FORUM

FOR THE DISCUSSION OF NEW TRENDS IN EDUCATION

Special Number on Multi-racial Education

Editorial Board

Ethnicity and

The struggle for genuinely comprehensive education has become increasingly complex, partly as a result of sociological and demographic factors which have particularly affected some city schools, and partly because of political machinations in a few LEAs and by an anti-progressive backlash directed by a minority of elitist educationists who have sought to exploit the difficulties encountered in the process of transforming the traditional, divisive school system into a comprehensive one. Failure or refusal to understand the complexity and magnitude of this task of transformation characterised much of the simplistic discourse around the so-called Great Debate throughout the last school year.

Forum is well aware that structural comprehensive reorganization is still far from complete, and has gone on record urging successive Secretaries of State to take more effective action to secure the essential preconditions for more equal educational opportunity. However, the journal concentrates mainly on trying to help teachers in primary and secondary schools to develop ways of teaching children and organising schools that will enable *all* pupils to succeed in learning, as befits the philosophy of comprehensive education. To this end we regularly publish articles by teachers experienced in teaching in a nonstreamed context.

From time to time **Forum's** focus is set on some particularly challenging task in the implementation of comprehensive education. In this number we focus on some of the implications for teaching in schools where children come from a variety of ethnic and linguistic home backgrounds yet must learn to come to terms with the mainstream culture and communicate effectively in English. However large or small the proportion of non-indigenous children in school, their presence brings a new dimension of meaning

Comprehensive Education

to comprehensive education. The all too gradual trend towards a fully comprehensive structure, and consequent nonstreaming through the primary-secondary continuum, has coincided with increased ethnic diversity in this island's population. All schools should, therefore, be taking cognizance of the fact that Britain is a richly and diversely multi-ethnic society for which our traditionally largely ethno-centric – or even Eurocentric – curriculum is inadequate and inappropriate.

Our first contributors, Jeff White and Dave Houlton, set the scene with a brief critique rejecting the concept of 'cultural deprivation' and consequent compensatory strategies. They argue instead for capitalising on linguistic and ethnic diversity, for consequent bilingual approaches in the interest of enhancing the self-esteem of children from minority groups. A more detailed exposition of E2L teaching based on the same premise, is provided by Hilary Hester and Jim Wight. Both articles thus justify specialist input and support in an unsegregated context which accords with the pedagogy of non-streaming in the primary school.

The problem of overt and implicit racial bias in textbooks and children's fiction is raised in the first article and developed more fully by Iris Morrison. Both articles argue the case for some censorship of book provision at least for younger children, while Iris Morrison suggests that older pupils can be involved in critical appraisal of attitudes inherent in books.

Some implications for community education in a comprehensive school situated in a multi-ethnic environment are presented by Arfon Jones. He rejects the 'rather arrogant objective of integration' and shows how such a school can contribute to the development of harmonious relationships that recognise diversity. The case for nonstreaming is again cogently stated in the multiracial context.

Though not dealing overtly with the multi-ethnic context, Bernard Wakefield's critique of Social Studies or Humanities courses has significant implications. His survey finding that schools generally avoid controversial issues and concentrate unduly on adaptation is clearly pertinent.

Several contributors point the need for a range of in-service education to meet the urgent demands of schools in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Clearly such schools require additional resources and staff, the provision of which should not fall exclusively on their respective LEAs but be recognised by DES as of national importance. Moreover, all schools, wherever they are, operate within a multi-ethnic society. This has implications for many aspects of the curriculum, including text-books and visual material, and hence for both initial and in-service teacher education everywhere. Nor has the Schools Council really faced up to the wider curriculum implications, despite its specific publications. The major official contribution has come from the Community Relations Commission.

All too often the presence of children whose mother tongue is not English is regarded simply as a language problem. Dialect is regarded as evidence of cultural disadvantage and treated as requiring remedial attention. Protestations of colour-blindness – 'they are all just children to me' – mask latent prejudice and justify policies of assimilation or the imposition of the dominant culture. But, as our contributors show, mother tongue and ethnic culture are vital reference points for a child's sense of identity and self-esteem in the process of learning to communicate and participate effectively in the wider community of school and society where the dominant host culture and language prevail. In publishing this number **Forum** is affirming a commitment to an interpretation of comprehensive education which embraces recognition and respect for cultural diversity without discrimination. The Green Paper's rhetoric for a positive approach to cultural enrichment will achieve little without resources. That publication as a whole is considered in this number within the context of **Forum's** stance.

Biculturalism in the Primary School

Jeff White and **Dave Houlton**

Jeff White and Dave Houlton have taught in Leicester primary schools for twelve and eight years respectively. The former is now Head of St Peter's Junior School and the latter is Senior Master at Mayflower Junior School. Both are active members of the National Association for Multi-Racial Education and serve on the local CRC Education Sub-Committee. The views expressed in this article are their own and not those of the Leicestershire Education Authority.

The presence of multi-ethnic groups of children in British schools has for some years considerably influenced curriculum developments. This has most notably been seen in the provision of resources for the teaching of English as a second language. It is only comparatively recently however that pedagogical practice has focused on the question of cultural identity and the wider implications of living within a multi-cultural society. It can be postulated that many of these newer developments have arisen as a reaction to the concentration particularly in the 1960s, in America and Britain, on the concepts of 'cultural deprivation' and 'compensation'.

In America by 1964 'cultural deprivation' was already accepted as a theoretical concept and, based largely on the views of educational psychologists, the thesis contended that children from poor socio-economic backgrounds had linguistic and cognitive problems which adversely affected their school performance. In order to 'compensate' for these supposed deficits the emphasis in intervention programmes was on pre-school experience. Education was seen therefore as the answer to the plight of of poor white and ethnic groups and the 'cultural deprivation' concept coupled with the culture of poverty argument in particular, dominated the War on Want Programme and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. 'Cultural deprivation' as explanatory theory certainly suited political liberalism.

Inevitably the British situation has been affected by the developments in American compensatory programmes. In the 1960s the sociology of education concentrated largely on the characteristics of these children who failed at school. Although the social ameliorative approach has received criticism much of the compensatory terminology is still widely used and its underlying concepts taken for granted. Therefore it is worth remembering that despite large injections of money into long neglected areas inter-vention programmes have, on the whole, failed.

The term 'culturally deprived' itself seems technically inaccurate and inappropriate since every individual possesses a culture. The contention that 'disadvantaged' backgrounds fail to provide adequate early training in attributes such as literacy and numeracy serves merely to emphasise education's role as a transmitter of the mainstream culture. Also the interventionist's utilisation of a social pathology model of behaviour and intelligence reveals an ethnocentric liberal ideology that denies cultural differences.

Linguistic diversity

The cultural deprivation concept also assumes the synonymity of linguistic competence with the development of standard English and much of the curriculum of compensatory programmes has been centred upon this verbal deprivation hypothesis. Yet research with black pupils in America and work with pupils of West Indian origin in Britain has revealed that speakers of non-standard English are not without the linguistic and cognitive competence needed to handle abstract and logical thought. A positive approach to the development of language in a multi-ethnic school situation recognises that children bring a range of linguistic styles to the classroom that enrich the life of the school. Curriculum strategies should capitalise on this linguistic diversity.

Teachers in multi-ethnic school situations can enhance their understanding of biculturalism by looking at how children function in both the mainstream and the sub culture. They can seek to avoid confusing difference with deficit and attempt to understand how children's behaviour may emerge as a response to the settings and values that are supplied by the mainstream culture. There should be a recognition that a complexity of factors affect educa-

tional performance and positive attempts should be made to build upon the considerable strengths and riches that children of diverse cultures bring to the school environment.

Research evidence

Evidence available from the corpus of research concerning the growth of the self-concept among children indicates a distinct tendency for children from ethnic minorities to make a negative evaluation of themselves, their skin colour and their culture. The psychological condition resulting from this has significant consequences for the all-round development of the child, in particular his motivation and attainment within school.

It thus becomes clear that by failing to recognise and respond positively to the child's skin colour and the culture of his religious or ethnic group, the school may unwittingly be contributing to the diminution of his already fragile self-esteem thereby seriously restricting his ability to benefit from the opportunities available. So, if non-white children are to function at a level approximating to their full potential and, eventually, to participate fully in the life of the wider society, it is incumbent upon schools to reappraise their curriculum and, in addition, the criteria on which it is constructed since these often inherently deny the worth of minority cultures and achievements.

Already a number of encouraging developments have occurred, especially towards promoting the more readily identifiable elements of non-European cultures. In particular Gujerati and Punjabi folk dances now figure in the work of many schools, the major festivals of Diwali and Eid have been afforded a place on school calendars and Asian and Caribbean instruments feature as part of musical activities. It may be argued, of course, that initiatives of this nature have no major significance in themselves but it should be stressed that for some schools they represent a marked departure from mono-cultural traditions and have produced appreciable benefits in terms of encouraging in non-white children a sense of belonging and identity and of fostering closer links with ethnic minority communities.

It is recognised however that in many cases these developments are essentially peripheral to the work of the school. Therefore for the curriculum to take full cognisance of the needs of non-white children more fundamental changes are required. Central to this should be a thorough reappraisal of books and teaching materials since these cumulatively contribute to the growth of attitudes.

At the simplest level in Nursery and Primary schools it is vital that Asian and Caribbean children have access to visual and play materials in which they are positively represented. In practical terms this requires that book illustrations, wall pictures, jigsaws etc show non-white people occupying a variety of social roles in an everyday urban setting. Black and brown dolls should be in evidence and social play materials should include non-European clothes, jewellery and cooking utensils.

Text books

In the selection of text books for the older age range teachers should possess clear criteria since inherent in our own education, reinforced by the text books we used, were many ideas and attitudes concerning the inferiority of non-European people. These will have inevitably impinged on our consciousness, thereby influencing our judgement as well as our historical and geographical assumptions. So care should be exercised lest notions of European superiority be perpetuated.

Works of fiction provided in schools may also contribute to the erosion of a child's self-esteem. This can be done through the presence of pejorative associations of blackness with evil and ugliness; through a failure to portray non-white characters as of equal significance as Europeans and through a tendency to restrict them to a stereotyped range of human characteristics – normally criminal, comic, stupid, unintelligent and subordinate. In this way children are effectively denied symbols of positive self-identification.

This state of affairs can be rectified at varying levels. Firstly teachers should consciously seek out for children writing which reflects with accuracy and sensitivity the feelings and experiences of non-white people. Also, as educators, we have a responsibility to indicate to publishers the deficiencies of existing publications for children. At this point it should be stressed that it is not the writers' intention to imply or advocate a system of censorship. Of course in certain extreme cases it would be justifiable

and indeed necessary to withdraw books which are offensive to ethnic minorities. But in the long term perhaps a more fruitful approach would be to accept the sharpening of children's own critical awareness as a major educational objective.

The mother tongue

At the core of a child's self-concept is the evaluation which he attaches to the language he speaks. It is through this, the mother tongue, that early learning within the home takes place and the foundation for later conceptual development is laid. It is gradually being recognised by teachers and parents that the total immersion of a child, especially in the Pre-school and Infant years, into an all-English school culture may have profound and adverse consequences in terms of intellectual and emotional growth. Also such an act may carry with it an implicit but unequivocal suggestion that the child's mother tongue is of inferior value and that bi-lingualism is an undesirable attribute. With this in mind moves are now underway, albeit as yet of a tentative and experimental nature, to provide opportunity during these early years for non-English speaking children to receive, for part of the day, instruction through the mother tongue. In this way it is anticipated that a gradual transfer into a new environment may be effected and that the potentially damaging results already alluded to may be avoided.

The case for mother tongue provision in the later Primary and Secondary years is no less cogent. At this stage, as a matter of priority and urgency, some schools are now attempting to encourage, in a conscious and systematic fashion, a respect for the mother tongues of pupils. Various strategies have been devised in this connection. These include on-going surveys of languages spoken in the school, with findings prominently displayed; Language Notice Boards to which children and parents are encouraged to contribute; provision of books in Asian and other languages and, as a matter of principle, translating circulars for parents into appropriate languages.

Teachers of English now often find that progress in a second language, English, is aided considerably if the learner has achieved proficiency in his own Mother Tongue. The Bi-lingual method is founded on this principle and seeks to utilise the mother tongue as a medium for the teaching of English. Although initially developed for use with Europeans, experiments involving indigenous teachers using taped mother tongue sequences with Gujerati and Punjabi speaking children have shown its wider applications. As a result, training in this method is likely to feature in the in-service education of teachers of English as a second language in the future.

But, for ethnic minority languages to receive their full status in schools they must acquire parity of esteem with English. This requires that they be offered as subjects for examination at 'O' and 'A' levels.

Staffing and resources

Clearly, measures of this nature have major implications for schools in terms of staffing and resources and would therefore require policy initiatives from LEAs as well as their active support and encouragement. It is recognised however that the role of the DES in this would be of crucial importance; it would be equally important in the encouragement of the formulation of policies at Local Authority level covering all aspects of multi-racial education. In particular there is an obvious need for all teachers to undergo in-service courses that focus on the development of positive classroom practice in respect of cultural diversity.

It is conceivable that the need for such provision would be reduced and its effectiveness enhanced if underlying the initial training of teachers was the recognition that all schools, regardless of ethnic composition, are operating within a multi-racial society. Hopefully, this would ensure that a multi-racial perspective would be integral to all features of a prospective teacher's training.

A consideration of the role of teacher training in a multi-racial society must take account of the advantages to be gained from having teaching staffs of a multi-ethnic composition. The presence of teachers of Caribbean or Asian origin can serve a dual function of bolstering children's self-esteem and promoting respect for ethnic difference. In addition these teachers can provide for staff essential knowledge of the backgrounds and life-styles of minority groups. In the future, with the trend towards greater mother tongue provision, bi-lingual teachers in particular will have an increasingly important function. For these reasons a national recruitment policy is essential.

White Studies

Iris Morrison

Iris Morrison is the Deputy Warden of Lewisham Teachers' Centre. The views she expounds here should not be attributed to the ILEA.

'All llamas have great pretensions to infallibility . . . personally I found them generally very intelligent, but cruel, dishonourable and depraved'.

'The woman of Tibet is not attractive . . . yet repulsive as she may be, she is vastly superior in many ways to the Tibetan male, as she possesses a better heart, more courage and a finer character'.

So wrote A Henry Savage Lindor in a fragment of a book or periodical that was part of a lifetime's collection given to me by a teacher who retired in 1950.

Under the title, **Living Races of Mankind**, the author tells us about China, Mongolia and Tibet. What we really learn about is A Henry himself, his values, his standards, and above all his complete confidence in the superiority of the British way of life; he leaps from the page.

I imagine from the text that this was probably written about 1910. It is lavishly illustrated with particularly fine, well produced photographs which are curiously at odds with the text. The photographer has posed his subjects, wearing their best clothes, in the style of Victorian family photographs, and they gaze across the cultures and the years with a solemn heroic dignity. Despite the text, they are at least the equal of A Henry.

There is no reason to suppose that the author thought to deliberately misrepresent what he saw for some deeply sinister purpose. There is no reason to suppose that he thought much at all. He observed well but seems to be unable to analyse what he saw or use it to broaden his understanding.

A period piece?

It would be comforting to dismiss this text as a bizarre period piece, belonging securely in a past for which we personally need accept no responsibility. Certainly guilt about the past seems a useless self-indulgence, but to continue to deny ourselves the delight of appreciating and sharing in the richness and diversity of life styles around us is self punishing.

Evidence of racial bias expressed by individuals and organisations is all around us and evidence of its expression through the media and the press has received an extensive airing. The fact that our school text books, materials, and children's literature reflect a white European male dominated society has been well documented.[1]. At the same time evidence has mounted to show that caste status and educational achievement are strongly linked. The Bullock report cites evidence showing that those it questionably describes as 'families of overseas origin' experience educational disadvantage. It is clear that children in the nursery school already differentiate between individuals from different racial groups and that as they progress through the primary school they begin to evaluate racial groups in positive and negative terms and to rank them on a hierarchical social scale [2].

Racist tendencies

The fact that even young children in our society have at their disposal a range of racist taunts and expressions, even though their meaning may not yet be fully understood, must lend urgency to our investigation.

Although much has been written about it, little hard research has been done on the links between these facts. Humanitarian considerations apart, few professional teachers can find satisfaction in their work if it is ineffective in challenging such an irrational status quo. The school is only one influence among many, but it is one that is within our competence to change.

It is tempting to welcome without question any initiative that is taken and easy to indulge in a thoughtless 'ventriloquism' of the ideas of others.

Decisions that are taken as a result of such research findings that we do have can lead to the reinforcement of prejudices. If we define other people's needs on their behalf in terms of an idealised view of ourselves, straining for similarities at the expense of difference, we shall encourage hierarchical separation. The role of missionary is seductive; in its assumptions that with a little effort others can become 'just like us' it reinforces notions of ethnic minorities as a deficient group. There has, for example, been a preoccupation with some children's forms of language. Yet Goodman after twelve years study of children in the reading process has stated: 'The only special disadvntage which speakers of low-status dialects suffer in learning to read is imposed by teachers and schools.[3]

The professional challenge we face is not one of identifying deficits in particular groups of children, but in developing our skills in selecting books and materials appropriate for a multiracial education for all children, improving learning and teaching skills and strategies, and in devising ways of making creative use of the conflicts and tensions that confront us.

For many teachers, the daily and insistent demands of the classroom, and activities which stress traditional curriculum areas in in-service work, both inside and out of school militate against reading about and discussing these issues. If we recognise racism as a central concern, it needs special and continuing consideration on its own. It cannot be viewed as a special project that is completed in a particular period of time. Similarly the model of a period of instruction, the receipt of a certificate and the subsequent status of an expert is woefully inadequate.

Prejudice

The scale of the task is daunting, we need much better information so that we can take action with more confidence. At the same time it is clear that information alone does not necessarily change attitudes. There is a great need for discussion on how to deal with incidents involving racial prejudice in classroom and playground. This is a most delicate and complex question and very little has so far been written about it, we are unlikely to be able to deal with it in a professional and effective way until we have begun to critically examine our own knowledge and attitudes. Since these are made manifest in our classroom texts, this is a useful starting point. There is already a considerable amount of material to help us in evaluating books and materials and some on sensitive and rigorous ways of using it in the classroom. The selection of appropriate texts and the creation of new ones is at the same time a clear and visible statement to all of our intention to put our house in order.

It is clear that individuals whose genuine concern is not in doubt do not always agree about books. The book **Sounder** by William H Armstrong,[4] is listed in the publication **Books for the Multiracial Classroom.**[5] The same book is analysed by Albert Schwarz[6] as one that confirms racist stereotypes. Similarly Gillian Klein[7] points out the overt racism in an illustration of cannibalism in **Here are the Brick Street Boys.**[8] This book is also listed in **Books for the Multiracial Classroom.** We cannot leave it to others to read the books for us, perpetuating and re-creating a pantheon of experts to shoulder our responsibilities and do the thinking for us.

In our Teachers' Centre, groups have been meeting regularly over the past two years to begin looking at the materials available. Initially our aim was to recommend

suitable new books for interested teachers to buy to redress the ethnocentric bias we believed to exist. At that time I think most of us felt that it was mainly a question of the absence of minority group characters and themes in reading schemes, text books and literature.

We had no desire to merely write book reviews, but to find a way of structuring our talking together about books.

We looked at various lists of criteria for analysing books, rather superficially it now seems. As insight and sensitivity deepen, criteria need constant revision. We decided to use **10 Quick Ways to Analyse Books for Racism and Sexism.**[9] It offers a fairly detailed framework and supported those of us who had no experience of book reviewing.

We decided that it would be easier if we all read the same book and wrote out our review, so that the discussions were kept to particular cases, and a written record was available to chronicle our development.

In practice it was difficult to maintain the standards we set for ourselves. As children's books on minority themes only began to appear in the mid-60s, it soon became obvious that we could not afford to buy sufficient copies of new books to continue in this way. Our way of working in depth did not enable us to deal with a great number of books, and although more books were appearing, few met with our unqualified approval.

Books in use

We began to look at the books already in use in school. Our lack of time and the need to meet after a full day's work leads to some frustration at not being able to talk and think through together ways of raising and dealing with issues in the classroom. The fact that we now have black members of the group, not all of whom are teachers, is particularly valuable.

Group members bring in reviews, books, suggestions and ideas from other sources for discussion, which deepen our understanding. To date, most of the teachers in the groups are primary school teachers or teachers of English in secondary schools. We hope to enlist the help of other subject specialists to extend our work.

Research findings that we had read about the lack of minority characters and themes in school books were certainly confirmed. New books are still being published that depict an all white London.

Many commonly used reading schemes tend to be set in the depressing suburbia of the author's mind and have no minority group characters at all. These are usually the first books that a child reads for himself and the black or brown child will not even find his existence acknowledged there. A false picture of our society is being presented which denies the reality experienced by all inner city children.

One of the aims of the **Breakthrough to Literacy** [10] series is to link its material with children's spoken language. The vocabulary is certainly more useful to children and the series has some minority group characters but they remain peripheral. In none of the series is the black child the central character and in **My Friend's Country** a common negative stereotype of West Indian life is reinforced; nobody seems to work, uncle is lounging on a seat in the sun and it is still carnival time.

It is difficult to imagine a successful piece of writing that expresses no bias. The tension created by experiencing a variety of biases is exciting and enjoyable. Two of the books in the **Nipper** [11] series, **A Visitor from Home** by Beryl Gilroy and **Tiger Paleface and Me** by Petronella Brainburg, both succeed in getting the 'voice' convincingly and authentically in minority group characters. These two books are far from the bland, emotionless world of many reading schemes.

The 'Quickerwits'

The humour in the **That Boy Trog** [12] series is refreshing. In the fantasy world of the series the black tribe are aptly named the 'Quickerwits'. This series is currently showing on the BBC TV programme 'Words and Pictures'. It will be interesting to hear the views of teachers using the books about the children's attitudes towards them and whether there is any carry over from the fantasy situation into real life.

The delightful stories of Petronella Breinberg [13] and Jack Ezra Keats [14] are about black children, showing them in situations reassuringly familiar to all children and stressing our similarities under the skin.

There is a shortage of books that show the diversity of the life styles of ethnic minorities that echoes the shortage of children's books about different social classes. **The Trouble with Donovan Croft** [15] by Bernard Ashley is about a black boy who as a result of emotional stress is unable to speak. The author has written a 'case study' type of book with sensitivity but Donovan has so many of the problems associated with the 'immigrant' child stereotype and the white family who foster him are so incredibly long suffering and kind, that few children will want to identify with Donovan. The book confirms the prejudiced view that black people are a problem and have to be tolerated. Books that present a positive view of contemporary urban life are hard to find. Few authors seem willing to risk presenting a character who has really succeeded in breaking through convention, although such individuals exist in real life.

An interesting and sensitive book that meets some of the needs is **The Devil's Children** [16] by Peter Dickinson. The story is set in the future, and the author writes with insight about a 12 year old white girl who finds herself living with a group of Sikh families. The plot demands that the Sikhs are on the move to the countryside and although they settle outside a village and take an active part in overcoming the problems in the story, the feeling remains that they are passing through and moving on. Black and brown Britons are here to stay.

Information and text books are needed that give accurate information about racial differences. The book **Your skin and mine** [17] has extremely simplified illustrations in the usual white middle class mode, except that the main characters are coloured in white, yellow and brown. These books have little multiracial content and the 'racelessness' of the characters is rather disturbing. No one could identify with them. All the passers-by in the books are white.

The colonial view

Many old History and Geography books are still in use presenting a colonial view of history. America is still being 'discovered' and Africa a 'dark continent'. The third world is still being presented as either a holiday camp for European Visitors, full of exotic animals and a few people living in picturesque or sordid poverty or as a place peopled by inadequates. In the text book **Let's Visit South Africa** [18] the author appears to be aware of all the common arguments against apartheid and racial discrimination; he makes statements that appear to be quite liberal, but invariably follows them with a superficial defensive comment in support of white racist views.

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Writing about the Pass Laws, he agrees that they are unpleasant for black people but adds that they were necessary as 'without this restriction the towns would be hopelessly overcrowded'. The theme of urbanisation is not tackled in the book. Whilst a more sophisticated appreciation of the connection between rural poverty and urban growth may need to be postponed until later, it is important to include in texts presented to pupils information about ancient kingdoms, cultural life and other views of heroes and events.

Children from minority ethnic groups may well be pleased to find books in schools which acknowledge their existence, but unless they find in them positive affirmation of their identity, their past history and their hopes for the future, their inclusion will only serve to increase feelings of alienation.

In reading aloud to younger children, the teacher can abridge, alter and discuss the text. The argument for not making some books available on the open shelves is a strong one. Various forms of selection take place before a book arrives in the classroom and it is the teacher who takes the final professional responsibility for deciding which books to present.

Older pupils can be encouraged to participate with us in a critical appraisal of books, that goes beyond comprehension of information and literary style to the stance of the author, the use of stereotypes, and the omissions and distortions that we are coming to recognise.

A great deal has already been written to help us but in many parts of the country and even in our area of South London, books and periodicals which carry discussion and reviews on this topic have to be diligently sought out. They are not readily available in our bookshops and newsagents. Specialist booksellers are not always large and wealthy enough to bombard us with advertising matter. A useful list of addresses has been produced by a joint working party of the Library Advisory Council and the Community Relations Commission Education Committee[19].

In a review of Alex Haley's book **Roots** Julian Moynahan wrote 'Perhaps,Haley has given most of us all the reality we can stand'.

If we believe in education we can never get enough.

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2. David Milner **Children and Race** (Penguin Books, 1975).
3. Kenneth S Goodman and Catherine Buck **Dialect Carriers to Reading Comprehension Revisited** in **The Reading Teacher** October 1973.
4. William H Armstrong **Sounder** (Harper & Row, 1970).
5. **Books for the Multi-racial classroom** compiled by Judith Elkin for The Library Association Youth Libraries Group, 1976.
6. **Racist and Sexist Images in Children's Books** (Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1975).
7. **Times Education Supplement**, 8th April 1977.
8. **Here are the Brick Street Boys** by Allan and Janet Ahlberg (Collins 1975).
9. **Interracial Books for Children** Vol 5 No 3 (available from Children's Rights Workshop, 73 Balfour Street, SE17).
10. **Breakthrough to Literacy** (Longman).
11. **Nippers** (Macmillan).
12. **That Boy Trog** (E J Arnold).
13. **My Brother Sean, Doctor Sean** by Petronella Brienburg (The Bodley Head).
14. Jack Ezra Keats **Whistle for Willie, A Sunny Day** etc. (Penguin).
15. **The Trouble with Donovan Croft** by Bernard Ashley (Oxford University Press, 1974).
16. **The Devil's Children** by Peter Dickinson (Puffin, 1969).
17. **Let's Read and Find Out** by Paul Showers (A & C Black).
18. **Let's Visit South Africa** by Bernard Newman (Burke Publishing Co, 1967).
19. Appendix II **Public Library Service for a Multicultural Society** (1976) a report produced by a joint working party of the Library Advisory Council and the Community Relations Commission Education Committee.

Twenty Years Old

With this issue, **Forum** enters its twentieth year. In our first number we defined some of the 'New Trends' for which it was proposed to act as a Forum for discussion; these included the move towards comprehensive education (then in its early infancy); 'reappraisal of such features of internal school organisation as streaming', as well as 'new approaches to the content of education'.

Today 75% of secondary school pupils are in comprehensive schools; it is difficult, in some areas, to find a single streamed primary school. Forum can, perhaps, claim to have had some influence on these developments.

Forum would like to thank all those who have stayed with us over the years, attended our conferences, and taken part in our discussions. We certainly intend to continue playing our part over the next twenty years and more.

The Editorial Board

Language in the Multi-Ethnic Classroom

Hilary Hester and **Jim Wight**

Hilary Hester was a member of the School Council Project 'English for Immigrant Children' and is co-author of Scope Stage II (Longman).

Jim Wight was director of the Schools Council Project 'Reading English to West Indian Children' which produced Concept (7-9) (Arnold).

Both are now members of the Language Division of the Centre for Urban Educational Studies. Hilary Hester is director of the Second Language in the Primary School Project. Jim Wight is in charge of the Reading Through Understanding Project which is shortly to publish three units of material Make-a-Story, Share-a-Story and Explore-a-Story.

The multi-ethnic classroom is a linguistically complex place and this complexity raises very important issues for us as teachers. At the Centre for Urban Educational Studies we are engaged in various primary school projects, notably SLIPP (**Second Language in the Primary School Project**) and RTU (**Reading through Understanding**), which have increased our understanding of the issues. This paper will discuss certain of the conclusions reached.

Developing English as a second language

Meeting the needs of children who are learning English as a second language within the classroom situation is recognised to be far from easy. In many schools (and Authorities) it is thought that their needs can best be met by providing specialist teachers of English as a second language. Obviously such access to specialist help, as in other areas of the curriculum, is immensely important. However for many second language learners, the greater part of the day is spent in the general classroom with their teachers. Many teachers feel that this pattern of specialist provision does not provide enough support for children and that some of the skills of the specialists should be part of the professional competence of all teachers working in multi-lingual classrooms.

Until quite recently approaches to second language work (E2L) have been strongly influenced by methods developed overseas for the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) to older learners. However, the original EFL model has made it difficult to see how help for children within the classroom can be organised. EFL teaching traditionally involved listing grammatical patterns of the language and presenting them to the pupils in carefully graded stages. Much emphasis was placed on the learners imitating the teacher's language and repeating it, often in a very formal way. Such an approach does not fit comfortably into current notions of learning and teaching in the Primary School. Its prescriptive nature and the demands it made on the teacher's time fostered the belief that E2L work could only be tackled by the specialist teacher working with small groups of children. The acceptance of the traditional EFL approach has hindered the search for strategies that are supportive for the child in the classroom. In prescribing what language is to be taught it has ignored what the children bring to the learning task, and the choices they make about how and what they want to learn.

We need a model that is more flexible and more sensitive to a child's needs at any stage in his learning. This means that all teachers need to develop a greater understanding of the nature of English and the way communication works so that the child's difficulties may be identified and language learning related to ongoing curriculum work.

This focus on the child and the strategies he is using for sorting out the rule system of English is important. In deciding how best to intervene and support children's language learning it is also important to analyse what the language is needed for. Here again, the EFL teaching model is misleading. An analysis of language to be taught, based solely on linguistic criteria, is inadequate for our purposes. Foreign language teaching courses start with a graded list of language patterns and then find situations for introducing and practising them. The relevance for the learner of the content is not always considered important. Such syllabuses are built on the premise that there is an accepted list of patterns which make up basic English. But what is 'basic' for one group of learners may be inappropriate for another.

The situation is complex because not only a child's learning of language, but also his intellectual and cognitive growth must be taken into account. We need to ensure that the child is learning and not just learning language. Therefore it is crucial that we start with important content and identify some of the language necessary to it. This involves a close examination of the learning tasks presented to children. For example, considerable time is spent in primary classrooms helping children acquire

mathematical concepts. For this a syllabus is used which analyses the stages by which children are guided to an understanding of the subject. In introducing children to concepts of weight, it is usual to start with a range of heavy and light objects which children handle and classify to establish meanings of heavy and light. Then one sets up a situation in which children can explore the relative weights of various items. A range of language can be used in discussing this task, but crucial forms initially for a second language learner are 'x is heavier than y', and 'x weighs more than y'. The next stage is to measure how much heavier x is than y, leading eventually to the notion of standard units of measurement. Such a breakdown of tasks gives a much sounder basis for considering what language is important for learning to take place. In other words the grading of the task gives a guide to the grading of the language. But most importantly, second language learning is placed firmly within the context of ongoing activities in the classroom.

It is obviously easier to apply this analysis to some activities and some subject areas than to others. Such an analysis is more acceptable for maths and science than for other traditionally less structured subject areas. One of the problems in thinking about the possibilities of teaching English as a second language in the classroom is that it has been seen as *language* teaching, and as such falls in that area of the curriculum called English. However much of the English work in the classroom in the past few years has focussed on the production of 'creative', less predictable language both in speaking and writing. Thus, approaches to second language work based on the EFL model within the context of English teaching have not been acceptable. But by moving towards an analysis of learning tasks in important subject areas, and by not thinking of it as English teaching, second language work in the classroom becomes much more possible.

One of the disadvantages of withdrawing children for second language work is that they are taken away from those English speakers who provide their most powerful models, ie their peer group. This peer group interaction is important, and is a strength in the classroom which should not be ignored. Common sense suggests that children learn as much from the peer group as from their teachers. We have been exploring learning activities which involve children working in collaboration with

each other, and the extent to which the involvement of native speakers in such activities provides models for children learning English.

This can be illustrated by considering a Happy Families game played by four 5 year olds. We have analysed the language used by the children for making requests. The child of interest here is Anuja.

Jason, Maria, Helen, Anuja. Request forms.
J. Maria, I need that pear please.
M. Can I have the cabbage . . . please?
A. *Can I have a bus*? (Wrong item asked for)
H. May I have my car please?
J. Anuja. May I have the lemon please?
M. Please can I have the onion?
A. *Please I have a . . . Jason, please I have a horse?*
H. May I have my fire-engine, Jason?
J. Mariha, can I have my horanges please?
M. I wonder if I can have the peas?
A. *Can I have a cow's card?*
H. Please may I have my bus Anuja? Thank you.
M. Please can I have a card? Thank you.
A. *Please can I have this?*
   Please can I have a dog? Thank you.

One can see from the above sequence of requests used in the discussion how she learned the language needed to play the game from the other children. Her need to take part in the game motivated her to learn the language.

There are several other important points to make about this activity. First it is one which is part of on-going activity in many classrooms. Second, it is an activity which has value for the native speakers in the group as well as the second language learners. It is crucial that in building on the support that native speakers can provide for second language learners we do not limit the native speaker to undemanding tasks. Third, the very nature of the activity is supportive for children learning English. Their understanding of the nature of the activity will aid their acquisition of the language being used.

When native speakers are involved in a tightly focused activity like this they seem not to use a wide range of language. Further, because the same procedures of deciding which card is needed and of asking for that card, are repeated, particular utterances are also repeated. This repetition is invaluable for children in the early stages of learning English who need opportunities for hearing and

using the same language many times. Traditionally this has been provided in EFL based courses through drill type situations which were criticised earlier. In the classroom creating contexts for meaningful repetition has been seen as a difficulty partly because it is time-consuming for the teacher and partly because the repetition and the patterning are not seen as a part of normal native speaker usage. However, in classrooms where the role of language, particularly spoken language, is valued, teachers may well be organising such small group activities for the whole class, so second language learners can be included in this provision. Further, consistent patterning seems to arise in a number of other areas. This consistency helps children sort out the system of the language they are learning:

Charts are often made to record the information in different ways:

These things float/these things don't float.

Our favourite stories.

Colours (red and yellow make orange/blue and yellow make green etc.)

How heavy are we?

What we can do in one minute?

What we like eating . . . and many more.

For native speakers the activity leading to the production of such charts – discussion about the task, the collection of information, the classification of the information, the organisation for presentation . . . the recording and displaying of it – may be enough. But a further step, checking the interpretation of the finished chart through discussion, games and questions could be invaluable for the child learning English. Similar patterning can be found in some early reading material. A careful choice of reading material that reflects the natural rhythm of the language, that keeps to normal word order and has good visual support, may well be used an an introduction to spoken language.

We have also been exploring the use of story material. Particularly supportive for second language learners are those stories, many traditional, which contain repeating sequences. The repetition of the sequence provides an element of predictability for the listener which supports his understanding. Such story material that has been developed through SLIPP satisfies most of the important criteria for successful E2L work in the classroom. Story telling is an activity that is highly valued in the primary classroom; mixed groups of second language learners and native speakers can work together at their own levels on activities developed from the stories (sequence cards, language master material, games, puzzles); because the stories contain repeating sequences, key patterns of language are heard several times by E2L learners, and extra listening time is provided by taped versions of the stories in a Listening Area of the classroom; the stories provide models for original story making by the children. Further support for understanding is provided by translated versions of the stories in the children's mother-tongues, and by clear visual support, using cut out figures for introducing a story and through illustrations in the story books. Visual support through real objects, real substances, models as well as pictures, has always been an important element in primary school teaching, but for the child learning English it is a crucial support for understanding.

The SLIPP work has explored ways of working with children who are in the first year or two of learning English. Continuing support for many years of their education will be needed. Approaches for work with more advanced children were developed in the **Scope, Stage 2** materials (Longman for Schools Council Project, 1972). At this stage it is difficult to assess what extra support along traditional lines a child learning English will need, since the full potential of working in the classroom has not yet been exploited.

Developing English as a mother-tongue

Over the past decade there have been a number of seminars, conferences, meetings where E2L teachers and English teachers have come together to discuss the common ground between their objectives and methods. These encounters have *not* been a conspicuous success. It is true, none-the-less, that E2L teaching has had an influence on thinking about how some groups of mother-tongue English speakers should be taught.

A parallel has been drawn between children who speak little or no English because their home language is Urdu or Cantonese and children whose linguistic performance is very restricted in school and who are diagnosed as 'linguistically deprived' or 'non-verbal'. The teaching

programme developed in the US by Bereiter and Engelman epitomises this view and advocated what look in practice very much like traditional E2L teacher-led dialogues to teach key vocabulary and language patterns. In this country the Bereiter and Engelman programme has not been favourably received but the diagnosis underlying the programme does have its adherents.

In our view such a diagnosis is seriously wide of the mark. Children who come from English speaking homes and are inarticulate in schools must *not* be equated with second language learners. Rather than assuming a linguistic deficit in the child it is much more constructive to look on the classroom and ask what may be inhibiting the child's performance. It is often the face to face situation with the teacher or tester, which is designed to stimulate or find out about the child's language, which in fact restricts it. There is now a lot of sociolinguistic research which emphasises that children can give a very misleading impression of their competence in school especially when some or all of the following factors are operating:

1 Child is isolated for special attention.
2 Child is being tested – or feels himself to be.
3 Child is talking with adult/authority figure (rather than his peers, or his juniors).
4 Child is responding rather than initiating.
5 The language task involved is unfamiliar.
6 The language task involved breaks rules of normal conversation or communication (eg 'Answer in complete sentences, please.').

A second parallel that is often drawn is between bilingual learners and bidialectal learners. It is accepted that non-standard dialects are authentic and rule-governed and not mere substandard or sloppy versions of correct English. But it is then asserted that standard English is the language of the classroom and that non-standard dialect speakers (especially West Indian children) can be at almost as much of a disadvantage educationally as second language learners. If we focus for a moment on the West Indian child we can see that the situation is somewhat complicated, but that the evidence does not support this E2L analogy. Consider for example the relationship between West Indian dialect or creole and learning to read.

Three years ago a project was set up at CUES to investigate creole interference in the process of learning to read and produce appropriate reading material. The initial hypothesis was that since a broad West Indian dialect is spoken in a significant number of West Indian homes, children with that type of preschool language experience would find the standard English of early reading material more difficult to understand and that this would influence the speed with which they learned to read. This hypothesis however was not born out by the evidence gathered by the project. We found that even in the first year at the infant school the classroom *English* of the majority (80%) of black children was as close to standard as was that of their white peers. And that when their command of English was compared with the language of early reading texts there was no reason to suppose that dialect differences should interfere with their understanding. Admittedly early reading books are not always written in very natural English – but this is not a dialect issue. Dialect difference however can influence how a young child will read back the text he is tackling. He will sometimes make small modifications in keeping with the rules of his dialect, preserving the meaning but altering the grammar slightly. This is a problem only if we choose to make it one. Moreover if understanding is seen as the goal these small instances of translation are a good sign because they suggest that the reader is interpreting meaning and recording it into his own language rather than simply reciting the words.

The principles that have emerged in the above reading project are in tune with the general language policy which is evolving at CUES and is bringing much closer together the teaching of second language learners and of native English speakers. The main common strands of this integrated policy can be summarised as follows:

We should find out about the *whole* of a child's linguistic competence, not just his or her mastery of the type of English that is usually required in school.

The home language or dialect should be recognised as part of the child's competence, to be valued and given a role and status within the classroom.

We should explore further the connection between language and learning, and create learning situations which naturally encourage talk as part of the learning process.

When faced with potential difficulties in understanding we should look for ways of supporting the meaning rather than automatically simplifying, though with E2L

Mother-tongue Maintenance in Primary Schools

Anne Wilkins

Anne Wilkins had eight years' experience in primary and secondary teaching, much of it in schools with a multi-lingual population, before entering teacher education. This article was originally a discussion paper presented to the education sub-committee of the Leicester Council for Community Relations.

'No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart.'

A Language for Life : 20.5

The discussion which follows will try to show that adherence to the principle stated above involves more than simply not discouraging the child from speaking his mother tongue in the playground, and that the development of respect for this mother-tongue can have positive results, both educational and social.

Concept development and language development proceed side by side, each supporting, and being supported by, the other. To plunge a child at 4-5 years old into a 'zero language situation' (ie one in which all learning and socially relating is expected to take place in a language of which he, as yet, knows little or nothing) means a major check to his concept development just at that time when, in his mother tongue, he has mastered a network of structures and a stock of vocabulary for use in acquiring and processing knowledge, concepts and attitudes. The central hours of his day – the school learning hours – are thus largely lost in these important respects, while the child's language activity is suddenly reduced to little more than the learning of labels. At this task he spends many hours each week; but there is no evidence that long diffuse hours spent in this way are ultimately more effective than shorter, more concentrated periods of second-language learning, framed in a school day of continuous enquiry, such as the mother-tongue primary child enjoys.

The fact that some children of primary age show great skill in mimicking the sounds of a second language may lead to a misapprehension of the degree of knowledge that they possess. The full grasp of a language, for living and working (which is where 'second language' differs from 'foreign language') implies not only learning sentence structures and amassing vocabulary, important though they are, but also developing the deployment of language for many different functions. Individual functions include: hypothesising, synthesising, specifying, generalising; all of these are developed during the study (in the mother tongue) of history, geography, maths, science, etc, and in turn, are essential for progress in these types of study. Social functions of language include: conferring, negotiating, persuading etc, at all of which

the child needs to become proficient if he is to adjust properly to the adult world. From age 4 to age 7, approximately, the child who is being educated in his mother tongue is learning the intellectual and social workings of the language he has already acquired. To hinder this learning at primary school age is to throw a double burden of intellectual and social adjustment onto the child at adolescence, and make his task, and that of his teachers at post-primary level, yet more difficult.

The tacit devaluation of the second-language child's whole culture through the lack of respect paid to his language has often been commented on. In this respect, the experience of the United States may be enlightening. For many years, a 'melting-pot' policy was operated, the aim of which was to submerge the cultural differences among the population by simply refusing the official recognition. The intellectual wastefulness of this policy was recognised in the 1950s, when record low levels of attainment in European languages were noted by educationalists. The socially divisive results of the policy – the very opposite of what had been intended – was seen in the 1930s: it was clearly futile to appeal to a potential delinquent in terms of the moral code of a culture he had been taught to despise. (We should perhaps not deceive ourselves into believing that the 'excellent' attitudes towards education seen in children of Asian-origin families will persist if we teach these children, by our attitudes to their languages, that their culture is not valued here.) In the United States in the mid 1960s, a change of attitude was marked by Fishman's influential book **Language Loyalty in the United States**. In the decade since its publication, consciously bilingual programmes have been devised and put into practice, so that there is now considerable understanding of useful bilingual method in the primary school. Among the principles endorsed by the successful results of schemes in, for instance, Montreal and Brussels are:

a) The second language is introduced, at early primary stage, in regular *small* amounts (45 mins per day) as a subject, and, increasingly, towards secondary level, as a medium of instruction, at first for 'visual' subjects (craft, PE), later for 'conceptual' ones (maths, history).

b) Teachers should be bilingual, in order to understand the problems faced by the language learner, but each teacher teaches in, and is addressed in, one language only.

c) Literacy is to be firmly established in the child's mother tongue before being introduced in the second language.

A Multicultural Neighbourhood Comprehensive

Arfon Jones

After serving as an Education Officer in Uganda, Arfon Jones taught at the Northern Counties College of Education before becoming Head of Community Activities at Sidney Stringer School and Community College in Coventry, where he has been Head for the past two years.

The relationship between an educational institution and its community is conditioned by the neighbourhood's culture, by the professionals' perception of their role, and by the nature of the control of the decision making process and the implementation of decisions.

There are at least two models:

1 A dual-purpose institution, where the school finishes at a particular time and the community takes over the plant. Usually there are separate personnel to manage the two sessions, and occasionally there is acrimony between them. This is an efficient use of plant and allows some means of communication.

2 An institution where the school is just one part of the Centre where staff are working together to achieve specified community objectives, one of which might be the integration of the community. This is more of a philosophical idea than merely the physical sharing of plant, and the emphasis is as much concentrated on out of plant activities as on the use of buildings.

Sidney Stringer School and Community College has attempted to realise the second model in the inner city area of Coventry, with a school population of 1500, where 45% are of immigrant extraction, 10% West Indian, 5% Asiatic and the remainder of indigenous stock, which includes the Scotch, Welsh and Irish. The buildings are purpose built, surrounded by high rise flats and Victorian terrace housing. There are few green spaces. All the indices associated with social priority areas are found in the community.

In this sense there is no community, but rather networks of families, often with conflicting perceptions of social reality and values. Sometimes there may be hostility between various groups. Educational expectations vary even within groups, and in a co-educational comprehensive school on a campus open to the public, some parental fears are exacerbated even by the thought of social contact between the sexes.

Even if the naive and rather arrogant objective of integration is rejected, the institution is still faced with some fundamental problems.

There is a considerable number of pupils and their parents who have little competent access to English. An even greater number suffer from language distortion. They appear to cope, but are always operating at a lower level of efficiency especially in comparison with native tongue speakers of English.

Others, having migrated to this country at an early age or having been born here, are in constant struggle between the cultural values of British society and that of their parents, producing pain, anguish and misunderstanding between both parties.

Other pupils come from non-academic families and face considerable disadvantage compared to pupils whose home lives give great impetus to academic success. Sometimes it is suggested that such parents have no interest in their children's education. In our experience this is a great calumny. Often the problem is confusion as to the nature of the support necessary for the child to do well.

Again, for many adults, their experience of education has been negative, so that they approach any educational institution, if not with hostility, then certainly with a great

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It will be noted the principles b) and c) are very little different from those applying traditionally (and still) to indigenous children learning eg French or German, except for the earlier start made on the second foreign language.

The question of introducing literacy in the second language is a difficult one, on which not enough research has been published to make conclusions sure. Clearly, reading and writing are highly artificial and sophisticated skills, not 'natural' like listening and speaking. It is known that to introduce *any* child to literacy in his mother tongue is unproductive until he has structures, vocabulary and concepts to be able to handle not only what the print is 'about' but what the processes of reading and writing are. From both these points of view, it seems likely that, to introduce a second-language child to the new concept of reading and writing, when he has neither a clear notion of what these activities are, in his own language, nor a fluent command of spoken English on which to practice coding and decoding, will be time-consuming and non-productive for the teacher and confusing in the extreme for the child. Time spent at primary level in establishing the nature of *language* (as a human activity) rather than a language (eg English) would be repaid by a more efficient passage into and through the child's secondary education.

deal of wariness, especially when involvement is attempted through formal structures.

An integrated staff

The duties and perception of their role as staff is crucial in approaching such a community. From the inception of Sidney Stringer five years ago, an attempt was made to integrate both 'Community staff' and 'teaching staff', under the management of the head, though many staff wished to be full time 'teachers' or full time 'community workers'. The senior management opposed this dual concept, so that the present system is composed of staff who

(i) teach full time, (ii) staff who spend most of their time in community work with some teaching, (iii) staff who spend half their time teaching and half their time in community work, and (iv) staff who spend most of their time with teaching duties and some of their time in community work.

Such varied categories of staff allow constant contributions from various experiences to determine objectives: the major being the participation of parents and adults in the educational process.

Participation can vary from the presentation of information, which is really no more than open communication, to involvement in decision making.

A unique element at Sidney Stringer has been the development of neighbourhood group work. The community was divided into specific areas and staff allocated with the initial brief of establishing contact, to seek out and to hear needs, and to see where and how the institution could react to those needs. The staff involved would not necessarily be those whose major tasks are in community work but rather staff whose major duties lie in teaching. For instance, a senior member of the management team and a scale two teacher are attempting to

(a) assist resident groups in applications for planning permission for a playsite and for its development if it was successful, and also

(b) are trying to establish a tenants group to take up neighbourhood problems.

The work and experience is reported back and discussed at an appropriate time, helping to sensitise the institution to the articulated needs of the community it serves.

Each neighbourhood area now elects some of its parents onto the Council of the School and Community Association from where two parents are elected onto the Board of Governors which have full powers over such traditional areas which once belonged to professionals, such as the curriculum. The Board of Governors appoints the Head and can also remove him.

Here, therefore, we have a clear line of participation from small local neighbourhood groups to the Council of the Association and onto the Board of Governors.

However there are clear dangers especially in a multiracial area. The often humdrum details of committee work and its associated constitutionalism is alien to the majority of people. One must realise that power is not handed over to the people but to small networks of individuals whose involvement in constitutional and democratic frameworks is often a major barrier to participation by the majority. This small group may desire to do good from a limited perception of a detailed knowledge of a small segment of the community. And this perception, though not thankfully at Stringer, could be racist, prejudiced or ideologically motivated.

The role of the professional is to seek out ways whereby the majority and especially those in need most can benefit from an enterprise set up to satisfy those needs.

The House Head

At Sidney Stringer we have a key figure who has been integral to the development of community participation. That person is the House Head.

After some contact with the junior school, the House Head takes over approximately 100 children at the start of their secondary education and will take them through the school until the pupil's statutory experience is completed. In these five years the House Head will be responsible for the pupil's academic, social and moral development.

Central to his responsibility is his relationship with the parent, and at Sidney Stringer every House Head must undertake the *minimum* of one positive home visit a year.

Besides the excellent effect on the pupil's perception of education of seeing his House Head in his home, the House Head becomes the instrument whereby the aims of the school and the purpose of education are discussed

based on the firm foundation of a trusted relationship between family and school – the school being that one person who has been welcomed into the house by the family.

Increasingly we find that the family desires such contact even when, in school terms, the child's progress is satisfactory.

The House Head is also a link in another sense, since the parent is not only concerned with the institution since his child is being educated there, but also as an adult himself, living in the community that Sidney Stringer hopes to serve. The fears, the hopes and the demands of parents as adults can be transmitted back into the ttructure of the institution, especially when the parents shemselves are concerned and nervous regarding the entire education service. In this way we are reasonably certain that the entire views of our parents are being considered rather than the views of what could be a vociferous minority.

When we now call a meeting on a year basis or for specific activities such as an employment evening we can usually guarantee a very good attendance, mainly because the parent would not wish to 'let down' the house head who has suggested that the meeting is important due to the trust now established between the two.

Two further developments now appear possible. We have seen signs that when families are in difficulties it is possible for a House Head to act as a medium whereby all agencies serving the area may be joined in an attempt to solve a particular problem. It is far better for a House Head to act in this way rather than attempt to extend his role to cover that of social worker, counsellor, community worker, which is sometimes the danger with over committed staff.

Similarly, with the development of such an intensive pastoral and caring system it seems ridiculous that the relationships sometimes painfully built up should be cut by an arbitrary defined statutory age. While one approaches the old slogans of education for life with a certain caution, the development of Stringer is now pushing us to examine our role with the 16+. Instead of a sixth form seen merely as an extension of the years 11 to 16 for a select number of pupils, or even as an open sixth, catering for a wide range of abilities and needs, as happens at present, the possibility now arises that a community

college should play a significant part in the adjustment to employment, as a 16+ Centre. Most important of all at present, it can be seen as an instrument for help in coping with unemployment, in finding jobs, in keeping jobs, improving qualifications and being able to help in the development of the individual whatever his age.

Now one crucial element applies here that must be pertinent to any involvement of community and certainly in the education of that community; and that is the experience of education. This is best illustrated by a description of a traditional aspect of many schools that attempt to involve the community.

Most Community Colleges have a mothers' group. The Sidney Stringer group has certain differences. It is all white and was brought together to Sidney Stringer by the local Social Services Department.

A community worker who was also a qualified teacher of Home Economics was attached to the group. They were given a 'space' in a project area where teaching in aspects of child care, in needlework and fashion to children of statutory school age also took place.

A small creche was established for the pre-school children, looked after initially by a rota of mothers and pupils involved in child care CSE courses. The mothers drank coffee and gossiped while gradually and with increasing confidence eavesdropped on lessons that went on simultaneously. The community worker who had by this time gained their trust, then took certain lessons in child care and the teacher sat among the mums. The next step was to ask the mothers to exhibit some points of child rearing to the pupils such as changing a nappy. Gradually discussion, informal and unstructured at first, started to take place which evolved to such a time as when the community worker with the teaching staff and outside help could start a formal structured adult education course in child rearing.

Once mothers had confidence and security in education the next stage was to disseminate their knowledge and new perceptions to other mums living in their neighbourhood. Mums some of whom had rejected school, had experienced with confidence an adult education class, where theory and practice, where discussion and debate had been natural and acceptable aspects.

Some of the fifteen and sixteen year old girls would also have been a part of this group. Their future would be

similar in some instances to the reality of lives of the mothers. When they become mothers, perhaps at seventeen or eighteen they too might face life in a high rise flat. It would not be sufficient to know that a play group existed at Stringer. It would be essential that the girl knew a welcome awaited her, that her response to school was positive and that she felt it to be a warm and caring atmosphere: that people she knew as teachers whom she knew had cared for her still existed, and did not evoke hostile memories or threatened her hard earned and won adult status. There would be no possible way that such a girl would involve herself if she had spent most of her adolescence in the D stream, forced to wear uniform, and made to feel a failure. This is the reality of the total community concept.

And what better person than this eighteen year old mother to talk to those girls now fifteen who remembered her as a pupil when they were twelve, about the realities of pregnancy and child rearing. The same principles underline the approach to the involvement of Asian women.

It is my belief that a school that is not caring and imposes violence on pupils in the name of order, thereby creating groups of children who look for scapegoats to dissipate their feelings of violence; a school that streams pupils into different ability groups, with the possibility of creating a rejected group, who may be of one colour or culture, is an instrument for creating and at least maintaining racial tension and hostility. If the atmosphere is one of trust between pupils and staff then in the main, there will be *at worst* in that institution a truce between potential groups. In the Stringer experience there is in the rational orderly relationships inside the classroom and increasingly in leisured activities a distinct measure of co-operation and support between groups and individuals.

Transforming education

It must also be realised that this achievement only comes with a great deal of hard work and sometimes great strain by and on members of staff.

Sidney Stringer was the amalgamation of two tightly streamed authoritarian secondary modern schools. In attempting to base an institution on the development of internal discipline, and thus eradicating corporal punishment; in attempting to teach mixed ability sets in the major curriculum areas; in developing an intensive home/school links programme; in attempting to amalgamate the community as an integral part of the school, a situation arose that is the antithesis of what existed before. There was violence between pupils of differing cultures; there was large scale truancy and a rejection of the school by parents.

Today the school has very little truancy, no violence at all in the classroom, the lowest rate of vandalism of any school in Coventry and an atmosphere that the many visitors describe as warm and happy with excellent relationships between staff and pupils. The examination results are also good. There is a unified staff nearly all showing various degrees of enthusiasm for community education.

While it is not possible to evaluate in any statistical sense causal relationships between any of the indices of progressive education and the present level of success, there is little doubt that the combination of those factors within the context of community education, are its foundations.

On this basis we appear at Sidney Stringer to have made a start towards enabling many groups normally classified as non-participants to contribute to the running and the use of the institution which in turn, we believe, plays an important part in developing harmonious relationships in our part of Coventry.

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learners the language will often need to be simplified as well.

We should find ways of fostering communication between children and methods of collaborative learning, both because of the support this gives to E2L learners and because of the greater freedom it creates for *all* children to use and extend their own language skill and to be more active in their own learning.

The Green Paper

Brian Simon

What are we to make of the Green Paper? Presented not so much as the culmination of the 'Great Debate' as a consultative document for further discussion, it certainly presages further action, possibly of a decisive kind, in relation to a number of central educational issues – for instance, the content of education, assessment, the relation between schools and industry, school government and 'accountability'.

But one thing is clear. In the process of (or under cover of) rebutting extreme Black Paper views, and reiterating determination to promote comprehensive secondary education, the Green Paper marks a new phase in its clear assertion of an active (leadership) role for the DES in relation to educational (as apart from administrative) matters. In the past, advice on important educational issues and developments has been the prerogative of the Central Advisory Councils (before that, of the Consultative Committee); bodies which had an independent status vis-a-vis the DES and normally consisted largely of experienced educationists. Today these Councils are in abeyance and educational direction is, apparently, to be taken over by the DES, using procedures with which we are now becoming familiar. However tentative some of the formulations may be (and many are not), there is here a very clear bid, if not for central control, at least for the assertion of the central authority as the leading force or power in the determination of educational procedures. This needs recognition, even if the outcome may be uncertain, for centralising forces, if too strongly pressed, will certainly be resisted by local authorities and teachers, both of whom value their independence and historic responsibilities. It is impossible at this stage to say what the outcome will be.

How does this tendency express itself? First, in relation to the curriculum, where it is now clearly asserted that the Secretaries of State cannot 'abdicate from leadership' on this issue. The procedures proposed include a review of curricular arrangements in each local authority area, to report in 12 months, when there will be further consultations on the outcome 'and on the nature of any advice which the Secretaries of State might then issue on curricular matters' (para 2.22). The Circular initiating this review will list a wide range of issues for report. By this means options are kept wide open for further central government action on this highly sensitive issue.

But the main immediate impact of the Green Paper (and other events to date) will undoubtedly be felt in the area of standards and assessment. It is already clear that many local authorities, on their own initiative, are proposing to introduce new forms of mass testing in their schools. There is a clear assertion here of the 'need for schools to demonstrate their accountability' to 'society', and that this requires 'a coherent and soundly based means of assessment for the education system as a whole, for schools, and for individual pupils'. Some of the material in this section may be unexceptionable, but the current pressure for the imposition of what are still mis-called 'objective' tests will receive encouragement from this document; the DES, it is said, will 'encourage the development of such tests (including diagnostic testing, BS) and it is hoped that they will become widely used by schools and authorities'. But the effect of all this on the schools might be disastrous, as we know well from previous experience. Nor are there, as yet, tests of the new type required for the assessment of the wide range of abilities and skills the schools are now, and rightly, concerned to developed in their pupils.

There is a clear danger, under this rubric, of the imposition of mass testing of a limited and restrictive type covering the three R's, and on a wider and more inclusive scale than existed even under the tripartite system. Unless proposals of this type are very firmly, determinedly and consistently resisted by teachers and others there can be no doubt that the result will be a sharp restriction on the teacher's power to provide educational experiences of a broad and varied character, in line with modern knowledge and experience relating to learning and development.

It would seem that one overall objective of this whole exercise may be precisely to restrict the scope available for the exercise of the teacher's initiative; to bring it under a strict external control. It seems that the Taylor Committee's proposals may have the same intention (and effect). It is as well to be alerted to this danger, since it is as a result of the initiative exercised by teachers standpoints) that many of the most positive advances have been made in the past. Deliberately to reduce the scope for effective action of this type in order to bring everyone 'into line', would certainly have a stultifying effect on the whole development of education.

FORUM'S
Primary Conference

Forum Reporters

This is a report of the primary school conference organised by **Forum** in June. Speakers included James Britton; two primary heads, Henry Pluckrose and Mary Brown; two class teachers from their schools, Chris Buckton and Stephen Rowland; and Michael Armstrong. The aim of the conference was to crystallise and discuss advanced practice in the schools in the light of the current discussion of educational aims and procedures.

Jimmy Britton began by acknowledging that progressive teachers are in for a hard time in a period of shrinking perspectives, not only in education, induced by inflation and economic uncertainty. The timidity and narrowness of mind characteristic of the age of the Great Debate, may be judged from the attitude to the Bullock Report. Within two years of publication it had been transformed from the untidy and unnecessary compromise it had seemed to him when he had signed it into a beacon of enlightened thought.

Today's key words are 'literacy' and 'evaluation'. There is no threat in the terms as such, only in the way in which they are being used. Emphasis on literacy tends to isolate reading and writing from their roots in speech, from conversation and talk, while emphasis on evaluation focuses on limited objectives easy to measure on a narrow interpretation of basic skill.

The remainder of the opening address might be seen as an attempt to redress the balance by extending and enriching the criteria of literacy, of basic skill, of educational achievement as a whole, and by setting out the conditions essential to successful learning.

What is at issue, Britton suggested, is the nature of our knowledge of the world, no less. For him – as for David Hawkins in the essays reviewed in the last number of **Forum** – knowing and learning are acts of construction, reconstruction and interpretation, a process of building and testing models of our environment or plans of our behaviour.

The Bullock Report, in one of its uncompromising moments, insists that a child learns as certainly by talking and writing as by reading and listening, and it was on the characteristics of children's talk and writing that he concentrated attention. Perhaps the most important characteristic of the kind of talk or writing that best satisfies the demands of inquiry, discovery, exploration and experiment – the heuristic aspect of learning – is its conversational quality. The physicist Heisenberg declared in his autobiography 'Science is rooted in conversation'. Einstein wrote about the fundamental importance of the act of 'groping intuitively for the meaning of the facts'.

But, by and large, the teaching of science in schools, as of so much else, has ignored exploratory talk or writing.

Expressive talk

A series of beautifully judged examples of children's writing demonstrated the central relevance of 'expressive' talk and writing, of the conversational mode in the work of the best teachers and classrooms. It is not the only appropriate mode for education; necessarily it leads into more formal modes of learning which in turn lead back to fresh conversational inquiries. But it is only by way of the intuitive gropings, the informal talk, that knowledge can be brought to life afresh in the mind of every learner.

This certainly calls for basic skills, but it is easy to take a naive view of skills. There are two models for learning a skill. Sometimes there is a right way to do something which can just be picked up, or read up. But in the case of complex general skills it is more a matter of having a go and learning by having a go. So it is with language learning; one acquires rule governed behaviour without prior knowledge of the rules themselves.

For learning of this kind – learning to read by reading and to write by writing – there are two chief conditions of success. The first concerns the nature of the input, its richness and variety; it is easy to see how much this demands of teachers and of the environment of the school or classroom. The second concerns the character of children's intentions; only when the activities of reading and writing are themselves related to each learner's own intentions can the structure of reading and writing be mastered.

It is necessary, therefore, for education to be altogether more hospitable to intention – the intention of each learner. The great weakness of the Black Papers, and the point of view they represent, is this failure to respect the intentions and the autonomy of children. The central issue in teaching is a matter of relationships – of the teacher's respect for the interests, values, concerns and intentions of his pupils – and his ability both to extend and respond to them in such a way that the structures of language and thought can be mastered and knowledge comes alive afresh in every mind.

Discussion of Professor Britton's address tended to centre on relationships with the outside world, on how to explain educational ideas to parents, politicians, employers, local councillors, rather than examination of the ideas advanced. But the points were to be taken up at the afternoon session.

Innovating schools

There was a turn now to assessing the work innovating primary schools are actually doing. It is past time, said one speaker from the floor, to make clear that the formal approach advocated by such as Rhodes Boyson has for decades been the rule in primary schools. It is this, then, that is open to criticism when there are complaints of inadequate attainment in a changing situation. Innovating schools remain in a minority and changes of the kind they have been introducing does not register an immediate effect – the task is to consolidate an approach in tune with the times. That interest and motivation are central to learning was one of the main points to emerge from descriptions of school practice. Also that it is intrinsic to the approach of innovating schools to cultivate relations with parents, a point now being officially advocated. Schools primarily directed to instruction in the basic skills are more likely to shut children away and keep parents at a distance – again the past pattern now being outgrown.

'Community' is what the educational debate is really about, said the headmaster of Prior Weston School, near the Barbicon in the city of London. The school is a community of children where the needs, hopes and expectations of childhood can be met and expressed in the most various ways; a place where the child is challenged intellectually and physically in an environment planned for him. The primary school is also a community of adults working with children, not only professional teachers but ancillary workers and, too, parents, of whose expectations, problems and demands cognisance is taken.

From such a base there can be extensions into the outside world in many ways while the school provides a focal point for all who work with children, from the play group to different aspects of social work. Schools have been too much like monastic precincts. To grow out of and respond to the community at large is to invite feedback from parents, the local authority, institutions beyond the parochial boundary, and this has been the experience of Prior Weston.

The atmosphere of direct engagement was the most striking aspect of the primary school for Chris Buckton, a secondary teacher appointed to a half-time liaison post at Prior Weston. A group of the primary children taken to see the secondary building observed that, big as it was, there were 'hardly any rooms in it except the library'; a room, in their view, being a place to work comfortably. For her own part the primary timetable had initially aroused horror; 8.50 am to 12.40 pm without any break, it seemed impossible! Now it was the dislocation of time, attention, pace, imposed by division of the secondary day that seemed unnatural. That the primary school has no doors and other adults are wandering about had also seemed threatening at first. But it soon appeared as an aid to the cooperative engagement distinguishing the primary school community, an active engagement which positively fosters human relationships.

Living with uncertainty

The educational approach of Sherard School, Leicestershire, was reviewed from three angles; the demands made on teachers, classroom practice, the rationale behind this. It is a major change of focus for the teacher – said the headmistress, Mary Brown – when he begins to see children's productions as the 'means' rather than the 'end' of learning. Given autonomy to plan teachers gain both in enthusiasm and confidence which, in turn, allows for recognition of their own capabilities and limitations and discussion with others of problems or uncertainties. Every teacher must learn to live with uncertainty insofar as he meets with problems requiring judgment, to which there is no definitive answer; such as the reconciling of individual and group needs in particular situations, which vary widely, the exercise of authority without resort to manipulation.

Teachers who engage with children on the classroom floor are not 'stepping down' condescendingly into an immature world but entering on a scene where real intellectual problems arise and must be tackled. Many excellent primary teachers work largely at an intuitive level and it is of first importance that they should become more articulate about what they do, how they do it and why. The methods now being elaborated offer something

so powerful in terms of children and their education that no backlash of negative opinion must be allowed to swamp them.

One of eighteen teachers in the school, Stephen Rowland, took up a key question, how to go about structuring the classroom and the children's work. He defined three levels. The provision of a creative environment in terms of the classroom and resources; the guidance of children in activities leading to learning and competence, which requires a grasp of what is to be learned and the learning process at different stages; appreciation of how children themselves become involved and responsible for their own learning if given an opportunity to develop organisational structures themselves.

Illustrations relating to each of these levels turned on the introduction of resources which could be used for various ends relating to work in progress but also usable by children with ideas of their own which they were ready to follow up. Two conclusions had resulted from experience of this procedure. That children, if allowed to structure their own work, are capable of setting goals and working systematically towards them with only occasional guidance; and that the use of resources in this open ended way enables the teacher to diagnose needs more generally and structure classroom and work accordingly.

Insights and intuitions

Michael Armstrong, engaged in research at the school, enlarged on the theme that teachers have much to learn from children, from their insights, intuitions, reflections, as encountered in language and art, forms of play, their endless enquiries. Creative and critical engagement can be at a high level, the instances given being on the borderlines between mathematics and design in art, painting and writing, and illustrations provided in terms of developments in the work of individual children.

The main concern was to challenge the assumption that 'creativity' is only a frill, that the primary school should concentrate in the first place on basic skills. It is precisely when children are permitted to engage with the realities around them in a creative and critical way that both maturity and competence grow, mastery of the basic skills included. To reverse the process, to concentrate on mere competence and imagine active engagement can

follow, is to undermine the whole educational enterprise.

In further discussion it was urged that more theoretical rigour is needed in defining the educational approach and objectives of the primary school. It was also suggested that the excellence of their work might be impaired if too many ancillary tasks in the community were undertaken. But, it was finally underlined, an immediate ancillary task is to decide what answer to give to local authorities now initiating plans for a reversion to formal testing.

There seemed little doubt of the nature of that answer and, from the chair, the editor of **Forum** said that more attention would be given to the primary level in future and invited a continuation of the discussion in the journal.

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Social Studies and Social Control

Bernard Wakefield and **Geoff Rainbow**

Bernard Wakefield and Geoff Rainbow both taught in various secondary schools before taking up their present posts as lecturers in Sociology at Leeds Polytechnic. The enquiry which is summarised here was completed at Easter 1976.

Curriculum content remains remarkably stable over time. The same named subjects remain on the timetables from generation to generation. Only infrequently does a new 'subject' emerge. The most recent emergence is the area of study variously described as Social Studies or Humanities. The content varies from school to school (although probably no more than in more familiar subjects like English). It is however possible to delimit the field as drawing its material largely from the Social Sciences and from Social Philosophy; and inspired by the declared aim of a comprehensive understanding of man and his place in the world. The development of the area has been marked by a spate of publishing and vast increases in CSE provision.

We set out to examine what was happening within a large LEA where the subject was known to be well established. The results are surprising. The subject appears on the timetable of over 80% of the secondary schools under some title. Not only is the teaching widespread it occupies a substantial proportion of the timetable of pupils. In less than six years it has moved in many schools to a position of equality with English, Maths and Science so that many pupils find themselves studying it for 10% of their time. It is as often a compulsory subject as an option. A remarkable and unexpected finding was that the subject is taught very largely by Senior Staff in the schools – Heads of Departments, Year Heads and House Heads. (41% of the staff involved fall into these categories.)

In only one school had the subject been on the timetable for more than 5 years, and the key year for its inception in most schools was 1973-74. This matches data from an examination of CSE entries which after a slow growth between 1970 and 1973, doubled in number from 1974. This date is important: 1974 was the year when the first ROSLA group reached the fourth year. This suggests that the need to provide for this 'new' area of the educational system was an important determinant. In discussion with teachers, a dominant concern was with course 'relevance'. Traditional school subjects are seen as increasingly irrelevant and incapable of holding the attention of groups characterised as 'the less-able' or 'ROSLA' kids. Traditional subjects are seen as 'too academic', 'too abstract' and too divorced from real life. From the outset therefore there appears a non-academic,

practicalist orientation to teaching in the area. (An ambiguity should be noted in the growing desire to establish CSE courses in this 'non-academic' area.)

A grass-roots movement?

Most of the courses show evidence of an enormous investment of careful preparation time on the part of staff, very few of whom had any previous acquaintance with the field. (1 in 12 if we look at initial qualifications; 1 in 8 if we include attendance at courses.) There was little evidence of intercommunication between schools, or direction from above. Curriculum development in this field appears to be a grass-roots movement. In these circumstances the substantial similarity in content suggests an origin in common problems. This emerges clearly in a discussion with teachers about the purposes and intentions of their syllabuses. One teacher spoke of the prime aim as 'getting them to look at matters from other points of view, from parents' or society's viewpoint'. Another – one of the four Social Science graduates teaching in the field – was uncomfortably aware that his course entitled 'European Studies' was intended to encourage pupils to see themselves as citizens of the Common Market, and that the course possessed political overtones. An aim encountered more than once was that of producing 'a mature adult who could fit into society', epitomised, perhaps, in a course entitled simply 'Design for Living'. Another teacher in similar vein said that he regarded his course as a 'basic survival kit in today's society'.

A second characteristic of the courses is an emphasis on personal relations and upon psychologistic approaches. In conversation teachers lay a good deal of stress upon this aspect of their work, and it is clear that they present most problems as susceptible of resolution through improved communications or rational compromise rather than through a changed social structure. In all schools methods of teaching were very similar. Much use was made of audio-visual material, visits and discussion. It appeared to be the case everywhere that factual material was reduced to a minimum. This was variously explained: it was suggested that Social Studies is largely a matter of opinions; that, unlike the case of History and Geography, there are no 'facts'; and that it is the process of discussion itself or self-discovery rather than content which matters.

In all cases books are used impressionistically and opportunistically rather than systematically. Schools are proud of their links with the outside world and there is a two way flow of visits. MPs, policemen, councillors, representatives of the FPA and so on are invited into school. In the opposite direction, schools take pupils to visit Hospitals and Old People's Homes and enable the children to participate in community service.

In spite of all this excellent work there remains a feeling of unease on a number of counts. First, schools appear to be avoiding controversial areas, and even avoiding controversial approaches. We should deplore a concentration on the sensational, as a courting of controversy for its own sake, nevertheless it seems desirable that children should be made aware of them in school where they can be considered dispassionately. Second, the focus on a personalistic approach presents dangers. Concentration on adaptation and integration of the pupil into the existing world is not undesirable. It is an essential feature of any conceivable educational system, and schools would be doing their pupils a disservice if they failed to help them make the transition from school to adult life. Undue concentration on adaptation presents dangers however. It may present a false picture of our society by its neglect of conflict theories. Many of the conflicts in our society appear to be structural and not, therefore, capable of resolution in personal terms. Recognition of this simple fact of life would not only enhance pupils' understanding of the world, but might also allay some of their personal worries. A danger inherent in a consensual, personalistic approach is that it may be seen by some pupils as supportive of a status-quo which they, or their families reject. The teacher of Social Studies could therefore be placed in a false position not unlike that of the teacher of RE where he is cast in the role of Society's policeman. (In both cases probably unjustly.)

The concentration on the personal and upon adaptation neglects structural factors; and may lead to a lack of emphasis upon two of the most important dimensions of social life: the political and the economic. Few schools appear to deal adequately with either of these. Where political education is included the concentration is on the machinery of government, rather than on the concept of power and its social distribution. Economics appears even more rarely than politics and tends to be identified either with fiscal matters (taxation) or with personal finance and budgeting. Teachers appear to operate in the field of economics with a very primitive model based on such homely metaphors as the division of a cake, or the national purse. We find this extremely disturbing in a period where most recent elections have been fought largely on economic issues.

A consensual model

The orientation of Social Studies teaching appears to display at all levels an attachment to a consensual model of society and an attempt to enable the pupil to adapt to it. In a well-known paper* Bernstein (1970) attributes the movement towards integrated codes to a lack of moral consensus in society, reflected in schools. In an early period Durkheim suggested that the source of moral consensus could be found particularly in history which reflected a national value system. Without such consensus the danger of anomie becomes salient. Whatever the truth of Durkheim's theories (and the present authors would not subscribe to them) the model held by teachers seem to approximate to Durkheim's model of societal processes. The greater permissiveness of the age and the rejection of authority by many pupils in school are seen as, at least potentially, anomic. Problems of control in school have been linked with social changes in a wider arena. Rejection of school authority with strikes; violence in school with hooliganism and vandalism; the youth culture and the crisis of traditional authority; school rules and law and order. The problem of containment of the ROSLA pupil and the problem of order in society become facets of a single problem for which the liberal answer of better communications and personal adjustment provide the solution. The development of *relevant* Social Studies syllabuses is heavily weighted towards social control.

While the origins of the ideology of social control can be found in the practical orientation of courses to immediate problems, it is perhaps exacerbated by the lack of a Social Science background of most of the staff involved. We would accept fully that the teaching of Social Studies is not, and should not become the teaching of Sociology or Economics or any other of the Social Sciences. Some acquaintance with these disciplines would however enable staff to be aware of pitfalls inherent in the

Remedial help within Non-Streaming

Barry Chisholm

Barry Chisholm was a Remedial Teacher at Countesthorpe College in Leicestershire for five years before studying for an MSc at Sheffield University. He takes up an appointment as Educational Psychologist in Wolverhampton this September. This article was intended for our Special Number on Comprehensive Remedial Provision in January 1977 and concerns the 14 and older age range.

It seems to me that when we talk of mixed ability groupings in the Secondary School we are implicitly assuming an organisational structure that not only recognises the basic individuality of each child, academic as well as slow learning, but that also provides sufficient sensitive flexibility to cope with this. Perhaps I can use the example of my own school, Countesthorpe College, to show how we have attempted to move towards this position.

The school is a Leicestershire Upper School (14-18 years) so naturally the main area of focus for our purposes will be the younger students within the school – the fourth and fifth years. In the early days (1970-71) these year groups were organised as follows. Tutor groups were mixed ability and based on friendship groups. Students followed a basic 'core' curriculum for about half of each week in these same mixed ability groupings in the following areas, English, Social Studies and Maths. Very often a different teacher would be responsible for each of these subject areas for any one group. For the remainder of the week students chose from a wide variety of options along the usual academic/non academic continuum. Work has always been 'individualised' at Countesthorpe – that is students have always worked at their own pace – there has been little or no emphasis on class teaching – and this has applied across the breadth of the curriculum. This leads me to my first point, that individualisation has been of fundamental importance in any success we have had in working with slow learning students in mixed ability groupings. For if we take away the need for a class of children to move forward at a uniform rate in their work then we also remove a sensitive area of frustration for both students and their teachers. This was largely achieved by a worksheet approach to the curriculum – the teacher did not need any longer to thrust the syllabus at students en masse – it was there ready for them in print when required.

But mixed ability teaching, it seemed, could not proceed without the support of a Remedial Department – the teachers simply did not feel competent to cope adequately with such a wide range of ability. Thus two Remedial teachers, one per year both on free timetables worked in conjunction with other teachers, or sometimes used one of two well stocked withdrawal rooms.

The stated aims of the department have been as follows:
  (a) to withdraw some children for extra help with basic reading and writing skills,
  (b) to support slow learning students and their teachers in the mixed ability groupings,
  (c) to provide suitable and modified materials for slow learning students in a variety of situations.

Although this structure went some way to meeting the criteria of my opening sentences it fell short of making adequate provision for slow learning students in a variety of ways. (I would also like to observe at this point that many of the criticisms apply for students across the ability range, perhaps with different emphases).

Individualisation of work may well be crucial in a mixed ability setting but the worksheet method first employed had several adverse implications for slow learning students and their teachers. The level at which the original worksheets were pitched was largely beyond the reading level of the students about whom we were concerned. However as one of the stated aims of the department was to provide 'modified materials' this should have been remediable. But such was the output of worksheets across all areas of the curriculum that this proved to be an impossible task. Consequently some

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field. If the subject is to continue to grow a massive programme of in-service training in the Social Science disciplines seems essential. More important, however, is a recognition of the possibility of an alternative paradigm. The current paradigm concentrates on enabling the pupil to adapt and adjust to the needs of society. An alternative in a democracy is one which suggests the possibility of adapting and adjusting society to the needs of the pupil; and a study of the means which can be adopted to achieve this. It is possible that without this it is not only Social Studies as a curriculum area, but also democracy which is at issue.

* Bernstein, B (1970) On the classification and framing of educational knowledge **Class, Control** vol. 1 (1971).

attempt was made to simplify worksheets for restricted areas of the curriculum particularly the core subjects. Even then the success of this approach was questionable based as it is on the premise that material can be simplified linguistically and conceptually so that all those students one might find grouped within a remedial class will be able to work from it, on their own, with success and satisfaction. All too often a given piece of work when modified, lost its conceptual structure or proved to be either linguistically too complex or too simple for most of these students. Such is the range of competence amongst those students we label remedial that I feel the group worksheet approach will always have severe limitations.

Secondly, all students had a large number of teacher contacts – and it has long been a widely held opinion that less able students perform better from the security of a small number of teacher relationships. Certainly an organisation of one teacher/one subject limits teacher/pupil contact time making the task of individual teachers particularly difficult in relation to discovering the needs of slow learning children. This was reflected especially in the option system where teacher/pupil contact time was at its lowest and was exemplified in the numbers of dissatisfied slow learning (and other) students.

The support function of the Remedial Department was valued in most areas of the school but again threw up its own problems. Slow learning students were spread over some twelve tutor groups for each year group and thus the remedial teacher was faced with deciding where exactly to place this 'support' to best advantage. One might valuably spend a lesson working with two or three children in Science only to discover later that another group of children had not been adequately catered for in Maths. Again, in providing support of this kind it was easy to fall into the trap of creating 'in situ' a remedial group within a mixed ability class, with the remedial teacher working with the slow learning group, whilst the class teacher was free to concentrate on the remainder.

One might presume that the withdrawal lessons for basic skills, at least, would be exempt from criticism. Certainly they allowed for the structured, intimate approach found in most remedial classes – but at the same time they were detached from the remainder of schoolwork. The number of necessary contacts between remedial teacher and staff in all the other areas of the school made an integrated approach to reading difficulties virtually impossible. So the reading/writing programme tended to proceed in isolation. It is from this that I would make the greatest single criticism of our first model with reference to the slow learning children. It enabled students to sample all areas of the school in their own groups but it did not provide an integrated structure within those settings. There was no link up between what a student was doing in, say, Technical Drawing and Maths or English, which seems so valuable for the slow learning child. It appeared that nobody saw the student for a large enough proportion of his week to be able to monitor these curricular difficulties which we felt, were inextricably related to many of the pastoral problems that arise in school.

With this in mind a second, and I believe, more promising model has evolved. The year groups have been divided into two teams (each fifth year team of 130 students has 6 teachers who work in the team base with their own students for 50% of the week). Work is largely on a 'tutor to group' basis, primary style, although some teacher specialisation does take place. Wherever appropriate work is of an integrated nature and covers the areas of Social Studies, English, RE and Maths. Usually project based, the curriculum is still individualised but with a minimal emphasis now on the worksheet. Rather, projects are discussed and structured by teachers and students, and monitored continuously with students being directed to appropriate material in the Resource Centre or elsewhere.

For the remainder of the week the student selects courses from a variety of options – helped by parents and tutor. These too are explicitly mixed ability, but course content and the system of guided choice means that some courses at present may remain quite selective. An alternative to 'filling up' the timetable in this way is for the student to return to his team base and continue ongoing work there under the supervision of some of the 'team's' teachers.

How does this organisation help the slow learner?
(a) It gives him tremendous flexibility and involvement in his timetable.
(b) He spends a lot of time – at least 50% of his week – with the person who knows him best and who is ultimately responsible for his progress, the tutor.

(c) The move away from a 'core syllabus' towards individual 'interest based' projects has further reduced competitive elements.

Any disadvantages would seem to fall on the shoulders of the teachers. A common worry seems to be that the slow learner takes up an undue proportion of available teacher time, and as a result the teacher is unable to devote sufficient time to the others in the group. But we hear this same argument propounded about classes in schools which practise the most rigorous streaming and as such it is not a problem confined to mixed ability groups.

A second suggestion is that the teachers themselves may not be competent to provide work for the slow learning children – that they have 'no idea what is best for them.' Perhaps redeployment of remedial help is one answer to this. We have not continued with one Remedial teacher per year group but are moving towards the Remedial teacher working totally within one team only – spending half the week on Remedial work and the remainder on other teaching. To me this seems a most positive development. It places the Remedial teacher in a more meaningful context – he now has a place which fits into the overall school structure. Moreover it gives him better access to students. Withdrawal work (and there will perhaps always be a need for some) can take place in the team area and it becomes possible to be more flexible over time units than is normally allowed by 'lesson time' constraints. Thirdly, moving the Remedial teacher into the team structure also facilitates a valuable aspect of the support system for both staff and students. The Remedial teacher now becomes available to students and teachers in a variety of new situations in which each can learn from the other. In Countesthorpe teachers have broadened their areas of competence in just this way. Many of the tutors, in fact, now work with their own group across the range of Social Studies, English and Maths with the 'back up' of specialists within the team.

There seems to be no reason why this should not be extended to include remedial work with slow learners. In service training may be necessary to achieve this end, but courses we have offered at school have been received with interest and enthusiasm. By working with teachers in the classroom and providing some extra training, I believe the Remedial teacher can largely contribute in reducing the fears of inadequacy that the class teacher may have towards mixed ability teaching and also dispense with the mystique of remediation being a job purely for the 'specialist cum psychologist'. If we have skills to bring to the mixed ability setting, it seems pointless to lock them away in our own rooms when we might be sharing them for wider distribution! I am convinced that it is only as the contribution of the class teacher increases that the concept of true mixed ability teaching will become real and valid. In day to day terms, the role of the Remedial teacher in such a structure might be to spend part of his time in ordinary classroom teaching and for the remainder of the week to work wherever help may be best given for students or teachers; in supplementary teaching, co-teaching or providing materials for individual children.

In conclusion, I have described a model for mixed ability teaching that will affect *all* students specifically because it insists on treating them as individuals. It has seemed important to us that large school units are broken down into teams so that all students may more easily find and identity for themselves; that each student should have a close working contact with his tutor; that work should be both individualised and student centred; and that there should be flexibility within the organisation for the student to experience all areas of the school in the way most appropriate for him. In addition extra factors may apply more particularly for the slow learning student. The Remedial teacher and his work should not be isolated from the rest of the learning in the school, but a part of it; class and subject teachers should be involved as fully as possible in the education of slow learning children in their groups, thus reducing the specific role of the Remedial teacher; the Remedial teacher should work at a variety of forms of in-service training for staff in all areas of the school, but be prepared to be used as a specialist in situations for which other staff do not feel prepared. These may be *some* of the ways in which we may make mixed ability teaching more relevant for slow learning students and relieve some of the apprehension felt by class teachers.

The Information Trap

David Tripp

David Tripp is Leverhulme Research Fellow at the Department of Education of Cambridge University. For the past three years he has been evaluating the Cognitive Research Trust's project (**CoRT**) which he discusses here.

The **CoRT** Project began from an attempt to identify what 'Thinking' would look like if it were a school subject. The author, Dr Edward de Bono, contended that, if the majority of teachers felt that pupils learn to think through the subjects of the curriculum, then they may be able to learn to think much better if the skills involved were identified and taught as such, instead of being left as a vague and hoped for outcome of teaching other things. The project offers a structured framework of thinking skills that are taught separately and directly through a group discussion approach. The course is defined solely in terms of these thinking skills which are practised on information chosen simply to illustrate the application of the skill.

Of all the developments and problems that this project has discovered, one constantly recurs in every situation: teachers and pupils define curriculum and assess performance exclusively in terms of the information being used. It is not that they do not recognise the primary importance of skills, but that without the conscious and direct teaching of skills, information always seems to dominate.

Even curriculum projects fall into the trap. Summarising the intent of twelve projects, F H Sparrow wrote (1):

> 'The developers were certain that much irrelevant and out-of-date material was being taught in schools, and that they could replace this outmoded curriculum with something much better – more relevant to the times and more interesting.'

The project teams would no doubt quarrel with his summary, but that is how they are seen from the outside, it is the information that is perceived, for there is no mention in the context of the quote of the skills and operations to be learned from the new, relevant and interesting information. Yet it is these skills that are more important, for information is always limited by its context and cannot generalise to another situation as the operations learned on that information can. Some information is more appropriate than other in that it may be more acceptable, of greater utility, motivates more or is more intelligible, and it is by criteria such as these that it should be judged. It is the value of the **CoRT** project as a curriculum innovation that it has shifted the emphasis from learning a body of information to teaching skills regardless of the information through which they are learned. What happens when one falls into the Informa-tion Trap is that the points and operations to be understood and generalised from the particular information are not made explicit. In this article, for instance, it would be to communicate only the incidents I am using as illustrations, leaving the reader to abstract the points I wished to make. Readers may enjoy accounts of incidents, but few would see why I had chosen them or generalisations I wished to make.

An example

In teaching the trap is less obvious because neither we nor the children tend to ask what it is they are supposed to be learning from the information they learn. A good example was a lesson I observed where the children were read a story about a fight on a bus. They were then each given a card with a description of the way one party involved in the incident saw it. The children then discussed the incident each from the point of view they were given. It was a successful lesson in terms of response and involvement, but it was a superficial approach to teaching underlying thinking processes. The **CoRT** project would call the lesson Other Point of View, and through Explanation, Illustration and Practice would show children how to find other people's viewpoints in different situations. The project may well then have used the fight on the bus as another situation for an extended piece of work, but the children would have had to find the different viewpoints, and how they looked, for themselves. In the former lesson with the cards, the children would have been able to get into someone else's skin and see how something (fictitious) looks from there, which is useful, but in real life, were they to be involved in the same incident they would hardly be handed a card with someone else's point of view and asked to think about that. The basic operation has been assumed to have been learned as an indirect spin-off, and most of the children would have gone away having had an interesting discussion about a fight on a bus from a partricular viewpoint, but with no thinking operation that could readily transfer to any other situation.

Skill learning

Some teachers see the attempt to teach skills directly as a cause of problems. Anything new will have problems, but these should be considered in comparison with a

critical appraisal of the traditional approach, for it may become apparent that the latter is a cause of more problems than the former. For example, a secondary school that I visit regularly set up an Interdisciplinary Enquiry (IDE) course for its first year. One might expect IDE to facilitate skill learning without the restraints of what it is legitimate to each under particular subject disciplines, but unless teachers set out to teach skills directly they unintentionally end up adopting areas of information that are just as rigid as the subjects they wish to escape.

In this case they began with topics for investigation but soon found that the pupils were incapable of working on their own: many had reading ages well below the national average; they had a very limited attention span; it was even found that some did not know alphabetical order. Because their curriculum was defined in terms of 'The Land' (its formation, use, climate, etc) teachers could not teach the necessary skills because, apart from the fact that they had not been identified, all pupils were doing different things and needed individual attention. At the time the IDE leader commented:

> 'We wouldn't touch that one again, it's so amorphous. It goes everywhere and is everything: Physical Geography, Geology, mountain climbing, farming, people, plants, animals . . . we might just as well put a blank in the middle of the web and put everything else around it. Next year we could just take Under the Ground.'

Because the problems of teacher time, pupil ability and available resources were seen in terms of the amount and variety of information available, the solution was correspondingly seen in terms of a further selection of information. Limiting topics solved nothing, and it was only when the whole IDE activity was redefined by the skills to be taught that any progress took place.

Another example of the way in which the Information Trap inhibits skills learning is the way in which pupils' and teachers' expectations become so structured towards it that skills are no longer seen as possible educational objectives. At the other end of the age range a teacher in a College of Further Education was explaining why her pupils wished to reject the learning of thinking skills:

> 'You're teaching them to think within their own conceptual system as it stands at the moment, there's nothing to go beyond it. Students say to me, "It's all very well you asking us to consider all factors, but we don't know all the factors." And it's true. You could go into Anthropology, Psychology, the lot . . . there're all sorts of different ways you can expand their thinking processes, but they're not going to do it with this (CoRT), for it's just within what already exists in their minds.'

The particular lesson referred to is the basic 'Consider All Factors' (ie Think of everything you can, then look back to see if you can think of anything else), and it raises the whole question of just how much (or how little) we do ask students to use their already available experiences and information, rather than trying to make thinking redundant by providing the necessary information to arrive at the 'correct' answer.

The 'right' answer

The paradox in this teacher's comment is that it is precisely because there is so much relevant information available that, in the end, an answer has to be produced from the necessarily very limited selection that is, or can be put, within our conceptual framework. To the students, learning how to 'consider all factors' was impossible unless they could pretend that they knew them all. Thus the teacher was forced by her students' expectations to define 'the right answer' for them from information she would give them. This is not to suggest that information is unnecessary to produce an answer, nor that to expand the information available within the system is not a worthwhile aim; it is to suggest that to concentrate as much as we do in the acquisition of information is a grave mistake, for it will often exclude learning about how to deal with situations where our information is incomplete, as it is incomplete in every situation outside the education pretend game.

The idea that you cannot work with what pupils already know is a common one. In a conversation with a headmaster and a teacher of a small remedial group in a large inner city comprehensive, the following exchange took place:

> **Head:** 'The thing that worries me about this scheme (CoRT) is that it depends upon what you can get from the children . . . they haven't had this early extensive vocabulary . . . they are often lacking in all sorts of

experiences that we take for granted . . . could it just be that there is nothing there to get out anyway?'

Teacher: 'No, I don't think so. There's one boy who literally couldn't articulate anything when he came to this school; couldn't even say what he'd had for breakfast; but through talking and asking him to consider questions and draw things, he's changed. When he's asked to design a machine, he's able to do it, and he has ideas that the others don't necessarily have. He may not have many, but he is able to think and he takes a great delight in it. He'll sit and draw and laugh to himself, and when he first came he didn't laugh for two terms, he didn't smile even. There's something there because he can talk about his dreams when he can't talk about anything else, and he can remember those. So I wouldn't care to say there's nothing there, it just needs bringing out.'

Head: 'Yes, We're talking, not about children who've not got anything in there, but about children who're not aware of what they've got in there, and therefore give the appearance of not having anything there.'

Here, at the extreme of inability to handle information that is coming in, is a child who is quite competent to handle what he does already know, and through the kind to tasks that his teacher gives him, is developing skills that will enable him to handle new information.

Stress on information

Children may often be classed as less able simply because they are not good at handling all the new information presented by the teacher, and this bias towards information is present from an early stage in schooling. Children are very quick to pick up cues to form expectations of what education is about. I am often asked by older Primary children, 'How many points do you want?' They do not look at the situation to find out how many points they can find, they look to the teacher to define how many he wants. This is the result of the way teachers define the information rather than the skills that the pupils will use. Whenever a teacher is dealing with information he will have selected it in order to make certain points and the pupils are quite legitimately asking to be told how many points to find. Pupils who are not used to a genuinely open-ended situation are thrown by a truthful reply, 'I don't know.' Yet, if the teacher is asking them to use a skill he cannot tell beforehand what any individual or group should produce, for they will find what they can find in the information, rather than find what teacher thinks they ought to find.

I have yet to meet the teacher who denies the importance of skills, but because we have been brought up to learn and dispense information we unconsciously use it to define our curriculum, and refer to skills to justify it. Ask a teacher what they are teaching or a child what they are learning and they will usually reply in terms of the information: Prairies, The Normans or The Land. Yet, if that is really so, then, as Postman and Weingartner put it (2):

'If you are over 25 years of age, the Mathematics you were taught at school is "old", the grammar you were taught is obsolete and in disrepute; the Biology, completely out of date, and the History open to serious question. The best that can be said of you, assuming that you remember most of what you were told and read, is that you are a walking encyclopaedia of outdated information.'

That quotation will usually produce a taxonomy of skills to justify the information; but such taxonomies do not justify particular information, and do not justify subjects. The adherence to subjects is another product of the Information Trap. The argument often runs thus: Prairies are justified by the skills to be learned from them, Prairies are legitimately Geography, so Geography is justified. Skills do not justify any information, because if the skills are useful on other information then they can be learned on other information.

Subjects

Last year I asked a group of students to list the reasons they could see that justified their subject. The list they produced included twelve points, such as: 'Teaches children to synthesise information; teaches them to communicate ideas'. What surprised them was that when all the points were collected, although we had seven different subjects from Creative Writing to Mathematics, there was not one point put forward for any subject that they could say did not apply to all the other subjects. All they had done was justify certain skill areas. In terms of teacher training, school organisation, resources and skill learning school subjects may be lengthy, ineffective, tedious and expensive.

Consider the following list of objectives and decide what subject it is derived from: (3)

1 INFORMATION: (a) Primary and (b) Secondary sources.
2 ORGANISING PROCEDURES: Exploration, Collection, Evaluation, Analysis, Synthesis, Comparison, Explanation, etc.
3 SKILLS AND ABILITIES: Vocabulary acquisition, Reference skills, Memorisation, Comprehension, Translation, Extrapolation, Communication.

The list is not complete, but perhaps 1. (a) and (b) will show it to be History, for although the distinction is general the terms are more often found in History. In fact the whole list is in terms of the operations, but those justify nothing, and can only be justified by the same kind of criteria that I suggested for information above.

Skill areas

If the real purpose of subjects is to teach these skills then why cannot we teach the skills directly and avoid the Information Trap? It is possible to look at the whole curriculum in terms of the skills that could and should be taught with relevance to life outside school. At CoRT we have already found it feasible to teach them regardless of the information used and in the face of pupils' and teachers' expectations. What is now necessary is to define other skills areas over which the school has some control. For instance, one could look at a lesson in terms of the following skill areas:

(a) Cognitive: learning to think for oneself.
(b) Social: learning to work with others.
(c) Communication: learning to express oneself.
(d) Informational: how to acquire and internalise information.
(e) Physical: learning necessary fitness, dexterity and control.

Such a curriculum definition requires new teaching skills, for it is a mistake to think that the old expertise with information will lead to anything other than the Information Trap. Look at the kind of teaching decisions that have to be taken in the following situation where a pupil is learning about tropical climates: (a) How does it compare with what he already knows? Can he find good or bad points? (b) Should he work on his own or with

another? Whom? (c) How can he best communicate what he has learned? Writing? A graph? Tell me? (d) What will he need to know, and how will he find it? From me? A book? That West Indian child? (e) How long should I expect him to sit still?

Such an approach provides a whole new curriculum structure which would enable teachers to teach such skills directly, for without such an alternative to keep information in its proper place as one aspect of learning, information takes over. Much work needs to be done on the definition of skills and teaching methods, but this will come from teachers themselves (another experience of the project) given the orientation and the time. Perhaps the most definitive finding of the present CoRT project is that problems arise, not from difficulties of teaching skills, but from the fact that most teachers and pupils expect only to teach and learn information. They are caught in the Information Trap.

References:
1. F H Sparrow. 'The Role of the Evaluator' in **Evaluation in Curriculum Development: 12 case studies** (Schools Council Research Studies, Macmillan, 1973).
2. N Postman and C Weingartner, **Teaching as a Subversive Activity** (Penguin, 1971).
3. J B Coltham and J Fines: **Educational objectives for the Study of History** (The Historical Association, 1971).

Advance Notice

The next issue of FORUM (Vol 20, No 2) will be a Special Issue on non-streaming; or, better, on Unstreamed Teaching, a practice now under attack from some quarters. A group of general articles are planned, by Roger Seckington (assessing gains resulting from this movement), Ted Wragg (preparing teachers for non-streamed teaching) and others. Annabelle Dixon writes on the Infant School, Philip Sherwood on maths teaching in the Junior school; Arthur Razzell on the organisation and direction of the Middle School. Other articles will deal with the teaching of modern languages and mathematics at the secondary stage.

This number will provide a rational assessment of the movement towards non-streaming, as well as tangling with some of the difficulties involved.

Reviews

Intuition wins

Communication and Learning in Small Groups by Douglas Barnes and Frankie Todd. Routledge and Kegan Paul (1977) pp 139 £2.50.

Douglas Barnes is one of a handful of people who have taught the teaching profession – or that part of it that was listening – two important lessons. The first is that children talking to each other can be a crucial part of the learning process, because learning takes place in the process of producing language, in the act of articulation itself, which means that speech (or writing) is too important merely to be demanded after the event, as proof that learning has taken place. The second is that there is little opportunity for collaborative pupil-talk in many classrooms, where teacher-talk, often couched in subject-specialist terms, predominates, and where much of the pupils' oral contributions is limited to guessing what the teacher wants them to say. It's a hard lesson for a profession that rivals only lawyers and politicians in its fondness for the sound of its own voice. It's also a highly radical message, implying not a change of subject-matter – mere curriculum reform – but a change of classroom methodology, which is much more problematic because it impinges on the authority structure of the school: 'the allocation of power', as Barnes and Todd conclude, 'affects how people take part in the formulation of knowledge . . . placing control of relevance in the hands of one person . . . will affect profoundly the basis upon which others participate.' And this in turn does relate back to the question of subject-matter: 'what is learnt by discussion in a group of peers will be different in kind as well as content from what is learnt from teachers.'

Of course, a lot of group work is now going on, but much of it is workcard-dominated and involves the written answering of 'closed' rather than 'open' questions. Where teachers are brave enough to try providing genuine group-discussion situations, they are unlikely to provide the kind of dramatic, instant results that will convince sceptical colleagues who believe that, since the teacher is the expert, the best thing the kids can do is listen to him. They also tend to be based on an act of faith, difficult to prove because the school's self-fulfilling prophesies operate against it, that many pupils under-achieve and that group talk enables them to use and develop skills which would otherwise remain unexploited; it's significant that the class teachers were often surprised at the high quality of the recorded discussions which this book describes and analyses. The analysis in fact attempts to provide a stronger theoretical framework for that act of faith by testing empirically a system of categories that would illuminate 'the interplay between cognitive and communicative functions of speech in contexts planned for learning.' The category system was to include five types of tasks, three 'situation variables', a level-of-formality scale running from 'intimate' to 'public', four characteristics of the 'exploratory mode', and index of 'collaborativeness' on three levels with three kinds of 'marker', and a four-fold method of discourse analysis with a Piaget-based cognitive analysis of utterances. You will be as relieved as I was to learn that this 'quantitative analysis' proved impossible; the reasons for this are carefully documented and provide, incidentally, a healthy warning about the dangers inherent in many earnest research designs; 'in the analysis of informal discourse, it seems that one obtains reliability and inclusiveness at the expense of going against what seems intuitively to be meaningful,' write Barnes and Todd wryly. Well, it's a relief to me personally to learn that at least one central area of human activity may still be beyond precise research categorisation.

The discussions were recorded in two large urban comprehensive schools; the first phase involved thirty-two boys and girls of average ability working in eight mixed groups on nine topics, the second phase, collected by a 'quasi-experimental procedure', involved twenty-four pupils in eight single-sex groups working on two tasks. Phase two produced talk of a generally poorer quality, which is explained by the pupils' perceptions of the 'test' situation they felt themselves to be in (another healthy warning about research). Because of the collapse of the quantitative analysis system, the book contains no neatly tabulated findings or over-simplified conclusions; but for those willing to back 'what seems intuitively to be meaningful,' the transcribed discussions and authors' interpretations, ('qualitative analysis') provide much that is valuable in the search for more effective teaching strategies.

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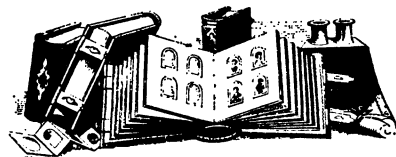
A Case for precision

Mind that child by Tom Kitwood and Marie Macey. Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative (1977) pp 54, 65p.

Problems in Primary Education by R. F. Dearden. Routledge & Kegan Paul (1976) pp 132, £3.00.

The two books reviewed here represent totally different levels of debate on education; one for parents and the other for students and teachers.

I feel that writing on education for non-professionals should be positive and precise. It should give parents the means to make valid judgements about the effectiveness of education in practical terms. **Mind that child** however, seems to me to be a rather emotional plea for parents to support 'progressive' methods of education in face of the threat of a national system of testing children which could deter teachers from using those methods. The aim is admirable but the work is so loosely argued that it could provide Black Paper supporters with all the ammunition they could ask for. The authors' repeated requests for clarity in our aims for education are equally often followed by the vaguest of statements that children should 'function as fully as possible – as human beings.' Not once is the latter term defined.

Chapters 3 & 4 question the validity of educational research in general and the Bennett study in particular. The criticisms are well founded but no realistic means of evaluation are suggested as an alternative. This is required for the book ends with the advice – 'Where schools are not doing their job properly, we should insist that they take themselves in hand'. What job?

In the author's own words 'If we wish to live in a society of real humanity, this sort of slipshod thinking won't do.' This book still leaves parents grasping at tables and spellings for lack of any positive points to look for.

Problems in Primary Education is part of a series designed to meet the needs of students at Colleges of Education and Universities, but I would entreat all practising primary school teachers to read this excellent work. There is a need at present to review what we are doing in schools both in the context of society as a whole and in actual classroom practice. This book includes arguments for and against present theories in education with a clarity and practical relevance which will enable teachers to do just that.

The book is divided into two main sections – 'Aims and principles' and 'Teaching and learning'. The first chapter 'Who should determine aims?' poses fundamental questions such as 'What is success and failure in the way of learning in the primary school?' It then goes on to set the scene for the rest of the book by showing that slipshod thinking won't do. Grand sounding phrases such as "our cultural heritage" or "the full development of each child's potential" may have their place on speech-day platforms, in prospectuses or in students' essays, but when it comes to the crunch at 9-15 on Monday morning such notions are apt to fly to the remotest corners of consciousness. I agree. We teachers need to analyse what we are doing and determine precisely what effect the various method elements are having on children.

Consider those methods which involve freedom of choice for children. '. . . experiences which they (children) now have, or miss, involve consequences for their futures . . . Since he (the child) often does not

know of his own future and the consequences for it of what he does now, he cannot form a judgement of his best interests on any adequate basis. Even his interest in becoming autonomous is subject to this deficiency.' This is an important consideration, not to be ignored for adult orientated doctrinaire reasons.

The author makes many acute observations about current practices. eg Although learning how to learn is important some things will have to be directly taught. 'This may simply be for greater efficiency in the limited period of schooling available, or because failure, muddle and confusion have resulted from self-directed learning . . .' Teachers should not assume that one method will cater for all contingencies but should be sufficiently flexible to use other techniques where necessary.

The chapter on 'Competition in Education' again analyses practice in schools with that clear, unblinkered approach which is symptomatic of the whole book and which I found so refreshing.

In the emotional atmosphere of public debate teachers need to remember that 'we are likely to be invited to compare the very best of the integrated day with the very worst of unenlightened backwater formal teaching' or vice versa. This book can help teachers to keep their heads under such circumstances and make rational judgements about their work.
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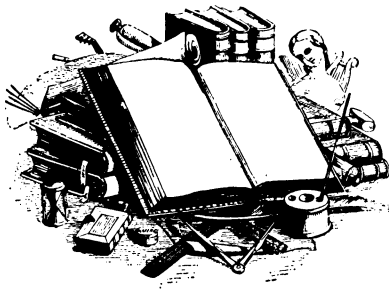
Language Sense and Nonsense

Language, Schools and Classrooms by M. Stubbs. Methuen (1976) pp 128, paperback £1.40.

This book is easily and quickly readable. As it is about sociolinguistics this is important and refreshing. Moreover, brief introducion though it is, it is not superficial. And it is well referenced for further reading.

The first half introduces, summarises and discusses a range of theories and basic concepts used in sociolinguistics. The key question kept in mind throughout is whether and how such theories and investigations contribute to an understanding or explanation of pupils' success or failure within the education system of schools.

Several recent myths are effectively debunked – language deficit, verbal deprivation, that use of non-standard English necessarily inhibits learning and serious or abstract thought. A whole chapter is devoted to a critique of Basil Bernstein, examining the chronological development and changes in his terminology and theorising, disentangling internal contradictions and confusions, exposing some shortcomings of his empirical evidence, and concluding that his supposedly linguistic theory 'has an unclear and unacceptable status' because it is untestable and fails to explain his own cited evidence. But Stubbs does not dismiss him out of hand. He suggests that some of his specualtive concepts might be related to classroom observation.

Of particular relevance to this number of **Forum** is the chapter on the work of Labov on the language of negroes and Puerto Ricans in the USA, and that of Wight, Norris and Sinclair on West Indian language in England for the Schools Council. This latter work deserves to be better known here.

The second half of the book reviews attempts that have been made to examine teachers' and pupils' language in the classroom. The emphasis here is on context and roles. This involves a short skirmish with the hidden curriculum and the sociology of knowledge, where the relative lack of field study data is again noted as a weakness. The pointlessness of mechanical, statistical counts of grammatical or syntactical forms and the dangers of drawing contextless conclusions are pointed out.

Stubbs demonstrates that some knowledge of linguistics, of linguistic *systems* and not just *forms*, alongside a sociopsychological appreciation of context is necessary for any meaningful interpretation of discourse or dialogue in real social situations such as a classroom.

He concludes with some useful suggestions on how experienced and student teachers can undertake small scale investigations of language in schools. Despite the amount of recent interest in this, very little is really known about it. It is an important and fruitful field for investigation which this little book should encourage.

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