

FORUM

FOR THE DISCUSSION OF NEW TRENDS IN EDUCATION

Summer 1978

Volume 20

Number 3

85p

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Reductions available on bulk orders of current number. (e.g. 10 copies for £6.)

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

Facing the pressures

As its full title indicates, **Forum** exists to encourage informed discussion of new trends in education. It seeks to examine the rationale and implications of new trends in theory, practice and policy – national, within local authorities and at individual school level – and hence to identify and promote whatever seems positive and likely to advance the educational progress of all children. Throughout its twenty years of publication, **Forum** has advocated non-streaming and comprehensive secondary school structures as organizational trends, and has explored teaching strategies for maximizing individual children's learning within this framework. Identifying with non-authoritarian, flexible and relatively informal teaching approaches has not implied any disregard for the importance of high standards of achievement but, on the contrary, an emphasis on finding ways to enable all children to achieve. Such has been the nature of **Forum's** commitment.

On some matters of current debate, however, there is ground for concern that unhelpfully polarized stances are being taken up. The Green Paper and the subsequent Circular 14/77 to LEAs have caused discussion about educational standards to focus on the narrow issue of discriminatory testing, and aroused fears that the educational progress of the past twenty years could be reversed with a return to harmful categorization and labelling of children and schools. This focus risks distortion through over-reaction with consequential rejection of the proper function of assessment and monitoring of children's progress in learning.

Forum is concerned that the educational standards of achievement of all children be progressively raised, but contends that normative testing, with consequent categorization, is not the means whereby to secure this. We campaigned against the eleven-plus not only because of its labelling effect and the self-fulfilling prophecy of the bipartite system it served, but also because of its destructive impact on the work of primary schools whose curriculum it constrained and distorted.

As a contribution to informed discussion about standards and testing we publish articles in this number on the place of assessment in primary and secondary schools by Stephen Rowland and Jim

Eggleston respectively, a review by Alan Evans and Arthur Jarman of how LEAs are reacting, and a salutary appraisal of America's testing mania. While the latter clearly warn us to be on our guard, the former remind us that we need to check that our teaching is enhancing learning. In this context an American contributor puts forward some strategies for successful teaching in 'disadvantaged' schools 'where most of their students score in the bottom fifth of the nation on standardized reading tests.'

Teachers' professional judgements are seen to be threatened not only by an epidemic of testing but also by proposals concerning the responsibilities and composition of school governing bodies. Here again, polarized stances give cause for concern as they may deflect attention from efforts to foster mutual understanding of what schools are and should be doing in the interests of furthering the education of all the children for whom they are responsible. Such mutual understanding, especially between teachers and parents, is not easy to achieve and yet is surely to the advantage of school and children. We publish an account of one school's endeavours and the experience of Family Workshops in bringing together children and adults from the local community in voluntary learning situations.

We hope that this number of **Forum** will help towards more open and informed discussion of current pressures on teachers and schools so that the real issues at stake may be analysed and appropriate action taken. There is no doubt that there are pressures to halt and even reverse the gains of recent decades. It is also true that educational expectations have risen, and that the very success of schools has paradoxically drawn critical attention to areas of relative failure. Hostile criticism thrives amidst bewilderment, and schools have changed dramatically over the span of a generation.

The teaching profession needs allies in protecting what is educationally sound and in securing resources for further advance. It cannot risk isolation through polarization of attitudes, but must be prepared to discuss, listen and explain. Education is both a professional and a public matter.

The Testing invasion

Philip Sherwood

Philip Sherwood has been a headmaster in Leicestershire for the past twenty years. He contributed an article on mathematics teaching with mixed ability groups to the previous number of **Forum**, and now writes about some lessons to be learnt from the American experience of testing in schools.

Well meaning but ill-informed enthusiasts imported the Grey Squirrel and the Little Owl from America. The results were disastrous for our ecology. The native red squirrel was driven from our countryside by that bushy tailed American rodent who was finally declared a pest while the Little Owl established itself as an unwelcome predator.

Well meaning but ill-informed educational enthusiasts are anxious to let loose among us equally disastrous American imports – the American Tests of Attainment and the Myth of Measurability.

Now, there is no excuse for the educational enthusiasts. The baneful effects of the whole American measuring mania have been admirably identified, catalogued and condemned. The American National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has devoted two issues of its journal, **Principal**, to attacks on standardised testing. These have since been published in book form, **The Myth of Measurability** (Hart Publishing Co Inc NY).

Had this been merely the mumblings of disgruntled American headteachers, the evidence might seem tainted. The attack was spear-headed by specialists from outside the conventional field of education. Physicists of international standing, Banesh Hoffman and Jarold Zacharias joined with MIT scientists, Harvard lecturers and the National Education Association to challenge the qualities of the tests and the dubious theory and rationale on which they are based.

Testing is big business in America, a quarter of a billion dollars was spent on the process last year. The NAESP questioned whether the money might not be more wisely spent and invited the big business of testing to debate the ethics and nature of the process. IBMs Science Research Associates, Houghton Mifflin, McGraw Hill's Testing Department, Educational Testing Services, etc all sent their representatives to meet concerned educators. The testers were presented with questions:

'Do testers acknowledge that multiple choice tests penalize students who know too much?'

Can statistical correlation really apply to individual children?'

The questions were answered by standard business statements of policy. 'This is a competitive industry. We've got to protect what we have so we can sell the product.'

There was no real dialogue or discussion. The call to the testing industry for more social responsibility went unanswered.

Of course we have no home based commercial testing industry on the scale of Educational Testing Services. The batteries of our Assessment of Performance Unit are as yet unmasked and the Director of the NFER is saying soothing things about 'lightly scraping the surface' and not 'digging dirty great holes'. We could happily leave our American colleagues to their problems if the recent Green Paper had not stated:

'3.7. Local education authorities need to be able to assess the relative performance of their schools to reach decisions about staffing, the allocation of resources, and other matters. In particular, it is an essential facet of their accountability for educational standards that they must be able to identify schools which consistently perform poorly, so that appropriate remedial action can be taken.'

There is a reassuring codicil to this statement of intent—

'The danger (of league tables of school performances) will be recognised by local education authorities which are operating assessment practices (of whatever type) yielding results for their schools individually.'

Publicity temptations

My concern is that local education authorities were never entirely free agencies. They have on occasions been dominated by Directors of Education and over ruled by County Councils. It is not unknown for a Chairman of County Council to seek laurels for his county through education. What could be more prestigious than a County reading age above the national norm? The news media are not over scrupulous, the sensational takes precedence over the educational. In America there is concern at both the covert abuse of data and the

overt. The *New York Times* publishes the City's 'league table' of school attainments without any qualifying information. The scores are then used 'as weapons rather than tools of analysis'.

The American experience is more relevant to us than we might think and it is worth examining some of the comment evidenced in *The Myth of Measurability*.

Effects on Schools

Much of the American experience is only mirror image of our Payment by Results era, but we have grown complacent about those disastrous days and voices can be heard assuring us that they achieved something. This despite the historical evidence to the contrary. Bernard McKenna of the American National Education Association described the phenomena in two American School Districts where new school superintendents recently set out to get the 'local standards up or beyond the national averages' and vowed that students should show 'a year's growth in a year'. The Bakersfield superintendent made it clear that 'tests are a part of the evaluation of teachers and principals'. American teachers and principals responded to the challenge with the same devious tactics of our Victorian result paid forebears; 'some gave clues and answered questions'. Others, realising that to show a good year's growth you need to start with a low score, gave the Autumn tests 'rapidly and with little precision'. The end of year tests were of course given with meticulous care. Children showed more than a year's growth. Teachers were advised that if 'scores were inordinately poor they should not be turned in'. The physical reaction of the over-tested American children was similar to that recorded by Her Majesty Queen Victoria's Commissioner in Lunacy when reporting to the London School Board on 'Over-pressure', a phenomena of the payment by results era;

'examination day appropriated to itself much of the foreboding which used to be reserved for the Day of Judgement'.

In defending the practice of testing it is usual to assert that evaluation will not lead to 'teaching for the tests' and distortion of the curriculum. Our own history of education and the American experience indicate that it

is inevitable. The effect on schools of the Gadarene pursuit of 'improved standards' has damaged both teacher and taught. Experience indicates that it will be equally damaging here.

Content and Quality of the tests

The content of the tests is challenged by many of those who wrote exposing the Myth of Measurability. David Harman (Harvard) prefaced his criticism of reading tests with a latin tag 'Si Duo Idem Faciunt, Non Est Idem' which being translated means that if two children both manage 'Egg, book, little, tree' on a standardised reading test, it is not axiomatic that they have comparable reading ability. Most tests of reading or linguistic ability monitor the cognitive domain whilst ignoring the affective. Confining testing to the cognitive and motor skills 'skirts what might indeed be the main component of reading ability'. Affective factors defy standardisation yet they are the stronger influence on learning.

Where science testing is concerned a scientist from MIT (Edwin Taylor) has very simple advice:

'do not administer these elementary school science achievement tests'.

'any quick answer, paper and pencil science test that has consequences for the child or school is likely to be irrelevant and perhaps harmful to those activities most likely to interest children in science'.

To reinforce this point of view Taylor has selected samples from elementary school standardised tests and subjected them to the comment of a professional scientist. Of the multiple choice questions he claims that in eight of the fourteen questions cited *all* of the alternative answers given are scientifically correct. He enjoys himself for several pages with the more 'outrageous items gleaned from the science achievement tests examined - in each case the urge to comment is irresistible'. To the question on what would happen 'If the earth's axis were straight up and down instead of tilted' he innocently comments 'What is "straight up" in space?' You may say that 'of course children would know what the question meant' but if you have any potential scientists in a class they may wish to question rather than tick trite answer boxes.

We have some home based experience of nation wide science testing in the days of payment by results. The Science and Art Department tested and the inspectors were usually from the Corps of Royal Engineers. Conditions for teaching and testing could never have been more favourable yet the Cross Commission on Elementary Education (1886) was assured that the halcyon days of science teaching were before testing, when eccentric country parsons like Dawes and Henslow were anticipating Nuffield and making pop guns from elderberry stalks and asking children which feet did sheep use first when getting up from the ground – Answers were expected from the field and not the book.

Taylor as an MIT scientist indicts the standardised test because what they 'do best (namely to verify recognition of technical terms) is largely irrelevant to the enterprise of science as it is practised in real life. Moreover it is irrelevant to the process by which children are attracted to science'. His is not a negative approach. He is not opposed to evaluating:

'Let the elementary school classroom be rich with things and people that stimulate messing around and arrange to support projects that students find to be fun and power evoking. Evaluate the program – not the child – by asking sensitive visitors to sample the energy, attention and noise level of the classroom. Invite them to report on the plans, the playfulness and enthusiasm of the children, and the support systems of the materials'.

It is a prescription which may not commend itself to an APU but I suspect that it would have had the sympathy of HMI Canon Moseley back in the 'halcyon days'.

Judah Schwartz, another MIT professor of engineering science and education, is equally critical of both the content and rationale of current standardised mathematics tests. He finds it hard to understand 'why any constituency that is interested in achievement test scores should be satisfied that their children, teachers, schools, and school systems compare well or poorly with the publisher's norming group. It is particularly difficult to understand when, all too often, what is being compared is performance on wrong, ambiguous, misleading and trivial items'.

The Ethics of Testing

The Americans are happy to admit that 'No people on the face of the earth have been bitten quite as hard by

the testing bug as the Americans'. Sixty years ago the Standard Binet test was adopted to 'screen' immigrants. The test established that between 80% and 87% of the Jews, Russians, Hungarians and Italians awaiting entry on Ellis Island were 'feeble minded'. As a result it was possible not only dramatically to reduce immigration but also to justify the action by statistically valid, reliable and objective criteria. Of course the results of the testing are unacceptable today, but today's results will be equally unacceptable tomorrow.

It is this almost insidious use of test results that causes most concern. In education it means that the testers exert an irresponsible control in a domain that is not truly theirs. We are now beginning to break away from the control exercised by examining boards at secondary level. It will be a sad day if the current enthusiasm here for American style testing reverses that trend.

There appears to be a widespread and informed concern among responsible Americans at the state of the testing industry, its affect on the nation's education, and its overt and covert abuse. Banesh Hoffman, physicist and author of *The Tyranny of Testing* sums it up most succinctly.

'It seems obvious that test publishing despite its narrow technical domain, exerts an enormous bureaucratic tyranny. The activities of testers give rise to psychological trauma, contribute to dehumanisation, and bring to them a considerable measure of economics control over matters that should remain the province of scholars rather than business men.'

We have no native test businessmen, although at publishers' exhibitions I note a proliferation of imported tests. Nelsons now boast a Department of Measurement and Guidance, with a catalogue of its own. My concern is not with what is, but with what might be. It was said of a Midwestern state's total assessment programme that 'it had the promise of a snowball rolling down hill, no one knows how large it would become or where it would come to rest'. In this country we now have a small snowball with the same promise. I know that it is only a small snowball, but then to start with there were only three pairs of grey squirrels – and they were so attractive.

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Assessment and Testing at Local Level

Alan Evans and Arthur Jarman

Alan Evans and Arthur Jarman are officials at the Education Department of the National Union of Teachers and have been monitoring the policies of LEAs concerning testing and assessment in schools.

The 1944 Education Act, during its passage as a bill through the Commons, was described by R A Butler as a synthesis rather than a compromise:

'A synthesis between order and liberty, between local initiative and national direction, between the voluntary agencies and the state, between the private life of a school and the district it serves ...'

Notwithstanding the advocacy of the minister, local education authorities in England and Wales and the Department of Education and Science have developed a somewhat nebulous relationship. Such a relationship has permitted, over the last 30 years, the gradual evolution of local education authorities, rather like Darwin's finches, into a number of species where variation is the order of the day. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the arena of assessment and monitoring of school performance. Such variation reflects differences in the political beliefs and persuasions of those elected to serve on local council education committees in conjunction with the professional fortes and hobby horses of the staff of the Education Department, from Chief Education Officer down. It is not always based on educational considerations and too rarely meets the needs of the children for whom the education service is designed. The reactions of local education authorities with regard to testing and monitoring performance in schools range from those LEAs who are avidly in favour of testing every aspect of school performance to those who are equally vocal in their opposition to any form of externally imposed assessment, other than that carried out for the sole benefit of the individual teacher. The arrangements within LEAs for the assessment and monitoring of performance appear to form a continuum between these two extremes. It is possible to identify certain key points on the continuum which provide an overall view on the attitudes of LEAs and what they are actually implementing in the way of assessment and monitoring.

At one end of the continuum, and it would be a matter of subjective judgement to decide whether this point has a positive or negative value, there is a small and not very vocal cluster of LEAs who assert that no assessment and testing takes place and have no plans whatsoever

to subject the schools in the area to monitoring procedures. It is important to recognise, however, that all teachers should test, assess and monitor children's skills, abilities and knowledge. Diagnostic tests for screening purposes, to identify those children who are in need of special education or specialised programmes are carried out in schools throughout the country. And it is right that such tests should be carried out. Medical assessments are made at regular intervals by the school health service and the majority of primary schools in this country have a record card system, the completion of which involves assessment of the individual child by the class teacher. It is possible that authorities which claim that no measures for assessment of performance of children exist may have a restricted definition of the process of assessment and evaluation. It is perhaps not surprising that, in view of the amount of ill-informed debate on the subject, assessment and evaluation have come only to mean standards, norms, children failing or passing according to some fictitious, statistical national average. Local authorities should, however, examine carefully their policies and methods on diagnostic testing and screening with the guidance of those directly involved – the classroom teacher.

Moving along the continuum, the next group or cluster to be identified is characterised by the following statement from a local education authority:

'... at the present time the authority has no policy to introduce assessment of performance of children on the basis of testing. The only testing undertaken in our schools is that used for the purpose of transfer to secondary education.'

For those labouring under the illusion that the 11 plus has totally and irrevocably disappeared from the primary school – a few words of enlightenment. There are still local education authorities who demand that in the spring term blanket testing takes place throughout all schools for children in their fourth year at junior school. Some of these local authorities will claim that a sorting device is essential if the secondary school population is to be organised, banded or streamed, and it should be noted that such procedures are not allowed under the terms of the 1976 Education Act

other than those authorities already using them when the bill was enacted. Perhaps these authorities, many with an 'established' comprehensive secondary school system, can explain the difference between using the Moray House Verbal Reasoning Tests to select pupils for grammar school entry and using the Moray House Verbal Reasoning Test 'for the purposes of transfer to secondary education'. One is tempted to think that an authority's use of blanket testing at 11 plus is more for administrative convenience rather than the result of an educationally-based decision. The authorities who will now retain this system of testing, in order to appease those who call for LEAs to monitor standards and assess performance, would do well to heed the words of Mr D T E Marjoram (Head of the Assessment of Performance Unit), who stated that LEAs need only sample ten per cent of the school population to provide a regional picture and that testing of the individual child is best undertaken by the teacher. 'Blanket testing', Mr Marjoram warns, 'by an outside agent is wasteful, inefficient, expensive and possibly unacceptable with APU outcomes'. Recalcitrant authorities who have retained outmoded tests from the days of the 11 plus should not be permitted to mislead the public by claiming they are responding to the demands for assessment of performance and monitoring of standards.

Diagnostic screening

The next key point along the continuum embraces probably the majority of LEAs who share in the common belief that it is the teacher's task to teach and the LEA's task to administrate in such a way as to facilitate the teaching task and to make it as effective as possible. These are the local education authorities who have either, quite recently, or over a period of time, introduced authority-wide screening procedures and diagnostic tests:

'The authority has had for a number of years, a standardised screening procedure to identify children with reading difficulties'.
'At this present time there is a comprehensive screening procedure in operation which aims at identifying children who are at risk from an educational point of view.'

The Bullock Report (*Language for Life*, 1975) gave great emphasis to the importance of screening procedures, and rightly so. The report referred to the role of the

school health service in both curative and preventive medicine for young children and, faced with the glowing evidence of a nation of healthier children, proposed that '... it is now time to introduce a far more systematic procedure for the prevention and cure of educational difficulties... we have therefore considered carefully the proposal made to us by many witnesses that every LEA might institute a screening programme.'

Professional collaboration

The response to these proposals (and others included in the report) was the establishment of local working parties of teachers, educational psychologists and local authority administrators, to discuss and develop ideas and to formulate practical plans for future action. There were major problems inherent in screening at an early age and many questions needed to be resolved. It was recognised that such testing should lead to more efficient teaching – were the resources available to ensure that special educational attention would be given? What form would recording of these screening procedures and recommendations for action take – would this necessarily mean developing a standardised record card? How were the problems of self-fulfilling prophecies to be overcome, when diagnosis of possible learning difficulties was to be made at an early age? As standardised tests can only indicate narrow bands of ability, what additional tests and measuring devices should be used? Working parties throughout a number of LEAs consisting of teachers, LEA staff, educational psychologists and experts in test construction tackled these and other problems, systematically and thoroughly, eventually emerging with plans for screening and diagnostic procedures.

Clear objectives

This orderly, professional and dignified progress is a far cry from the hysterical, reactive response of some local authorities to the issues of testing and monitoring raised in the so-called Great Debate and the subsequent Green Paper. Those local authorities who have inaugurated diagnostic and screening procedures would seem to have very clear definitions in their corporate minds as to the meaning of assessment, monitoring and testing and have been able to make a clear distinction

between those three concepts and 'accountability'. In a number of authorities where screening procedures are in operation, frequently at the 7-plus level, the diagnostic tests provide not only the information regarding children with special education needs but are also a means by which an authority's remedial education service can be deployed effectively:

'... the test is administered by primary schools staffs under arrangements made by the county's area supervisory remedial teachers and has the support of all the professional teachers' organisations. The test results are used by the county educational psychological service as an aid to the early identification of handicap and are useful in assessing the amount of remedial help a school needs in terms of teacher staffing.'

A number of LEAs, clustered at the next point along the continuum appear to have over responded to the calls for local testing. They have, frequently under the guise of reforming the primary record card system of the authority, instituted a battery of tests to be carried out at various ages between 5 and 11 plus and the results of which can be neatly entered on the revised, up-dated and without exception, lengthier record card. That record cards are essential is not in question; teachers require basic knowledge about the pupils they are receiving in order to plan a curriculum suitable to the needs of individuals and some longitudinal profile of a pupil's progress, or lack of it, will provide useful guidelines for teachers at the secondary level. However, one should seriously question the format of a record card which for completion requires children aged 8 – 11 years to undergo a series of eight major tests as is the case in one local authority:

'The scores for mathematics, English and verbal reasoning to be recorded on the card should be those obtained from the NFER Standardised Tests given to the second year (8-9) and third year (9-10) pupils in May and to fourth year (10-11) pupils in January of each year.

For second year pupils the tests will be:
English Progress Tests B2
Mathematics Attainments Test B

For third year pupils the tests will be:
Verbal Test B
English Progress Test C2
Mathematics Attainment Test C3

For fourth year pupils the test will be:
Verbal Test B
English Progress Test D2
Mathematics Attainment Test DE1'

Both pupils and teachers at schools in this authority must become quite 'test-weary'. Frequently such authorities, indicating that they intend to enlarge their testing programme, have not found suitable test materials. In some areas, this has encouraged local working parties to devise tests and a positive spin-off from this has been the introduction and/or greater availability of in-service courses on test design and construction. If tests are to be developed to suit the needs of the schools, it would seem appropriate that the ideal 'test developer' is the teacher who is aware, not only of local and individual needs, but also of the constraints and impediments in terms of school resources, staffing levels and the actual testing situation, that have to be negotiated. It is heartening to see that a few local authorities have grasped this fundamental fact and have provided suitable courses in assessment and monitoring techniques. There are, however, some local authorities which have succumbed to the temptation to look for the cheapest tests.

Open consultation

Just as, at the opposite end of the continuum it was possible to identify a small cluster of LEAs who denied the existence of county-wide testing, it is also possible to isolate an equally small number of LEAs who are examining the issues of assessment and monitoring, not only in their proper perspective but in great detail. A few authorities have resisted the urge to flood their schools with tests, and have been justifiably resistant to responding to pressures to determine the cost-effectiveness of the local education system. Instead, these authorities have, via the use of committees and working groups, consulted freely and openly with teaching staff and have arrived at a greater clarification of philosophies, aims, objectives and problems centering on the issue of assessment and monitoring. What in actual fact will eventually develop from such classifications remains, of course, to be seen, but full consultation has taken place, the problems have been carefully analysed and the basic foundations have been laid.

The activities of local authorities in assessment, monitoring and testing present a varied picture and if there is any one factor which appears throughout LEAs with any measure of consistency, it must surely be the

Assessment in the Primary School

Stephen Rowland

Stephen Rowland teaches at Sherard Primary School in Leicestershire and was one of the team of speakers at the **Forum** conference on the primary school last June.

The current trends in education seem to suggest a return to more formal methods of assessment in schools involving greater testing, examining and reporting of children's progress. While many of us view this threat with some considerable anxiety, there seems to be little coherent expression of the part that assessment should play, and the form that it should take. I wish here to outline an approach to assessment that seems appropriate and supports educational requirements in a primary school.

But first to outline the argument against formal testing. Any tests which are designed and administered outside the classroom themselves play a large part in determining the curriculum. In its simplest form the teacher, anxious that his children should perform well in the forthcoming tests, concentrates his efforts on teaching those areas covered by the tests. In order to do this he must often set aside the children's particular interests and allow them only very limited freedom to choose their activities. Thus the authoritarian nature of tests determines, to some extent, that the classroom should reflect this authoritarianism.

Even if we were to believe (which I cannot) that the above was a price which must be paid in order to gain the 'objective validity' which society seems to demand, what exactly is it that such tests are able to test? Perhaps the ability to recall and use certain basic facts and skills –

but only within the narrow confines of the test, not the child's ability to apply these in his own world. Certainly these tests do not assess the development of creative intellect since this depends, for its expression, upon the present concerns of the child, his attitude and environment. The assumption behind tests which are aimed at 'grading' children and comparing them to some standard is that learning is a process, like climbing a ladder – a one-dimensional notion – whereas it is much more aptly compared to a developing lattice, expanding through many dimensions, with new connections being made and old ones being broken. To suppose that this lattice can be reduced to a number of independent ladders (one for each area of the curriculum) is completely to misunderstand the learning process and deny its interdisciplinary nature.

To summarise these points: the effect of an increase in testing in primary schools would be to measure accurately (and even this accuracy is in some considerable doubt) nothing of importance at great cost to the quality of education.

However, I would argue that assessment of some kinds is an essential part of teaching both in order to improve the opportunities for learning and from the point of view of accountability. I wish now to concentrate on this former aspect of assessment; in its role as an educational aid.

(Continued from page 77)

constant references by local authorities throughout the country to the work of the APU. Many authorities, within that central band on the continuum, view the APU as a panacea for all assessment ills, at local as well as national level. It would appear that only a few LEAs are perceptive enough to understand that it is a waste of resources to enter into competition with what the APU is doing nationally in the local authority, direct comparison of results will not be possible unless the tests and procedures used are fully comparable. The APU has adopted a cautious approach with a great deal of preparation and pilot testing. The unit has not allowed itself to be pushed too hastily into the activity of testing, which could result in the work of the APU becoming

meaningless and counter-productive. What the APU is *not* doing (and openly admits that it is incapable of doing) is the screening and diagnosing to identify individual children's problems and to aid in the effective deployment of resources – this is surely the area in which local authorities should be concentrating their resources and calling upon the expertise of the individual teacher.

It is a salutary thought that the attitudes of LEAs themselves appear to fall neatly under the bell-shaped curve of normal distribution – an interesting statistical device used frequently to represent the attainments of a population of children in a pictorial form. Tester test thyself.

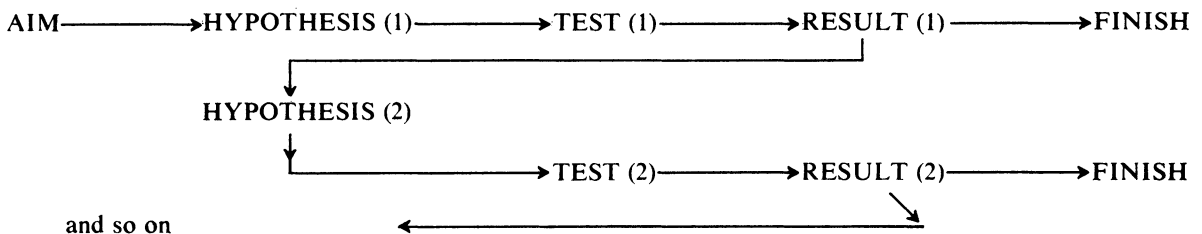
I shall call this suggested method of assessment 'monitoring'. Its main features, on which I shall expound, are:

- 1 It is child-centred.
- 2 It views the child's learning within the context of the environment.
- 3 It is a continual process inextricably linked with the day-to-day organisation of the classroom.

Being child-centred, monitoring is not concerned to compare children with some arbitrary or objective 'standard' or even with other children within the same group. It is concerned to detect growth, but not on the assumption that children should, or could, grow along the same paths. It is not just a question of children developing at different rates, but rather in different ways. Inasmuch as comparison enters into monitoring, it is in order to compare the child at present with the same child in the past. But even this comparison is not a quantitative one as would be the comparison resulting from tests performed by one child on different occasions. We are concerned to detect growth. This may consist of a widening of interest and application, an increase in the depth of understanding within a certain field, an increase in the complexity and subtlety of these ideas, the success with which they can be communicated. These are just a few of the aspects of intellectual growth. Then we have to consider growth in the areas of social and moral development.

No test could hope to measure these developments. They are developments which require continual assessment or monitoring, not just of the products of children's work, but more fundamentally of their activity. To give an example: it may well be that the most important aspect of a child's development in scientific and mathematical thinking is the development of his ability to set his own goals or aims, derive his own hypotheses for their solution, to test these hypotheses and then, if necessary, adjust the hypotheses and re-test, repeating the process if made necessary by further results.

Diagrammatically:



This intellectual 'skill' is of a different order to the kind of 'skills' tested by most tests. Its development can only be observed by observing the process itself. It is a process which we can observe amongst five-year-olds using sand, eight-year-olds using batteries and bulbs, or eleven-year-olds designing and building a working model. Its success and development is certainly enhanced when the child chooses his own aim, a possibility not catered for in tests, and not encouraged in classrooms where the teacher is over-anxious to ensure that his children come 'up to standard' in tests. By observing children involved in these kinds of situations, we are able to assess more than the ability to solve a given problem along given lines (as in tests). It involves the whole series of features of learning: interest, approach, ability to use acquired skills appropriately and successfully. The emphasis is on the creative use to which a child is able to put his skills. It is through this creative use of skills that the skills themselves are developed.

Delusions of objectivity

So-called 'objective' testing views the child as 'possessing', in vacuo, certain skills and knowledge which are to be tested. This may be a reasonable assumption if we are only considering the most superficial of skills and knowledge. If we are concerned with understanding, awareness and creativity, it is quite clear that the child's 'ability' varies considerably according to the environment in which he finds himself. Thus one child will be at his most successful in a completely unstructured classroom without any adult guidance, another would feel lost in such an environment. One child will need many and varied materials to arouse his interest and creativity, another will respond more readily to discussion and written stimuli. The exam attempts to neutralise the variable of environment by standardising exam con-

ditions – conditions which are alien to even the most formal of classrooms. It thus avoids making an assessment of what should be assessed, that is, the child's ability in his environment. What I have called monitoring would aim to assess the child *and* his environment, rather than the child divorced from his environment. A 'positive' assessment would not indicate a 'positive' (able, bright, high I.Q., etc.) child, but rather a positive match between the child and his environment – that is, a match that provides the child with a fertile environment in which he can flourish. A 'negative' assessment would indicate a mismatch. The aim of monitoring is to provide the teacher with clues so that he can adjust the environments of the children to suit their particular individual needs. I use the word 'environments' in the plural here since every child has a different environment, partly due to the difference in the way the teacher intervenes with each child, and partly due to the fact that the child's own environment is largely determined by his conception of and use of the total environment.

Since monitoring aims to assess the child and his individual environment, the assessment is also one of teaching (the teacher being responsible for and having considerable influence upon the child's environment).

From what has been said, it is clear that monitoring has to be conducted on a day-to-day basis, and is an essential part of teaching and planning. Exactly how it is put into effect would of course depend upon the teacher's individual style. However it may be of some use briefly to outline the way in which I try to put it into practice.

A personal strategy

It seems to me to be important to allow oneself enough time in the classroom to observe. I try to make sure that every day I spend at least a quarter of an hour either observing the class in general, or concentrating on an individual or group. During this period I try to avoid getting involved with the children's individual problems. This kind of 'objective' or 'non-involved' observation provides some basis for assessment of the total environment and the children's apparent response to it: for example, the availability of materials, the level of absorption of the individual children in their work, the children's interaction. But one cannot get beyond the

superficial appearance of the children's learning by this kind of observation since one is 'objective to' or 'outside' the learning processes themselves. The more thorough assessment of individuals is part of the normal intervention with the children's work. The children being given almost complete freedom to choose their own activities, this interaction often consists in helping them with their plans, discussing their intentions and work and where necessary suggesting further activities. The monitoring process is continued at the end of the afternoon, when the class group meets together and, among other things, some children tell the group about anything they have particularly enjoyed doing, perhaps show or read their work, and consider what they want to start on the next morning. I make a brief list of the children and their planned activities for the following day, partly so that I can make any preparations necessary, partly so that I can remind them the next morning if they have forgotten. I also use this as an opportunity to make sure that no-one has got 'left-out'. Perhaps there is the occasional child that I haven't worked with for a concentrated period for a few days, in which case I make a note to get involved with him next day.

Written profiles

I have purposely not mentioned written records up till now because I don't believe them to be among the essential aspects of monitoring. They may be required in order to inform parents, future teachers, heads of departments and head teachers of the children's development. For this purpose it may well be necessary (as it is for me) to build up a profile on the individual children by recording the more striking or more general developments as revealed in the day-to-day monitoring.

There seems to be a popular misconception that an assessment gains 'objectivity' and thus 'validity' through being officially recorded and preferably recorded as a number or grade which is the result of a test. This belief lends support to a style of teaching that constricts children and thereby suppresses the very development that it claims to measure. I hope that I have suggested a type of assessment that gains its validity by being a fundamental part of that process of growth which it is designed to enhance.

The Constructive use of examination results

Jim Eggleston

Professor J F Eggleston, of the University of Nottingham School of Education, has contributed articles on examinations and assessment to **Forum** vol 13 no 2, vol 14 no 1, vol 16 no 2 and vol 18 no 3.

The financial investment in the examination of pupils in secondary schools in England and Wales is probably larger, as a percentage of all monies spent on education, than in most countries. Society and teachers (as the Beloe Report showed) demand descriptions of pupils' attainments which enjoy a claim to have national currency.

In order to achieve comparability and the kind of descriptions of attainment which facilitate selection to the next tier of educational opportunity, procedures are adopted which yield *apparently* straight forward descriptions of attainment. In Biology and fine art, in physics and history attainments are reduced to a crude, one-dimensional scale, for this purpose. The testing procedures are, in fact, normative, that is to say, designed so as to discriminate between candidates and distribute their scores (marks) in some approximation to a Normal distribution.

Confused purposes

So long as the intention is to satisfy entry requirements to Higher Education then such procedures are defensible. However, even for this purpose, it is arguable that assessment procedures carried out by the examination boards while exhibiting administrative and statistical sophistication lack the refinement necessary for accurate prediction of student attainment at higher levels. If the improvement of teaching were to become a function of assessment then the descriptions of attainment at present available are totally inadequate. Normative testing is designed to compare the performance of one student with another. This purpose can be secured without reference to absolute standards. It is not necessary to identify performance criteria which will be achieved by pupils whose learning has been effective. The results of normative tests are reported in terms which are uninformative; as scores, grades or percentile ranks. They do not provide the kind of information upon which our teachers may act in order either to diagnose pupils' strength and weaknesses or to change their teaching strategies. It can be argued that tests built on different

principles should be designed for these purposes, but if the expensive apparatus of national examination is a permanent feature on the educational scene then the possibility of extracting more and useful information from them should be explored.

The traditional mechanism of normative test construction and item analysis are most explicitly formulated in the development of objectively marked tests. Items are written and selected so as to achieve an across the board sample of syllabus content and those intellectual processes which operationalise the course objectives. In ideal circumstances the items are pre-tested on a sample of pupils drawn at random from the population to be examined.* Items are then further selected for inclusion in the final version of the test so that the average score will be about 50% and the candidates will be adequately spread along a single scale of attainment. Items which are too easy or too difficult, which would provide useful information for teachers, are useless in normative tests and are eliminated. Items of middling difficulty are selected provided that they can be used to predict whole test scores with reasonable accuracy. Obviously, by this means the resulting test will come to consist of items which have some claim to equivalence, (sometimes called rational equivalence) insofar as each, demonstrably contributes to 'what the test measures,' which is attainment reduced to a single dimension. A moment's thought will show that such a procedure does some mischief to the idea with which the test constructor started, that was to sample both knowledge and the variety of intellectual skills required to master the subject. The test constructors in their quest for a normative test of attainment have made an assumption which may not be warranted, that performances in qualitatively *different* skills are positively and reasonably highly correlated.

Discrete sub-tests

There are alternative strategies for test construction in which pre-test items could be grouped or clustered according to the similar demands the members of each group make on candidates. This technique (commonly

used in the analyses of attitude measuring instruments) allows the possibility that attainment in a given discipline is more-than-one dimensional. The effect of this procedure is to produce a series of sub-tests each 'measuring something distinctive.' Arguments sometimes advanced against this sort of development are, that the consumers of examination results would not understand the more comprehensive descriptions of attainment which would then become available; that the track record of empirical investigations in this field indicate at best cautious optimism and that sub-tests which in many cases might contain relatively few items will be unreliable.**

Protagonists point to the gains in information which could potentially refine placement and selection procedures and provide feed-back for teachers so that they might observe some effects of their teaching. Changes of this kind may be for the future. The more important concern is with the present. Is there any means by which information available now could be accessed for the improvement of teaching? It is my belief that it can.

Useful feed-back

Consider the case of an examination board with, say, 9,000 candidates who are given a test of subject X consisting of 100 items. If the average O-level class consists of, say, 30 pupils then 9,000 x 100 bits of information will be potentially available relating to individual pupils, and 300 x 100 bits of information relating to class performance. The typically normative test produces only 9,000 bits of information ie the whole test scores or grades for each candidate. It is suggested that this is very poor information pay-off from the examination. The diagram illustrates different levels at which information could be tapped from the examination system.

Information available in an examination

CLASS		INDIVIDUAL PUPIL
WHOLE TEST	300	9,000
SUB TEST		
Say 4.	12,000	36,000
ITEM	30,000	90,000 Bits of information

The figure 90,000 in the bottom right hand corner represents the total pool of information, ie the score of

every pupil on every item. The figures on the top right hand represents data typically available to teachers, the scores on the whole test of their pupils and hence their classes. Such data could be and usually is, related to the examined population ie norm referenced. If, however, sub-tests had been extracted from the whole test more information would be available. Consequences of four sub-tests, being identified, is illustrated in the middle row. The teacher could decide how far the outcomes measured by the sub-tests were consistent with his intentions and compare the performance of his class with that of the population tested, or with his own expectations. Even more information becomes available at the level of test items. In effect each item is a sub-test where $N = 1$ and, therefore, as the test analyst will be quick to point out, an unreliable measure. But this concept of reliability is related to the relationship between one item and other items contributing to the test, it is irrelevant to other purposes. For a teacher, the ability of his class to respond appropriately to a particular item is an important bit of information. If his class has learnt what he has tried to teach them then he might quite reasonably expect them to 'get the item right,' and if they do not, or if they fall below standards achieved by pupils taught on similar courses by other teachers, he will have cause to reflect on his teaching methods.

With the computer facilities currently available it will only be lack of commitment to the idea and financial constraints which inhibit the development of means of access to this useful information. The advantage of such a system over the present whimsical feed-back of examiners' reports and expensive private reports to schools is indisputable. Teachers would know from year to year how far their expectation of pupils' attainment matches their actual performance. The language used to communicate these findings would not be the foggy semantics of 'standards' or the 'precise but vague' technical terminology of percentile ranks, but in terms of 'how many members of my class successfully completed this item.'

Teacher assessment

I have argued previously in *Forum* that the potentially most error free assessment of attainment is conducted by teachers. The potential can be realised only when effective moderating procedures are available, and when teachers

Pre-requisites for teaching the disadvantaged

Vernon Broussard

Vernon Broussard taught mathematics in American secondary school and community college programmes and held various advisory posts before moving to administrative positions at the California State Department of Education, where he was manager of the Reform of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RISE) project. He is now Associate Professor of Education at the University of Southern California. This article was written for the Californian context but presents ideas of much wider relevance.

Many urban educators have worked from the assumption that programmes hold the key to successful educational development of disadvantaged children. My experiences, however, indicate that there are other variables which undoubtedly influence the level of achievement. My basic contention is that the significant variable in these situations is the adjustment of teachers who are the vehicles through which the programmes must be transmitted to students. My position essentially is that, unless teachers are fundamentally sound in terms of their orientation towards the inner-city, and, unless they have certain attitudes, the educational programme cannot achieve its objectives. To this end, I'd like to suggest that there are six pre-requisites to successful teaching in any inner-city or disadvantaged school, and that these pre-requisites must be the foundation upon which the educational philosophy of the personnel in the school is based if programmes introduced into disadvantaged schools are to have any impact on the educational development of the students.

First of all, if teachers are to be successful in the disadvantaged school, we must realize that the failures we are experiencing there are not attributable to the dynamics existing in the community and its surrounding environmental forces, but to our inability to analyze

those dynamics, and subsequently to utilize them in classroom situations. Generally speaking, we avoid shouldering the responsibility for our failures; rather, we assume that the causes for such failures result from some genetic intellectual inferiority of the students or to some social pathology existing in the environment in which disadvantaged children live. Far too many teachers apparently believe that disadvantaged youngsters lack the native intellectual ability to function effectively in school. This conclusion is based upon observations of what teachers actually do in target schools, rather than on what they say they do. The research indicates that one of the gravest problems of all faced by school systems with large concentrations of disadvantaged children is a deeply ingrained belief that such children have less ability to learn than other children. The attitude that large numbers of children are uneducable gives teachers an easy way out if they work where most of their students score in the bottom fifth of the nation on standardized reading tests.

Although a large percentage of disadvantaged school teachers believe that the students are intellectually inferior to other students, a far larger number ascribe the failures of education in these situations to some kind of social pathology existing in the life style of their students and their parents. These teachers function on the assumption that there is something pathologically wrong with the children's environment and, ultimately, with their culture. Further, they tend to believe that the experiences evolving from a different life style are innately bad and negative. This belief is evident in the terms we use to describe children from oppressed situations, 'culturally deprived', culturally disadvantaged, and the like. In many instances, educators are beginning to demonstrate some perception in this area, for such terms are being replaced by others; however, the attitudinal and behavioural changes which must accompany the change in terminology have not developed. The approaches which teachers continue to use in disadvantaged schools

(Continued)

can continually refine their assessment skills and procedures. If examination boards or the APU were to release information of the kind indicated here, at least some of the conditions for effective teacher assessment would be met. Ultimately more important is the information which would become available to teachers to facilitate analysis of and reflection on the effects of their teaching.

* Recent development in test technology seem to render this stringent condition unnecessary.

** Reliability of the test is a function of the number of items it contains.

are both culturally arrogant and biased. What is suggested is not a black or brown or Indian curriculum; what is suggested is tailoring the modes and techniques of instruction to the strengths of particular children. The school must take the life styles of the various ethnic and racial groups in the disadvantaged school seriously as a condition and a pattern of experience, not just a contemptible and humiliating set of circumstances from which the children should be anxious to escape. It must accept their language, their dress, their values, as a point of departure for discipline exploration to be understood, not as a trick for enticing them into the dominant culture, but as a way of helping them to explore the meaning of their own lives. This is the way to nurture potentialities from whatever ethnic or racial group or social class and the first pre-requisite.

Schools' failings

Teachers in the disadvantaged school must accept the fact that the failures of many inner-city children are actually due to the inability of the school and staff to be responsive to the experiences and cultural strengths of the children as they presently exist. If we intend to be successful in this setting, teachers must go through cognitive and affective learning processes which enable them to identify the cultural strengths and the life styles of their students so they can alter programmes and approaches to reflect the children's cultural orientation.

The second pre-requisite to successful teaching in the disadvantaged school is an expansion of the function of the school. Since western societies are highly industrialised, the main purpose of urban as well as other schools has many managerial functions. That is to say, the major function of the school has been to prepare youngsters to serve productive roles in society. Since one of the major criteria for productivity is the degree to which one is able to procure and maintain employment, the major function of the school has been to prepare youngsters for jobs. There is nothing wrong with the school having as one of its functions the preparation of youngsters for the world of work. It is definitely a legitimate and viable goal. But, when we observe that most black, Spanish-speaking, and Indian youngsters served by the schools are not prepared to function productively in society, we must conclude that there is a problem somewhere. When we realise that the per-

centages of minority-group youngsters composing the unemployment rolls far outnumber their part in the total population, and that fewer than half the youngsters in disadvantaged communities entering high school actually graduate, we are forced to conclude that there must be an alternative approach that is presently operative.

Self-esteem

Because unemployment and drop-out rates among 'minority groups' have become alarmingly high, schools have raised a number of questions. However, few, if any, of these questions have been concerned with whether or not disadvantaged schools should give managerial function top priority to offset this trend. I suggest that the school serving in the inner-city must recognise and respect the traditional values of their students and give traditional functions top priority. That is to say that a school must serve the collective memory of the community with which it is working. It must preserve the consciousness of the individuals as a link with the past and the present and the future. It must assume as its major function the development of self-esteem in youngsters through some identity. Research results have shown that it is only after the person begins to value his connection with the group, a tie which he cannot sever under any circumstances, only after he realises that he is important as a member of the group into which he was born, that he begins to value himself or that he develops self-esteem, and it is an established fact that self-esteem is the major success factor in any situation. The schools, through teachers, must support and encourage cultural values, for it is only after these traditional functions have been served adequately that one can expect to serve managerial functions effectively. If teachers expect to be successful in the disadvantaged school, the second adjustment which they must make is to expand the function of the school to include an emphasis on cultural and heritage values of its students.

The third pre-requisite involves the relationship between teacher expectations and student performance. All teachers, regardless of where they teach, must constantly evaluate the relationship between the rewards they issue and the behaviour for which such rewards are given. This evaluation, however, is especially significant for teachers of the disadvantaged.

Historically, starkly disenfranchised groups in America, especially black people, have been informed, directly and indirectly, that success for them will come if they are obedient, humble, respectful, and well-behaved. Such assumptions so permeate our society and the institutions responsible for preparing teachers, that many teachers in disadvantaged schools function thereon without realising the basis of their behaviour. However, they do, in fact, operate at all levels of the educational system.

In most instances in the disadvantaged schools, the prevailing emphasis is on conformity rather than creativity, on discipline rather than independence, and on quiet order rather than on the joy of discovery. I strongly suggest that teachers in disadvantaged schools must determine whether they reward youngsters who conform, are obedient and respectful, or those who perform. The behaviour the teacher awards is the behaviour she expects. I suggest that teachers should expect achievement from their youngsters; look for ability, responsibility, initiative, and creativity, and reward it. Teachers in urban classrooms must treat their pupils with as much dignity and respect as other human beings.

Teacher accountability

The fourth pre-requisite is an understanding of the teacher's role in a given school and community and a willingness to accept such. Teachers in disadvantaged communities must understand and accept the fact that they are servants of the community. They are working with that community's most valuable commodity, its children; therefore, community people have a right to question the teacher's performance and activities, and the teacher has an obligation to respond.

Parents of the children in the disadvantaged school are not interested in how professionals serving them accomplish their tasks; they merely want their children educated. If a teacher does not facilitate this process, if he does not do the job the community he serves wants done, then he has no business functioning in that community at all. Teachers must accept the fact that they are serving at the pleasure of a given community, and not at that community's expense, presently the case of many inner-city situations.

The fifth pre-requisite to successful teaching in the inner-city classrooms relates to the teacher's attitudes

toward professional responsibilities. The loyalties of teachers must be to the students and parents for whom they work and the profession in which they work, but not to the system or to their personal careers. Far too often in urban educational situations, the teacher's orientation tends to be upward to administrative superiors rather than across the local community to their clients. In a sense, teachers must make decisions which are educationally sound for the youngsters with whom they work, irrespective of whether or not such decisions coincide with the demands of the system.

Tackling irrelevances

One of my responsibilities over the past several years has been to work with teachers who are already employed in disadvantaged schools. One of the most interesting phenomenon I have experienced in these situations is the extensive complaining these individuals have done or do about situations existing in their school settings which handicap their endeavours. Inevitably, someone in the group will allude to one of four major problems: (1) The biases of standardised achievement test; (2) The irrelevancy of textbooks; (3) The incompetency of school administrators; (4) The illogical procedures developed to evaluate the process of teaching.

When these problems, as well as others, are identified, I remind the group that success in their endeavours will only come when they assume definite positions in terms of each one of these problems and when they are willing to push for the necessary changes in light of their stands.

If teachers in disadvantaged schools feel that standardised achievement tests are ineffective in evaluating the progress, strengths, and weaknesses of their students, they must decide that those tests must be discontinued, and they must refuse to administer them. They must, however, be able to suggest other ways of accomplishing what the tests attempt but fail to do.

If teachers feel that the textbooks provided for their classes are oriented to a style of life completely foreign to that experienced by their students, they must assume the position that such textbooks can no longer be used in their classrooms. They must illustrate the irrelevancy of such materials and work for the development and utilisation of materials which capitalise on the cultural strengths of their youngsters, consequently increasing the possibilities of success.

If teachers feel that the function of an administrator is to facilitate their professional growth and to provide an educational atmosphere in which they can be productive, but as is too often the case, prescribe activities, restrict their behaviour, they must join forces with the community to see to it that such administrators are relieved of their responsibilities at the earliest possible date and search for other administrative organisational patterns to accomplish their purposes.

If teachers feel that the evaluation of educational processes in the various classrooms should be the responsibility of their teaching colleagues rather than that of an administrator who seldom, if ever, is in a position to observe that process in action, they must be willing to take affirmative actions in light of such beliefs by suggesting alternatives, facilitating the restructuring of present teacher-evaluation procedures.

All of this is a way of saying that teachers must become professionally oriented rather than career oriented. For they can only be successful in their endeavours in the disadvantaged school when it is clearly understood by parents and students that teachers are committed to providing the best educational opportunities possible for the children.

Success orientation

The sixth pre-requisite to successful teaching in disadvantaged classrooms relates to the strategy and attitude of ensuring success in these classrooms. If teachers are to be successful in disadvantaged school situations, they must destroy the failure syndrome existing there and institute methods and procedures which will ensure the success of all youngsters in the classroom. Teachers in such situations must realise that all youngsters have strengths and, consequently, will achieve if methods and materials used in classroom situations will facilitate the development of such strengths. Teachers must develop attitudes which force them to feel directly responsible for the failure of any youngsters to experience some personal, social, and intellectual growth while they are in their classes.

Urban schools have unique ways of shifting the responsibility for the failures existing there from their own shoulders to someone else's. High School teachers claim their youngsters were not provided with a sound foundation in Elementary School. Teachers at the upper

elementary grades blame the lower elementary teachers for failure to teach youngsters the basic skills, and lower grade teachers claim the youngsters were not prepared for school when they enrolled and pass the blame on to the home. If our schools in urban areas are to serve youngsters in some meaningful fashion, the rationalisation of failures existing there must be eliminated and each teacher must dedicate himself to seeing to it that youngsters achieve.

Classroom strategies

Teachers may accomplish this goal in many different ways, and what will work for one person will not necessarily work for another. There is one approach, however, which I feel has considerable merit. I offer it here merely as the foundation upon which one can build to facilitate the educational development of all youngsters in the classroom. If, however, this approach is utilised faithfully, the classroom will be relieved of the dullness it presently is endowed with and will be transformed into a productive, lively, and enjoyable place for both teachers and students.

The first step is to announce to everyone at the beginning of the school year or semester that no one will fail, and mean it. Remind the children that they have been promoted to the present grade level because they successfully accomplished the necessary tasks in the previous grade; consequently, they have come for the purpose of learning what there is to learn in this grade, and that everyone will achieve that goal. This step attempts to give the students positive attitudes towards their activities during the year by releasing their anxiety over the possibility of failure. Many children in disadvantaged schools refuse to participate because, whenever they have become involved with the school on previous occasions, they have failed. This step then seeks to open the door of the classroom to all the children, intellectually as well as physically.

The second step is to conduct a comprehensive, diagnostic assessment of each child's special strength and educational needs. The needs assessment must include the cognitive and non-cognitive areas alike, such as learning styles and the norms, the values, the beliefs, the language, that are positive in the individual participant's background. Based upon my observations in the state, we are making excellent progress in the area of

needs assessment and diagnosis in the cognitive areas; however, such is not the case in the non-cognitive areas or in the affective domain. Many theoretical myths concerning cultural and verbal deprivation have been put forth by nationally respected educational psychologists, such as Martin Deutsch, Erwin Katz, Carl Bereiter, Siegfried Engelman, and others who state that educationally disadvantaged children lack the favorable factors in their environment which enable middle-class children to do well in school. These myths of verbal and cultural deprivation are particularly dangerous because they divert the attention away from the real defects in the educational system to imaginary defects in the child. It leads its sponsors, as I mentioned earlier, and once again in my opinion, to the hypothesis of the genetic inferiority of these children which the deprivation theories were designed to avoid. Hence, attention in our needs assessment must include the non-cognitive areas.

Number three, the presence of specific instructional performance objectives. These are objectives that can be assigned as learning tasks to individual children.

Number four, individual prescriptions. These are prescriptions that are based upon the needs assessment.

Number five, multi-faceted and multi-dimensional classroom interventions. These interventions include individual, small-group and large-group activities, the use of a variety of manipulative materials, instructional aides, parent tutors, student tutors, and a clear statement of the activities planned to achieve the objectives.

Number six, the presence of continuous process evaluation procedures. These would be activities necessary to accomplish the objectives. These process evaluation procedures ensure that each specific performance objective, that is, the learning task, is thoroughly mastered before a subsequent performance objective is started.

And last, the continuous progress of each participant along a continuum of hierarchical objectives.

Teachers who consider using this approach must be flexible in terms of group composition and in establishing performance criteria. The success of the approach depends upon the extent to which the teacher is able to comfortably fulfill the resource role and is perceptive in assessing the activities of individuals and groups and the significance of individual and group activity which does not always appear to be task oriented.

Teacher orientation

In summary, I suggest that teachers who expect to be successful in disadvantaged schools must make six basic adjustments: (1) Accept the fact that the school is failing to adjust to the expressed needs and cultural orientations of disadvantaged children. (2) Expand the function of the school so that traditional values of the students receive top priority in all aspects of the school's program. (3) Emphasise creativity, performance, responsibility, and initiative rather than just conformity and order. (4) Understand the nature of their servant role in the community and accept such. (5) Become professionally oriented, rather than career oriented. (6) Structure classroom activities in such a way that student success will be insured. This structuring, I believe, should be based upon a comprehensive, individualised, diagnostic-prescriptive approach.

When these six adjustments have been made, it can be predicted that the degree of success experienced by disadvantaged school teachers will be greatly increased.

Editor's Note

Forum vol 20 no 1 (1977) was a **Special Number on Multiracial Education** in primary and secondary comprehensive schools, with articles on biculturalism, language and neighbourhood links.

See back cover for how to obtain it.

Streamed and Nonstreamed

Roger Seckington

A member of the **Forum** Editorial Board, Roger Seckington appraises the recently published study, **Ability Grouping: The Banbury Enquiry** by David Newbold (1977) NFER. £4.75 pp 125.

The 'grouping for education' debate has lacked detailed evidence from educational research about the effects of streaming or mixed ability grouping. Most notable so far was the comprehensive 1966 report by Yates in **Grouping in Education** giving a detailed summary of research studies to that date. Other studies of the effects of ability grouping in schools include Barker Lunn followed by Ferri (NFER) looking at primary schools, and Ford looking at social aspects in comprehensive schools. The Banbury Enquiry a 'comparative controlled study of the effects of homogeneous and heterogeneous ability grouping in the junior stage of secondary education' is the latest detailed study in this field. The study draws its data from Banbury School and is a controlled investigation bearing some similarities to the large scale investigations carried out in Stockholm in the late 50s and early 60s.

Banbury School has a 'basic federal organisation of separate Halls working to a common curriculum'. The Halls are matched both socially and academically.

At the time of the study two of the Halls were streamed in the first year and two Halls employed a mixed ability grouping organisation. The research examined the differences which emerged between the two grouping systems. As the final sentence of the report states 'The problems of mixed ability grouping face all comprehensive schools: the conclusions from this study may well be of considerable interest in many of them as well as Banbury'. Indeed they will, for many of the aspects so carefully researched and the conclusions that have been drawn from this research confirm the personal observations of many teachers and provide the kind of firm evidence so urgently needed at this time.

What are these conclusions?

Social integration

The study first looked at the allocation procedure on transfer from primary to secondary. It was found that for the purposes of the enquiry the system of allocation to the Halls was generally satisfactory. An important result of this part of the investigation was to highlight 'that there are residual effects from different primary schools, even at the end of the first secondary school year, whatever the grouping system into which the children have been placed'.

A concern for social integration has always been a major consideration in the movement away from fine streaming. The divisive nature of streaming was pointed out by Hargreaves amongst others. Teachers often remark on the general improvement in class control and atmosphere that comes with mixed ability grouping. There has always been, however, less certainty as to whether or not pupils from different social backgrounds and abilities do mix. The Banbury Enquiry, whilst recognising that academic ability is a factor in friendship choice in either system, particularly in the streamed system, claims that there is 'clear evidence of more wide-ranging friendship choice in the mixed ability situation'. 'The analyses support the view that at least

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in the short term and within the school context, mixed ability grouping at first year level provides more effective integration between pupils of different abilities and backgrounds than does streaming'.

Academic standards

In the grouping debate the crunch has always come over the question of relative academic progress within the two systems. A traditional view put forward is that the more able will be held back in a mixed ability situation, or that the less able pupils will be lost. This study, as did the earlier NFER and Swedish studies, demonstrated that 'academic standards are generally comparable in the two systems of ability grouping'. 'There are academic differences, particularly some advantages for less able children in mixed ability forms, but these do not mask the overall similarities of the results from the two grouping systems'. The section of this study dealing with academic progress is detailed and considers separate subject areas. As with the earlier studies the role of the teacher is demonstrated as being of paramount importance, and 'varying teacher-class interactions have a markedly greater initial influence on the secondary school progress than does the type of grouping'.

Flexibility

Practising teachers will, I suspect, be very interested in the section 'More Individualised Approaches'. This examines aspects like behaviour, motivation, parental support and expectation, individualised learning, teacher-dependent learning and the personality of the pupil. By a process of more personal observation the study shows that the type of grouping system has little or no influence on the academic progress of an individual child. Yet the study suggests that mixed ability grouping is a more flexible system which allows the child to make a realistic personal assessment and 'not one based on the reputation of the particular class in which he is placed'.

Because the method of enquiry is primarily objective and compares two systems of organisation this is a valuable study. The conclusions might well not have

supported those who favour a mixed ability organisation, but in the event they do. The study indeed questions whether pupils 'can be streamed on entry to secondary school with any real hope of reliability in terms of academic achievement or more particularly of potential'.

This study is concerned with the first two years of secondary schooling. A second phase of the enquiry is now being undertaken at Banbury.

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New Teachers

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Communication with parents

Warwick Shipstone

Warwick Shipstone has taught English in both tiers, High School and Upper School, of the Leicestershire comprehensive secondary system and is now a Deputy Principal at Wreake Valley College which caters for the whole secondary age range.

If you have about 1,200 pupils in your secondary school the chances are you will have over 2,000 parents out there in your catchment area – a small townfull of diverse individuals – albeit many of them bonded in pairs – who fall into almost as many categories as there are individuals.

But, broadly speaking, parents come in readily recognisable types: the most common, of course, is the normal, sensible and co-operative sort, but there is also the ‘it-was-all-so-different-when-I-was-at-school’ type – bewildered, hurt even to discover that their child is an apparent schizophrenic – angel at home, devil in school. Then there is the ‘I-know-my-rights’ type who will write to the Minister for Education, the Director of Education and the local press (not necessarily in that order) at the drop of a standard. Aggressive and thoroughly convinced of rectitude, they clamour for cane, prayers, grammar (Latin) and the sacking of incompetents. Finally there is the invisible but not silent minority. They never come to see you but their grumbles reverberate about the neighbourhood.

It is obvious that communicating in a meaningful way with so many and so varied a mass of ‘customers’ is very difficult. Oh, it’s easy enough sending out letters via the children giving dates of holidays and appealing for support of the minibus fund, but broaching important school issues is another matter. Even in the former type of missive the old adage that ‘information is not communication’ is so true. How many reams of paper have been wasted on letters beginning ‘Dear Parents’ eventually finding their way into gutters or down drains as paper aeroplanes? Even those information letters that do reach home are open to misinterpretation. A recent pre-Christmas epistle I sent out issued a customary guarded warning about consuming alcohol on the school premises and its dire consequences. Several parents thought I was having a seasonal joke!

The crux of the problem in communicating between school and parents is partly the lack of over-view parents have. This is illustrated by the result of my ‘drink’ letter – most parents could not conceive of their children (and therefore other people’s children) taking

alcohol into school. Another paradox appears here – parents are at once totally interested in their own children but at the same time unable to assimilate the effect of the experience of the institution on these children. The very institution itself is at fault in poor communications with the outside world.

Secondary schools are large, complex and impersonal. How many primary schools have such problems? It may be a case of the grass being greener but it always seems to me that parents’ evenings, PTAs, fund-raising efforts etc go much better at primary schools which have a much smaller set of parents. The head teacher who can stand up and address all of the parents in the school hall is fulfilling a primary communicative function. On a sensory level they can see and hear him – very important this in the days when a head is often heard but not seen. They can also ‘feel’ his/her personality and even ‘perceive’ his/her qualities – all so much more human than what can be deduced from a reprographically produced circular. There is no doubt that face to face contact is unbeatable and should go on as much as possible in every school.

Open evenings

However, a much more difficult task is to involve parents in the general, educational processes not those related solely to their own child’s needs. This, of course, can be attempted by open evenings where departmental philosophies are expounded and where parents can challenge the validity of what is being done in, say, ‘new’ maths, or can express their fears about how sex education is being dealt with. An open platform type of communication has its disadvantages – a panel of teachers facing a large crowd of parents can feel like a row of aunt Sallies and the ensuing dialogue can polarize very rapidly. My first experience of such a meeting with parents was a near disaster. Thrust forward as a new, young and ‘progressive’ English teacher about to expound his philosophy, I found that the parents had heard me say,

'spelling does not matter' when, in fact, I had said 'spelling does not matter as much as enjoying the experience of writing.' I found myself being shot at from all directions, and eventually had to be rescued by a kindly parent (incidentally, also a Leicestershire headmaster) who suggested a sensible middle course.

This middle course may bring us to the heart of the matter: teachers and educationalists often find it difficult to push forward trends in education because they seem so absolute and progressive; parents are much more conservative and need to feel solid ground under their feet. The compromise is probably the tightrope – a favourite analogy of my present head – picking a narrow and precarious line between what parents and society want now and what educationalists want for the future.

Three-way consultation

In the early years of Wreake Valley's existence, several problems occurred which upset this delicate balance. Anxiety begat Rumour and 'which of you will stop the vent of hearing when loud Rumour speaks?': therefore with anxiety the prime factor and rumour not a little rife, an experimental body was set up at Wreake to 'explore and discuss matters in the College which are of concern.' The group was made up, uniquely, of parents, teachers and governors. There were to be four parents elected from the PTA, four teachers elected by the staff meeting and four governors designated by the governing body. The group was to be called the Parent, Teacher, Governor Working Party (PTG) and was to decide its agenda from subjects suggested by or through its members. It was important that members, though speaking as individuals, should represent a broad consensus of the viewpoint of their parent body – not an easy task, especially for the parents. Another important point of the constitution allowed the PTG to invite any person to its meeting who could assist in its working. The working party also had to follow the spirit of advice given in the Handbook of Guidance to Governors/Managers.

The PTG had been in existence for two years before I became a member, and it ran for a further two years before the major reasons for its setting up began to vanish and undermine its existence. It was significant that at the very first meeting I attended there was a

heated discussion about the role of the working party and its aims and achievements so far. This proved to be a regular introspective process and showed the PTG as beset with almost continual self doubt. In fact the PTG had to wrench itself from philosophy and plunge into practical investigation before it came to life. Paradoxically again, this very 'life' became crushed in conflicting loyalties produced by the various 'sides'. Even though several governors doubled up as parents and some staff doubled as governors, the group developed into two camps – teachers and the rest.

The problems arising here stemmed from the impossibility of having four parents to represent 'a consensus' of the opinions of 2,000 and of having four staff to be accountable for the views of 75 teachers. How could four parents bring up anxieties which truly represented the fears of all or even most parents? How could staff on the PTG put forward criticisms to their colleagues without seeming to have questioned their professional competence?

Talking together

These were serious problems never far in the background. But dialogue ensued, research was undertaken, reports were written, recommendations were made and, above all, matters of concern were at least talked about and feeling aired. We discussed everything from modern maths and mixed ability to bullying and lost property. We sent questionnaires to parents, students and various departments. We probably learned more from sitting down together and drafting out questions than we did from the replies to those questions. For here we found quite a problem – how do you interpret a mass of raw information, for example, only 70% enjoy Humanities', 'as many as 70% enjoy Humanities'. The learning process of the PTG was painful and frustrating, but ultimately it was enlightening because staff could begin to understand the parents' worries and parents could appreciate some of the problems staff faced.

But did it work? The PTG no longer meets because other means of communication have allayed many anxieties and fears. And yet there are still needs unfulfilled. The small group can be the ideal place for full and frank discussion. Perhaps throughout the year we should have several parent/teacher working parties to

Family Workshops

Dave Bennett and Tanny Rees-Jones

The Family Workshop Unit was set up in 1974 by the Inner London Education Authority to extend a style of work with parents and children that had been developed for some five years in Wandsworth. Dave Bennett and Tanny Rees-Jones are tutors at the Lavender Hill Family Workshop.

The Family Workshop concept evolved from work with parents and children since 1969 at the Central Wandsworth Adult Institute's Allfarthing branch. Basically, a Family Workshop is an informal, multi-disciplined educational situation for adults and children, organised by a team of teachers. There are now nine Family Workshops in Wandsworth alone, and some seventy part-time tutors are involved in workshops all over the Inner London Education Authority.

Some Family Workshops take place in the daytime and tend to attract mothers with under-fives, while others take place in the evenings or during school holidays and attract adults with older children. Adults without children also come. The range of subjects taught in these workshops includes arts and crafts, music, drama, literacy, English as a Second Language, dress-making and sewing.

This article is mainly about the Lavender Hill Family Workshop, but much of the theory described and analysed here can also be seen in practice at many other Family Workshops in Wandsworth and elsewhere within the ILEA area, especially in those where adults and children are working in the same space and are not separated into creche, playgroup and adult class.

However, this is no blue-print for a standard Family Workshop, for if the students and staff are really to share control of the teaching situation, the concept must remain flexible enough for each Workshop to develop its own identity and educational potential. For the

purpose of this analysis, we have acted as surgeons, and cleanly cut educational aims from socio-political aims and implications, although we realise that education of any kind is a socio-political force. However, we have made the division both in the interests of clarity and to underline our priorities as educationalists. For us the difference between learning and education is that whereas any incident in one's life is potentially a learning experience, education begins when a structure is designed for or by a person or group of people in order to exploit and maximise that learning potential which is present in any experience.

'The aim of any experience in Adult education should be that of challenge rather than of reinforcement of existing attitudes or uncritical habits of mind, to involve the students in an educational experience, and to make the students aware and critical' (from *The Educational approach to controversial learning situations*, ILEA).

Primary Aims

- 1 To provide education in various subject areas for adults.
- 2 To do the same for children.
- 3 To integrate 1 and 2 in such a way as to educate and inform the relationship between parent and child.

Educational method

Family Workshop is a team teaching situation in which different activities are made to relate so that a cohesive total situation is developed by the team. Some activities go on solely for adults, some solely for children but an attempt is made to give the room coherence by relating the tables in some way eg by process (adults – macrame; children – string sculptures; adults – marbling, children – bubble pictures; adults – drama, children – music and movement); or thematically eg Lavender Hill Summer Family Workshop's Circus week, in which arts and crafts, music and drama were all related to the circus theme. Thus while having the relief of space from

(Continued)

discuss such topics as:

The welfare of the child,

The child's curriculum,

The difference between what the child needs and what the parents want,

Better communication with schools, teachers and students.

The first two alone are enough to keep discussion going for years!

their child, there will be a reason in the integration of the activities for the adult to watch the child out of curiosity and enjoyment, rather than seeing it as a chore.

The children's activities should also be a way of teaching by example possible ways to organise a stimulating environment for your child, which may well also be less stressful for yourself as parent.

Other activities (eg cooking, sing-songs, some performance drama) bring the whole group together. But since everyone is being directed in these situations, the parent is participating with the child rather than minding it – a refreshing situation which should stimulate and expand the parent-child relationship. Additionally, these activities can fulfil different educational goals for the different age groups simultaneously eg sing-songs, basic harmony for adults, development in language, rhythm, melody, numeracy for children.

The teaching style is informal and relies upon structure and visual aids (timing of activities, layout of materials, samples) rather than a totally didactic method. Thus the students are encouraged to use and develop their own powers of taste and judgment. Self confidence is built upon and the unconfident are attracted and grow, rather than being scared off and diminished by the proclamations of experts. The appeal of the Family Workshop is to all classes but is designed especially to be accessible to those who found school oppressive and may have been stifled by it, to those whose confidence has been impaired and who find themselves under-stimulated and lonely, especially those who are in this condition due to being a house person with young children. Consequently, the premises are often non-educational and orientated towards community use, so that the barrier of official and educational buildings is dismantled.

Where it is necessary, direct teaching is geared to individuals, so that 'high' level and 'low' level teaching is possible within the same teaching situation.

Socio-political aims

We are attempting to bring under-stimulated, unconfident people in contact with each other and with other people in an environment which fosters creative communication and self-confidence. We believe that this situation intrinsically helps to alleviate oppression and depression, but also it fosters 'self-help' groups (baby-sitting, consciousness, raising, problem or suggestion

exchanges) amongst workshopppers, which further the alleviation process and frees and develops personalities. Such groups could be described as extended families. From our belief that self-esteem and self-confidence can be generated by the Workshop and the interaction it fosters, stems our aim to develop the way house-workers and child minders consider themselves and their roles, towards seeing themselves, at the very least, as a potentially creative necessity.

In a technological consumer society, to attempt to place knowledge of processes back into the hands of the consumer is an attempt to fight the disabling and depersonalising force implicit in that society. We would hope that both the activities taught and the method of teaching are such an attempt. Equally we are attempting to practice education which does not cause an elite to spring up, which avoids mystification of our own roles in the process and the consequent dislocation of society – education in the community, a process shared between adults, children and teachers is our aim. Less pretentiously, we know that craft products produced in Workshop are considerably cheaper than those sold in the hordes of craft shops which have emerged in the last decade. These financial implications are true of much that goes on in Workshop.

Welcoming features

Most of this article has concentrated on the Family Workshop's role as being instrumental in achieving certain aims. It must be pointed out that it is the intrinsic worth of the Family Workshop which attracts people. It should be, and we are told it is, a warm and welcoming place to come, in which talking is as valid as doing. It does attract people to mainstream AEI classes, it has changed the lives of a growing number of women who have come as students and gone on to become tutors, or stall holders selling their work, or teachers. But its power and importance also lie in its existence as an attractive and stimulating place to which one can come. Without that it would not be instrumental in any achievements.

The self-confidence fostered in 'students' by the informal and non-didactic teaching style also encourages and nurtures the exchange of information and skills between 'students' or from 'student' to staff, as well as the more orthodox current from staff to 'student'.

The actual decision making power of the group is not constant since there is no formal committee. Many decisions are taken by the group in term-time Workshops, but people are attracted by an environment initiated by the tutors, in which there is the potential to make one's own way. Attempts are constantly made by the staff to structure storage of materials so that they are accessible and inviting to individuals who do not want to join in any of the activities planned by the staff. Thus the power of personal choice is both fostered and catered for, and the power of the group over its Workshop is a force which changes its focus and intensity constantly as the Workshop population changes and as the concept develops. Reflection on this variable is a frequent topic of discussion amongst staff and amongst staff and students, and we see it as a learning process for us all.

We would seek to maximise and exploit the educational potential of adults and children together rather than pretend one or the other group does not exist. Implicitly Family Workshop does not say 'we will relieve you of your children', but 'we will attempt together to relieve any stress in the parent-child relationship'.

In a Primary School

Finally, in January 1978, with the support of the headmaster and his staff, we started a Family Workshop inside a local primary school which has been awarded priority status by the ILEA. The workshop is open one afternoon each week during the school day and takes place in the dining hall. It is attended by adults, under-fives and school children, and is linked to an English as a Second Language class for adults. The staff comprise one teacher from the school, one of the Family Workshop Unit's lecturers and an assistant tutor.

As time goes on, it is hoped that this workshop will increasingly become part of the school's curriculum. At the moment, however, it is too soon for us to analyse its effect upon the school, apart from observing that it has started to attract into the school parents who have hitherto refused to take a step inside the building. They are coming for themselves as well as for their children.

Advance Notice

Forum vol 21 no 1

The September 1978 **Forum** will focus on the opportunities presented for educational advance by the demographic phenomenon of falling rolls in primary and secondary schools. **Forum** argues that advantage must be taken of this new situation to improve pupil-teacher ratios, increase flexibility, arrange for more individual attention through smaller teaching groups, and generally raise the educational achievement of all children. Conditions will be possible for the full implementation of many of the educational practices, such as nonstreamed teaching, that **Forum** has for many years advocated in the face of difficult circumstances in the schools.

There will be articles on vertical grouping for various age ranges, on the advantages experienced by small comprehensive schools, and on the importance attached by parents to keeping their local school. Both urban and rural situations will be considered.

Caroline Benn will write about the education of the 16 to 19 age group.

This **Forum** will provide ammunition for the battle to prevent attempts to cut educational expenditure and resources on the excuse of falling school rolls.

ORDER YOUR COPY NOW

Scientist and Educationist A.R. Luria

Joan Simon

Joan Simon translated and edited the original English edition of **Speech and the Development of Mental Processes in the Child** by Luria and Yudovich, which has been reprinted by Penguin Books, and co-edited her translation of **Educational Psychology in the USSR** (1963). In this obituary article she reviews Luria's work.

Every year, for the last twenty or more, we have had a Christmas card, usually the first to arrive. Perhaps an exotic Santa Claus driving a troika of scarlet horses round an onion towered place, in vivid colours against a black background. 'My warmest greetings', the message on this one ran, 'I hope your work is full of exciting experiences as ever'. Underneath the well-known signature – A R Luria – with a long lower line to the 'L' and erlining the rest.

It is getting on for twenty years since the publication in English of his **Speech and the Development of Mental Processes in the Child** (1959) which has become something of a classic. This has provided the base, during the past decade, for translations into Spanish, German, French, Danish, Dutch. Copies of the fourth impression of the German edition, with a scholarly introduction, reached me last November.

Much else has since supervened, published in America and Holland as well as here, both recent work and accounts of research Luria undertook many years ago. There have been lively presentations for the general reader – **The Mind of a Mnemonist. A little book about a vast memory** (1975), for instance – as well as major works. **Higher Cortical Functions of Man** (1966), **The Working Brain. An introduction to neuropsychology** (1973), **Basic Problems in Neurolinguistics** (1976).

It still doesn't seem possible that one so pre-eminently alive, so dedicated to solving human problems and whose work has revolutionised neuropsychology, no longer is. But Alexander Romanovich – Alix to innumerable friends in many countries – died in Moscow on 14 August 1977. He was 75.

His work as a psychologist began, then, in the Soviet Union of the 1920s. Indeed one of the most fascinating of his recent books, **Cognitive Development: its cultural and social foundations** (1976) relates to research bearing on the effect of rapid social change in remote communities in Central Asia. For despite a heart ailment, which plagued his last years, work – always full of excitement for him – never flagged. Rather he set to the

more intensively to write up past enquiries which, during an ever engaged life had never attained this stage. And these scientific researches – by one who, unusually enough, held a doctorate in education as well as in medicine and psychology – are of immediate moment to educationists.

It was in 1957, on a visit to this country and staying with us in Leicester, that Luria came into the room with a small volume in his hand. 'A little book that may interest you', he said, handing it over. Just published in Russian it was the first of these delvings into the past, an account of research conducted in the early 1930s when he was working at the Institute of Medical Genetics in Moscow with pairs of identical twins. And about as different from the research of Sir Cyril Burt as it would be possible to imagine.

On the narrowest view **Speech and the Development of Mental Processes** could not have been more welcome. For the battle against 'intelligence' testing was still in full swing, a mode of classifying children essentially unconcerned with the learning process which dominated school organisation and stifled educational thinking. But clearly there was a good deal more to it than this. **Psychology in the Soviet Union** (1957) had just appeared, a series of papers with the selection of which Luria had much to do, indicating a new trend in research virtually unknown in this country. And here was another example.

Help was duly forthcoming with the translation, especially the problem of reproducing imperfect speech adequately in another language. For the particular pair of twins in this case suffered from speech defects and the research turned on planned educational intervention in the case of one, using the other as control.

'Some small difficulties will be very easily solved after my consultation with our linguist', Alix responded encouragingly to one of my requests in December 1957. So they were, the book duly appeared a year or more on – and, outside a small circle, made little impact.

One of the most perceptive reviews was in an early number of **Forum** (Vol 1 no 3, 1959). But a good many

years were to pass before attention turned here to cognitive psychology and language came to the forefront of attention. Perhaps progress in this direction is marked by new impressions in 1966 and 1968, a paperback in 1971, after translations had begun to accumulate.

Language the key

The key finding is that, once language enters into the child's activity, not only is the structure of mental acts modified but also the underlying relation between complex mental functions. This restructuring of the process of change, to some extent of the very nature of the child's psychological functions, points directly to the dependence of development on environmental influences. In so doing it also indicates that educational intervention can be so planned as to promote the process of change.

Attention was appropriately drawn to the breaking of quite new ground in the foreword to the first edition by the professor of experimental psychology at Cambridge, Oliver Zangwill. Soviet psychologists see 'the study of language and its development' as 'the key to our understanding of vital problems in human intellectual growth' and the book could be seen 'as a vindication of this belief'. Unfortunately psychologists in the West had avoided the question, largely because of technical difficulties. But this 'noteworthy contribution to the experimental psychology of language' would 'undoubtedly stimulate fresh enquiries'.

This preface should have been updated when Penguin Education issued a paperback twelve years on. Instead the publisher eliminated it, substituting one by James Britton. And, appreciative though this is of the importance of language, it suggests that the underlying psychological theory is difficult for the average educationist to understand rather than explaining it. So the opportunity was lost of introducing the many readers of this edition to a significantly new departure and its implications.

Nor has this been grasped by others who have drawn on the findings in one way or another, as many have. Eclecticism is very much the mode of operation – taking a little bit here, a little bit there, from forms of theorising which, taken as a whole, may be mutually exclusive. Correspondingly an inappropriate assumption, borrowed

from biology, has continued to serve as a general point of departure. Namely the proposition that the development of the child mind is a product of the interaction of heredity and environment.

'Intelligence' testing depends entirely on the assumption that this is so. And, in the prevailing social circumstances, it has seemed to some of first importance to establish which of these two 'factors' is paramount. Although this means no more than a return to the initial assumption, since all the arguments revolve within the given limits.

It is now well known how Burt established, in statistical terms, the overriding importance of 'heredity'. More recently geneticists have insisted that the crude juxtaposition of heredity and environment is illegitimate. Consequently the standpoint has emerged that the two in interaction enter into development, a view adopted by A H Halsey in a symposium *Heredity and Environment* (1977). An essentially biological mode of approach has, then, been somewhat modified.

Human thought

By contrast Soviet psychology places man squarely in his social setting and society in the realm of history. Correspondingly the focus is on man *in his activity* which is of a specific kind. What differentiates human beings from animals, as has been recognised time out of mind, is the use of tools and speech. Consequently also differentiated, in the course of social development, is the human brain and capacity for thought. In the case of man psychological phenomena are evoked by social experience, by interactions between people and by active mastery of aspects of social living. This, then, is the context in which the development of mental processes should be studied.

Another basic standpoint is also indicated here, that the human brain is the highest product of the evolutionary process, that psychology must be firmly grounded on neurological findings relating to the reflexes of the brain and the localisation of functions. In this area Luria's work has been pre-eminent. And that it bridges another gap is indicated by the terms 'neuropsychology' and 'neurolinguistics' – implying a reaching out to absorb recent developments in the area of linguistics of which too little account has been taken.

What provided an initial breakthrough, in experimental terms, was the postulate that the reflex activity of the human brain is 'mediated' by speech, allowing for the willed behaviour characteristic of man. And in due course research bearing on the ontogenesis of child behaviour established a two-way process as pivotal.

The child does not merely react to influences brought to bear, in terms of acquiring individual experience like an animal in natural surroundings. From the outset he actively *masters* aspects of social living – from the simple grasping of a spoon to such complex techniques as writing guided by adult directives. But if, initially, activity is governed by such directives, at a certain stage, with the acquisition of speech, the child introduces his own directive signal, in this form, to control his own behaviour.

This provided a base for investigating the subsequent mode of development, or how, in the course of the child's activity in a social setting complex mental functions are *formed*. Evidently language, or speech, provides an essential way in. And Luria's various researches, which have contributed much to cognitive psychology, consistently underline the point.

Here is an approach taking full account of specifically human attributes, even while accepting the principle of determinism, one combining the individual and social which yet allows for self-activity. Accordingly it provides an escape from one-sidedness, or various dead ends.

Against the unscientific

From behaviourism which reduces the most complex intellectual activity to motor habits – thereby allowing, in turn, for simplistic sociological explanations. From its mirror image, the sentimental, idealist conception that child development is primarily a matter of the unfolding, or 'flowering', of innate spiritual qualities. In which case mere rhetoric about the autonomy of the individual, or respect for the child's creative powers, may pass for constructive educational thinking.

These approaches, says Luria, by evading the key question of the formation of complex mental functions, 'disarm educational science'.

Primarily needed is a clear understanding that, at each stage of child development, specific forms of activity present the organism with new problems, new

demands, necessitating the development of new forms of reflex action. In the process complex functional systems are formed, open to further modification. The mode of formation of such systems can be investigated by the methods of science and research so far points to an infinite flexibility. This is the context in which individual differences emerge, again of infinite variety.

For education

Also requisite is an understanding that all mental activity is an outcome of the child's life in social circumstances. For, if the higher nervous processes of animals develop as an outcome of individual experience, the basic form of mental development in man is 'acquisition of the experiences of other people through joint practice and speech'. And not only in immediate terms, but also access to the sum of social experience. For this is not, of course, stored and transmitted solely in biological terms but in the exoteric form of techniques, art, science. Hence the crucial importance in human society, and to children's development, of education.

Reading and Writing

One of the last pieces Luria wrote was on the specific difficulties some children meet with in mastering reading and writing. The object was to indicate that neuropsychology may point to a specific cause and remedy when educational means fail. For, possible defects of the brain apart, research of this order throws light on the nature of problems encountered at certain stages of child development in normal circumstances.

Luria's central concern was always the removal of threats to effective psychological functioning, to a fully human life, whether in cognitive or affective terms; as an obituary in *The Times* aptly underlined. Likewise research techniques have been directed not merely to locating barriers to activity or achievement but to remedying disturbance of function, or compensating for defect, even in cases of massive brain damage.

His earliest work in psychopathology was *The Nature of Human Conflicts* (1932), taking the scientific road abandoned by Freud. Some of the most notable has been on aphasia – loss of the power of speech as a

consequence of lesions in the brain - and work in hospitals during the war was on these lines. Subsequently, in the 1950s, he worked for six years in the Institute of Defectology of the Academy of Educational Sciences in Moscow when he had directly to do with special schools.

Remedial education

But the stress laid on the remedial aspect, on the scope for regulating function and malfunction, has a general connotation. The pointer to the importance of devising appropriate teaching methods is plain. Indeed, from the kind of work described there has developed an immense body of research into variations in the formation of concepts in specific areas - in mathematics, physics, geography, history - in relation to the adjustment of teaching techniques or the reordering of presentation.*

One day, perhaps, this work will be better digested here, in terms both of research and teaching. Meanwhile innumerable booklets enlarge on 'The Sociology of' this, that or the other; most falling far short of comprehending what education is and does in terms of psychological understanding. On the other hand psychological expositions may depict mental development as occurring in a vacuum, in terms of the chronological appearance of particular processes in relation to the individual child's 'maturation'.

Meanwhile the picture is further muddled by new biologically inspired interpretations - the 'naked ape', the 'selfish gene', the advent of 'sociobiology'

Ways forward

One remedy might be historical study of the development of the relevant subjects to discern why and how this state of affairs has come about, to plague educational endeavour. In this connection there is an illuminating 'autobiography' by Luria - on the development of his work in the context of Soviet psychology more generally - in *A History of Psychology in Autobiography*, Vol VI, ed E Boring (1975) together with accounts of the same order by others.

'Retrospective analysis of the road one has travelled is always useful', Luria wrote entering into this project. And he ended, characteristically, by pointing to problems which can now be tackled from a new perspective, by reconstruction of his own earlier research to incorporate the more sophisticated techniques now to hand. A reconstruction 'towards which I have only begun to move', he added which calls for many years work and will be 'substantially advanced only by other investigators'.

It is a comment appropriately optimistic about human capabilities. Yet it also differs significantly from the certainties so confidently canvassed in some quarters - the surest sign of a less than scientific approach. While individuals 'come and go', Luria concluded, 'solid work' remains to be built upon. Undoubtedly this applies to his own. But for all who worked with him there remains a gap that no one else can fill.

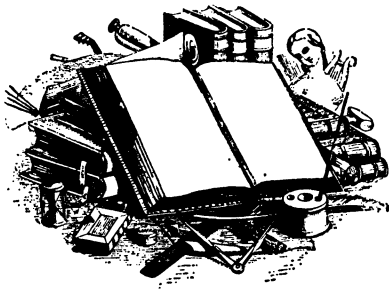
* Some of the relevant papers, now dating back fifteen years or more are to be found in *Educational Psychology in the USSR*, ed B & J Simon (1963). Also more general ones, notably by L S Vygotski - to whom Luria always referred as his mentor and as setting the course of Soviet psychology - by Luria himself and by a close colleague in the department of psychology at the University of Moscow, A N Leontiev.

Editor's Note

In 1958 A R Luria delivered three lectures at University College, London. These were published by Pergamon Press in 1961 under the title *The Role of Speech in the Regulation of Normal and Abnormal Behaviour*.

Recent Penguin editions of Luria's work are: *Speech and the Development of Mental Processes in the Child* (1971) and *The Man with a Shattered World* (1975) at 50p and 80p respectively.

Reviews



Clearing the air

Progress in Education by Nigel Wright.
Croom Helm (1977) pp 222. £2.95 pb.
£6.50 cl.

A lot of people believe that there are alligators in the London sewers. They haven't seen them, of course, but they have it from others with impeccable credentials, and can become deeply offended if it is suggested that they have been taken for suckers. Perhaps most of us prefer believing what our friends and acquaintances tell us to what is upheld by evidence. Indeed, to get on with life's work, we mostly act on hunch and examine the evidence when there is time later, adjusting accordingly, if we are honest with ourselves.

A lot of people have come to believe what the **Black Papers** have been saying since that **Critical Quarterly** of 1969. It may be because their views accorded with concurrent fears of national economic decline, or it may be because they reflected the discovery for the first time by the educational elite of what had for long been the low but unnoticed academic level of the vast army of labourers and their children; but for whatever reason, the Black Paperists have been able to disseminate their allegations as if they were objective truths. All their

no-nonsense talk about standards and discipline suggested that they had the hard data. Their use of the media has been skilful. The radio interviewer only needed eventually to say something like, 'Now, Dr Boyson, in view of the widespread dismay over falling standards . . .' to have cued in his speaker with half his work done for him. Why has this not been challenged? *What* widespread dismay? *What* falling standards? It is not challenged because repetition of the claim, unsubstantiated other than by random instances, has given it credence.

Someone had to point out that the emperor has no clothes, and it has fallen to Nigel Wright to do it, clearly and painstakingly, in **Progress in Education**. So far the book has aroused only a few embarrassed coughs, but it deserves all the attention it can be given. A volte-face by the media that have maintained all the scare stories is too much to expect, though. As Nigel Wright himself says in his introduction, 'Truth and light does not come blazoning forth from a review of the evidence. That simply is not the way it works.'

Considering what he is doing, systematically dismantling the whole Black Paper case, in so far as it has any consistency, Wright is laudably restrained. He raises claim after claim, sets beside each the available evidence and repeatedly dismisses it as unproven. He concludes 'that however much evidence we have and however "hard" it may be, we ought to remain in a state of profound doubt on many education matters.' One of the main attractions of the Black Paperists has been their claim to certainty: they do not need to weigh the evidence – they know. And it is tempting to be drawn into this battle simply by making counter claims and quoting scraps of research where they seem to support us. Wright is as sceptical of Rosenthal and Jacobson's **Pygmalion in the Classroom** as he is of Neville Bennett's **Teaching Styles** and

Pupil Progress. All have been too eager to claim to know.

Nevertheless, the Black Paperist claims have been used so mischievously to chivvy teachers and to further political ends, chiefly over selection, that a more specific and substantiated case for radical reform, rather than a retreat into some fantasy past, needs to be made. The attacks of the Seventies should at least have shaken out the complacency. Standards *are* too low: the basic skills of learning appropriate to our changed, mobile and diverse society are still unlikely to be acquired effectively in our schools. In denying the charge that basic skills have fallen, we are compelled to identify those basic skills (and surely they include basic skills in communicating, negotiating and collaborating) and look more precisely to how they may be learnt.

Wright stops short of suggesting a programme for such improvement – that requires a separate book anyway. What he has done, however, is to clear ground and lay us a cornerstone for the reconstruction yet to be made. Where Wright does help us forwards is in going beyond the issues where the evidence is inconclusive. As he points out, 'British educational research has been pre-occupied for most of this century by this desire to *measure*'. Much of what we value most cannot be measured but does not therefore cease to exist or have direct bearing upon education. In fact the current educational debate, in spite of all the concern for assessment of performance, is not really about the measurable, but about values. It is here that he exposes the central humbug of the Black Papers. Wright's documentation of their abuse of research findings leave them clearly in the field of political polemic. For all their protestations, academic standards are their own first victims.

For a book packed with precise reference and a wealth of footnotes, **Progress in Education** is eminently readable. I hope it will find its way

into the hands of parents, governors and politicians, for they will have no excuse not to read it. Wright pursues his argument clearly and with nice flashes of humour. The first half of his book weighs the evidence on a series of topics such as the Modern Primary School, Streaming, Violence, Indiscipline, and Truancy. The second half concentrates on the case of the Black Papers, but then leads us to the challenge still remaining. If the old days were far from being good old days, and if, as seems likely, we are still failing to meet the needs of our secondary school students, there is no avoiding radical departures.

Towards the end of his book, Wright makes a case for (a) more research related to 'the feelings, desires and explanations of the people being studied', and (b) reference to alternative paradigms in education. 'Only by performing the gigantic switch to a new paradigm can (researchers) suddenly break into new territory, solve age-old problems and move forward. Schooling as we know it has not changed in its fundamentals, for many centuries.' Thus his repeated cautioning that we should not draw hasty conclusions from evidence, that on many vexed issues we cannot form any conclusions at all, does not lead to a limbo of indecision. Far from it, and this is where I find the book inspiring at a time of publicly expressed uncertainty about education, it leads us to be *more* radical than before. This is the response that should now be made to the Black Paper campaign – a clearer definition of aims, a more thoroughgoing experimentation and a bolder plan for innovation.

Some might wish that Wright had gone further himself, but that he leaves to others who can thank him for a clearer starting point now he has blown the smoke away. He has helped us to be surer of our own arguments and left us at least in no doubt that, however much some will go on believing the contrary, there never was

much to fear from those alligators breeding in the sewers.

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At 13 - 14

**Framework for the Curriculum:
A Study in Secondary Schooling** by
Penelope B Weston NFER (1977)
pp 188 £5.50

Quite simply, this book is one of a series which aims to describe what happens in our schools in the third year. The 13 - 14 Curriculum Study formed part of a research programme financed by the Social Science Research Council for a period of five years. The study was divided into two stages: in Stage One the research team made use of three questionnaires to gather general information from a sample of 117 schools in the West Midlands. This was followed in Stage Two by more detailed inquiries carried out in a sub-sample of twenty schools, all carefully chosen to be as representative

as possible of the original 117. The schools chosen for special scrutiny were asked to supply timetables, curriculum outlines, handbooks and other general information, and to make more detailed returns for three subjects: English, Science and Art.

It seems quite clear that the third year poses special problems for many of our secondary schools. As the author of this study says: 'in a "normal" five year secondary school course the third year marks the halfway point, an inbetween stage, with the generalised enthusiasm of the lower school behind and the new challenge of examination of "leavers" courses ahead.' In the case of two-tier systems, barely touched upon here, the problem can be made more acute by a quite understandable desire on the part of the 'high' (11-14) school to treat its third-year pupils as if they were "leavers" in the traditional sense – no longer to be satisfied with the common curriculum – the integrated humanities courses or design programmes – of the first two years.

And, of course, it wasn't so long ago that the 'third year', or its equivalent, was the last year of schooling for the majority of our pupils. Only since the raising of the school leaving age in 1947 have all pupils been obliged to stay at school *beyond* the third year; and only very recently has it been possible to view the needs of all third-year pupils in the context of a five year course.

Yet the assumption that the third-year curriculum is simply part of a common foundation course for all pupils – that there is nothing here to justify a large-scale research project – is clearly false; and this book shows that the actual situation is far more complex. For, paradoxically, the raising of the school leaving age to sixteen has had the profound effect of making the third year a time of decision and forward planning for *all* pupils. And the need for pupils to make choices about their courses for the fourth and fifth years can act as a

very real constraint, as harmful, perhaps, in its own way, as the pressures exerted on junior schools by the 11+ selection procedure. The danger is apparent in the words of one head teacher quoted in the book: 'there is a lack of time during the year where the maximum number of academic subjects are taught to make possible an informed choice of options for the fourth year'.

In looking towards that fourth year, many schools begin to modify the structure of the first two years. They might describe their third-year diet as a common course, but streaming or banding – with clearly differentiated courses – tells a different story; and there are often exceptions related to languages. In the words of another head: 'the third year curriculum is inevitably a compromise. Conflict between a common curriculum with stable primary groups and increased specialisation with the flexibility required is most acute in the third year'.

This conflict between a common core and an option-based curriculum in the third year is a recurring theme throughout this excellent and thought-provoking study. It is, sadly, outside the author's brief to point out that a unified five-year curriculum would remove the necessity to view the third year as some sort of 'bridge' between two radically different curriculum structures.

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Why fail maths?

Teaching Primary Mathematics, A report of the Mathematical Education Section of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. Harper and Row (1977) pp. 110

This report, like its predecessor **Children Using Mathematics**, was prepared by members of the ATCDE Mathematics Section. It is 'not offered as an impartial survey of current opinions, but recommends classroom procedures based on views of education that the authors tend to share'.

The first half of the report puts forward, in fifty-two pages, strategies for learning and teaching mathematics and includes brief discussions of the teacher and his/her relationship with the child, the class, the classroom and colleagues; subheadings include 'the cycle of learning', 'levels of attainments', 'talking with children', 'children as individuals', 'the role of the teacher', 'progression', 'using the environment', 'the need for practice' and 'apparatus and materials', many dismissed in a page or two of assorted thoughts.

The authors are firmly in the progressive tradition of Nuffield and Plowden. (It is sobering to reflect that a few years ago this remark would have been assumed to be complimentary, while now it might well be taken as pejorative. It is necessary to state that it is meant to be a neutral statement of fact).

I would agree with most of what the authors say in the first half. Every child should expect success rather than failure; children should enjoy their mathematics; mathematics should be relevant to the child. Most teachers would agree with these three principles on which the authors base their aims and objectives. Unfortunately, in fifty-two pages it is all too easy to make generalised and impressive

statements and almost impossible to be either specific or of practical help.

Some sections could form the basis of fruitful discussion between teachers – for example, the section on 'the teacher and the classroom'. However, I suspect that many primary teachers will find those parts they agree with platitudinous, and those with which they disagree unconvincing.

Occasionally a point is not only a good one (many are), but is also well made, as with the nine-year-old on page thirty in tears over his inability to remember how to divide 351 by 13: some years previously he could no doubt have dealt with the problem by a 'one for me, one for you' method. He had, as the authors put it, been 'untaught'.

The second half of the book concerns evaluation and assessment, and here the content is, to my mind, much less satisfactory. It seems even more like sets of notes for students, with resumés of several attempts to categorise objectives, ways of assessing objectives, and objective tests.

'We take it that the work of Piaget is familiar to all teachers' (p.77). I can just see those rows of heads nodding with eyes turned down, ignorance mingling with guilt. Some good points are made on the danger of some Piagetian tests, and there is a refreshing heresy in the reasonable suggestion that some of his tests are more useful as teaching situations.

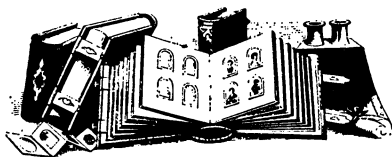
A chapter discusses examples of test items on area from which one deduces that the authors don't much like any of them: the book closes with the excellent observation that the central problem of mathematics teaching is *why* children fail: whereas written tests in many subjects reveal children's difficulties, mathematics tests are usually unhelpful in this respect. 'For this, only a teaching strategy based on discussion and questioning is effective'. Amen to that.

In brief, the book is short, quite readable, and mainly honest fruit-cake



with an occasional cherry. At least the cake is fresh, and a charge from this year's diet of stale bread.

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English chatter

Teaching English Across the Ability Range by Richard W Mills. Ward Lock Educational (1977) pp 250 £3.75

In the late fifties, when *Forum* first appeared, I had the good fortune to head the English Department of one of the first purpose-built comprehensives. Sometimes there were over twenty staff teaching English, ranging from the inspired to the pedestrian who needed strong encouragement and support to move even one step on from lessons restricted to dictation, spelling lists and the occasional poem to be copied out for neatness. It was a transitional time, when streaming was rigid and when it was progress for each form's English teacher to be able to rely on having a set of text books and a set of 'readers'. We advanced by discussion, tolerance of diversity, exchange of experience, reference to outside thinking and attempts to redefine our aims. It was the start of a long march.

Teaching English Across the Ability Range brings all this to mind because reading it was like listening in, over a school year, to the ebb and flow of

talk and ideas in a vigorous, intelligent and dedicated English Department. You don't necessarily agree with everything said or done, and there is enough divergence to keep the arguments on the boil, but there are common assumptions and common basic aims. And one accepts that, being teachers, everyone is a bit anecdotal and long-winded. The best way for a new teacher to learn their business, though, is to hope for early appointment to such a team and participation in their interactions.

Indeed, all the contributors *were* once all members of the one 11-18 comprehensive school English Department and shared the experience of the school's destreaming. They have since gone their separate ways, but kept sufficient contact to compile this book and thus enable others to share it. The editor opens with a rehearsal of the justification for unstreamed and mixed-ability English and David Mears follows with an account of an actual changeover. Although both pieces are unnecessarily diffuse, they form invaluable documentary evidence reference for any teachers embarking upon similar innovation, stressing as they do, the need for planning, consultation, amendment.

The second part, '*inside the classroom*', introduces accounts of thematic English, literature, drama, visual stimuli, and the organisation of small group work. It is pragmatic, and stuffed with useful suggestions from which you can take your pick.

Richard Mills offers the book to students in training and secondary school English teachers – new to teaching or new to, or contemplating, mixed-ability grouping or work with wide ability bands. I found it uncomfortable to read, not because it is in the least abstruse, but because it tends to be chatty. Teachers can bore each other at times, but that is no reason for not listening since we do indeed need to pick each others brains. For those students and teachers

to whom the book is offered, perhaps the best long-term pickings are to be gained from the ample notes, bibliographies, and the whole of part three, '*Materials*', with its book-lists, names and addresses.

In the end, for better or for worse, most of us are not persuaded by argument, but by the example of steady, successful practice, by good, encouraging company, and by ample and clear information. They can all be found in this book.

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When they were 7

Perspectives on School at Seven Years Old by John and Elizabeth Newson.
Allen and Unwin (1977) £6.95. pp 216.

'... They are told that when you talk to Jesus you must shut your eyes and when you go to the toilet you must shut the door. ...' Such a sentence, besides being the most vivid encapsulation of the social control exerted by the infant school I have yet read anywhere, also characterises the Newson's latest book: page after page reveals their deep familiarity with the total world of the growing child. Their genius is to give the simultaneous impression of objectivity and involvement. An objectivity that does not treat children as remote members of the human race and yet can give detailed tabulated results of their careful, painstaking work amongst a very large group of children. The involvement shown in the Newson's discussion of these results is not reflected by any bias though, but revealed by the evident real personal interest in the children and their parents. This is the factor, I would venture, that makes the book so astonishingly readable, it could be that it 'speaks to my condition'; teaching six and seven year olds, I recognise these children immediately and feel I am eavesdropping as I listen to the parents' views on schools and teachers.

That I should be able to recognise children so similar to those in my class, who live just north of London, is yet another tribute to this book as it is permeated by a very strong regional flavour; to have given more apparent, and probably spurious, generalisation, the various references to life in Nottingham could have been carefully 'laundered' out. As it is, their existence gives a real geographical and social context to the work and because they are incidental and yet frequent, a picture is built up of lives being lived

in an identifiable place in an identifiable country. It might be an unusual book to recommend to a foreign student of contemporary Britain, but it could, in its quiet way, be the most revelatory book they would ever come across.

Nonetheless, the odd assertion is made here and there throughout the book, that others might be less than positive about, given the lack of any real evidence, although they undeniably make good fuel for argument. For instance, in discussing the '... strong class gradient in the proportion of children who have been to the (live) theatre ...' ie the middle classes very definitely attend the most, the Newson's claim that '... "live theatre" as opposed to canned cinema has a parallel in natural, unprocessed food as opposed to canned food ...' and state that they have already noted the importance the professional/managerial classes place on the 'fresh and natural'. It's an interesting claim, but it could be argued, also without benefit of factual research, that 'fresh', has, paradoxically, a certain attractive unpredictability about it that goes with a more adventurous outlook on life: eg maybe *this* time you will be called up on the stage to sing or Widow Twanky *will* fall into the orchestra pit; its parallel in food perhaps being that maybe *this* time you will turn out an edible crunchy loaf and not a square leaden thing nobody wants to eat. Either way, there ain't much proof ...

Finally, although the Newson's did in fact take note of the mothers' previous occupation/class status before she married (and they admit to not being altogether happy about this information being excluded from this particular book) I personally found it a great pity that it was excluded. I believe much more sense could be made of the differing parental attitudes and aspirations if this information is taken into account. The mother's present class status (as defined by her husbands' occupation) may have little relevance if she actually considers

herself to be another; I would like to have known for instance, if the impression one gains of mothers who think of themselves as having 'married downwards' being more ambitious for their children, can be factually demonstrated. Apart from which, the mothers do emerge in the book as only having an existence either in relation to their children in the role of mother or as an adjunct to their husband, for example 'bleacher's wife'. This could of course be as they see themselves, but one is not given the opportunity of knowing and the result is a certain lack of perspective.

Taken overall however, there is nothing in this book that could prevent me from unreservedly recommending it to the very widest range of people, social geographers, historians, psychologists and teachers alike. I would also recommend that the first chapters on the research procedure are also read in depth, not just to see for themselves how carefully the Newsons went about their work but how much thoughtful and detailed preparation has to go into the making of a book that can combine both literary and scholarly virtues.

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