8 weeks, ie for the first half term to October. They arranged three or four sessions of 35 minutes (one teaching period) a week when they could work with the pupils. This could include a lunch hour session. Two pupils were normally allocated to each teacher although a few worked with only one pupil or with three.

Usually a teacher would work with pupils from their own 'tutor-group' if they were the form teacher for a first year class, or with pupils that they taught at some stage during the week. The Principal, the Deputy and the remedial teachers were also among those who taught the course.

'Crash Course' became a teaching commitment for the staff involved and they were not asked, as far as possible, to provide relief for absent colleagues at the time they had arranged to meet their pupils. Indirectly of course every member of staff was affected. If they weren't teaching the course themselves, their turn to provide relief supervision came round a little more quickly and everyone had to tolerate the children missing the odd lesson from time to time. This did not cause undue concern because all staff were aware of the temporary nature of the Crash Course and of the benefits both to the pupil and to themselves if the pupil was able to improve his standard of reading.

Course Content

The two main aspects of the course are (a) the Crash Course Booklet and (b) reading.

A brief meeting for all the staff involved was held after school as soon as the reading testing for the first year pupils was completed. Pupils were allocated to their teachers on the basis already stated and the teachers were issued with a folder, a crash course booklet, a small book in which spellings could be written and a reading book for each pupil.

Crash Course Booklet

This consists of fourteen sheets of lists of words which together cover the total range of more sophisticated phonics encountered in reading English and so helps the pupil to gain a full understanding of how words are built up. A pupil must have a reading age of not less than about 8 before he tackles this work as a knowledge of initial letter sounds, consonant blends and simple vowel diagraphs (ee or oo) is assumed.

The teachers were asked to give the pages to the pupils one at a time as they worked through them. The two or three pupils worked together, discussing and practising the sound. The sounds are explained using any tips or hints, blackboard work sketches etc to make them memorable and interesting. The pupils read the lists and put in the missing letters. They may well practise spelling a few or try to think of other words containing the same sound.

For example, the first sound is *ar*. For each sound there is a 'Key Word'; one that we might expect the pupil to know anyway and one that he can refer to if he is working out a new word. With *ar* the Key Word was *car*.

These were the lists they were asked to read:

arm	b - - n	h - - m	sh - - p
- - my	b - -	ch - - m	b - - ge
- - t	c - -	f - - m	l - - ge
- - ch	f - -	al - - m	ch - - ge
	j - -		enl - - ge
	t - -		
	st - -		

The sounds soon become a little more complicated and involve the introduction and explanation of basic spelling rules such as double consonants only following short vowel sounds, or dropping the 'e' when adding endings such as 'es', 'ed' or 'ing' to a word.

Spelling

A large part of the work reinforcing the learning and understanding of the sounds is spelling. Spelling lists are included with the majority of the word lists. The teachers were asked to explain the spellings and give tips on how to learn them, eg by saying them as they write them a few times. The spellings were to be learned for the next session and tested. The course is self revising; there is no need constantly to go back over the sounds covered. Later word lists often include the earlier sounds as part of more complicated words. The pace of coping with the sounds often tends to

accelerate as the pupils become used to handling the phonic work and generally the whole booklet can be covered in about seven weeks.

It may be felt appropriate with certain of the sounds to supplement them with further practice or a written exercise. The **Booster Workbooks** 1-4 by W C H Chalk contain suitable exercises. 'Soft c', 'tion' and 'ous' tend to be the most difficult sounds.

Reading

As well as teaching the sounds and spellings from the Crash Course Booklet, teachers are asked to ensure that the pupils read regularly and to make a point of hearing them read every session—even if just for a few minutes. A target for them to reach at home could be set and the pupils encouraged to read as much and as often as they could. Often they managed a book a week.

A range of books at an appropriate level is made available and the teachers or pupils can come at any time to change the books as they finish them. We used mostly the **Instant Reading** and **Booster Books** by W C H Chalk. There are ten titles in each of these series and they include a lot of humorous school stories, some short stories and some excellent science fiction.

When they have finished teaching all the sounds in the booklet, the teachers are asked to spend two or three short periods from their sessions with the pupils going through some of the syllable-analysis scheme prepared by the Leicestershire Schools Psychological Service. This scheme shows words broken down into syllables. By sounding the syllables separately and then blending them together, the pupil revises all the sounds he has learned and, hopefully, learns to feel confident at tackling any new word he may come across.

For example:

am	use	ment	amusement
app	ea	ling	appealing
em	ploy	ment	employment
ex	plan	a tion	explanation

The pupils are re-tested on the same Word Recognition Test after the completion of the course (normally about eight weeks).

There is often a good improvement in the scores attained by pupils. The emphasis on reading regularly at an appropriate level also improves comprehension; particularly as the aim is to get the children to enjoy the books and the stories they tell. There is also an improvement in the general level of spelling that a

pupil has *after* the completion of the course – sometimes even a month or two after – as he gradually learns to apply what he has learned.

The children have almost invariably been highly motivated to do well on the course. It is always inexplicable when, as happened in 1974, a boy with an initial word recognition age of 8.9 read only one or two books in half a term and did very badly in most of the spelling tests by simply not learning the words. Nevertheless, after eight weeks, with a very patient teacher, his score had jumped to 10.7 and he has coped well with his work ever since.

It appears to be impossible to pin down exactly how the Crash Course works to improve a pupil's reading ability. It is obviously the result of a combination of factors – any one or number of which is relevant to the learning achieved by a particular individual: eg his own motivation to do well, the teaching of phonic patterns, a lot of reading and being heard reading, books of a suitable standard, books they like, individual attention and encouragement from one particular teacher, insistence on spelling practice, growth of self confidence and so on.

We undoubtedly have the advantage of the pupils' high motivation on entering a new school and, of course, the pupils are older and more able to cope with the demanding pace of this work. There may well be some loss of ground over the period of the summer holiday which accounts in part for some low scores on initial testing. As indicated earlier, the exact score is not so important as identifying quickly those pupils who will benefit from some help with their reading and spelling.

Those parents who have contacted the school once they know that their child is going the course, and those who were anxious about the ability of their children to cope, before they actually arrived at Heathfield, have been delighted at the interest taken in their children. Very often the parents are involved by the children in hearing them read at home or by testing their 'spellings' for the next day.

Occasionally a pupil has not reached an adequate level of reading or is still felt to have specific weaknesses, particularly spelling. Then the remedial teachers take over and try to provide a little extra help, probably on a one-to-one basis once or twice a week for a short period to ensure that no child is left reading poorly and not understanding spelling.

The Word Recognition Test is obviously only a rough guide to reading ability. For several children

whose results seem to show that they have made little progress, the scores do not seem to reflect the actual improvement that they have made. For example, Amanda (8.7-9.3) and Marion (8.6-8.9) were in effect both reading and writing competently after the completion of the course, and they continued to improve throughout their first year at the end of which their standardised grades were, in English and Social Studies, average for the mixed ability class. So we are working with individuals and not statistics.

The vast majority of children need have no real difficulty with reading. A short, structured course, together with a large amount of effort and goodwill from the teachers, appears to have some success at coping with many of those children entering a secondary school as poor or hesitant readers.

The Results

1974	Martin	7.9 – 10.5	Ashley	8.1 – 9.0
	Kevin	7.9 – 9.7	Anne	9.0 – 9.9
	Carl	7.9 – 9.7	Corinna	8.5 – 9.2
	Beverley	8.2 – 10.0	Simon	8.5 – 8.9
	Steven	7.5 – 9.0	Collette	8.1 – 8.4
	David	9.1 – 10.6	Andrew	9.2 – 9.4
	Tom	8.9 – 10.4	Tina	8.6 – 9.0
	Andrew	8.9 – 10.3	Chris	8.4 – 8.5
	Susan	8.5 – 9.8	Chris	8.1 – 8.3
	Paul	8.7 – 9.4	Helena	9.0 – 9.1
	Kim	9.4 – 10.2	Lorraine	8.4 – 8.5
	Andrew	8.9 – 10.3	Kim	} no measured improvement
	Chris	8.4 – 9.5	Simon	
	Nicola	8.4 – 9.5	John	
	David	8.5 – 9.5		

(15 improved by one year or more)

1975	Brett	8.7 – 11.6	Teresa	7.7 – 9.0
	Neil	8.5 – 10.7	Paul	8.1 – 9.3
	Peter	8.0 – 10.2	Simon	8.7 – 9.8
	Angela	8.9 – 11.0	Anthony	8.8 – 9.9
	David	8.0 – 10.1	Andrew	9.2 – 10.3
	Gale	9.3 – 11.3	Deborah	8.5 – 9.5
	Richard	7.7 – 9.7	Patricia	8.2 – 9.2
	Stephen	8.5 – 10.4	Carole	8.7 – 9.7
	Amanda	8.7 – 10.6	Robert	8.5 – 9.4
	Diane	8.5 – 10.4	Joseph	9.2 – 10.0
	Mark	8.6 – 10.4	Diane	9.3 – 10.1
	Helen	8.3 – 10.1	Nickie	8.4 – 9.1
	Robert	9.1 – 10.9	Amanda	8.7 – 9.3
	Ian	8.9 – 10.7	Adel	7.7 – 9.9
	Dawn	8.4 – 10.2	Robert	8.9 – 9.5
	Mark	9.1 – 10.8	Peter	9.5 – 10.1
	Nicholas	8.4 – 11.0	Julie	8.5 – 9.0
	Kateriona	9.9 – 10.5	Gary	8.4 – 8.8
	Gary	7.7 – 9.1	Alan	8.4 – 8.7
	Julie	7.8 – 9.2	Marian	8.6 – 8.9
	Adrian	8.1 – 9.5		

(30 improved by one year or more)

Remedial Teaching in the Humanities

W F Quinn

Bill Quinn is Deputy Head and Director of Studies at the Hedley Walter School in Brentwood, Essex, where he has been responsible for the Humanities Scheme for the past eleven years when mixed ability methods were first introduced there. He also has considerable experience as an examiner for English in CSE and the pilot CEE. In writing this article he has been assisted by Mr Dick Horton, Head of the Remedial Department.

During the past eleven years the Hedley Walter School, Brentwood, has developed some very successful mixed-ability learning methods; indeed, during this period perhaps, it has been the most visited school in the country. This success has been reflected not only in the very high level of academic success which these methods have engendered, but also in the degree of literacy achieved by those pupils at the lower end of the ability level – the ‘remedials’. Mixed ability methods apply to all subjects other than foreign languages, but space here limits me to an exposition only of the methods employed in the Humanities, an amalgamation of English, History, Geography and RE, an important area of the curriculum and one accounting for a little over one-third of the whole school week.

The Hedley Walter School is a comprehensive school of over 1400, with an age-range of 11 to 18-plus, a staff of about 80, and an open sixth form of about 160. From the first year onwards pupils are organised in mixed-ability classes based upon friendship clusters; these classes are the teaching units, and pupils remain in them until the end of the fifth year. The school is different from most schools practising mixed ability methods in that these methods are retained up to the end of the fifth year throughout the examination course. Through Mode 3 methods applied to ‘O’ level, as well as to CSE, courses have been adopted allowing strictly-moderated examination of the whole ability range – from ‘O’ level Grade ‘A’ through to CSE Grade 5 – and consequently numbers of pupils deemed originally to be ‘remedials’ have been able successfully to enter for external examinations. In conformity with the general philosophy of the school – an equal valuation of all pupils irrespective of ability – with one deliberate exception there is no withdrawal of remedial pupils and we believe this to be an important factor in the success we have had. For the size of the school the Remedial Department is quite small – a Head of Remedial Department, Mr Dick Horton, and two part-time but specially trained assistants – none the less, a very valuable service is performed for these lower-ability pupils and the school in general.

At the outset it must be stressed that the school has a normal intake. If anything, there is some creaming since there are two direct-grant schools in the town, and most Catholic children of good ability attend Catholic secondary schools. Moreover, almost half the pupils on intake come from a large council estate. True, there is one important reservation; there is no immigrant problem such as that which affects some large city schools and creates a language problem. Nevertheless, in each year’s intake there is a proportion of low-ability pupils, pupils well retarded in reading attainment and with low English Quotient (NFER) scores. For example, in the 1971 intake from which the detailed examples given below are drawn, there were 87 pupils with a reading age of below 10 years – 27% of the intake – and a little over half of these were judged to need remedial assistance.

In the work of the Remedial Department and the special help given to pupils of low ability or those retarded in their attainments of literacy, five particular features may be described. The main one is the specialist help given in reading and (later) in written work. On entrance to the school, on the basis of primary school records, all pupils of average ability and under are tested for reading, and those found to have a reading age of 9 years 3 months or under are noted for specialist assistance. (Pupils with a slightly higher attainment may also be included if their initial work or their records indicate the need for this.) The school later confirms or modifies this assessment by means of an NFER English attainment test, this being taken about half way through the first year. Once daily, each day in the week, during and *only* during the period when the class concerned is taking a foreign language lesson (French or German), these pupils are withdrawn in very small groups for reading tuition by the specialist teachers. This is the main and most time-consuming function of the Remedial Department. Some pupils quickly make progress and even in the first year their reading tuition may be cut to one or two periods a week. As and when others improve in reading ability and attainment, they are encouraged to start a foreign

language with their class-fellows. By the third year it is normally found that most pupils have obtained a reasonable reading age, and the Department shifts its emphasis to specialist help with written work for those still deemed to need remedial tuition, although reading practice still continues. At the beginning of the fourth year practically all such pupils are incorporated with their fellows and no longer need to attend special remedial groups, although special provision is made for the one or two who have not made satisfactory progress, and additional facilities are made available to others as described below.

Helping subject specialists

A second function in remedial work is the part played by the Remedial Head in advising Humanities teams on the suitability of books, film-strips, tapes and other appropriate learning resources for the less able pupils, week by week according to the topic or theme to be studied, and also the suitability of questions, exercises, oral discussion work and creative writing. This he does by participating in the weekly team planning meeting timetabled for each year's Humanities team. Thus each team is assured that work specifically designed to facilitate learning by less able pupils is always included in the weekly worksheet.

From the second year onwards, these worksheets are designed to cover the differing needs of the whole ability range, with a variety of choice and response and a gradation of difficulty built into them; however, individual worksheets may still be further adapted to meet specific needs of individual remedial pupils. With the first-year pupils, attached to each ordinary worksheet, designed as described above, is a special supplementary worksheet, especially composed to enable the pupil concerned to cope with aspects of the theme in progress. Apart from this, however, there will always be some questions on the main worksheet which the remedial pupil can do. A section taken from a typical worksheet is given here as an example:

FIRST YEAR HUMANITIES - DISENTIS - A SWISS MOUNTAIN FARM

Ordinary Worksheet

Section B Mr Condrau's Farm

- Where is Mr. Condrau's farm?
How many acres does he farm and where is his land?
Distinguish between the two types of farming land. (B)
- How many and what types of animals are kept on Mr. Condrau's farm?

- Where are these animals kept during the winter months? (B)
- Explain the meaning of the terms cash crops and maintenance (or subsistence) crops. (C)
What crops does Mr. Condrau grow in his valley fields; to which group do they belong? (B, C)
 - What machinery is used on the farm?
Does Mr. Condrau own it? (B)
Why is there a lack of modern machinery on the farm?
Who helps Mr. Condrau with his work on the farm? (C)
 - What languages do they speak in Switzerland?
In which part of the country is each language spoken?
Swiss people usually speak at least two languages. Which two do you think Mr. Condrau can speak? (C)

(References:

- A Britain & Beyond - Bk 2
- B Information Sheet
- C Key Lesson Notes
- D Disentis - Laird & Chambers)

Remedial Worksheet attached

Section B Mr Condrau's Farm

Mr _____ farm is in the village of _____ in the upper part of the River _____. He farms _____ acres of arable land, and has _____ of _____ land in the valley bottom.

Mr. Condrau keeps _____ cows, five _____, ten goats and _____. He grows _____, _____, _____ and _____ on his land. They speak _____ languages in Switzerland. These are _____, _____, _____, and _____. Mr. Condrau speaks _____ and _____.

Disentis	Condrau's	Romansh	German
twelve	calves	four	six acres
	four	wheat	six pigs
Italian	barley	arable	oats
Romansh	German	French	

Ordinary Worksheet

Section C Swiss Mountain Scenery

- Complete the cross-section of a Swiss valley, including the following: mountain peaks, mayen, steep forested slopes, alpine pastures, village, cultivated fields, river.
- In the following questions Figure 2 etc. refers to the photographs in Book D - Disentis. Look at the photographs and then answer the questions.
 - Fig. 2 (p. 6) - A section of the old Gotthard Pass Road.
Describe the road and suggest why it was built in this manner.
 - Figure 3 (p. 6) - The galleries on part of the St. Bernard Pass from Valais Canton.
Suggest why these galleries were built.
 - Figure 4 (p. 7) - Near Tarasp on the Inn River.
This photograph highlights a difficulty frequently met in alpine rail construction.

What would this be?

- (d) Figures 5 and 8 (pp. 9 and 12) – The location of Disentis.

Where has the village of Disentis been built?

How would you describe the general shape of Disentis?

What man-made feature has helped to determine this shape?

Remedial Worksheet attached

Section C Swiss Mountain Scenery

(YOUR TEACHER WILL HELP YOU WITH THIS SECTION)

Complete the section of a Swiss Valley.

Look at the photographs in 'Disentis' by Laird & Chambers and answer the questions. The words in brackets may help you.

1. Figure 2 (p.6) – Describe the shape of the Old Gotthard Pass Road. (twists, turns, bends)
2. Figure 3 (p.6) – Why do you think these galleries were built? (avalanches)
3. Figures 5 and 8 (pp. 9 and 12) – Where has the village of Disentis been built? (side of the valley, flat land)

A fourth important task for the Remedial Head is the day-to-day assistance given during the course of Humanities work. Although his time is limited here, some time is found during which he acts as an 'orbiting teacher'; that is, he circulates round the classes during their Humanities lessons, giving active individual help and advice to remedial pupils as they do their work. This, of course, is also a function of the class teacher, one of whose primary tasks is to act as a class tutor, organising and guiding individualised learning by all the pupils in the class; the teacher's work here, as well as that of the Remedial Head, is facilitated by the team-teaching organisation which ensures that a block of four classes (a half-year group) is taking Humanities together in a suite of adjacent rooms under the supervision of a team of four or five teachers for an adequate block of time (generally a whole morning or afternoon).

As indicated by the figures cited below, the measures taken during the first three years go a long way to improve the reading attainments and literacy of remedial pupils. Nevertheless, care is still taken to see that this achievement is consolidated during the fourth and fifth years; consequently, a small number of pupils at the lowest end of the ability range are encouraged (but not compelled) to choose as one of their three optional subjects special courses organised by the Remedial Head and designed to assist their Humanities work. (Humanities, Maths and Science remain as com-

pulsory subjects for all pupils up to the end of the fifth year.) Again, this pays off, not only in terms of practical achievement, but also in enabling such pupils to participate in external examinations and to gain CSE and even 'O' level certificates.

Many schools seem to be quite content if, as per the theory of a limited percentage of ability levels promulgated at the time of the introduction of the CSE eleven years ago, they are able to enter 60 per cent of their intake for external examinations. The bottom 40 per cent are either ruled out or entered for special 'limited ability' courses. Over the past few years the Hedley Walter School has been entering over 90 per cent of its entire intake for ordinary 'O' level and CSE exams, and most of the remaining 9 or 10 per cent has comprised the Easter leavers, very few of whom have been remedials. As an example of the progress made and the success rate of pupils who originally entered the school as remedials, the record of the 1971 intake is given at the end of this article. These pupils completed their main school career in summer 1976 (although some of them are now in the Lower Sixth), and one wonders what might have happened to them had they been placed in a streamed situation.

These pupils, 45 in number, were divided among 10 mixed-ability classes and constituted 14 per cent of the total intake (321 pupils). There were 24 boys and 21 girls, and the decision to give them remedial help was made by the Head of Remedial Department initially on the basis of their primary school records. A careful check was kept on their work and where appropriate they were encouraged to take up foreign language work with their class-fellows and 'released' from the special reading groups described above. For some, however, it was deemed necessary to continue specialist reading help throughout the first three years.

Of the 45 pupils concerned, 3 left school before reaching the fifth year, there were 4 Easter leavers and 1 took no examinations. 37 took examinations and registered 153 passes between them (an average of over 4 apiece) and 34 'O' levels (17 of these at matric level) and the great majority in the Humanities. Of these 37, 29 obtained a pass in English and 1 in Drama. Only 4 of the 37 failed to gain any qualification.

This article has hitherto been concerned with a brief exposition of the practical details of assisting pupils of low ability; by themselves, however, the measures outlined would not necessarily have achieved very much. Of greater importance, we believe, are the factors of motivation and relationships within the classroom. It is,

Record of Remedial Pupils through their School Career — 1971 intake

Name	Reading Ages—Holborn Scale						Fifth Year Attainment or Other Comment				
	Sept 71	Mar 72	July 72	Mar 73	Mar 74	July 74	E. Q. 71/72	No. CSEs attempted	Passes at Gd 5 or better	English passes	Other achievement
P. A.	9.0	9.6	10.6				79	8	4	Yes	
T. A.	9.6	9.9	10.6				84	7	5	Yes	
J. B.	9.3	9.9	10.0	Left school			86	Removed from district			
P. B.	9.3	10.6					93	5	1	Yes	
P. Br.	8.3	10.3	11.9				80	6	2	Drama	
S. B.	9.0	10.6	11.0				85	8	7	Yes	
P. Bu.	(adm. 1972)		10.6	12.3	13.3	13.9	82	8	6	Yes	
D. C.	8.0	9.0	11.0	12.0	13.9	13.9	88	No exams taken			
A. D.	9.3	11.0		Left school			79	Removed from district			
M. D.	9.0	9.6	10.0				77	Easter leaver			
D. D.	8.6	9.9	10.0				87	4	1	Yes	
J. E.	7.9	9.0	10.0				—	9	8	Yes	
S. F.	9.3	—	10.0				85	6	3	Yes	
R. F.	7.3	7.9	8.6	9.9	10.6	11.0	71	4	2	Yes	
H. G.	9.6	11.0	11.9				101	9	9	Yes	5 'O' levels (B & C)
S. G.	8.0	8.9	9.0	9.6	10.3	10.9	—	Easter leaver			
B. G.	8.0	8.9		Left school				Removed from district			
I. H.	9.3	10.9	11.9				93	8	8	Yes	5 'O' levels (B or C)
P. H.	9.3	10.3	10.3				81	9	4	No	
S. H.	9.0	9.6	—				81	Easter leaver			
S. Ho.	9.0	10.3	11.0				85	8	2	Yes	
J. L.	9.0	10.3	10.9	11.9	12.0	13.6	76	2	0	No	
T. L.	9.0	9.9	10.6	11.3	13.0	13.3	79	5	2	Yes	
R. M.	5.9	6.0	6.3	6.6	7.3	7.6	69	5	0	No	
J. M.	9.6	10.9	11.3				101	7	7	Yes	5 'O' levels (B or C)
S. M.	7.9	8.6	9.3	10.3	11.6	11.9	70	6	6	Yes	
B. M.	9.0	9.9	10.3				85	7	6	Yes	1 'O' level (D)
V. N.	9.0	10.0	10.3				79	8	3	Yes	1 Grade 1
R. O'B	9.6	10.3					88	8	7	Yes	
L. O.	9.3	10.0					87	Easter leaver			
R. O.	9.0	9.3	—	10.9	11.9	13.9	69	7	6	Yes	2 'O' levels (E)
R. P.	8.9	10.3					86	6	3	Yes	
S. S.	8.3	9.6	9.3	10.3	11.6	11.9	78	5	0	No	
S. Sp.	7.6	9.9	10.6	11.9	12.9	13.3	82	4	0	No	
D. S.	9.0	9.9	10.0				99	0	0	No	1 'O' level (E)
D. St.	9.0	10.9	—	11.9	13.9	13.9	71	6	2	No	
G. S.	8.0	9.9	—				87	9	7	Yes	4 'O' levels (D & E)
R. T.	8.3	9.0	—	10.0			83	8	6	Yes	3 'O' levels (D & E)
D. T.	9.3	9.9	10.9	12.0	12.9	13.6	76	6	5	Yes	
E. T.	8.3	9.9	—				83	6	5	Yes	
S. T.	9.6	11.0	11.9				—	9	2	Yes	
N. V.	9.3	9.9	10.3				87	6	4	Yes	1 'O' level (E)
A. W.	8.6	9.6	10.3	11.3	12.9	13.3	98	8	8	Yes	4 'O' levels (1 B/C)
I. W.	7.6	9.3	10.0	10.6	12.3	13.3	77	8	7	Yes	2 'O' levels (1 B/C)
D. W.	8.0	9.0	9.3	9.9	10.3	11.0	—	6	5	Yes	

Note: English Pass is at Grade 4 or 5 unless otherwise stated.

Tyndale and the Left

John P White

John White has taught in secondary modern and grammar schools, a French lycée, a technical college and a College of Advanced Technology. Since 1965 he has lectured in Philosophy of Education at the University of London Institute of Education. Author of **Towards a Compulsory Curriculum** (1973), he here presents a personal view of the issues raised by the William Tyndale affair.

Most of the people who put pressure on the ILEA to intervene in the Tyndale affair in the interests of 'standards' were associated with the Labour Party. This is quite evident from the Auld Report, but it may come as a surprise to those whose only acquaintance with the affair was via the press and television. In the image which the media consciously or unconsciously projected, the left was doubly discredited: the Tyndale staff were at fault in imbuing the children with their own left-wing ideology of anti-middle-class anarchism, and the Labour ILEA was seen as leaving the staff alone to do their worst. The heroine of the story was the Tyndale teacher Dolly Walker who cared so much about standards that she tried to enlist the support of Rhodes Boyson, the chief spokesman of the Black Paper point of view. The Tyndale affair, as projected, powerfully reinforced the stereotype associating conservatives with an insistence on standards, learning, achievement, and socialists with the reverse.

But the stereotype needs to be challenged. There is no necessary connection between socialism and permissiveness. The democratic left has excellent reasons for taking a strong stand on the content of education. Despite its differences, it has long been animated by a

picture of a better society than our own – one where people fraternally co-operate in the promotion of their own and others' well-being, are impatient with privilege and injustice and allow full weight to individuals' demands for spheres of privacy and non-interference. A condition of such a society is that its members are *conscious* of what it is to be a citizen of such a polity. This demands knowledge of political and economic arrangements, knowledge of the moral principles underlying a social democracy, the broad understanding of science, literature, art, history and other things necessary to understand what one's own or others' well-being may consist in and to make informed political decisions. This is not the place to specify further the kinds of understanding demanded. I wish only to underline what interest the democratic left should have in minimum standards of attainment.

This 'pro-standards' position needs to be disentangled from three other points of view usually associated with it in the projected image. The first is that standards have been falling in recent years, especially since the rise of comprehensive schooling. One can deny or be agnostic about the truth of that claim while still insisting on minimum achievements. The second is that

(continued from page 57)

perhaps, significant that the Bullock Report emphasised the need for teaching practices and attitudes which have been in vogue in the Hedley Walter School for at least a decade. 'Fundamental', says the Report, 'is the teacher's ability to create warm and sympathetic individual relationships with the pupils, so that they are encouraged to learn through the stimulus of success' (18.12). The system of team-teaching and individualised learning adopted by the school applies to *all* children, including the so-called remedials; the 'them' and 'us' polarisation which can arise from formal instructional methods has been replaced by a system where the teacher becomes the ally to aid the learning process, with a consequent relaxed and happy relationship within the classroom.

Moreover, *all* pupils are encouraged and motivated

to believe that they can attain high standards and, just as pupils will respond to a low expectation on the teacher's part with low and restricted standards, so many pupils, conversely, will respond positively to high expectations from the teacher. Their confidence and self-respect are reinforced by their realisation of success and their standards are pulled up and up and up. Again, the Hedley Walter School has anticipated Bullock in its insistence that remedial pupils should not be isolated, but that remedial help should be closely related to the rest of the pupil's learning. Given an awareness of the needs of remedial pupils, with the application of carefully-developed and structured techniques of learning and the fostering of the right kinds of relationships and motivations, there is no doubt whatever that mixed-ability 'works' for remedial pupils, just as it does for pupils of high ability.

teaching should be by traditional, chalk-and-talk methods and backed by a rigorous system of discipline and punishment. One can be equally sceptical about this while believing in minimum standards: how these standards are to be attained raises quite other issues than the one under discussion. The third is that the standards we should mainly be concerned about are those in the three Rs and in areas of 'fact-learning', narrowly conceived. This view simply exhibits the limitedness of the conservative attitude. It is essentially backward-looking, a harking back to the old staples of the elementary tradition. The interest which the left has in minimum standards is potentially more generous spirited. Its vision is larger. The breadth of achievement it demands is larger too: it is not the three Rs in themselves which are important, but the higher realms of the spirit to which they are only the gateway.

Curriculum orientation

All this is to do with what democratic socialism might and should be, not with what it has been. Up to half a century ago the British left retained a broad interest in the content of education and saw its connection with this wider vision. But since then school organisation has come to seem more important than content. The Labour Party did nothing, publicly at least, in 1926 when the Conservatives took the elementary curriculum out of political control and handed it to the schools. In the 1944 debates only Shinwell pointed out that the Board of Education should surely have some views on what kind of curriculum was best. 'We are discussing machinery,' he said, 'but saying very little about content.' His remark could epitomise Labour thinking throughout this period. Even Tawney, for all his magnificent onslaughts on those who lose sight of social ends in their entanglement with means, and for all his lifelong devotion to educational reform, failed to insist that the vision of a socialist society brought with it consequences about what schools should be free or not free to teach. And to take up a more contemporary refrain: what conceivable point is there in pressing for a fully comprehensive system if that system can be remoulded to serve the needs of the economic order? Comprehensive schooling is an integral part of the socialist vision. As such, it follows from all that I have been saying, that its curriculum and objectives must equally be a product of that vision.

To come back to Tyndale, and in particular the

alleged misconduct of the school staff. Whatever disciplinary action may have been taken against them by the time this article appears, I do feel that so far (September 1976) they have been too severely criticised in many quarters and often for the wrong reasons. I am by no means a believer in extreme permissiveness and have already expressed my support for 'standards', as I have defined them, but, even so, I cannot help feeling a certain sympathy with the Tyndale teachers. I do so for three reasons.

First, the aims of the school, meagrely expressed though they were, were thoroughly socialist in intention: 'to encourage all children to live together in social harmony', to 'encourage children to think for themselves', to promote a fraternal democracy free from blind obedience to authority. I can only applaud such aims and would wish them to have the highest priority in all schools. The trouble with many schools is that they do not take such social objectives seriously enough: if some people are confused enough to label them 'indoctrinatory', then I am all for indoctrination of this sort. What went wrong at Tyndale, if one can believe the Auld Report, was not that the aims were bad, but that insufficient care was taken to see that they were realised. The staff seem to have believed that the way to promote autonomy and independence of mind was to give children as much liberty as possible to do what they wanted, that treating children as their equals was a step towards an egalitarian adult society, and that adult authoritarianism could best be prevented by reducing the authority of the teacher to zero. The fallaciousness of making these simplistic connections between ends and means is now obvious to most.

Secondly, despite my disagreement, I find it difficult to be very hard on the staff for their libertarianism. It is one of the ironies of this case that they were, after all, only putting into practice in a radical form the theories which had been pumped into them in their own training and which have, between Hadow and Plowden, become the official gospel of the primary world. Activities, not knowledge; freedom of choice, not teacher dictation; development from within, not imposition from without . . . were not Ellis and company putting the stresses in all the officially approved places? So weren't they right to dig their heels in when the managers and others attacked them?

It would be a pity if Tyndale (especially as presented through the media) simply reinforced the public myth that the socialist view of education necessarily embodies an extreme libertarianism and that only conservatives

care about basic skills and standards. The Tyndale teachers, like many others influenced by a wayward relativism which holds that working class children cannot have 'middle class values' foisted on them, married their version of socialism on to extreme progressivism. But the socialist ends they favoured demand a more rigorous attention to content, as we have seen.

My third reason for sympathy is, paradoxically, the teachers' very hesitation over imposing their own educational objectives on their pupils. They were quite right to hesitate. What right has any teacher got to decide on the broad contours of the curriculum? It follows from my argument that he has none. He has no professional expertise on this matter, because of its intimate connection with the nature of the good society. It is a political topic through and through: any decisions in this area belong to the political community alone. The Tyndale staff were right in denying themselves the power to make such decisions: where they went wrong was in wishing to send power downwards, to the pupils, instead of upwards, to parliament and/or parliamentarily-accountable bodies.

Circumscription not prescription

What form such bodies should take is another matter, one on which we might have much to learn from Sweden and Norway, who virtually alone have had experience of running state-controlled curricula in line with social democratic objectives. That there are problems here is undeniable. One pitfall to avoid, I am sure, is to put too great constraints on teachers when it comes to syllabus details and teaching methods. Here teachers do have a professional expertise which doctors and milkmen lack, since any official content has to be tailored to pupils' differences in attainment and interests and only teachers are in a position to do this. In arguing for a public curriculum, then, I am not arguing for the continental system of prescription in detail. I stress this, because supporters of school autonomy are wont to argue that only by maintaining it can teachers experiment with new ideas. But these claims are unfounded. There can still be plenty of room to experiment in a system where the broad contours are defined. Innovations and initiatives might even be of a higher

quality under such a system than they are now, since teachers would have a clearer idea in many cases about fundamental objectives and their connections with their own day-to-day work.

A second major problem is this. What point is there in demanding state-controlled curricula with socialist objectives if socialists are not always going to be in power? Won't this lead to a politicisation of school curricula, which may come to change with every swing of the political pendulum? And won't the children then suffer?

Democratic consensus

This argument is not as telling as it looks. Parties are not likely to advocate *totally* different curricula. There will clearly be agreement on the importance of the three Rs, and beyond these there may be much more agreement than is sometimes thought. Scandinavian experience does not reveal any major split between socialist, liberals, and conservatives; and it will be interesting to see whether the anti-socialists now in power in Sweden will change the established social-democratic curricular system. I predict that they will not. On curriculum the left is always likely to be in a more defensible and electorally appealing position than the right. For the left's curriculum is a mirror of social ideals to which the democratic right has at least to pay lipservice. If socialists call for such minimum standards in scientific, social, political, aesthetic understanding (etc.) as will enable all men not only to be better-informed citizens but also to choose their own preferred way of life from as many alternatives as possible, what non-socialist party is going to contradict them? Ignoring their extreme right wing, the conservatives have not pledged themselves to destroy the national health service, even though they may well never have introduced it on their own initiative. It will be the same with the content of education. The democratic left has nothing to lose by formulating a united policy on this and proclaiming it as loudly and clearly as possible. In a decade it could become as universally accepted between the parties as the right to free hospital treatment. Exceptional or not, Tyndale has awakened the public to the need for curriculum control. Its wider significance is that it has given the left a ready-made audience for a new curriculum policy. Let us hope that it makes full use of this opportunity.

Reviews



Helpful Strategies

Psychology and Education of Slow Learners, by Roy I Brown. Routledge & Kegan Paul (1976), pp 120, £2.95. (Students' Library of Education Series.)

The Slow Learner in the Secondary School - Principles & Practices for Organisation, edited by Clive Jones-Davies. Ward Lock Educational (1975), pp 147, £1.95.

Just before the turn of the century, Leicester, London and a few other more progressive School Boards began to make provision for children who could not pass their 'Standards' by removal from their normal schools into Special Schools or similar establishments. Since that time nearly all our expertise and techniques in the education of slow learners have developed out of policies of segregation. More recently educational thought has tended to turn towards policies of integration and now, in a truly comprehensive situation, a special school (or even a special class) may well appear to be an anachronism. The need to fit slow learners into the new pattern has led many teachers and administrators to seek advice in areas which, traditionally, have been the concern of the Special School. This very noticeable awakening interest in the

needs of the slow learner is most welcome but, if the change is to be for the good of all our children, the fullest information must be sought and the greatest care taken in the formulation of long term aims, short term goals, organisation and techniques before curricular innovation is activated.

Brown's book is an excellent introductory text on the educational and psychological problems involved in work with slow learners. The accent is on habilitation and remedial services aimed at integrating the handicapped person into society, which he sees as the main aim. He stresses the importance of the multi-disciplinary team. He concedes that the effectiveness of a system can be assessed in a variety of ways but feels that our wealth of data on these children contains little information on how they adapt to normal adult life and on their ability to raise a family effectively. **Forum** readers will treat the conclusions with caution, firstly in the light of their own concept of 'Education' and secondly in the light of a realistic appraisal of the problems involved in getting the individual members of a multi-disciplinary team to a case conference at a given time and place, all fully briefed in advance! They will also bear in mind that, while most are convinced of the social advantages of integration, some educationists are equally convinced that cognitive skills are best developed in some form of segregated situation, be it a special school, a special class, a form of withdrawal for special attention, a clinic or whatever. Certainly many would wish to consider other criteria in addition to a somewhat vague thing called 'Skills for Social Living' which can, so easily, become Skills for Living on Social Security.

Brown's book should be read first. As a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Calgary, he has the advantages of looking at our problems from the outside. He also draws on his experience in developing special

remedial clinics for handicapped young people and adults when he was Research Fellow at Bristol from 1964 to 1968.

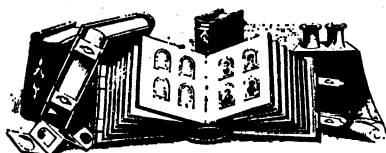
Jones-Davies, from his position as Adviser on Special Education for Gloucestershire with a sound and relevant background in the field, introduces his book with three chapters of his own, one on causes of learning difficulties, another on the characteristics of children with learning difficulties and a third on considerations for organisation. His contributions are factual, unbiased, fair comment and supported by excellent references. A fourth chapter, by a practising headmaster, sets out with clarity some of the problems that beset the curriculum in schools 'where for the first time in our history, substantial numbers of highly intelligent pupils and university educated staff are coming alongside non-readers and other remedial children . . .'. The statistics at the end of the chapter, though interesting, need to be interpreted with care; the reading ages on entry in table 3 are much higher (over 3 years on average) than the comparable figures in table 2. Reading progress is notoriously uneven being more like an obstacle race than a flat event and while the entrants in table 3 have surmounted all the reading skill obstacles, at least four of those in table 2 have scarcely started. The remaining five chapters are contributed each by an enthusiastic practitioner explaining individual aims, organisation and method. Together they cover nearly all types of attempts to solve the problem of slow learners at the secondary stage of education.

It is interesting to note from both books how colleagues are, at last, showing signs of looking beyond the labels of 'ESN', 'Retarded', 'Dull', 'Backward', 'Remedial' and even 'Slow Learner' towards a view of all types of children with all kinds of learning difficulties which do, however, fall into three main groups with which every school should be staffed and equipped to cope:

- (a) Those whose whole education needs more deliberate intervention and planning by teachers than would be either necessary or desirable with normal pupils.
- (b) Those who have specific difficulties which are external to themselves in the sense that they relate to inadequacies or limitations in their environment or in their relation to it.
- (c) Those whose difficulties are internal resulting from inadequate processing of sensory information in the peripheral and central nervous systems.

The above are the three areas identified by Brennan in the Schools Council's survey, **The Curricular Needs of Slow Learners**, and I feel it strange that neither book makes more than passing reference to this survey. It certainly seems that some of the systems explained in the second book aim at one group rather than another.

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Teaching 8-13s

Middle Schools, by T Gannon and A Whalley. Heinemann Educational Books (1975), pp 164, £3.95.

Middle Schools is an important and useful book for student-teachers, and teachers, because it presents a fair picture of the historical setting, and the practical experiences of some of those purpose-built establishments for the 8-13 age-range. While acknowledging the economic expediency discussed in such detail by Reese Edwards (1972), Tom Gannon and Alan Whalley describe much of the thought, idealism, and enthusiasm, as well as the sheer hard work, contributed by so many teachers.

Possibly, the quickest way into the book would be to start at the end, with the case studies. Here, the two headteachers give brief and interesting sketches of their own purpose-built middle schools.

It becomes clear from the four case studies that although many of the aims and objectives considered by teachers to be important for children of the 8-13 age-range, are shared, there are diverse ways of achieving them. The rest of the book supports this view. The first two chapters put the schools into their historical setting, considering the provision for children of 8-13 and their special needs, physical and emotional, as well as intellectual.

Chapter three is concerned with the curriculum for the middle years, and the difficulties inherent in reaching a balance for the differing needs and abilities of the children. With the immediate pressure of examinations relieved, teachers of the middle years are free to ask questions and to attempt answers, sometimes in terms of innovative methods, or untraditional subject matter. The upper school is not forgotten, but instead of preparing children for future entry, the middle school tries to cater for children as they are, trusting that 'the practising of skills within a sampling process of a balanced curriculum together with an attitude of willingness to go on persevering would more than compensate for any academic shortfall in "subject" content; and versatility, greater maturity and a positive attitude towards studies could help to avert the known reactions of "opting out" at fifteen'. Several models arising from the needs of the children (and their teachers) are discussed, particularly in relation to the areas of knowledge they incorporate, and the skills, attitudes and values they imply. In addition, the Appendix contains examples of programmes for theme-based project work, or integrated studies, which may serve as practical guides to those wishing to undertake such work for the first time.

The evaluation and recording of each individual's progress are regarded as imperative, in a structure where a child may be taught in groups of from one to one-hundred, and in a curriculum where both direct instruction and open-ended enquiry play their part. Detailed discussions of the ways in which innovations in curriculum, and teaching and learning methods, may be achieved; and of ways of ensuring that responsibility for record-keeping and guidance, as well as for support of fellow teachers in their various roles (of specialist, adviser, class-teacher, year-group leader, pastoral-care tutor) are contained in the next two chapters. The emphasis in the book seems to be on the fostering of positive learning attitudes and positive self-images in *all* the children and in all the teachers. The middle school is presented as a caring community, having important links, curricular as well as supportive, with the wider community of parents, local industry, and environment, other schools, and the neighbourhood.

The authors write with the conviction that comes from their own experience and that of their colleagues working in purpose-built middle schools. And, even here, they describe some of the problems of initial planning, architecture, and teacher-training that have arisen. Teachers trying to cater for children in the middle years, in less than ideal establishments, may not find it easy to explore all the modern teaching methods, although even in old buildings much can be achieved. The second Schools Council Working Paper (55), **The Curriculum in the Middle Years**, reports on a number of Schools Council projects and discussion by teachers on the aims, objectives, and possible content of a curriculum for children in the middle years, whether they attend primary, middle, or secondary schools. It would form a natural sequel to **Middle Schools**.

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Classroom Interface

Teacher Expectations and Pupil Learning, by Roy Nash. Routledge & Kegan Paul (1976), pp. 89, £2.95.

To convince students in Colleges and University Departments of Education that educational theory bears any relationship to their subjective experiences of teaching practice and the actual behaviour of children in classrooms is a continuing struggle for those engaged in teacher-training.

When we fail it's easy to blame the students. 'You didn't listen carefully enough'. 'You didn't read the right books.' And can be supported privately by agreement among colleagues that 'the quality and intellect of students is deteriorating these days'. So long as examinations continue, of course, students have to make the best of it. How savage then is the irony of so many education lecturers' parting shots as another cohort of newly-qualified, green professionals are tossed into the classroom to sink or swim. 'It's really all a matter of personality. Good teachers are born not made. You've either got it or you haven't.'

Of course what happens in classrooms is more complex than this and can't be reduced to 'having it or not'. If this were true we should be expanding our energies devising some kind of personality injection rather than pursuing research which tries to deepen our understanding of the educational process.

The introduction to Roy Nash's **Teacher Expectations and Pupil Learning** has some apposite criticisms of the uses and abuses of educational research and its familiar failure to address itself to the classroom knowledge of intending and practising

teachers. He's not knocking the application of educational research as such. In fact, as the book develops, he reveals a fascination and 'passionate' attention to detail which might lead some to suspect the conviction of his initial reservations. It might even be said that he adopts some of the practice he begins by disclaiming.

However, his conviction is that mainstream sociological and psychological research has distracted attention from the workface of education – the classroom. Moreover, the tenuous link between researchers' 'grand theories' – Freudian, functionalist, Gestalt, etc – their conceptual hypotheses and the empirical means they use to test them, result in critically distorted and over-simplified 'explanations' of behaviour. Bolstered by the kudos of 'objective scientific method', it's only recently that serious questions have been raised about the impact of the researcher on the subject being investigated, the method and process of the research itself and its ultimate dissemination as 'evidence' or 'explanation'. Much more interesting and revealing, possibly, might be what goes on in the space 'in-between' what comes out.

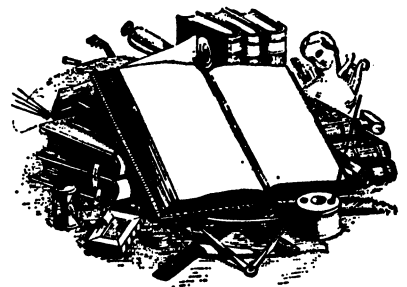
With these reservations in mind, he sets out to examine various classroom-based empirical research into attitudes, perceptions and learning: aiming to make his analysis both relevant to students and teachers, and directed to a consideration of some of the spaces in between the research findings.

His text ranges through a commentary on teachers' taken-for-granted perceptions of pupils and how these transmit attitudes which pupils then interpret. He goes on to outline, with illustrations, how experimental research designed to describe and measure this interaction by psychometric and attitude tests is inadequate. Categories which attempt to describe 'classroom climate' and which don't recognise the dynamic and

subtle nature of interaction and interpretation ignore the complexities of classroom behaviour. The preoccupation with control, maximising 'efficient learning' and engineering 'improvements' in pupil performance – so characteristic of the assumptions and recommendations of American research in this field – deserves more critical treatment than Nash metes out. Though his exhortation to find ways of paying attention to pupils' definitions of reality rather than relying always on teacher or institution orientated perspectives is welcome comment.

Nash's book promises a lot. Once you declare that a good deal of research pays insufficient attention to what teachers really want to know, there is a pressure to make what you produce as an alternative more directly applicable. Perhaps inevitably, because of the medium, he isn't able to deliver-the-goods, this time at least. The contradiction between achieving credibility from students and teachers and winning academic recognition still has to be argued through, in teacher-training especially. Perhaps the implications of his concluding remark is right, that it is not in books but in the co-operation of pupils, teachers, and researchers in the classroom that this tension will be resolved.

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Tertiary breakthrough

Experiments in English Teaching – New work in higher and further education, edited by David Craig and Margot Heinemann. Edward Arnold (1976), pp 187, £2.50.

This refreshing and stimulating book is a collection of fifteen essays by practising teachers in universities, colleges and polytechnics, and should give enormous help and encouragement to those working, often against the odds, in these fields. It is descriptive rather than prescriptive, each contributor giving what one of them calls a 'blow by blow account' of courses that have been or are being run in English and kindred studies; but whilst there is no dogmatic theorising, the attitudes of these writers emerge clearly from their accounts, and it is also evident that they all share a broadly similar approach.

As the editors point out in their Introduction, 'English' in many such institutions traditionally means 'the critical and scholarly study of literary texts'. While FE colleges and some colleges of education have long since developed a broader and freer approach, the orthodox view is still deeply entrenched in most universities, despite individual breakaway attempts, and this has had a profound effect on colleges of education, since BEd syllabuses have to be approved, and may be drawn up, by the universities awarding the degree. The key result of this has been that the main emphasis has been placed on criticism and not on creation, which has been treated as a very poor relation, not to be admitted to top academic circles except occasionally by the back door, where its appearance will hardly be noticed.

Moreover, the literature selected for criticism tends to be 'safe' – classics which have already gathered a body of 'respectable' critical literature around them – and this means that contemporary works, and much popular literature of all periods, are often excluded; with depressing effects on students' ability to form and rely on their own critical opinions.

The contributors to this volume are all involved in work which marks a clear departure from such a standpoint. They all emphasise a creative and active approach to English (or the area of study of which English forms a part, such as General Studies, Communication Studies, Drama, Language, etc), rather than a passively critical one; and they all give great importance to contemporary culture in literature, film, theatre, television and all other media which are currently produced and consumed.

There is another important difference between their approach and that of the orthodox university or college lecturer, and that is in the role of the teacher. Several contributors stress the need (to quote David Craig in his chapter on *Mixing the Media*) 'to reverse the flow of Truth and Authority from the Teacher to The Pupil'. This theme is developed by John Broadbent (New University English), who writes that 'the student's unrelieved dependence, his 16-year-long pupillage . . . is unnecessary. Students are wonderfully qualified and gifted'. By activating student resources in the academic arena, he says, we might 'make education internally more "relevant" in the sense of what people feel when study relates to, reflects, interacts with, another experience in living'.

As the editors say, staff and students must treat each other 'as partners in learning and in learning how to learn. We have to be concerned together both to alter the nature of the education we offer and to protect what has been achieved against the pennywise cuts and restrictions'.

The experience here offered for our

consideration is varied and wide-ranging: a few examples must serve as bait. Arnold Kettle and Graham Martin (Open University) write an interesting account of the problems involved in 'Teaching at a distance', and of the careful teamwork that has gone into the planning of their widely known courses on literature.

Peter Griffiths and Bob Osgerby, from Furzedown College of Education, show how a course that 'isn't just a "literature" course . . . but is concerned with English in a much wider sense' can in fact lead to a fuller experience of literature than the orthodox academic approach; they offer an interesting appendix of topics and themes studied, as well as some samples of students' creative and critical work. It would be sad if, as they fear the London University Board of English Studies intends, there will in future be 'no creative work, no thematic work, no drama in performance, no language work that strays very far from historical linguistics', and that they will have to concern themselves 'with such matters as "the influence of Milton on Coleridge" '!

There are several articles which deal more specifically with teaching communications, the media, drama and language; and one particularly interesting contribution by Ian Greenway on 'English and "general studies"', in places where these 'are considered only the poor relations of more practical subjects', where the odds against success are heavier than usual, but where, nevertheless, there are breakthroughs at human level as rewarding as a batch of university firsts.

The book is an encouraging indication of what can be done if entrenched academic opinion and the cuts don't prevent it.

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Daft Wisdom

Root and Blossom – The Philosophy, Practice and Politics of English Teaching, by Peter Abbs. Heinemann (1976), pp 196, £3.80.

Peter Abbs' book is a passionate – not to say apocalyptic – piece of writing; its evident commitment, and lack of statistics, are welcome. But, while it's central to his argument that there should be no real division between what is deeply felt and what is reasoned, I found it a vexing mixture of the indisputable and the contentious, the balanced and the bigoted, the wise and the simply daft. The argument is that our civilisation is fundamentally, and probably fatally, flawed, and that what little hope there is for it lies not in conventional politics or economics – all of it bankrupt – but in the vision and energy of small, subversive groups (Toynbee's 'internal proletariat') like the Intermediate Technology Movement, the Welsh Language Society and – you guessed it – English teachers. Or those who see their jobs as Abbs does, which will rule out quite a lot of us. Why English teachers? Because their concern is, or should be, man's need and ability to symbolise (and hence understand and control) experience, and because they stand in defence of a 'true' as against a 'pseudo' culture. It's an embattled stance, and the enemy is everywhere: urban industrialism, bureaucrats, copywriters and salesmen, progress, profits and productivity, polytechnics (I'll drink to that), mass media, and so on. And behind them all, the arch-villains, Descartes, Kepler, Bacon, Newton; they it was who perpetrated the notion that 'we could only know what we could measure', and set off the movement towards abstraction, efficiency, materialism, objectivity and the destruction of poetry, religion and

ritual. Can you blame Kepler for, say, pornography? Certainly: it's an extreme expression of that 'literalism, that exclusive emphasis on objectivity, in which we have been imprisoned since the rise of Science'. (So why not credit him for, say, long-playing records of Mozart?) Within such a broad-based polemic there is much to agree with. The fallacy of the dissociation between intellect and imagination, between knowledge and sensibility, is well exposed from Polani's work on the personal nature of knowledge ('there can be no thought outside of a person thinking'). This leads to the demand for experience-based courses for children and student-teachers, phenomenologic rather than academic (albeit very teacher-centred), stressing autobiography and 'creative-writing', challenging students' assumptions about learning instead of confirming them. But there is also much to dispute. Abbs proposes 'an immediate suspension of all those technical and commercial activities falsely generated by an inhuman economy', adding that he knows it's an 'outrageous suggestion'. On the contrary, of course, it's entirely reasonable (we could ground Concorde for a start). What is outrageous is the discussion of 'culture' and the teacher's duty towards it. The section on teaching 'alert and positive discrimination' is based on the premise that adolescents are 'powerfully bewitched by the manic images cast by the mass media'. Some people argue that 'what people do with media' is a more fruitful line of enquiry than 'what media do to people'. But Abbs will have none of that. 'A teacher . . . must know how to jump from a TV programme . . . or a banal pop-song into the more genuinely literary world of ballads, folk-song, fairy tale, myths, as well as literature.' There's nothing 'alert' or 'positive' about that piece of discrimination; it merely reveals a definition of culture as consisting of those things 'we' approve of. Can there never be a TV programme of lasting merit? Or an unbanal pop-

song? Despite an open definition of culture as 'the living transmission . . . of symbols', Abbs quotes approvingly Eliot's assertion that 'continuity of culture may have to be maintained by a very small number of people indeed'. And then there's all the impenetrable vegetable imagery with which Abbs describes other epochs of alleged 'harmonious living', in which the individual was seen as 'the valuable differentiated expression of the general animating energy, the vivid flower gracing the dense tree'. (You what?) And the quotation claiming that 'somewhere about 1450, men attained to personality in great numbers, 'Unity of Being' and became like a perfectly proportioned human bydo, and as men so fashioned held places of power, their nations had it too, prince and ploughman sharing that thought and feeling. It may be Yeats, but it's still nonsense. The English teacher does need to be a subversive, we do need a new 'politics of culture', but our direction surely doesn't lie in that kind of historical distortion.

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Checks on Chaos

Creative Teaching, by Howard and Audrey Nichols. Allen & Unwin (1975), pp. 128. Hardback £3.75, paperback £1.60.

This book presents a clear and logical argument in a series of sequential chapters. Although much of the material merely presents starting points for further reading and discussion, they are sound ones. The classroom teacher will have difficulty in disputing most of the fundamental issues raised, and will find much to satisfy in the ideas of the book.

The nature of the changes that have taken place in recent years and the agencies involved are well defined in the opening chapter. The pattern of organisation within schools, changes in curriculum and many other factors are adequately outlined. This, allied to the analysis of conflicting values between home and school and often between teacher and teacher, helps set the scene against which moves towards creative teaching take place. The chapter on decision making needs to be set against the previous issues and although the points raised are highly generalised they are pertinent and clear. The whole area of creative provision in human terms is well developed although the book does leave one feeling that analysis of actual case studies might leave teachers in a better position to take action on the basis of the ideas expressed.

The later chapters in the book, dealing with the more practical aspects of the learning situation, offer a whole range of constructive advice. The chapter on groups and grouping makes fascinating reading and will cause heated discussion in most staffrooms. Often a fundamental factor in the ideas on teaching models, it would provide a useful discussion

document for staff embarking on curricular innovation. The ideas on controlled but free movement by pupils around the school site may well threaten many moderately conservative organisations! It would have been helpful to have seen more stress placed on the ideas of teacher co-operation and team teaching in this area.

An excellent chapter on aids to learning raises very fundamental questions, particularly about their use and their cost effectiveness. The most telling point in this section concerns the frustrating situation where many teachers appear to be 'reinventing the wheel' in resource terms. The whole situation demands a much greater degree of centralised organisation on the part of a school, groups of schools or local education authorities to avoid duplication and wasted manpower.

The whole question of the ways in which teachers organise the learning situation is briefly outlined and any sensitive teachers will recognise their own inadequacies on reading this chapter. The fact that the authors can still talk of resource centres and individually based work as if they were new ideas is a reflection on our failure to deal with basic issues that ought not to be at all news to the profession and yet in many places are still singularly lacking.

The diverse factors involved in implementing innovation are sensibly and precisely handled and are the better for a touch of reasoned caution on the dangers involved. The strength of the chapter lies in its single but effective case study on the implementation of mixed ability.

If there are to be criticisms of this helpful and precise little book it lies in two areas. The chapter on psychological factors will smack to many teachers of blissful dreams in their halcyon college days. As always the ideas seem to lack the weight of scientific analysis and at their worst take on an aura of 'common sense'. Despite the criticism many of the checklists would provide a useful

starting point for schools or individual departments trying to analyse the effectiveness of their curriculum.

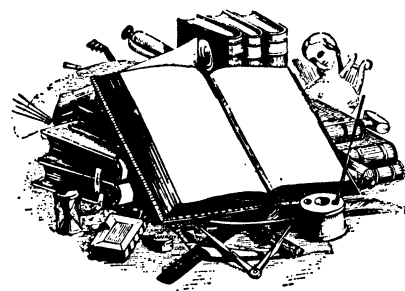
Similarly the section on evaluation lacks precision. The authors, like many teachers, appear to be searching for a recipe that will work in a practical situation and there is little that is helpful or constructive for the reader.

The major conclusion in the book is debatable. The statement that 'the teacher's task is to further the progress of all pupils towards ends that are largely previously determined'. In this one statement the dangers of the objectives approach seem enshrined. Surely the educative process is about more than leading children along predetermined furrows, it is about scaling mountains and following uncharted seas on occasions. The joy may be in travelling, not in arriving.

Much as one may applaud the approach advocated by the authors the heart often cries out for the individualist and the eccentric in teaching, and I fear this approach may effectively destroy them. Nevertheless the great majority of practising teachers will find help and advice in many parts of the text that will be useful to them in their everyday task.

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The Woodlands School, Coventry



FORUM AND THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

'What the best traditions of early education have done amounts to a major reorganisation of subject matter into a common and coherent framework. The sand and water and clay, the painting and writing and reading, the cooking and building and calculation, the observing and nurture of plants and animals are woven together into a complex social pattern which sustains romance as it extends a concern for detail and generalisation . . . This reorganisation, though incomplete and still mostly inadequate even for the early years, represents at least the beginning of a major practical and intellectual achievement. This is not usually recognised very much; teachers of the young are not usually regarded by themselves or by others, as "intellectual"! . . . Yet the skilful among them are able to see order and number, geography and history, moral testing grounds and aesthetic qualities in all the encounters of young children with the furniture of a rich environment. If such an achieved human character is not to be called "intellectual", it yet argues a considerable intellectual capacity, and one which could well be envied by those of us who have become imprisoned in the higher branches of learning.'

DAVID HAWKINS
in **Forum**, Volume 16 No 1
Autumn 1973

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