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This Issue

Middle Schools: their special value

Comprehensive Re-organisation

The APU and Assessment

Editorial Board

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The Next Forum

Michael Armstrong's long-awaited book, *Closely Observed Children*, reporting his in-depth research into a single primary classroom, is published in September. The January, 1981, **Forum** will carry an extended review-article on the book by Maggie Gracie. A number of other contributors, orchestrated by Michael Armstrong, will focus on the central issue with which the book is concerned – the activities, learning and potential of individual children in primary classrooms.

This number will also focus on other important contemporary issues. Andrew Hunt, Principal of a Leicestershire Upper School writes of the impact on schools of the present cuts in expenditure; Joan Leighton, head of a Manchester comprehensive, writes on the campaign in Manchester to preserve the 11 to 18 schools, in the light of proposals for reorganisation. We hope to include an evaluation of the NFER's long-awaited report on mixed ability teaching.

Whither Education?

Over the past year, **Forum** editorials have consistently called attention to the growing threats of government policy to the public system of education in this country. But as further information unfolds, the full implications as to what is intended become even clearer. All concerned in the system need to be aware of the position – only so can the necessary strength be mobilised to force a reverse in these intentions and allow, once more, a thrust forward in education.

Reduction in public expenditure is a key slogan of the present government. Not only education, but housing, personal services of all kinds, as well as the nationalised industries (now commonly referred to by BBC announcers as 'state monopolies') are all being cut and plans are to make further drastic cuts in the early 1980's. On the other hand, expenditure on defence and 'law and order' is increasing and is planned to increase further substantially in the next few years. Some time ago, expenditure on education overtook and surpassed that on defence for the first time in history – but all that is to be changed. In the coming year, spending on defence and 'law and order' is to rise by £400 million; education is to be cut by the same amount. The programme for 1983-4 shows expenditure on defence and law and order (£8,750 and £2,700 million respectively) far outstripping expenditure on education (£8,000 million). Indeed over these years expenditure on defence is planned to *increase* by over 13.3 per cent, that on education to *decrease* by 10.5 per cent. This in itself is a stark indication of the present government's priorities.

It is not as if this country's public expenditure as a proportion of national income is unusually high. Over the last five years public spending has been reduced by about 5 per cent. As **Labour Research** (May 1980) puts it in an analysis of this whole issue, 'Britain now devotes less of its national income to public expenditure than any other country in the EEC'. The government's intention is to reduce this proportion substantially further by the end of their four-year plan in 1983-4. Since expenditure on defence and law and order is to be increased substantially, this means that the social services, and education in particular, are marked out for further drastic cuts in order to achieve this doctrinaire target.

This is not the place to adumbrate an alternative economic policy. But at least we can say as loudly as we can that the government has got its priorities wrong. The planned increase in expenditure on defence and law and order is clearly being achieved directly at the expense of education. The public system of education is being decimated specifically to strengthen these particular sectors. It is this that is the main cause for concern.

And it is this that gives rise to the suspicion that the present government in any case, and for other reasons, is determined to prevent further growth in the system of education, to downgrade it, particularly as concerns its relations with the independent sector. It has been noticeable recently that two leading conservative educationists, Lord Butler and Mr Van Straubensee, have both gone out of their way to say publicly that, in their view, a Secretary of State's prime responsibility is to the *public* system of education. But the provisions of the Education Act (1980), some of which received a considerable mauling in the House of Lords, have been seen as a deliberate attempt to shore up the private sector at the expense of the public sector. There is no doubt that this was the intention of the assisted places scheme which, in spite of all the criticism, is to start to operate in September 1981, and it is almost certainly the intention to extend the scheme thereafter; while the drastic cuts in local authority expenditure imposed by government represent another arm of this combined assault. As a direct result of the government's first Education Act the movement to comprehensive education has also effectively been brought to a halt, or at least severely delayed. And this at a time when, as spelt out in a previous editorial (Vol 22 No 2), as many as 27 per cent of children of secondary school age are in selective schools of one kind or another.

This is, then, no time for complacency; rather it is time to re-state what can and is still being achieved within the public system, to invigorate resistance to existing policies, and to fight for the further extension of existing good practice. For this reason we are glad to include in this number an extended and unusual article by the staff of a nine to thirteen Middle School. Such schools, one product of comprehensive reorganisation, are now under threat in the present climate of drastic economies; yet, although they have been brought into being only comparatively recently, many have shown in practice what this new form of organisation can achieve, in terms of providing a caring and educative context for their pupils' growth. In the concern for individual pupils, which clearly shines through the article, are embodied values now becoming typical of schools which are also now beginning genuinely to serve their local communities. It is above all important that schools of this kind, and their teachers, should have available to them the resources, and degree of public support, that they so clearly warrant.

Time to Look into the Water

by the Staff of West Moors Middle School, Dorset.

One view of a middle school is as a bridge. Its function being to help children cross the divide between primary and secondary education. This idea has certainly influenced our thinking and is reflected in our curriculum by the move from integration at age nine towards subject differentiation by age twelve. In my view, however, it is at least equally important to allow each child the opportunity to pause on the bridge and look into the water – to direct his gaze away from his destination and towards a broader view of learning. All too soon children become channelled by the narrow requirements of public examinations. Middle School is the one phase in a child's education when, having already gained a secure grasp of the basic skills of word and number, and unfettered by the pressure of imminent examinations, it should be possible to really exploit enthusiasm and curiosity.

Frank Jacobs – Headmaster

Our school is three years old and is a purpose built middle school for 9-13 year old pupils. The building has a suite of four rooms for each age group, and in the first and second year suites, a practical area. The whole school shares a large library, a multi-purpose hall, a music and drama studio and a practical wing for art, craft and design, home education and science.

We have 430 children and 18½ members of staff and the head. Each teacher belongs to a year team and spends the majority of the week with that group of children. In the first two years, children spend most of their time with their own class teacher. Even the older children spend the majority of their time with their own teacher but have regular sessions in the science laboratory, the art area and in home education. Specialist teaching of French, science, maths and music is either arranged by exchanging classes within a year group or by exchanging specialisms between year groups.

West Moors was once a small village seven miles from Bournemouth. It now has several large council and private estates and is a commuter area for Bournemouth, Poole, Ringwood, and even London. Most of our children live in West Moors, with about 50 coming from two rural communities (among these is a small minority of travelling children who live on a local authority maintained site). The uniformly new, bright housing gives a superficial impression of prosperity, but under the surface, family circumstances are as varied as anywhere.

Because we are a new school, we had the unique opportunity to formulate our aims and philosophy together. There was a weekend conference for staff before the school opened, and during the first two terms we used the Schools Council, **Aims into Practice in the Primary School** project as a framework for deciding our policy. At weekly staff meetings we have often talked about the need to explain the middle school idea to other colleagues and to administrators, and this need has become so urgent in the present time of financial cut-backs that we decided to write something about our school and the way it works.

As we began to discuss the nature of middle school education, it became clear that apart from the age group, 9-13, there is nothing unique about daily life in our school. Any isolated incident could have taken place in a primary or secondary school. What is unusual is that the organisation and educational approach increases the chance of what is good in primary and secondary schools taking place under one roof, and at the time it is appropriate for each child. Perhaps it is because the initial skills of reading and writing have been accomplished for most children at their first school, and because we have no pressure from external examinations, that the middle school is able to concentrate on learning for its own sake, and on the individual child's needs.

Each of us agreed to write about something which happens in our own classroom which reflects this approach.

The Age Range

Children in the 9-13 age range are said to have much in common. It is hard to see this with the younger children bringing dolls to school and the oldest going out with boy friends and girl friends. They are, however, all in an age group where growing up, physically, intellectually and emotionally, is the issue, a time when the oldest and youngest can share moments with each other. Nevertheless, the real intellectual and emotional age range in our school is from about seven to fifteen. The primary school is often criticised for not stretching the most able children, while secondary schools are often so formal and structured that immature children cannot make progress. We hope to offer the right experience to all children. The facilities are here for specialist work, and so is the personal approach of a class teacher who knows each child and his needs.

The following accounts are a few examples of how we try to match maturity and school experience:

For the first few weeks in our school, Mark found life little different from his first school. Slowly, he was offered opportunities which he could only have dreamed of in a Junior or Primary School: broadcasting club, gymnastics club, with superb equipment, a good readers club, cookery club and orchestra. The school has about 30 clubs which are open to all children. Slowly, the scope of lessons widened to include clay work, making a Victorian tile, gathering blackberries and cooking them with apples, pastry

and a meringue topping to be eaten by 200 children and parents at a harvest assembly, studying grass and earth with the microscope and making simple tests on the samples, using the resource centre with its variety of books, tape recorders, overhead projectors, video and other hardware. At any time he could retreat to his year area and his class teacher to be cocooned if he wished. The threat of occasional bullying was quickly averted by a visit to our school counsellor who is available to the first year all the time, including break times.

In the Spring term, there were further new activities – stretch maths and a specialist teacher for games. There is still one main class teacher, but the opportunities exist for needlecraft, art and craft, mime, dance, informal drama and play acting. The specialist skills needed are either provided from within the first year term, or by occasional visits by specialists from other parts of the school, and by the specialist advice and equipment which is available to the whole school.

Jenny Carter – First Year Co-ordinator

During a topic work session the room was darkened as far as possible and the children listened to a Netsilik Eskimo story about the need for the Eskimos to placate the spirits in order to secure good hunting. The story of Nuliajuk was acted out in scenes, under the supervision of another member of staff, and on the following day, as interest had been sustained, the class were asked to retell the story in their own words.

However, I was suddenly aware that this introduction was totally unsuitable for one pupil. Darren has difficulty in producing more than a couple of lines of written work and although interested, would have little chance of recording the story on paper. (A fault on my part for not considering this beforehand.) At that point, I decided to send him and David – who has spelling and sentence difficulties – with a tape recorder into the library in order to record the story in a form that they and I would find satisfactory.

In this situation there was no pressure requiring them to produce an accurate written piece, but they did retell the story accurately, imaginatively (adding their own interpretations) and working in close co-operation with each other, even though they are not close friends. These are qualities that I feel are enhanced by the middle school and which, together with the opportunity staff have to work in close alliance, enable us to cater for the individual rather than the average.

Rachael Short – Third Year Teacher

The discovery that tee-square against drawing board (or suitable table) and set square against tee-square provide a means of making squares, rectangles, triangles and parallels at will, can be little short of astonishing to a ten-year-old.

From this we have led eleven-year-olds to 'scale full-size' drawings of nets for polyhedra, and thence to model bungalows of card, employing front and side elevations and plans. The pay-off is a small model bungalow complete with chimney, tiled roof, and pebble-dash, according to the child's open-ended design.

Incidental use of compass accompanied our main objectives. Its varied uses became more apparent to the children through the force of circumstances – the need to transfer dimensions and bisect with arcs for awkward roof angles, etc.

Such early ground work appears to be paying dividends at fourth year level, where children are designing and making wooden objects for the home, applying further geometric skills since their own 'bungalow' work last year.

Bruner, in acknowleding Piaget and Inhelder, hypothesises that any subject can be taught to any child in some honest form and quotes Inhelder's view that it is possible to draw up methods of teaching the basic ideas in science and mathematics for children considerably younger than the traditional age.

Frank Coram – Second Year Teacher and Art Co-ordinator

We believe that middle schools provide an environment which stimulates the youngest children to produce work of a far higher quality than in a primary setting. The example of the oldest is always there, giving a high standard to aim at, and the kind of facilities usually found only in secondary school are available to them. We do not find that the older children suffer. Since we encourage self-motivation, and do not have the restrictive pressure of examinations, children's work can develop along individual lines and with personal commitment, a style of work which will be most useful to them in the sixth form.

Our music facilities, and an instance when first and fourth year pupils worked together, are good examples of the potential of middle school for its pupils.

In our school, the younger children have the advantage of hearing older, more advanced players perform. For example, four fourth year girls have formed a wind band consisting of two flutes, an oboe and a clarinet. When the girls perform in concerts the younger children marvel at their skill and are encouraged to consider taking up an instrument themselves.

We are very lucky to possess a large room which we call the studio. This room is used mainly for music lessons and has many possibilities for different kinds of musical activity – classwork or small instrumental groups. The orchestra can rehearse in the studio and there is easy access to instruments in the store cupboard. The versatility of the studio, virtually unknown in the average primary school, is an enormous aid in giving children a variety of musical experience.

Janet Tye – Second Year Team and Music Co-ordinator

Towards the end of our topic on the Industrial Revolution, a discussion in my class led the children to devise three plays which would reflect (i) the wealth of the new mine owners, (ii) a poor family who had to move to the workhouse following the death of the father, (iii) the difficulties which workers faced in trying to improve their conditions of employment – we used the local example of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

We were able to spend some time on discussing outlines of the plays. As an evaluation of their knowledge of the Industrial Revolution it was an enlightening exercise. In the mine owners play for example, typical wages of the day were included, and the intolerant attitude of the owner was vividly portrayed. In the second play the misery of the poor family was quite obvious and impressions of the workhouse were described in detail. The boys of the third group, re-enacting the plight of the Tolpuddle Matryrs, emphasised the problems of a newly established Friendly Society.

As the first year are studying Victorian times we are going to 'slot-in' a repeat performance of the assembly which resulted from this drama, as the first year did not have the chance of seeing the original production. This will be an ideal opportunity for the fourth year children to have direct contact with the first years.

Alan Price – Fourth Year Co-ordinator

The Size of School

Our school is built to accommodate a maximum of 560 children. At present we have 433 on roll. This comparatively small organisation gives enormous scope for the personalisation of education. It means that most children know something about the majority of children. Just as important, the teachers know each other well. This makes for real continuity in the curriculum and in the treatment of individual pupils who may have social or personal problems or special learning difficulties. Despite the intimacy of our organisation, there are some children with special social and emotional needs. One of our teachers, a member of the first year team, has a special responsibility in this area as the school counsellor.

One of my main roles is to be available to children at all non-teaching times. This is important at the beginning of the school year when new children can find sanctuary in an area away from the hustle and bustle of the playground.

It is not only these children who find the sanctuary invaluable. Older children who have difficulty in establishing lasting friendships know they will be welcome too. The travelling children also make good use of the sanctuary. They usually turn up when the pressure on them in the playground gets too much. The sanctuary seems to act as a safety valve for the whole school.

It is interesting to see the pattern of use of the sanctuary. One group spends most of its spare time with me. Another group always comes in first thing in the morning. Other groups' visits vary from a few days to several weeks.

I provide a variety of activities in my room. Tie and dye is popular, as are the electrical experiments and an unconnected telephone. Card games are played and a good deal of model making and drawing takes place. It is often possible to find first and fourth year children working together. Jack and Margaret are regular visitors. Jack is a first year boy who was constantly in trouble. One lunch time, he wandered into my room and started doing the electrical experiments. Since then he has become a regular visitor and is learning to work in co-operation with other children. This has resulted in a marked improvement in his general behaviour.

Margaret is a third year girl who comes from a home background torn with strife. I have known her since the first school and never in all this time has she been able to sustain a lasting friendship. Other children tend to reject her for her anti-social behaviour. However, there are times when things seem to go better and then I see very little of her.

Dick Noon – First Year Team and School Counsellor

Alongside each teacher's responsibility to a year group, many members of staff have responsibility for co-ordinating an area of the curriculum throughout the school. Although the specialists are not usually able to participate in the teaching of their subject to all age groups, the size of the school and the close relationships which exist between colleagues make incidents like the following reasonably easy to arrange:

The third year term were able and willing to release me temporarily from my maths teaching commitments so that I could support the practical work on capacity that I knew the second year were planning.

They had decided to have a whole class working on activities at one time, and access to the extra sinks and equipment in the science laboratory made this convenient and possible.

When I arrived at the first session, the children appeared to have just started, and a few were still gathered round the teacher. All groups had sets of containers to order by capacity and they had a variety of materials to fill them. Some set about this task by pouring from one vessel to another; others compared the masses of full containers using the very accurate pan scales.

There seemed to be scope here for incidental reinforcement of other mathematical concepts whilst using these balances, and I spent my time with groups using them.

How accurately do you need to measure the mass?

To the nearest 10g or 1g?

You have chosen to record to the nearest tenth of a gram, how do you write it in decimal form?

Can you write it another way?

The second session was with a different class. Once again the children had started and most groups were ordering the containers using water and measuring jugs, having estimated the results first. The children I talked to were coping very well and I began to feel superfluous. Undaunted though, I believed that a lot of the learning would be in the talk surrounding the experience.

Later I spotted a pint milk bottle. I was able to challenge the group with:

Which holds more, a pint or a litre bottle?

How much more?

However they answered, I had them. They could discover for themselves.

Alan McKeckan, Third Year Team and Maths Co-ordinator

The same flexibility of organisation makes it possible for children to work on special assignments in another year group:

My class of 10-11 year olds are at present studying the Salmon Unit of *Man: a Course of Study*. Part of this unit involves discussion which leads on to the idea of innate behaviour. It was important to do this discussion carefully, and I decided to get some fourth year children to act as group chairmen.

I chose Roy and Mark. While they are not boys to whom reading and writing comes easily, they know a great deal about fish. They were in my class for the two years before this one, had covered this work and had a lot of experience of discussion. Roy, Mark and I each chaired a group of eight or nine children.

The first part of the afternoon was taken up in discussion: the questions were on the board, and a secretary in each group took notes. After a given time, the secretaries reported back to the whole class. For the second part of the afternoon, each group was given a different set of worksheets which posed 'problems' – How do salmon leap waterfalls? How do they find their homestream, etc.

As the groups settled down to this task, I looked to see how Mark and Roy responded. They took part in the conversations which followed the reading of the worksheets, and as the children began written work, Roy got up and walked around his group, looking to see what was being written. He seemed to be making encouraging remarks. Mark got cross with various girls he considered were not trying, then cut his losses and concentrated on the boys. After a while, they came to me and said that the children didn't need them at the moment – could they draw a picture of a salmon? They could indeed.

That afternoon, I taped a conversation with Roy and Mark. They said it had been good 'helping the second year'. It would have been 'too much' for me to have answered all the questions. Mark said they were both interested in what the second years had to say. They emphasised that they had learned something – how the salmons' sense of smell helped them find their homestream, and how they jump waterfalls. I felt that I was able to prove to them how much I valued their knowledge about fish and their experience of discussion.

I also taped a discussion with two children from my class. Alex said it was a good idea to have fourth years in – there should be more of it. Roy, he said, was 'a kind of authority in the group'. He kept order well and insisted that only one person spoke at a time. Alex didn't think that anyone from our class could have done so well. Simon said that Mark kept order well and help out generally. He didn't mention 'those girls.'

This was not a 'one-off' session – fourth year children have helped on personal topics, and I shall ask them to contribute again in a variety of ways. These children can often bring knowledge and status I can't match. Working with younger children can stretch them, both academically and socially, and makes them justify their position at the 'top' of the school. There *will* be More of It.

Joe Enright – Second Year Co-ordinator

There is an important rider to our timetable, that children's needs take priority. This may mean that the timetable is scrapped for a week or a day to make way for a visit or an intensive study. It also means that colleagues are usually happy to release a child or a group for a special project. Elizabeth's work took place in time allocated to home education, integrated studies and music:

Visits to a farm proved difficult to arrange during our home education on Dairy Products. One day Elizabeth told me that she used to help out on a farm, and asked if she could make a telephone call to enquire about making a visit. Before she tried, I heard her rehearsing the call with one of her friends. The first time she 'phoned, the farmer was out, and she was asked to try again at 1.30. This time, I heard her conversation. At her end, she had planned to be most business like, but had to adapt to a social conversation she was not expecting. The farmer agreed to a visit for ten children. Elizabeth then had to survey members of her class to find out who would like to go on this after school visit. I also asked her to draft the letter to go home to parents. This posed an immediate problem of the time we would return to school, so Elizabeth had to 'phone the farm again. The letter was issued more or less as Elizabeth had drafted it.

The visit was wonderful: a talk from the farmer, seeing young calves, the milking parlour, watching a calf who was only seconds old being licked clean and struggling to get to her feet. A normal school visit includes an element of tension for the teacher – and anxiety about how the visit will go and how the children will behave. Elizabeth, however, knew the farm, the farmer and her classmates, and taking responsibility for the visit left me as free as the children to enjoy it. What did Elizabeth learn? Something about organisation, communication and responsibility – not usually subjects on a school curriculum.

Maggie Gracie – Fourth Year Team and Deputy Head

In our small community, it is possible to involve parents in very many aspects of school life. Every parent is a member of the School Association which organises educational and fund-raising activities. Outside this formal structure for co-operation between home and school, there are countless fruitful relationships: dozens of parents bring regular supplies of scrap material; several mums run the school bookshop; others help in the library and hear children reading.

Liz is a single parent with two children in school, in first and second year. She attended all the parents' meetings when her first son started school, then she volunteered to help with the school bookshop and came in two lunch times a week to do this. At first she was co-opted onto a committee to organise a summer dance, and this year was elected to the School Association's committee. This term she made enquiries about helping with cycling proficiency, and is now training as a tester. At about the same time, her sons became interested in fishing, and Liz started a club where children exchange experience and a local fisherman has visited to give expert advice. What a parent! She was beginning to feel like a member of staff, and so when we had the opportunity to appoint a practical assistant, Liz was an obvious candidate. Now she works part time in school and still carries on with all her voluntary activities.

The Curriculum

Of all the many factors which influence the design of curriculum, there are six which seem to be particularly significant in this school:

- the paramount importance placed on language development;
- an emphasis on the skills of learning;
- recognition of wide differences between individual pupils in both their ability and interests and aptitudes;
- recognition of the possibility that different pupils may take different pathways through learning to arrive at the same goal;
- a belief in the need to safeguard certain basic standards.

The diagram (page 8) maps our curriculum – or at any rate that part of it which is programmed. The map shows a broad 'carpet' of language development and the skills of enquiry stretching centrally through all four years. These activities are pervasive. They not only extend into all other curriculum areas, but to a great extent depend on individual disciplines for their raw material. They also merit some allocation of time in their own right.

The other items on the map fall into two broad groups. Those such as mathematics and French which are difficult to integrate totally with other subjects are allocated regular times every week. Other subjects such as health and religious education are treated as integrated topics. In order to make best use of our practical facilities, as well as properly meeting the needs of both subject and developing pupil, some activities, like science, are integrated in the early years but regularly timetabled later. Within a clear agreement about what total content shall be included during each year, the four year teaching team exercise considerable freedom in the design of topic work, capitalizing on the current strengths and interests of teachers and children.

In the classroom, the teachers are taking daily decisions about children's learning. They have the curriculum map in their mind, and exploit every opportunity to link language development with the child's interests, and encourage children to learn and develop skills through their own experience and through necessity.

Peter searched in vain for the instructions to make a model Indian Reservation. The Reading Routes card he had chosen suggested following instructions to be found on another card. The number of the second card was clearly given.

Peter read the card thoroughly and could find nothing about Indians or reservations on it. I sent him back to read it again. He searched through other cards on a similar theme in case the publishers had just misprinted the number. It was at this point he consulted me again, absolutely baffled. I couldn't find the card either. 'Well', I said, 'I wonder how many children have been as frustrated as you are? All the schools with these materials have probably got the same misprint. Go and find a book in the library. I think that McMillan have published one on Indians – but look in the subject index first'.

Peter returned with a book and an idea. 'Don't you think I should write to them and complain?' he asked.

I thought this was an excellent idea. Peter is very slow to write and rarely finishes work without a few firm 'prods'. Well, this time the work was slow too, but no reminders were needed and after a couple of drafts we both agreed that the letter, as well as looking good, would make the point. The second attempt at an envelope passed my scrutiny and the letter was posted.

The reply surpassed all expectations – effusive thanks – the materials were just about to be reprinted – letter couldn't have arrived at a better time – no-one had ever pointed it out before – and a gift of a book, the sort of history boys like.

Peter was thrilled. He doesn't often get praised and rewarded for his usefulness. On the contrary he has many home problems which have also affected his behaviour in school.

Peter was able to follow up his interest because I knew him well enough to judge that this would be useful activity for him. And, because I teach him for nearly two-thirds of the week, I could allow him time to do it.

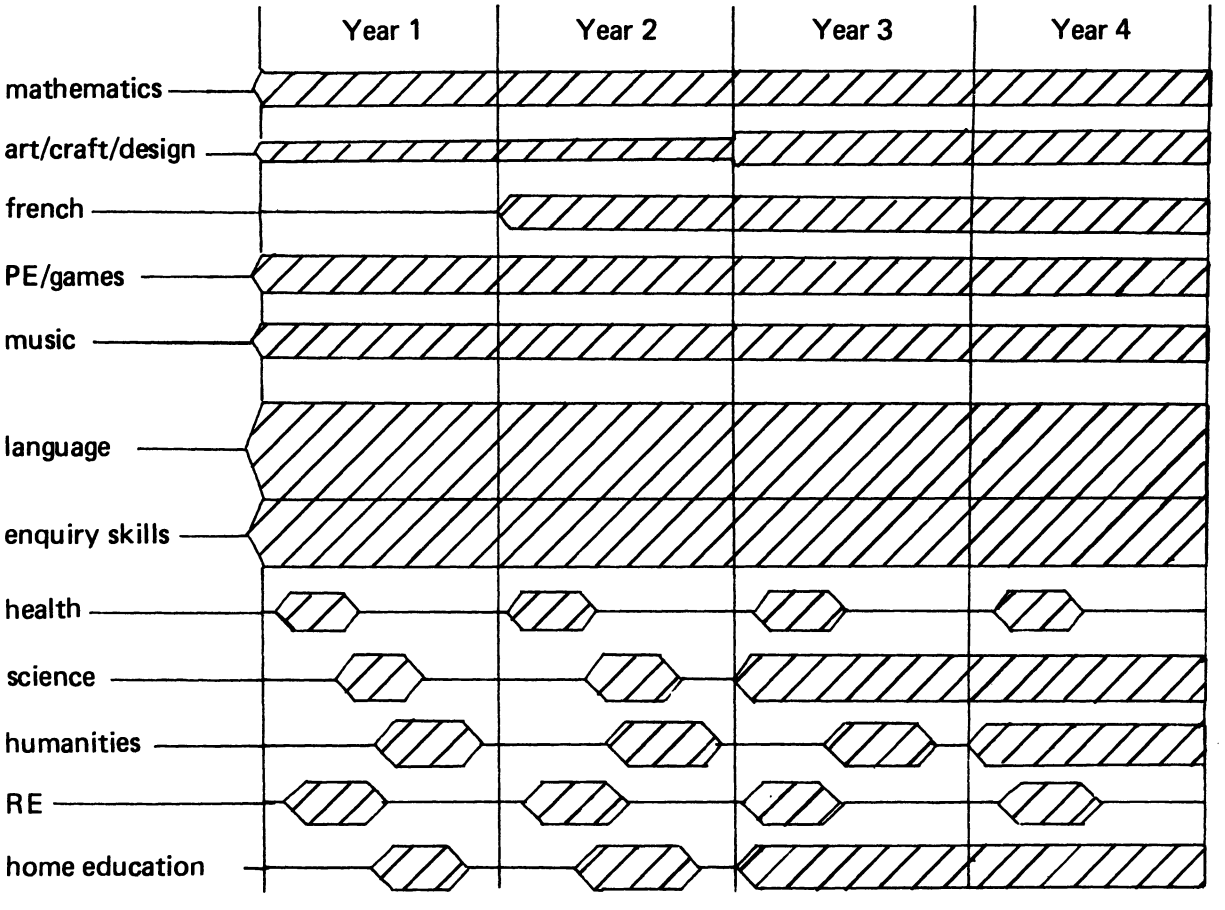
This is not an isolated incident. Children are encouraged to develop a critical attitude to print by allowing them to consult a variety of sources and to read and discuss critically.

Jill Taylor – Third Year Co-ordinator and Language Co-ordinator

The multiple activity of listening, watching and writing needs practice for it can result in a meaningless jumble of badly written fragments and half remembered facts. I have therefore suggested to and encouraged third and fourth year children to attempt to develop note taking on selected occasions. I have tried to give purpose to the idea by indicating ways in which good, brief notes in keyword and sub-heading form can act as memory joggers.

The exhortations have not, on the whole, produced many encouraging results – until recently. During our fourth year topic on the industrial revolution, there were a

CURRICULUM MAP



number of occasions when television programmes, film strips, lead lessons, etc., were used as starting points. Each child then developed his own work in a more or less personal direction.

The history and accounts of life during the industrial revolution are crammed with facts and impressions. So the children needed to find ways of storing the welter of information in which they were immersed, to produce work which was not copied in 'chunks'.

Lo and behold – a large number of children discovered, overnight, a generally successful note taking technique. One or two have even begun to develop a crude shorthand code to speed up the process. A few children have since informed me that this note taking is the greatest development since sliced bread and they wish they had heard about it before!

Clive Thompson – Fourth Year Team and Science Co-ordinator

The Head sums up

Of course, this kind of school needs talented and dedicated teachers, and middle schools have been lucky in securing more than their fair share of these. The very newness of the middle school concept has tended to attract gifted teachers. Given this combination of unbridled enthusiasm of children in their middle years and the vitality of their teachers, it is small wonder that so many schools are such exciting places. But there must be a word of caution. By their very nature middle schools make great demands on their staffs. I believe that in a good middle school children receive a better all round education – but the demands on teachers are comparably greater. If we are going to go on succeeding, the price must be paid, and it must be recognised that we need generous staffing to do the job well.

Frank Jacobs

An American Looks at Teacher Views of the APU

C. Thomas Gooding

C. Thomas Gooding, Professor of Psychology at State University of New York at Oswego, had been visiting Scholar at the University of Liverpool during the last year. Professor Gooding's experience include teaching in primary and secondary education and in Universities in Florida and New York. His special interests are in the psychology of human learning and the study of teacher professional development.

As a visiting scholar from America, I was interested by the September 1979 issue of *Forum* with its series of reports on the work of the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) regarding current development projects on national achievement testing in Great Britain (Goldstein, 1979; Simon, 1979; Stones, 1979). Subsequently I wrote to the APU inquiring about their programme of proposed tests. The agency provided me with a number of papers and pamphlets concerning their work (DES, 1978; APU, 1977a, 1977b, 1977c).

Being an American, I was well aware of the current pressures for accountability assessment in the USA as described by Shapiro (1979). As the British well know, we have a history in America of having been exceedingly enamoured with testing, particularly normative referenced testing, throughout most of the 20th century. Therefore, I had strong reason to be interested in examining this new trend toward national standardised testing in Great Britain.

Numerous positions relating to issues in national testing in Great Britain were carefully explored in the various articles and reports. But I was concerned about what seemed to be a lack of input from one very important source: I was able to find very little, beyond several letters to the editor in the *Times Educational Supplement* (1980), which expressed the views of classroom teachers on the national achievement testing proposals of the APU. I wanted to find out more concerning the perceptions of primary and secondary teachers on this subject. I also wanted to attempt to determine how classroom teachers thought national achievement testing would influence their work.

Method

In an effort to identify classroom teacher views of national achievement testing such as proposed by the APU and to examine potential implications for classroom practice and faculty professional development, I selected a small sample of teachers in Great Britain and conducted a survey regarding the issues noted above.

I distributed two hundred and fifty survey forms to teachers in primary and secondary schools from a two county area in Northwest England. Teachers were selected

from schools representative of both urban and suburban catchment areas. Participation in the survey was voluntary and replies were anonymous. The survey items questioned the teachers about their attitudes and opinions concerning selected issues in testing currently under consideration by the APU.

In order that responses would not be biased by different understandings of key terms used in the survey, definitions of technical points and terms were given within the questionnaire. (DES, 1978; Stones, 1979.) The reliability of the questionnaire used in the study was established by means of a pilot assessment of the survey form. (Nisbet and Entwistle, 1970.)

The return rate of 50% of the forms was less than ideal although fairly typical of questionnaire based studies. But Kerlinger (1964) notes that we have reason to be more confident of data reliability when we are interested in group responses rather than individual answers. While it is always difficult to determine why people do not respond in questionnaire studies, in this particular case two reasons are suggested; since the survey instrument had been subjected to pilot testing the teachers should have had little difficulty in completing the survey. However, it may be that some of those who were asked to participate hesitated to respond, because the questionnaire dealt with controversial issues. Not responding in such instances is suggested by Nisbet and Entwistle (1970) as an important reason for unreturned questionnaires. A second possible reason for non-response is that persons having strong opinions regarding the issues at hand may tend to respond, while those whose views are more nearly neutral may choose not to answer. The fact that most of the respondents did in fact express strong views lends support to this inference.

Results

1 Data gathered from the survey indicated that of the 124 teachers who replied, 65% are generally opposed to national achievement testing in the schools. The most frequently cited reason was that such testing is placing constraints on the teacher in an attempt to ensure that classes should not score below the national average. Some of the teachers remarked that in their view, such an approach would be detrimental to the work of the schools fostering unfair competition among them.

2 60% of of the teachers surveyed said that if national achievement testing is put into practice, they would prefer to see criterion referenced evaluation utilised rather than norm referenced tests. (Note: criterion referenced evaluation was defined in the questionnaire as testing in which the performance of each individual is evaluated on the basis of a set standard of competency. Norm referenced assessment was defined as testing in which the performance of the individual is compared with that of the total group.) If this result is indicative of attitudes of teachers throughout Britain, the traditional normative test is seen by a substantial proportion of teachers as an unacceptable method of national achievement assessment.

3 With regard to the impact of a national achievement testing programme on their classroom practice, the survey findings indicated that two-thirds of the teachers are of the opinion that national testing would increase their test preparation time. 20% of the teachers said that they already spend at least 10% of their class time reviewing old exams in class, having their classes take sample exams, or studying from exam review books. 50% of the teachers believed that a system of national achievement testing could lead to a more test-oriented curriculum.

4 As to the work of the APU and the test development programme, the majority of those surveyed were of the opinion that they had not been adequately informed or consulted with respect to the design of the testing programme. 82% of the teachers had done reading on the work of the APU, attended professional meetings where the APU testing programme was discussed, or had some other source of information on the proposed tests. Even so, as many as 60% believed that they had little information on the work of the APU.

5 Perhaps the most interesting data came in response to the open ended questions asked in the survey. 45% of the teachers reported their concern that the testing of their students could possibly result in a scheme of faculty evaluation which would be based in part on how well their students performed on the national tests.

Discussion

While the DES (1978) reports that pilot programmes in schools in England and Wales have involved approximately 12,500 pupils in the mathematics test development project alone, the APU seems remote to most of the teachers surveyed. The composition of the APU board may suggest a reason for this perception, since out of 17 members only six are local school representatives (Simon, 1979). Thus the present makeup of the APU board is such that it is strongly weighted toward the influence of the DES and related government bureaus.

Perhaps increasing teacher and teacher educator representation on the APU board could help to increase teacher input and also provide more communication links among the APU, teachers, and their professional organisations. In any event, on the basis of the information gathered in this survey, teachers do not appear to believe that they as teaching professionals have a major role in the decision making processes regarding national achievement testing in Great Britain.

To recall the findings of the survey relating to teacher evaluation, the teachers expressed concern that traditional normative testing (i.e. testing which compares the student's performance with the statistical average) is not the best course of action. Many believe that such norm referenced national achievement testing will put the emphasis on having their students achieve scores that are above average rather than having them attain a set standard of competency. The just published report on the primary mathematics test (APU Primary Survey Report No.1, 1980) suggests that the teachers are correct in their judgement. The report indicates a test design based on a norm referenced model: 'The aim of the test design was to provide a mean score and distribution of scores for each of the 13 sub-categories.' (APU, 1980, p.19.)

The teachers were also concerned that such norm referenced test results will be utilised inappropriately as a means of assessing their professional performance in the classroom. In a recent article on faculty professional development and teacher assessment Eckhard and McElhinny (1977) pointed out that most teacher evaluation and educational accountability schemes are usually based on three sources of data: classroom observations, supervisor ratings, and *pupil scores on standardised tests.* Such a procedure often plays down teaching objectives in favour of test scores. These tests assess content and competencies 'that are not the exclusive domain of the school, but are widely available in the culture, and therefore do not

exclusively measure instruction'. (Eckhard & McElhinny, 1977, p.615.) An alternative evaluation model has been proposed which relies on a contract system jointly developed between the head or adviser and the teacher. Similar types of self evaluation and personal accountability schemes have also been proposed and field tested by other authors (Elliot, 1979; Galton, 1979; and Varnava, 1979.) Assessment procedures such as these are based primarily on personal achievement of specified goals, rather than competition and comparison.

Conclusions

In view of the opinions of the teachers surveyed, approaches of the sort suggested above seem called for if national achievement testing is to be implemented in Great Britain. Otherwise, against a background of norm referenced testing which is currently developing, it will in my view become more difficult to create and sustain positive and growth oriented programmes of faculty development.

Past practice in both Great Britain and the United States has shown that when standardised normative evaluations of student performance are stressed, there is an emphasis on evaluation based on the test score criteria. Considerably less attention is then given to achievement based evaluation. Faculty development programmes have been shown to operate successfully where there are ample opportunities for achievement based evaluation of both teaching and student learning. (Ekhard & McElhinny, 1977; Galton, 1979; Scriven, 1967; Stufflebeam, 1971.)

With the APU pursuing a programme of test development for national assessment that relies so heavily on norm referenced test evaluation teachers may be under increasing pressure to focus on preparation of their students for these traditional types of examinations. The irony of all this is that the normative test oriented approaches to evaluation being considered by the APU could lead to a more static educational programme, while what Great Britain needs is a more innovative teaching faculty able to prepare students to live more effectively in a rapidly changing world. In the face of accumulating evidence from a number of sources it is to be hoped that the APU will re-evaluate its present course and give serious consideration to such alternatives as criterion referenced models of performance assessment.

In any event further investigation of the issues initially explored here is urgently required. This report was designed to be an exploratory, hypothesis-generating study. The results of this preliminary investigation indicate that a more comprehensive interview-based study of teacher views of national achievement testing should be undertaken. Such a project would be important in that it could avoid many of the problems inherent in questionnaire based research. Furthermore, the results of a comprehensive investigation would provide definitive guidelines for future action.

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Comprehensive Re-organisation and the Process of Change

Valerie Collier
Before embarking on research, Valerie Collier taught Modern Languages for eight years in Grammar and Comprehensive Schools in Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire.

This article describes an empirical study of the effect of secondary reconstruction upon seven schools within the same local education authority in the East Midlands. Comprehensive reorganisation in the 1970s made the schools larger, more diversified organisations, endeavouring to serve the needs of pupils from the whole ability range. Five of the schools were formed from small secondary modern schools, one had been a bilateral school and one was formed by combining a secondary modern and a grammar school.

From interviews held with the headmasters and the deputy heads (curriculum), information was collated concerning the curricular changes occuring since re-organisation, the formal organisation adopted, and the internal and external factors affecting change.

1. Curricular Changes

Three broad areas of curricular change have occurred:

1. The introduction of a vast range of new subjects

These include: Social Studies, Sociology, Rural Science, Computer Studies, French, German or Spanish, Latin, Engineering, Plastics, Photography, Car Mechanics, Materials Technology, Community Service, and the establishment of Drama as a subject independent of English. In addition, linked courses have been developed, enabling pupils to attend a local college of further education for vocationally orientated courses such as: Shorthand, Typing, Office Practice, Commerce, Catering, Retail Distribution, Nursing and Child Care.

2. The development of integrated courses

The development of integrated courses has been mainly on an intra-faculty basis and generally for pupils in the lower school and for older pupils taking CSE examinations. Thus, courses in Integrated Humanities (four schools) and Integrated Science (seven schools) have been developed for first and second year pupils, two schools have CSE Integrated Humanities courses and one a CSE Combined Science course, but by the third year the dominant pattern is for Geography, History and Religious Education, and Physics, Chemistry and Biology to be taught as separate subjects in preparation for fourth and fifth form O level courses. The same trend is seen in the Creative Arts faculties where attempts to integrate subjects by, for example, a thematic approach, are restricted to the first and second year. In Modern Languages some CSE courses in French Studies and in European Studies have been introduced for pupils with language skills insufficient for them to be entered for CSE French. Two inter-faculty experiments comprise: at one school a course leading to a CSE Mode III in Control Technology run by Creative Arts and Science staff, and at another, a project to integrate some of the first year English and Science teaching.

3. The pursuance of new teaching methods and ways of learning

The pursuance of new teaching methods and ways of learning has also been mainly in the lower school and for CSE pupils. In three schools enquiry based or resource based learning methods have been developed in Integrated Humanities courses for first and second year pupils. All schools have 'Nuffield-type' Science courses in the first and second year and two have Nuffield Science A level courses. In Mathematics the main development has been the introduction of School Mathematics Project materials. However, the conflicting aims of Modern and Traditional Mathematics have resulted in Modern Mathematics either being taught by traditional methods, or being incorporated with Traditional Mathematics courses, or being abandoned altogether. All the schools have adopted audio-visual or audio-lingual courses in the initial stages of foreign language learning, but formal exercises stressing written accuracy become increasingly predominant in the middle and upper schools. In English and Drama there has been a greater emphasis placed upon an affective approach in language and literature, but this is most apparent in the lower school and in courses for lower ability fourth and fifth form pupils who take CSE English Mode III and CSE Drama Modes I and III.

2. The Formal Organisation

The predominant characteristics of the formal organisation each school has adopted typify those of the collection code or mechanistic kind of organisational structure (Bernstein 1971, Burns and Stalker 1968) in three broad areas of analysis:

1. The structure of control, authority and communication

All schools have an essentially hierarchic organisational structure comprising: the headmaster, the three deputy heads who are generally assigned some specific responsibilities in either the administrative, academic or pastoral spheres, the senior staff of middle management, (faculty directors, heads of department, heads of house, year heads), and assistant staff. The main policy-making structures comprise the Academic Board and the Pastoral Committee whose membership is usually restricted to upper and middle management.

2. The organisation of knowledge

The curriculum is characterised by strong classification and strong framing. The term 'classification' refers to the relationship between contents of the curriculum and where it is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries. Upon reorganisation larger units or faculties were created, but this has been mainly for administrative convenience and has not on the whole led to a more integrated, co-ordinated approach to learning, single subject courses predominating throughout the school curriculum. The term 'framing' describes the degree of control teachers and pupils possess over how knowledge is selected, organised, transmitted and received, and where it is strong teachers and pupils have little control. In the schools studied, Mode III courses, which give teachers more control over what is taught, and enquiry based methods, which give pupils greater power over the learning process, are comparatively rare.

3. The relationship between the school and other sub-systems

There has been some blurring of the boundaries between the school and the community whereby parents have become better informed and links have been made with individuals in other sub-systems. These contacts have not, however, amounted to fundamental changes in the running of the schools, policy formulation and decision-making continuing to be the prerogative of school management.

3. Internal and External Factors Affecting Change

Internal factors have been far more important than external factors in the process of change and of these internal factors, the interests of the staff, including those of the head, have been most significant.

1. Staff interests

The heads and deputies saw themselves as 'catalysts' or 'initiators' in the process of change and have tried to fulfil such roles through their staff appointments. This power to appoint staff can, however, severely limit the range of innovations likely to occur in a school because heads endeavour to choose candidates whose educational beliefs and sympathies reflect their own. Five of the deputy heads (curriculum) had been appointed because of their commitment to specific policies which the head wished to implement in his school. The heads admitted, however, that they often could not find suitable candidates for their vacant posts. Thus they were reluctant to support suggested changes of a more radical nature such as Integrated Studies, resource based learning and Mode III courses, because of the difficulty of finding staff replacements interested in these courses when the initiators of the changes leave.

Within the collection code or mechanistic organisation, the incumbents of any position in the hierarchical structure can use the power of their position to thwart change. At one school the lack of curriculum development work in three faculties was considered to be a direct result of the lack of interest in such work displayed by their faculty directors. Even assistant staff are effectively isolated within their own subject areas and able to resist change. Thus at one school fears were expressed that the School Mathematics Project materials were being used by teachers to inculcate mathematical knowledge instead of to develop mathematical skills and understanding in pupils. However, heads and deputies expressed a deep reluctance to put pressures on teachers to initiate changes because of their respect for other teachers' professional judgement in their own subject areas. Thus, they rather hope that teachers' interests will provide the impetus for change. However, the majority of staff were shown to exhibit what Hoyle terms 'restricted professionality' (Hoyle 1972), being preoccupied with factors internal to the school and tending to disregard external sources of curriculum development information.

2. Pupil interests, the timetable, cost

Pupil interests were considered particularly significant in the upper school where reductions in staffing allocations were making it essential to rationalise minority courses. At one school O level and CSE courses which attract fewer than ten pupils and A level courses which attract fewer than five pupils are not run, in order that classes in the lower school do not exceed twenty-seven.

Before the schools had fully developed fifth and sixth forms, it had been possible to use extensive blocking of pupil groups in the lower school, thereby facilitating innovations such as team teaching, and to offer a wide range of options to older pupils. However, it was generally agreed that the strains upon the timetable were becoming unbearable and one proposed solution was to simplify the fourth and fifth form timetable by offering a common core curriculum and fewer options, a move which would severely restrict the future introduction of new courses.

Although not considered an important factor in the past, cost was regarded as likely to be of increasing significance in the future. At one school the lack of technician help in the Resources Centre is already restricting the development of enquiry based learning.

3. External factors

There was an overwhelming consensus that the contribution of external agencies to the implementation of changes had been minimal. It was generally agreed that, with the exception of contacts between a few teachers and advisers in specialist subjects, the advisory service had played no significant role. Similarly, the influence of teachers' centres, universities and colleges had been restricted to a few contacts made by individual specialist teachers. Courses run by such bodies were considered to have had little effect upon the schools as a whole. Schools Council and Nuffield Foundation projects were described as 'way out' and 'rather expensive'. Some have been introduced but it was not within the scope of this study to evaluate the extent to which the new methodologies implicit in many of the courses were being adopted. However, the varying usages made of School Mathematics Project materials illustrate how the potential for change inherent in materials produced by external agencies can be severely modified or lost in the process of implementation.

The examination boards have introduced a wide range of external examinations which in theory encourage and facilitate the development of new courses. However, although schools can choose at O and A level between boards, alternative syllabuses and modes, the general pattern is to use only one GCE board in order to facilitate administration and cut costs and to favour single subject Mode I courses at both GCE and CSE level. The most significant factor underlying these practices is the pressures felt to be exerted by employers, parents and pupils who place qualifications in a hierarchy with A level at the apex, followed in descending order by O level Mode I, O level Mode III, CSE Mode I, and CSE Mode III. At each level single subject courses rank higher than integrated courses.

Some Implications

Despite secondary reorganisation there has been no fundamental rethinking of the content, organisation or the process of education. All the schools have adopted a collection code or mechanistic kind of organisational structure. The process of change has been mainly influenced by internal factors, of which staff interests have been the most significant, and there has been a noticeable lack of external assistance in making changes. Curricular changes have consequently been of a fairly limited kind, being mainly restricted to the introduction of new subjects and to innovations within certain subjects for lower school and for less able older pupils. Thus, the study findings support the views of theorists who assert that the collection code or mechanistic kind of organisation is least likely to promote innovations because of its internal structure and its lack of receptivity to outside influences. (Bernstein 1971, Burns and Stalker 1968, McMullen 1974, Miles 1965.)

If, therefore, fundamental changes of a more radical nature are considered desirable and if they are to be successfully implemented, then there is a need for a more planned, systematic approach to change. This would entail changes in school organisation involving the adoption of an integrated code or organic type of organisational structure, deprive heads and their staff of their professional autonomy, and force schools to become more open systems, subject to much greater influence from external agencies.

However, schools are vulnerable to the demands of the surrounding environment, a fact considered by Miles (1965) to be an effective brake upon innovations in educational organisations and illustrated in this study by the way the importance attached by society to certain kinds of external certification affects the development of new courses. This vulnerability means that any fundamental rethinking of the content, organisation and process of education within the schools must be matched by a similar process in society as a whole if more radical changes are to be initiated and successfully implemented.

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Comprehensive Education in an age of uncertainty – issues in the 1980s

Keith Watson

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The much maligned Great Education Debate highlighted some crucial issues. Unfortunately, as a result of the present government's policies on education and public expenditure[1] these issues are in danger of being swamped in arguments over school meals, milk and transport. In the light of the uncertainties of the 1980s[2] it is imperative that these issues are not forgotten. The fact that 85% of secondary school pupils in the maintained sector are now enrolled in comprehensive schools means that all these issues will mainly affect these schools. This paper therefore seeks to explore them under four headings: (1) standards; (2) management issues; (3) the governance of schools; and (4) social issues. In so doing it is hoped to contribute to a debate that this author believes is essential regardless of which political party is in power.

Standards

The debate about educational standards was at the heart of the Bullock Report[3] recommendation as well as of the Great Debate. The recent report on secondary education is unlikely to minimise the arguments.[4] Instead, there must be more intensive discussion about the place of setting, streaming and electives within schools. Many believe, rightly or wrongly, that too much emphasis has been placed on the less able child with the result that the average have frequently been ignored and the able have been understretched. A report from the College of Preceptors in July, 1979, implied as much.[5]

The issue is closely linked with that of mixed ability classes. For many people mixed ability grouping and comprehensive schooling are inseparable. In countries as disparate as the USA, Canada, Sweden and the USSR, mixed ability classes are statutorily required and teachers are trained accordingly though it should be remembered that in all cases opportunities are available for both electives and special classes for remedial and able children and that there is a common curriculum. In most cases such specialist classes operate within the normal school context, though in the USSR there are also special schools for gifted children

in science, mathematics, music and languages.[6] Although some schools in the UK continue mixed ability teaching to CSE or O level the majority continue for barely two or at the most three years. There are some subject teachers (e.g. in mathematics and languages) who regard mixed ability grouping as disastrous and few teacher training institutions adequately prepare their students psychologically or methodologically for such classes. Surely this issue is of such importance that it should be removed from the political arena and examined dispassionately and on pedagogical grounds as to what is best for both teacher and taught in certain subject areas? Surely the debate about gifted children should be concerned about providing specialist tuition within individual schools or within LEA jurisdiction rather than with Conservative Party proposals to buy places in independent schools?

Likewise, there should be rigorous debate about the form and purpose of assessment and examinations. Should there be moves towards a common examination for all with special electives for the more able child, as recently advocated by the Secretary of State, or should we experiment with a multi-approach examination using oral, written, multiple-choice and project assessment for all examinees? Or should we be thinking more along the lines of the European or International Baccalaureat?[7] Examinations and the curriculum must be seen as inter-related, as was recognised when the Schools Council was created in 1964 but which unfortunately has not always been recognised since. Unfortunately the debate about a core curriculum has also been largely emotive. Surely the time has come for the curriculum and assessment to be debated rationally and dispassionately? Unfortunately the recent DES discussion document does little to enhance the debate.[8] Nor should it be forgotten that there was a common curriculum from 1902 until 1944 laid down by the then Education Department[9] and that most countries of the world operate a common curriculum very successfully.

Ironically cutbacks in teachers and finance will lead to a common core as LEAs and headteachers have to drop electives and peripheral subjects. As one CEO has observed, however, perhaps the biggest question raised is whether we can afford, in the 1980s, the danger of allowing schools to make individual decisions about the curriculum as we have in the past.[10] It is this danger as well as the uncertain age in which we live that should make us think afresh about the advantages of all children having (a) a basic grounding in numeracy, literacy and science together with (b) an understanding of their basic rights – civil and political, (c) an appreciation of our interdependence on the Third World, (d) an awareness of our multi-racial society, and (e) the opportunity to develop practical skills that can be of value whether or not paid employment is found.

The latter point touches on an unresolved dilemma in the comprehensive school. There are traditionally two strands in the curriculum in English schools – the classical academic strand, concerned with training the mind and preparing pupils for the professions and universities, and the practical/vocational strand concerned with preparing pupils for the world of manual work, usually in industry. The comprehensive school was designed to break down this dichotomy. Unfortunately, the former strand has tended to predominate regardless of its suitability for all pupils. Even the CSE examination has reflected the classical strand while industry and government, as well as pupils, tend to argue that schooling should be more positively job-orientated. The debate about the curriculum must honestly face the issue; is it to be more concerned with personal development or with national – even local – job needs and opportunities? How far can it be both?

Whatever the outcome schools must be more concerned with 'linkages'. At one end greater efforts should be made to establish better liaison between secondary and feeder primary schools. A common core could help here. At the other end attempts to develop bridging schemes between schools, local industry and commerce must be increased. Some schemes linking schools with local firms already operate but compared with developments in the planned socialist democracies of Eastern Europe, the USSR, China, Israel and Sweden, British schools too frequently operate as if neighbouring industry did not exist. Even in the élitist French system attempts have been made since 1959 to introduce a technical and technological bias into the schools, though with mixed results. During the 1980s therefore schools should develop a greater awareness of local job opportunities even though the unemployment problems might make it more difficult to decide what skills to teach.

Management Issues

In spite of the slight increase in the birth rate during 1979 secondary school enrolments will fall markedly during the 1980s. From a high level enrolment of 4.1 million secondary pupils in 1977/78 the number will drop to 3.7 million by 1983 and 2.6 million by 1989 with no possible upturn before 1993. What are the implications of this for schools? Some will close. In some LEAs (e.g. Oxfordshire, ILEA, Manchester) closure plans are already well advanced. Many schools will become smaller. A typical six-form entry school is likely to become four-form entry by 1989. Assuming that the teacher-pupil ratio remains constant this will mean a loss of 18 teachers (from 57 to 39), a loss of points from 65 to 42 and a downgrading of grouping from a Group XI to a Group IX school. More important is the effect on fifth forms and staffing. Since the proportion of pupils staying on beyond the minimum school leaving age has hardly changed since the early 1970s[11] sixth forms are likely to become smaller, less viable, offering fewer options. One original justification for the comprehensive schools was that they would generate large sixth forms. Now faced with smaller sixth forms schools and LEAs will have difficult decisions to make. Should sixth forms in a given authority specialise? Should they be pooled into co-operative ventures? Or should more viable sixth form colleges be created?[12] These are not new choices. What is new is the intensity and speed with which decisions must be made with the subsequent effect on teachers' morale.

Another implication of falling rolls and fewer teachers is that 'the education services share of public expenditure will fall'.[13] The present government's insistence on education cuts totalling £280 million by 1980/81 is being met in different ways by different LEAs but the changes in the new Education Act over the statutory provision of school meals and transport and the provision for greater parental choice will not only compound the administrative difficulties but will also create severe managerial problems at the school level. These need to be widely debated.

The Governance of Schools

Ironically as management problems within schools become more difficult pressures on participation and accountability are likely to be more acutely felt.[14]

While the Callaghan government could argue that 'parents

should be given much more information about the schools and should be consulted much more widely'[15] and the Taylor Report could argue that every school should have a governing body with LEA, teachers, parents and community/ industry equally represented[16] the present Education Act still leaves considerable discretion to local authorities. The presence of more demanding governors, some of whom represent parental and outside interests, will be a challenge to many schools. If aims and objectives are to be set by these governing bodies and if teachers are to be called to account for failing to achieve them new pressures will be placed on all members of staff. It may be difficult to prevent increased demands for limited tenure similar to that in the USA and Canada. In their turn teachers may find themselves pressing for a professional watchdog body like the General Teaching Council in Scotland.[17]

In France and West Germany parental and even pupil representation on a wide variety of school councils is recognised by law.[18] In Denmark, in selected schools, parents and pupils can appoint staff, choose the curriculum and prescribe what should be taught. In Canada a major survey is seeking to establish how far the community wishes to be involved in school governance. Similar pressures could grow in England especially if many more schools open their doors to wider community use.[19] In this situation teachers will become more open to outside criticism and judgement. How far they are prepared for this is difficult to tell.

External Social Issues

How far they are prepared and trained for the impact of social changes on schools is also hard to tell but avoid them they cannot. Many teachers in England and Wales still assume there is parental encouragement and support, even though attendance at parents' evenings and PTA meetings might challenge this assumption. To rethink the assumption necessitates rethinking the teacher's and the school's role in society. Already one marriage in four ends in divorce; one family in eight is a one parent family. Translated into school terms, out of a class of 30 children 8 or 9 come from one parent families; 9 come from families where there has been at least one remarriage; 15 are latchkey children; 2.5 have one parent chronically sick; 2 have a father unemployed. Although this picture is unevenly reflected across the country the situation is likely to worsen. Social norms are changing faster than we realise. In such circumstances the school's role needs to be infinitely more supportive and teachers may find themselves as much social workers as subject instructors. How can they best be prepared for these new roles?

An allied issue is that of employment. Can we still assume that full employment is attainable and that children should be conditioned to expect a job? Certainly not in the foreseeable future. Should not teachers' attitudes, schools' aims and curriculum content reflect this situation? The implications of this changing economic situation need to be thought about carefully particularly since unemployment is so often linked in our multi-racial society with colour.[20] Should not the implications of this and the changing cultural and ethnic complexity of our society be thought out in *all* schools and not only in those areas of high non-white density like Southall, Leicester, Leeds, Coventry and Birmingham?

I would postulate that it is these issues – a concern for standards, management problems arising from contraction and financial constraints, greater parental participation in the governance of schools and the implications for schools of the rapid social changes that are taking place – that should be at the heart of the debate about comprehensive education in the 1980s. What type of society do we want? How can schools prepare more effectively for the uncertainty of the next decade? How can teachers anticipate the future?

One thing is certain: there is a need for more, not less, training at both pre-service and in-service levels. Instead of bemoaning the fall in initial recruitment teacher education institutions should be thinking about how they can structure courses that prepare teachers to cope effectively with mixed ability classes and with more than one subject; that help headteachers and local authority personnel to cope with the problems raised by a contracting system; that train parental and other governors; and that think out the implications of unemployment and multi-culturalism. There is a real challenge that must be faced with courage. If it is not, we will find ourselves drifting aimlessly through the next decade.

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Discussion

Primary Group Work

The Oracle team's announcement that primary children were often sitting in groups but rarely working together on a group project will, I have no doubt, have produced the reaction amongst many primary teachers that they were aware of this already. Why these children are not working co-operatively is more difficult to explain. I am sure the teachers in those classrooms would have praised the idea of co-operation and possibly have assumed that the very closeness of proximity of the children and the ease with which they converse will have enabled co-operation to be generated spontaneously.

However this is rarely the case when you look closely at what the children are doing. True co-operative learning is something which has to be nurtured and encouraged. The age group in which I have found that co-operation is most difficult to establish is the seven to nine year group. Many children of this age seem to be reluctant to work with another person or persons. They will chat to someone else, even glance at what they are doing, but the kind of co-operative learning which people like Douglas Barnes write about in the secondary situation does not seem to occur.

In the past year I have been taking groups of young Juniors for science. I have followed my usual procedure of dividing the children into pairs generally assuming that if the children sat together they were friends. Each pair works through a set of assignment cards, doing little experiments and writing about what has happened and the results. I have rewritten these work cards over the years until they are as easy to understand as I can make them. They are there to stimulate thought; to encourage them to start noticing that things are not always what they seem. While the children are doing the experiments I move round discussing what they are doing, asking 'the probing type of questioning which encourages enquiry and discovery' ('Inside the Classroom', **Forum** Vol.22, No.3).

About 300 children have been through my classroom this year, and I have noticed how curiously reluctant some of them are to work with someone else. These children often insist on performing the experiments on their own, not appearing to realise how much easier it is when the burden is shared. This is extended to their writing, when I certainly would not forbid them to compose a joint account. Very few children have attempted to do so.

The non-co-operation at times has led to one boy standing by while his partner made a fool of himself. One pair of boys had to put a 500 g weight on a piece of string which was slung between two chairs. The weight had a ring attached but it did not occur to one of the boys to thread the string through this, instead he spent five minutes trying to balance the weight on top of the string. His partner stood by letting him do this while the rest of the children watched in amusement. When eventually, the first boy realised what he had to do, the other looked at him scornfully for he had apparently seen what to do. The point is that he made no attempt to help his friend.

This was not an isolated case although it was the most noticeable. On other occasions children sat silently by while their partners struggled. When I was present, probing and prodding, then the children were willing to discuss, to hypothesize and to question.

Now it may be that there is something at fault in my particular school. If the children had come from only one class I might have suspected that there was some fault in the attitude of the teacher. Many children did appear to co-operate, talking about what they had to do and about what was happening, but the ones who did not disturb me.

In the Infant classes in the same school the children work in groups, play together and talk, but is this talk about the work in hand or is it merely egocentric chatter to which no one is listening except the speaker? I have seen Infants telling each other how to build a model with bricks, but this so often has seemed to be 'speech for oneself', thoughts spoken aloud not really intended for an audience. Piaget suggests that between the ages of four and seven children indulge in egocentric language, which Vygotsky believed gradually became internalised as the conscious part of our thinking process.

Is it possible that some of the children who have found it so difficult to work co-operatively, to talk and discuss their work, are still in the egocentric stage? Or is it merely a lack of confidence in their own ability which makes them reluctant to put forward their own ideas? Or is it the fault of teachers and parents who consciously or unconsciously convey the notion that 'Now you are out of the Infants you've got to work'?

It seems to me that for some children co-operative learning is not as simple as sometimes we imagine. I hope that in the term they have spent with me some of these children will have learned that it is an enjoyable process.

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Time for a change: The Problem of Assessment

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In his article[1] 'Innocence in Education', Ben Bloom has written:

> In our innocence we have permitted testing to dominate education and to serve as the primary and often the only basis for our most important decisions about students, about teachers, and more recently about curricula and programs.

Since this article was written, we have seen the burgeoning of a concern for accountability in education in the United States and more recently in Britain. Thus the effects of our preoccupations with testing individuals that Bloom describes are currently being reinforced by new forms of national and local testing concerned with the maintenance of institutional quality control.[2] Much less attention is being given to the desirable nature of this 'quality'. Amid all the furore surrounding a proposed core curriculum[3] and the hectoring of industrialists for so-called basic skills, calls for the development of other qualities in pupils are being drowned.

This is indeed surprising in view of the fact that studies carried out in a number of countries show that most people – parents, teachers, pupils, employers – believe that the main goals of education are in the area of socio-emotional development,[4] and include the fostering of qualities such as initiative, friendliness, self-confidence, the ability to venture into the unknown, and a willingness to learn.

The development of personal qualities was never more necessary than at present, with the fundamental changes that are shortly to take place in the nature of jobs, in the wake of the micro-processor revolution and the widespread breaking down of traditional codes of behaviour. Paradoxically, such goals continue to receive little formal attention despite the tightening grip of accountability, a phenomenon which may be more or less directly attributed to the nature of school assessment. At the most obvious level, given that neither teachers nor pupils can get formal credit for having fostered such qualities, it is not surprising that teachers and pupils and indeed parents recognise the need for single minded pursuit of those almost exclusively academic passports which lead to occupational success. A much more pertinent question concerns why it should be that assessment procedures – individual and institutional – typically embody such a small part of the agreed range of educational goals. This is particularly surprising given that in this country assessment procedures have long been recognised as the major control on what is taught, when it is taught, and how it is taught. Indeed, an historical perspective reveals that assessment procedures have played a dominant role in determining the ethos of school life.

The Legacy of 'Payment by Results'

Public assessment has grown and developed in this country in direct proportion to the expansion of schooling. Apart from a few isolated professionally-qualifying examinations set up in the first half of the nineteenth century to ensure the doctor, the accountant or the solicitor really knew his business, schools were largely free of the influence of any kind of testing until elementary education began to be widely available in the latter part of the century. This expansion of mass schooling was marked by the institution of the infamous 'payment by results' system of the 1862 Revised Code. The justification for such a system in which teachers were financially penalised if their pupils did not reach the required standard in the Victorian version of the core curriculum, was offered at the time by its instigator, Robert Lowe:

> If it is not cheap, it shall be efficient, and if it is not efficient, it shall be cheap.

(In a more mealy-mouthed age, politicians are not given to such plain speaking. Nevertheless, it would be hard to find a better epithet to describe contemporary policies for public education.) Then, as now, government was concerned for accountability in education; that it should be able to control the amount and content of schooling provided according to the needs of the economy and the funds available. Thus, education became increasingly defined in terms of those outcomes which could be readily measured. The effect of the dreaded visits of HMI to administer batteries of tests to overwhelmed pupils was to put a premium on memory and repetition rather than the inculcation of moral worth and the preparation for good citizenship which had been the principal purpose behind the institution of mass schooling in the first place.[5] It might be supposed that assessment of progress in moral, religious and civic development might concern behaviour, attitudes or motivation – the outer reflections of inner reform. However, 'the socialising function of the monitorial schools was based upon the assumption that the learning of biblical texts would of itself produce the desired change in children's social consciousness'.[6] As McCann suggests in this quotation, the mere memorisation of such tracts was deemed to be sufficient evidence of progress.

It is hard to say how far assessment may be deemed responsible for this preoccupation with memory and regurgitation in the nineteenth century curriculum. To some extent it must be attributed to the unsophisticated pedagogy of relatively poorly educated teachers dealing with large numbers of pupils whose presence in the school

owed little to any desire to develop their individual interests and critical faculties, but was rather intended to ensure a minimum level of basic skills and social order. Equally though, it must be recognised that, given the essentially Victorian concern that the embryonic state school system should be economically efficient, the use of tests which encouraged an unquestioning attitude on the part of teachers and pupils, which were both quick to operate and apparently fair, played a major part in establishing that emphasis on readily measured learning which is still so apparent in contemporary forms of public assessment. More or less directly as a result of the Revised Code, the idea that it was both fair and convenient to use test scores as the basis for individual pupil selection and as a basis of accountability for public funds took firm root.

The payment by results system was gradually replaced by public certificate examinations, competition for which ensured the pursuit of similar goals to those identified in the Revised Code without provoking the teacher hostility to which making them responsible for pupil attainment had given rise. From this time it is possible to trace the continuing conflict between the 'pro' and 'anti' assessment lobbies in education. The 'anti' lobby criticised the examination system for exerting a disproportionate influence on the school curriculum and, in particular, on those many pupils whose interests and aspirations were not, and indeed could not be, academic. A Consultative Committee report in 1911 and a Government Circular in 1913 both urged a more vocationally oriented curriculum and a more relevant school-leaving assessment. In doing so, they deplored the premium examinations were placing on the mere reproduction of knowledge, on passivity of mind, and on a competitive and even mercenary spirit at the expense of the encouragement of independent judgement, creative thinking and true learning. As early as 1911 Edmund Holmes, a leading educationist, expressed the widely held view that:

> A school that is ridden by the examination incubus is charged with deceit . . . all who become acclimatised to the influence of the system – pupils, teachers, examiners, employers of labour, parents, MPs and the rest fall victims and are content to treat themselves with outward and visible signs – class lists, orders of merit – as being quasi-divine authority . . .

Such reservations about the effects of testing on the quality of education being received by pupils continued to grow and indeed to be expressed in important government documents throughout the ensuing decades. The Spens Report of 1938 expressed concern, as did the 1943 Norwood Report, the 1947 Secondary Schools Examination Council Report, and the 1959 Crowther Report which were typical in deploring the constraints formal public examinations were exerting on the secondary school curriculum. Such constraints, they argued, were a barrier to the development of a meaningful and relevant education and subsequent qualification for the majority of children for whom such examinations were not designed. (Indeed the majority of children have *always* been quite explicitly excluded from any hope of passing certificate examinations since success has been, and continues to be, restricted, de jure, to a more or less fixed proportion of each age group.)

Such concerns were further fuelled by emerging evidence that examinations were not even reliable in what they purported to do.[7] It became apparent from various studies that examination successes had little relation to subsequent job performance, and were even poor predictors of future academic success.[8]

It is indeed surprising that this long-standing and not unprestigious lobby has, despite the evidence in its favour, consistently failed to make any impression on the dominance of examinations and qualifications based on the regurgitation of academic knowledge in the education system. The 'payments by results' system, the School Certificate examination instituted in the 1920s, the 'O' and 'A' GCE which replaced it in the early 1950s, the CSE examination brought in as a result of the 1960 Beloe Committee Report, and now the Assessment of Performance Unit, have all in their different ways, reinforced the dominance of academic learning at the expense of other kinds of educational objectives. The reasons for and significance of this dominance are now becoming increasingly clear, as the difficulties of the APU focus a lengthening historical perspective.

A necessary fail-safe?

The most obvious lesson of the APU is the degree to which assessment is bound up with issues of public control of schooling, and it is indeed the issues of educational control and educational standards that have underpinned the 'pro' assessment lobby throughout the development of state education. Roach[9] clearly describes the struggle at the end of the nineteenth century between the universities and the state to control the content of education through the public examining system. The APU is the latest in a long line of educational testing procedures whose apparent function is to evaluate standards, either individual or institutional, but whose real function is to determine and impose standards. If, as Roach suggests, the general theme of twentieth century educational history is the steady growth in the directive power of central government, this has been with the active support of many parents and employers who see public assessment as the fail-safe vital to safeguard standards in schools which otherwise seem free to do fairly much as they like. Recent preoccupations with 'falling standards' and the institution of the APU itself, can be seen in large measure to be the result of the removal of almost all external examination control from the primary school, and the 'liberating' of secondary school examinations to allow a much wider range of subjects and, in many cases, a greater degree of teacher control.

If we have answered the question of why assessment is allowed to dominate schooling to so great an extent, we have yet to address the further and perhaps more important question of why that testing should consistently reinforce such a limited range of educational objectives. At the most obvious level it must be stated that academic testing predominates because the assessment of a written body of knowledge is easier to do than say oral or behavioural assessment, and therefore can more easily be made to look convincing. Because it is convincing, it provides an excellent basis for legitimating the raising up of some pupils to opportunity and the condemning of others to accepting the lowly status their apparent limitations warrant. This is not to suggest, however, some sort of conspiracy to defraud, but rather that the very obvious advantages of such testing quickly recommended themselves for purposes beyond those for which the techniques were first invented.

From Competence to Constraint

When the first examinations were instituted in England in the early nineteenth century their purpose was to ensure that members of the various professions possessed the

requisite knowledge to practice. These examinations in their turn were modelled on those for entering into the civil service in ancient China, namely formal, academic and competitive. The tragic irony is that because the professions to which these examinations gave entry were high status, before too long the *mode* of such entry itself acquired an equivalent status. As a result, oral assessment became demoted in favour of written tests, continuous assessment was eclipsed in favour of 'on-off tests' and the practice which the Payment by Results system had begun, namely the reproduction of knowledge rather than skills or personal attributes, became widely accepted as the only legitimate way to discriminate between pupils or describe educational standards. As testing came to be narrowly defined in this way, it led to a vicious circle in that whilst large amounts of time and money were being invested in developing and refining techniques for testing various kinds of cognitive function, no such efforts were being put into the development of tests of other kinds of educational objective. Consequently not only has this latter kind of assessment, through lack of familiarity, gained little legitimacy in public opinion, this lack of legitimacy is enhanced by the fact that where such assessments are attempted, the tools available are clumsy and crude in the extreme. Hence the ready acceptance of APU testing plans for maths, science and language and the sophistication of techniques such as Rasch modelling that they are likely to use. This is in sharp contrast with the difficulties now emerging both in achieving public support for monitoring the aesthetic, moral and social aspects of the curriculum, and indeed, in developing any testing technique of an equivalent sophistication.

To test or not to test . . .

To say this is to identify a fundamental dilemma which the increasingly strident debate about accountability is now making abundantly clear, although it is as old as the education system itself. To test the non-academic aspects of pupil performance can be seen as an unacceptable intrusion into the personal life of the individual. On the other hand, not to do it, given that testing in its various forms is the major control on what schools do, has meant that vital areas of personal (and indeed national) growth have been grossly under-emphasised in the curriculum. Instead, the majority of pupils who are explicitly excluded from success in academic examinations must come to see themselves as educational failures in a system that only rewards one kind of achievement.

The serious commitment to making the eleven years pupils are required to be in a school a rewarding and useful experience for them and for society requires some resolution to this dilemma. It requires open debate about the goals of schooling, about accountability, about the key role of assessment. It requires serious consideration by schools, by governing bodies, by parents, by local authorities, by central government, of the various alternative forms of assessment now being developed, which do indeed recognise the whole range of potential educational goals.[10] Otherwise, before long, we are likely to be faced with the much more unattractive situation of an education system out of gear with the needs of industry and of people in an increasingly leisured society; and the spectre of armed guards in school corridors to remind us of it.

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W(h)ither the sixth form: across the river and into the trees?

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There can be no doubt that the provision of education and training for 16-19 year olds is the most important as well as the most urgent issue for contemporary education, particularly in Britain. Of the 773,000 young people who reached school-leaving age in 1976-77 about 28% continued in schools whilst 28% went on to further education (divided equally between full-time and part-time day further education combined with employment). However, about 36% of the age group found jobs with no part-time day further-education and it was estimated that another 8% were unemployed six months after leaving school. There are many points which such a set of figures raise. Amongst them is that we have in Britain today a set of binary provisions for education and training which, because they compete with each other, result in offerings which are so complex, confusing and irrelevant to our young people when they reach the end of their compulsory schooling that, for too many of them, they become isolated from the education system for their post-compulsory school life.

Two major contributions in 1979 which make suggestions about the revision and rationalisation of the existing provisions for post compulsory group are **16-18: Education and Training for 16-18 year olds. A consultative paper** presented by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science, for Employment and for Wales; and the report from the National Foundation for Educational Research **The Sixth Form and its Alternatives** conducted by Judy Dean and others. It now seems appropriate to review the field using these as texts, especially because of their influential and prestigious origins and the claim to focus on the 'provision, (which) although diverse, is comprehensive so that no young people's needs are overlooked'.

If this provision is so 'comprehensive' (16-18, paragraph 4) why is there no *overall* comprehensive organisation and curriculum where the various courses and programmes are held in equal esteem and which allow young people to move freely within, between, in and out, as they develop? The 1944 Act required LEAs to prepare and develop separate plans for schools and further education in utilising different building programmes. This gave the impetus to creating systems of secondary schools offering mainly academic education parallel with tertiary vocational training institutions for young people who have reached the school-leaving age. Some thirty years ago the ratio of pupils/students receiving full-time education in Colleges to those in schools was in the order of 1:25. Since then there has been a levelling-off and whilst the number in schools has remained about the same the number of FE students has increased dramatically. Even as comprehensive education has grown the overlap between the two sets of institutions has meant that provision for 16+ still keeps the status and academic level of 'secondary grammar' alongside 'tertiary modern' institutions. But today it is questionable how much longer this situation can be both accepted and afforded.

There has, over the last few years, been a spirited determination, particularly by the schools, to retain pupils after 16 and, by doing so, turn them into students. Ten years ago the HMA put forward in **Sixth Forms and Colleges of Further Education** a set of 'clear-cut and unassailable educational principles which we can and should stoutly defend against "administrators, economists and calculators"; and upon which a firm policy may be founded'. These and other arguments for continuing to retain pupils in schools after the compulsory schooling phase, can be listed as follows.

(a) Continuity for pupils who establish a maturing relationship, or as the Crowther Report put it 'discipleship', with teachers of subjects through the various paths in the examination jungle.

(b) Continuity for staff who prefer to teach across the 16+ barrier which in turn gives to pupils in the 11-16 age range access to highly qualified staff.

(c) Developing a balanced, general education by providing liberal/general studies alongside main course specialisation.

(d) Providing a pastoral and counselling service which encourages staying-on, not only for those going on to higher education, but also for those regarded as coming from limited backgrounds to make up the 'new' sixth-formers.

(e) Developing social responsibility in the life of the school by giving senior pupils leadership whereby they get a taste of privilege, responsibility and authority.

(f) Developing in pupils subject-mindedness and the ability for independent study.

(g) Continuing the special link which schools have established with the universities.

The evidence provided by the NFER study, in the main, refutes these claims as being 'special' to sixth forms. The report shows that too many students in schools are pressured to go on to 'A' level courses and that there is no real harm done by breaking at 16 either to those who stay at school or to those who go elsewhere. One of the most important recommendations is that school sixth forms should be replaced wherever possible by separate tertiary colleges which combine 'A' level teaching with the type of vocational courses which are normally provided by further education colleges. Data produced show that the students prefer the more adult atmosphere in the colleges and that the tertiary college students achieve comparable results in the much wider range of courses from which they can choose. It is this evidence, together with the demographic trend quoted

in the 16-18 discussion document (where it is said that the total number of young people aged 16-18 will peak at 2.2 million in 1981-2 and then decline by about 25% in ten years time), that will surely appeal to government decision makers. There is no doubt that the government is anxious to concentrate scarce resources in more economically viable units even though this will probably result in a 'decline of standards' as fewer able pupils take 'A' level courses and proceed to academic courses in universities. However, the recommendation of the NFER report, for the creation of a 'tertiary' stage from 16-19, in which both full and part-time students are accommodated in colleges, is at variance with the assumptions in the consultative paper which gives the impression that overall 16+ provision is merely the sum of the parts of that which already exists!

The 16-18 document presented for discussion by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Employment is a joint approach to bridging the artificial gap between provision for education and training. One welcomes it as a step forward, clearing the ground prior to a national initiative for providing for young people, especially if it leads to incorporating the approaches now being developed by the re-vamped Schools Council and the Further Education Curriculum and Development Unit's unified vocational preparation, full-time pre-employment and youth opportunities programmes designed to complement the traditional GCE courses. However, elucidation is needed on the implications of the discussion document's wording in paragraph 13 which says that, 'The Government and other central agencies carry a number of responsibilities and duties, in particular (a) determining policy objectives for the education and training services.' Does this imply that there will be different hats in the ring, and just who are these 'other central agencies'? What are their functions? Will any single national agency be able to specify objectives and have the power to carry them out? To whom would it be accountable for guaranteeing equal opportunities for the whole age group? Perhaps the responsibilities should lie with a national co-ordinating planning council which gets rid of the differentiation between school and further education rather than a new government agency. Here, again, a break at 16+ is a necessary condition to achieving unified overall provision for the 16-19s, and indeed for beyond that, so that we have truly 'recurrent or participation education' provision which encourages early drop-outs to drop back in again. This is already in operation in several European countries, whereby students after their period of compulsory schooling follow programmes not so much different in aim or content as in methods of teaching and learning.

In all this, retraining and adaptability for students would require retraining and adaptability amongst the teaching staff because, as Stenhouse has shown us, there can be no curriculum development without teacher development. The converse is equally true; and it is here that the present separate development agencies need to co-ordinate their efforts so that the local receivers and providers are not subjected to confusing and conflicting demands. This would mean that there would be a reduction in the present concentration of resources for those preparing for universities and higher education as there comes about a widening of the target group to include curricula with a broad vocational bias. We already have the recently reported Mansell proposals for a common framework for the curriculum for 16+ which can be used as a starting point for further discussion, testing and development.

All in all, the 'Shadow over the sixth form' (**Education**, 8.6.79 pp 663-4) which exists at present is getting longer and darker. Taken together the recent proposals and discussion point to the breaking down of the accustomed autonomy of the binary system's provisions for 16+. As the **Education** article concludes, 'Co-operation is usually a better answer to educational problems that competition and lowering the drawbridge is better than raising it in preparation for a siege'. As we enter the era of the non-viable sixth form attention is beginning to return to Sir William Alexander's proposals for a 'tertiary stage from 16-18, embracing full and part-time students in tertiary colleges'. Ron King (**School and College: Studies of Post-Compulsory Education**) has already summed up the potential advantages of tertiary colleges as being to break down the *social* barriers caused by differentiating education and training with their predilection for emphasising the liberal and vocational, the cultivated man against the specialist, the full against the part-time elements, the national as opposed to the local scene, and the world of the adolescent against that of the mature adult. Furthermore, the *academic* advantages of the tertiary college are stated to be rationalising scarce resources of both staff and equipment, avoiding costly duplication, giving students a wider choice of subjects as well as the opportunity of transfer between and within courses, and creating a less confusing and more standardised set of nationally recognised qualifications.

It is these social and academic areas which our European neighbours are developing and, if Britain is not to fall even further behind, we cannot afford not to heed their experiences; otherwise our most important resource – people – will continue to be squandered. If the message is unpalatable to our present position or convictions we may not be able to afford the luxury that Woody Allen could in 'Manhattan' of changing his analyst. Surely, it is time to pay careful attention to the facts of life. The movement towards tertiary – or as I personally prefer to call them 'comprehensive colleges would give us at last a fully comprehensive system of education for all, and for all their students' lives.

Professional Development in Secondary Schools

Brian Haile
Brian Haile is the recently appointed headmaster of Yew Tree High School, Manchester. He taught at Netherhall, Cumbria for 10 years before joining the Manchester LEA in 1973 as Deputy Headmaster of Spurley Hey High School, Gorton. His present concern is the evolution of schemes of professional development for all teachers.

During 1977/78 I had the privilege and pleasure to be seconded to complete the M.Ed. degree in Teacher Education at the University of Manchester. The dissertation title was "A comparison of staff development programmes in different graduate careers". The organisations visited were Marks and Spencer Ltd., the Organics Division of Imperial Chemical Industries, the National Westminster Bank, the physicians attached to the North West Regional Health Authority, and the teachers in the City of Manchester Education Authority.

It was intended to have a third profession, i.e. law, but it was impossible to find information and/or activities on staff development.

The idea was to look critically at the Staff Development systems in those sectors at present and their development over the past few years and attempt to draw out evidence and techniques which could be used in secondary schools.

The three industrial concerns have members of staff allocated with a full time job of co-ordinating staff training and development. They are governed by law to provide training as described by the appropriate Training Board. The needs and requirements for each employee are clearly printed in training manuals.

The three organisations did comply with the requirements of the Training Boards and developed a much more fully detailed scheme of their own. It was delightful to see and hear the esteem and importance which was given to staff development *not* only by Training Officers, but also many members of line management and the trainees themselves. It may be of course that the attitude and approach is circular, i.e. because employees have always been provided with training programmes and help with development, they are all keen to return and help the newer employees.

Marks and Spencer and the National Westminster Bank programmes were clearly stated and highly structured involving periods of residential training. ICI used to be until they attempted to involve more flexibility by allowing individuals to apply and attend any of the list of courses offered throughout the year. They have now moved away from this to departmental-based courses. Very few are not on the open list. The onus is being placed on the Managers and their departments to identify needs and then the training personnel will assist with suitable training courses to satisfy those needs. The main reason for this was that they found that courses were being well attended from all departments, but there was no effect – employees returned to their respective departments and forgot!

The most impressive part of the Marks and Spencer organisation was the genuine feeling of belonging to a successful group and working for the good of 'St. Michael'. The number of trainee managers employed, comparatively speaking, was small and the quality of application was extremely high. The training scheme is very highly regarded by other retail organisations and any trainee managers who leave at the end of the year or after two years find no difficulty in obtaining a position elsewhere. Mobility is one of the basic requirements and this allows the group to utilise staff most effectively throughout the region and country. In a few cases, it can be used to encourage ineffective employees to leave.

The National Westminster Bank are attempting to incorporate some of their training into each branch and area using programmed materials on video, sound or written rather than always using the residential centre. They have identified and allocated skills and requirements for each level of responsibility and the training is completed before the employee gets the job. This is a marked contrast to teaching where employees are promoted without appropriate training – they then pick it up piecemeal by experience (good and bad). One might ask at whose expense?

One of the greatest problems relating to in-service education has been the lack of research into the assessment of teachers' needs. It is debatable whether there are specific needs which apply to all teachers at particular times in their careers. The only effective development can be self or individual development, therefore the assessment of needs must be individualised and activities should only be offered to the individual at the appropriate time, i.e. when he accepts that there is a need. ICI found this to be the case! General Practitioners used to receive seniority payments for attending a minimum number of hours on courses. I believe it was farcical to watch some of them enter the front door, sign the list and leave by the back door. Also the student tactic of signing absent colleagues in was used.

So that training and development can be related to and appropriate to each teacher, it is obvious that the teacher has to be aware of his own performance. It would be a great step forward if teachers' performance was appraised regularly. There are two types of appraisal, one of performance and one of the teachers' potential. For the appraisal of performance, self-assessment should initiate the process and be continued by discussion with more senior and experienced colleagues. A written report should be produced which sets out clearly the good parts and the parts which need attention and/or further support.

There could well be some value in developing a domain map of activities (including content and methodology) which could be set out and be available to help the teacher and his head of department and/or senior teacher to plan the individualised programme. The activities could be arranged in a series of hierarchical levels and the teacher's journey around the map becomes his programme. An overall

programme must be considered to be fixed. It must be flexible so that adjustments can be made by either the teacher or the school – conveyor belts must be avoided.

The content of a professional development programme should be made up of both 'on-the-job' and 'off-the-job' parts and should be continuous throughout the teacher's career – it should not cease after the probationary year.

The on-the-job part is perhaps the most crucial and should be developed jointly by the teacher, his head of department and co-ordinated by a senior teacher in the school. It may include classroom assistance – there is not a list of solutions a teacher can learn, in fact the problems and difficulties can be so different that they must be seen in context before a realistic dialogue can take place. This will then help him to devise the content of his immediate programme. All teachers should see their own pupils in different environments with their colleagues. Also, it is beneficial if they can see different teaching styles and talk to colleagues about the task of teaching. There may be regular counselling sessions for teachers with the senior staff about their performance and their development programme. Opportunities for any and all of the teachers to work for a Working Party on a particular aspect of education should be available and encouraged.

Part of the programme could include a guided reading programme or follow a series of sound broadcasts. It would be more beneficial if these were supported by either individual tutorials or small group meetings. Job attachment or job rotation may be built into programmes – it is one of the best methods of appreciating that particular role. This may mean a re-allocation of responsibility points, e.g. giving less points to more people and allowing everyone to share some responsibility. A programme content would be greatly enhanced if teachers were prepared to be more open about their own teaching and this would make free-structured group meetings more beneficial.

The 'off-the-job' content should be an outcome of the 'on-the-job' part of the programme. Visits to pupils' homes, local libraries and centres, child guidance clinics, welfare and social services, education offices, will all help to place teaching a group of pupils in total perspective.

External courses will be a major part of the off-the-job programme. It is extremely fortunate that there are these opportunities, but there is often a lack of overall evaluation and the placing of each teacher on the right course at the appropriate time has not been properly considered. The Regional Councils proposed and detailed in the James Report, may be long overdue. A system should be developed in which all courses are prepared, planned and justified before they are even advertised. Very full details should then be sent to schools who can discuss these with the interested and appropriate teachers. Afterwards, an independent evaluation should be made by teachers who have attended the course and also by the schools to whom they return.

The methodology used in programmes is much more important than has been given credence. There have been far too many lectures planned and courses constructed without sufficient consideration of the needs of members attending. Preliminary work (written, sound and video) should be offered to teachers which can be completed at their own pace and then the course meeting time can be used more effectively.

Programmed learning, role-play, games, small group methods, projects or case-studies are methods which are still only rarely used in teachers' courses. It is hoped as more materials are prepared for education, these methods will be used. A method new to industry is 'action learning' and this could be utilised effectively at heads of department level. For example, the heads of maths departments of four schools could meet for 1½ hours per week for a term to consider, discuss and suggest solutions to each other's problem areas. It may be of more benefit than the heads of department from all over the authority going to a series of lectures about maths departments. Schools, pupils, teachers and subject departments, are much too complex to produce a blueprint for all aspects of their development.

Evaluation is an area which requires urgent treatment on two different fronts. The first is the basic course evaluation from the point of view of the director or organiser. And on a different and more difficult front, is the evaluation of the course in relation to job performance, i.e. how much is transferred and beneficial in the school setting, both immediately and over a longer term. Evaluation should be considered at the planning stage, not as an after-thought. It has to be continuous, systematic and comprehensive. The whole purpose of evaluation should be to improve the quality and character of the development activity.

Educationists have devised and researched many of these principles and methods in professional development, but it is tragic that they are being employed to greatest advantage in areas other than education.

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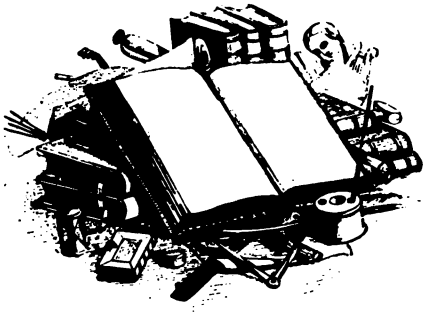


Curriculum Planning in a Queensland One Teacher School

Matthew W. Glen

This article, by the head of a very rural (and distant) one teacher school in Queensland, outlines how a systematic approach to the curriculum together with a flexible approach overcomes what may appear almost impossible problems.

Within the state education system of Queensland, one and two teacher schools are staffed by approximately 2.5% of all primary teachers and cater for nearly 2.3% of primary pupils. In recent years economic and social factors have closed many small schools but over 250 units are still operating within the vast boundaries of this state in 1980. Teachers seeking promotion as principals have all experienced life within these small institutions, including the multitude of challenges such a position involves. Just how does one teacher cater for the breadth of interests from five to twelve? No separate departmental curriculum for small schools exists. Therefore each teacher is given a considerable amount of 'professional freedom' to decide what form and structure the curriculum should take. An examination of the environment in which this small school is located should provide an appropriate beginning for looking at its curriculum.

Mingela State Primary School is situated in a small rural township about sixty miles from the eastern coastline of North Queensland. The town was originally established as a railway terminal before the turn of the century, to handle the extensive trade generated by the nearby goldfields of Charters Towers and Ravenswood. Although the pioneering gold days have disappeared, the town has survived as a small service community to meet the needs of local graziers and farming families. The population, numbering less than seventy, is mainly composed of temporary railway workers and a few long term residents. Buildings are old and deteriorating, reflecting the ravages of extreme summer heat and dry climatic conditions. Apart from the school, other public services include a small post office, police station, hotel, meeting hall and railway station. Good water is a scarce and valuable resource to the 'locals'. With a small annual rainfall arriving over a short period of time, tanks soon run dry and drinking water has to be railed into the community. For eight or nine months of the year, the Australian bush assumes a barren and blackened appearance.

Although the community is within reasonable travelling distance of large cities, the majority of local inhabitants remain relatively isolated from city lifestyles. Only a quarter of the school's population lives within the township, while the remainder travel from surrounding farming properties. During the wet season a number of roads become impassable, so pupil absenteeism can be an influencing factor on the normal operation of the school. Occasionally the occupational demands of running cattle properties can also affect pupil attendance. Since all the family are expected to participate in the daily life of the farm, mustering and other chores are considered very high priorities at certain periods. During a recent severe drought, many older school children were needed at home to hand-feed and water stricken stock. These are experiences which must be accepted in this environment, and can become sources of worthwhile learning opportunities for these children. Most parents are conscious of the need for a good formal education, but their expectations for their children's academic performance are not generally high. Pupil ability levels range from average to low in the traditional school subjects. However, significant non-academic skills possessed by the children include expert horse handling, animal care, and all-round athletic and sporting abilities.

With this type of environment and social background, the potential of learners must be developed in a way that is appropriate to the life style that most follow. A significant proportion of the children will eventually return to work and live on family properties or engage in those occupations associated with the land. Schooling should be able to provide these children with the skills necessary for success in these areas. Opportunities must also exist for those who have the desire and potential to continue their academic education. Apart form the school and home influence very few other opportunities exist for these children to socialize with their peers in situations which may broaden their understanding. No youth groups or churches are available locally, and only sporadic visits to other schools can be arranged due to transportation and distance problems.

The physical structure of the school has an important effect on the curriculum and type of learning which occurs. Space is at a premium in the current building, which is over seventy years old. It consists of one main teaching area where all the children are located, and a small library and audio-visual room. A separate office functions as a store-room, duplicating area, sick bay and preparation space. Currently a major works programme is being undertaken to provide better toilets, lunch area, health room and an expanded library. The rather cramped teaching area may then be improved to provide a full open-area concept to the teaching programme.

Given this general background, some conclusions can be reached on the content of the curriculum and the strategies and organisation necessary to achieve learning outcomes. The Queensland Department of Education provides seven main syllabus guides for the primary school, and these contain suggestions for a programme of study. Teachers in this state use the term Current Curriculum Programme or CCP, to describe the particular arrangement of syallabus objectives and content into manageable protions of work. From a CCP it is possible to list specific instructional objectives, learning experiences and teaching strategies, and the form of evaluation to be used.

As the curriculum is organised at this school, it is possible to find only a 'core' selection of material from a specific

syallabus or subject area. This core mainly involves Mathematics and Language Arts, which have been detailed on separate scope and sequence charts outlining the basic content to be covered by various year levels at different times of the year. This type of arrangement is necessary in a one teacher school to provide continuity of work for the children and establish a sequential pattern of development in content over a seven year period. Allowing for the individual capacities of each child is possible through the provision of a personal scope and sequence chart in both subject areas. In spaces provided on the charts, the teacher can keep a cumulative record which indicates the level of core material every child has mastered as well as a listing of specific problems, and establishing a record which incoming teachers would find useful.

Most of the objectives in the core materials are of a cognitive nature, but many opportunities exist for social attitudes and motor skills to be explored and practised. For example, the lower years of one to three may be combined for a unit on measurement and graphing. This would begin with a general discussion involving pictures indicating the different sizes, shapes and physical features of children. A variety of social attitudes can also be explored in this topic with children realising that all people differ physically due to their family and environmental backgrounds. Manipulative and motor skills are involved as children learn to measure themselves, cut out body shapes, construct models and graphs. Many similar opportunities exist in both Maths and Language Arts for a combination of objectives which cover cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains.

Literacy is given a major emphasis in the core programme with all children covering a wide variety of experiences and skills. Pupil groups in reading are established mostly on ability level, although opportunities for social and family grouping are also provided. A rotational system of activities is employed as an organisational feature for teacher-pupil and group interaction. Specific groups receive instruction on certain days according to the range of tasks with which they are involved. Activities covered by all groups include oral and silent reading, comprehension development, phonics and structural analysis, and research and study skills. Free reading and motivational games are also used to create variety and interest in this programme. Considerable time allocation must also be given for beginning reading instruction to be implemented with year one children since early reading experiences are so crucial for later success.

Thematic teaching also occupies a place in one teacher school curriculum. This approach generally involves the complete class working on a combined activity which may include an integration of many subjects or content areas. In basing themes on such events as Halloween, a starting point may be within language or drama, expanded to maths, art and science as the children explore the topic. These events usually cover a few weeks of development and culminate in the production of class concerts, magazines, art displays, craft and creative writing. The availability of commercially prepared material in the form of whole units, books, stencils and work cards makes the collation and organisation of such themes much easier for a busy teacher.

At the present, this activity based curriculum organisation is mainly teacher directed and initiated, but provisions exist for pupils to participate in planning certain components of their school experience. One example of pupil participation in curriculum planning is found in the Project Club, an interesting innovation in many schools. This is an entirely pupil planned and operated activity which is conducted in a manner similar to a small business organisation. It has its own student elected officers, formal meetings, agendas and financial records. The teacher's role is essentially kept on a low key basis, and he acts only as an advisor and consultant when organisational matters need clarification. The group socialising influence of such a club is beneficial to all pupils, and provides an outlet for their own creative and imaginative talents. The children consider this time as being a chance to exercise their rights and opinions on matters relating to their enjoyment and improvement of school life. At present the Project Club is engaged in a variety of school based activities. Farming backgrounds of many of the children are exploited in their vegetable gardening plots surrounding the school building. A new interest being developed under the title of 'Environmental Improvement Scheme' has two main aims. It is designed to enhance the general attractiveness of the school and grounds as well as eventually providing appropriate areas for controlled nature study observations. With teacher assistance, the children will prepare a submission for financial aid from available governmental sources to assist in the implementation of aspects of this small scale innovation. Community service activities are also conducted intermittently by the Club, and events such as 'Runathons' have raised finance for service groups as well as the children. In the last event, the $700 raised was evenly distributed between the Club and the district Ambulance Brigade.

Perhaps the best way to depict the diversity of experiences which may occur within the one teacher school is to provide a brief report of a recent afternoon's programme. This was a day in which two mothers had offered to participate in the school by providing their skills and time. In one corner of the main teaching area, eight or nine girls had material, tapes, scissors and other equipment spread out over the carpeted floor. One mother was assisting two of the girls working at an old sewing machine to complete their decorative aprons. At the other end of the room, the young teacher aide was surrounded by a group of year three and four boys, asking for assistance in construction of their two-dimensional geometric designs. On one outside veranda, another mother was instructing older boys on leather tooling techniques as they worked on making their own belts. In the front area of the school grounds, year one and two children were prancing around together as horses and jockeys while the teacher and tape recorder issued instructions for the mime and movement activity.

Of course this is only a brief sample of the style of instruction and learning which may occur in a small institution such as this. Like most schools, the curriculum of a one teacher school provides a vast range of interacting experiences, both planned and unplanned, involving many participants and resources. However, unlike most schools with many staff, the one teacher school has to cater for a broad scope of ages, interests and abilities within one classroom. This fact has obvious implications for a teacher planning a meaningful and worthwhile curriculum. Two important principles which I have found of great assistance in this planning strategy, have been flexibility and independence. There is a need for flexibility in curriculum organisation and implementation by always allowing for change, and a need to teach for independence as well as understanding in children. I believe that the initiative and self-reliance which a one teacher school can promote through its curriculum, will provide great assistance in guiding its pupils towards the attainment of their potential as adult members of society.

Reviews

Which hemisphere?

The Betrayal of Youth, by James Hemming. Marion Boyars (1980), pp 147, £2.95.

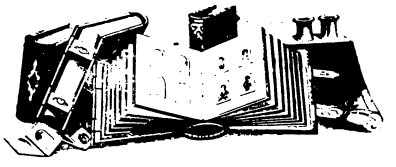
Betrayal is a harsh word to apply to secondary education over the last thirty years of struggle and advance; doubly so to those whose teaching careers coincide with these years of betrayal. After all are there not more 'qualified' school leavers than ever before, and far greater numbers, and a higher proportion, of young people pursuing their studies beyond the statutory leaving age, which anyway has been advanced to sixteen? Do not the schools produce music and drama of near professional standard and are there not thousands of young people travelling and working overseas with confidence and courage? So where then is the betrayal?

Sadly, the evidence is there among the dropouts, the wreckers, the antis, the great multitude of the turned off. And what is worse the failure of the economy to provide employment for those who have supposedly been prepared for it by their schools, turns off a lot more.

Where then have we gone wrong?

One feature of recent educational history which sticks out like the traditional sore thumb is the obsessional concentration on the organisation and reorganisation of schools at the expense of any real thought about their purpose. The full implication of the demand for 'secondary education for all', that most important concept enshrined in the Act of 1944, was never really examined; it was optimistically assumed that justice would be done to the new post-war generation if they were all given the same kind and standard of education as a minority had received in the pre-war secondary (grammar) schools. The curriculum of these schools was not questioned in spite of the fact that when they were established after 1902 there had been criticism that they looked back for their models to the 19th century public schools, rather than forward to what might be the needs of the new century as German educators were doing.

In the fifties and sixties party political stances towards comprehensive schools prevented the much needed peaceful, steady and commonsensical progress towards a system of common secondary education for all and the new schools found themselves the target for political sniping. To win popular support and parental approval they had to defend themselves for the wrong reasons. They had to show that they were 'as good as' the old schools in examination results, in enforcing school uniform, in developing prefectorial systems and so on.



Those schools which tried to develop a new and more relaxed style in curriculum choice, teaching methods, clothes and personal relationships were accused of lowering standards, lacking discipline and generally failing in their responsibilities. When academics, considered distinguished, joined in the witch-hunt, with their Black Papers and letters to **The Times**, the pressure to revert to old habits, and thereby (as Dr Hemming's book demonstrates) betray their clients, was difficult to resist.

Happily new work is now being done on what should be taught and how, but even so discussion too often tends to ignore real issues and to get bogged down in that generalised unreality known as a core curriculum. In the last number of **Forum** this question is effectively dealt with by Clyde Chitty and Denis Lawton. It is, however, only in Dr Hemming's book that I have seen it so clearly suggested that the starting point for reform is not a re-examination and re-arangement of the so called subjects of the traditional curriculum, but the psychological and physiological needs of the young at whom it is aimed. He shows how our education tradition has been biased towards the development of the left-hemisphere of the brain so that the non-verbal form of the intellect is neglected. I quote, 'Right hemisphere consciousness looks round corners; orientates spatially; takes pleasure in form and wholeness, responds to totalities. It is the obverse, as well as the complement, of the analysing, verbalising, logical activities which characterise the left hemisphere style of consciousness. A complete education should develop right and left hemispheres equally'. And indeed one can certainly see from one's own observation how many adults have been led to undervalue their powers because their strengths lie in right-hemisphere functioning which they had been taught to regard as inferior. The average grammar school teacher necessarily suffers from this 'excessive adulation' of left hemisphere functioning for was it not his kind of achievement which got them where they are? I remember in the very early years as a headmistress reminding the staff that virtually all of us came from a tiny successful left-hemisphere functioning proportion of our school fellows and that disappointment and frustration for us and our pupils would result if we assumed that all our pupils thought and functioned and, still worse, ought to think and function as we did.

Dr Hemming calls for education for competence, or capability, which can be described as social and practical life-skills and his call demonstrates clearly the need for a balanced curriculum in which the needs of both sides of the brain are met. This argument is dramatically illustrated in the chapter called 'Some Dimensions of Human Competence'. But education for competence can only exist in an atmosphere in which reason, tolerance and mutual respect flourish. For example, no real learning or human development can take place where there is staff-versus-pupil hostility, any more than industrial progress can take place if it is assumed that industry has two antagonistic 'sides'.

'The Catch 22 of the British educational system', writes Dr Hemming, 'is that if you are a high flyer you are very likely to have a limited, unbalanced curriculum in terms of personal development, while the price that has to be paid for a well rounded curriculum is that you end up with a low grade, even despised, examination result, or sometimes none at all'. The sub-title of the book is 'Secondary Education must be Changed'. How then can this be done?

Different ways of selecting heads of schools are suggested, for the writer puts great faith in the power of the head to influence the spirit, or atmosphere, of the school community. But the head needs support both internally and from the community in which the school exists, and what is surely needed is more general awareness among the public and among educators about what we are trying to do, together with a bit of healthy iconoclasm towards the sacred cow of examinations. Heads and assistants, HMI, and teacher-trainers, together with parents and administrators, must continue the processes of discussion and exchanges and through mutual support find the determination to look forward, or indeed to look around, to see what the young are crying out for, rather than to look back and continue to repeat and refine out dated and irrelevant patterns.

Dr Hemming's book should head the required reading list for all who take part in such exercises.

MARGARET MILES

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