

FORUM

for the discussion of new trends in education

Spring 1981

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This Issue

**Reflections on Children' Learning
A Symposium**

**Educational Standards and the
Present Cutbacks**

Editorial Board

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Michael Armstrong, Southampton.
Clyde Chitty, Earl Shilton Community College, Leicestershire.
Michael Clarke, Little Hill Junior School, Leicestershire.
Annabelle Dixon, Chalk Dell Infant School Hertford.
Maggie Grace, Leicester.
H Raymond King, Ex-Headmaster, Wandsworth School, London.
Roger Seckington, Earl Shilton Community College, Leicestershire.
Byron Thomas, Broughton Astley Primary School, Leicestershire.
Peter Thomson, Judgemeadow Community College, Leicestershire.
Roy Waters, ILEA Inspectorate.
Harvey Wyatt, The Woodlands School, Coventry.

Editors

Brian Simon, Leicester.
Nanette Whitbread, School of Education, Leicester Polytechnic.

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Editorial Communications. MSS and contributions to discussion (800 words maximum) should be addressed to the Editor, 11 Pendene Road, Leicester, LE2 3DQ. Tel: Leicester 705176.

Business information

Correspondence relating to subscriptions etc, should be addressed to The Manager, 11 Beacon Street, Lichfield WS13 7AA. Tel: Lichfield 51159.

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The Next Forum

This issue will focus on the actual effects of the cuts in educational expenditure on teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools. This symposium, entitled 'Putting Standards at Risk', will spell out in detail just how government policy is threatening essential aspects of education, in spite of the rhetoric about 'maintaining standards'.

Several members of the Editorial Board are contributing from their own experience. Readers now experiencing the full extent of the cuts are asked to write in giving as full information as possible. We need your cooperation, so please write, and let us have something (however, short) by the end of February.

This number will contain other articles, in particular an evaluation of the National Children's Bureau's report *Progress in Secondary Schools*, and the N.F.E.R.'s long-awaited report on Mixed Ability Teaching (if published in time).

The Question of Class Size

Michael Armstrong's *Closely Observed Children*, published in November, is an unusual book – indeed the first of its kind. It highlights, in a remarkable way, the realisable potentiality of ordinary children; in this case the members of a class in a normal local authority primary school in Leicestershire. Subtitled 'The Diary of a Primary Classroom', it records and analyses children's learning and productivity across a broad field of activity, being concerned, in particular, with the intellectual and aesthetic development of quite ordinary and normal children. It indicates what, given imaginative insight and tactful intervention by a skilled teacher, such children can achieve.

This book, the result of a full year's research in tandem with the class teacher (Stephen Rowland), is reviewed in this number by Maggie Gracie, another member of the Editorial Board. In addition, Michael Armstrong has master-minded a symposium relevant to his work under the heading 'Reflections on Children's Learning'. The various articles here illuminate the approach of *Closely Observed Children*, and relate to activities in both primary and secondary schools.

The reader must be struck by one characteristic of this approach, referred to in the introduction to the symposium. This is the extent to which very close attention is given to the activities and products of *individual* children, whose interests and work are known in detail to the teacher-researcher, as they must be if the teacher's intervention is to be productive in the way described. But in his introduction, Michael Armstrong refers to the 'desperately unfavourable' and 'deeply frustrating' circumstances in which teachers, embracing these perspectives, are forced to work. The ORACLE research programme, noticed in our last number, drew attention to the apparent impossibility of engaging in long educative interactions with individual children in classes of thirty or thereabouts, the present average for the primary classroom (now likely to rise). It is one of the main conclusions of the ORACLE research that, if the Plowden proposals for individualisation of the teaching/learning process are to be realised, a radical reduction of class size must be brought about – to roughly the level now obtaining in the private (or 'public') schools to which our present administrators send their own children

(about one in twelve).

But this is not what is happening. While public money is being poured into the 'independent' sector through the Assisted Places Scheme, the public sector is being starved of resources, and there is little doubt that the teacher-pupil ratio, in primary schools for instance, is now actually worsening. Andrew Hunt, the very experienced Principal of a Leicestershire Upper School and Community College, himself draws attention to this contradiction in his article in this issue. Two announcements came simultaneously, first, that his school is to lose four more staff in the current academic session over and above the six per cent cut already endured, and second, that the Assisted Places Scheme with certain 'independent' local schools named has been ratified. Mr Hunt refers to the 'inescapable logic' of the situation: 'cutbacks in staffing ratios in state secondary schools lead on naturally to the provision of assisted places in private schools for those "lucky" enough to escape!'

The situation would be laughable were it not tragic. The government's responsibility is to ALL our children – not only to a few. Their original appeal to the electorate was made on the need to *raise* standards, not to deprive teachers and educators of the resources required even to maintain the existing system. Why are so many distinguished teachers and heads, from what used to be regarded as advanced authorities (such as Leicestershire), seeking early retirement? Some have publicly stated that they are simply not prepared to continue to preside over the demise of all that has been achieved over the last ten or twenty years.

Forum has argued in the past that, given the will, falling school rolls provide the first real opportunity for years radically to bring down the size of classes, as countries like Sweden and Denmark did as an aspect of deliberate policy in the 1960s. Even in the present economic and political climate the case for such a reduction must be continuously pressed by teachers and others, a case now reinforced by the diverse findings of recent research, such as that carried through by Michael Armstrong and by ORACLE. These give an indication of what may be achieved, given the necessary conditions. There is no more important issue in the field of education.

Reflections on Children's Learning

Introduction to a group of articles on the appropriation of knowledge in a classroom environment.

Michael Armstrong

For several years *Forum* has taken an interest in the variety of ways in which children, through independent thought and action within a supportive school environment, come to appropriate knowledge: the ways, that is to say, in which they seek to make knowledge their own, putting it to use in intellectual inquiry and speculation. To some extent this interest has grown out of the journal's longstanding commitment to unstreaming which pre-supposes a determination to study both the common capacities, interests and needs of all children and the incommensurable individuality of each separate child – to promote human uniqueness within a commonwealth of learning. To some extent it also reflects the journal's sympathetic, though critical, response to the progressive tradition in educational theory and practice.

The problem of knowledge and its appropriation, in relation to comprehensive education, was first made explicit in *Forum* in Michael Armstrong's two-part article *Comprehensive Education and the Reconstruction of Knowledge*, published in Vol.17, No.2, which drew on a previous article by David Hawkins (*Two Sources of Learning*, Vol.16, No.1). Michael Armstrong's argument was taken up by David Hawkins (*A Third Source of Learning*, Vol.18, No.1) and by Gabriel Chanan (*Reservations on Reconstruction*, Vol.18, No.2), while Lesley King and Michael Armstrong examined some of its implications further in *Schools within Schools: the Countesthorpe Experience*, (Vol.18, No.2). Since then a number of articles have considered particular aspects of appropriation, both at secondary and primary school level. Maggie Gracie wrote on *The Role of Play*, (Vol.19, No.3), Stephen Rowland on *Assessment in the Primary School and on Ability Matching: a critique* (Vol.20, No.3 and Vol.21, No.3), Lee Enright on *Learning in my Classroom*, (Vol.21, No.2), Michael Armstrong on *The Informed Vision: a programme for educational reconstruction* (Vol.18, No.2) and Jimmy Britton on *Language in the British Primary School* (Vol.20, No.2).

In this issue we have asked four teachers to consider the process of appropriation and its enabling conditions in terms of their own classroom experience. We wanted to address ourselves, by this means, to two chief questions: how do children appropriate knowledge in classroom environments at different ages and in different aspects of the curriculum, and how do teachers assist them in this task. Stephen Rowland argues, with the use of a single carefully chosen example, that the essential condition of successful appropriation, determining both the intellectual level at which a child is able to work and the kind and degree of intervention required of the teacher, is that the child should "exercise control over the context in which he works, and therefore over the meaning of his activity". Jeni Smith reflects upon the progress of one particular

student's independent course of study over a period of several weeks and upon her own role within it. Pat D'Arcy describes a way of helping children and students to become more conscious of their own intellectual powers and thereby to exercise greater control over their own intellectual performance. Finally, Margaret Bowyer records how she came to appreciate the necessity and charm of independent learning in the study of French.

Each article offers its own separate challenge to those who would argue that children are incapable of intellectual independence or that teachers are incapable of responding to their pupils' independent demands in the circumstances of formal schooling. Elsewhere in this issue Maggie Gracie's review of Michael Armstrong's book *Closely Observed Children* considers further evidence of children's intellectual powers as displayed within the context of a primary school classroom. Nevertheless, it is no part of our intention to discount the formidable character of the task which these teachers have set themselves, or the desperately unfavourable, and deeply frustrating, circumstances in which at the present moment they are forced to work. The ORACLE research, reported in Vol.22, No.3, has shown how hard it is for primary school teachers to promote independent thought and action in classes of 30 or more children, as Stephen Rowland acknowledges explicitly, and Jeni Smith by implication, in the course of their reflections. We know something about the nature of the task and can catch at least a glimpse of its value and attraction in these reports of work in progress; but what we know is small indeed in comparison with what we need to know if this particular way of teaching and learning is to fulfil its apparent promise. Moreover, it is hard to act even on what we do know, let alone to advance our knowledge further, at a time of worsening pupil-teacher ratios, diminishing resources, barely disguised hostility to public education, and increasingly parsimonious objectives for the common school whether primary or secondary.

In these circumstances we rely more than ever on the readiness of teachers such as those who have contributed to this issue to persist in their radical objectives, to subject their own work to careful scrutiny, and to record its progress in publishable form. It is only out of a body of reflective practice, of close description and critical analysis, that we can hope to establish the full significance of appropriation and to sort out its implications. How, for example, can the principle of autonomy be reconciled with the aims of a common curriculum? (The question of autonomy has been conspicuously absent from the curriculum debate of the past five years.) How can the assessment of performance reflect children's most serious intellectual engagements rather than their responses to the artifice of standardised

tests and public examinations? What are the implications of appropriation for our understanding of learning structure and sequence? How should we aim to reconstitute the relationship between teachers and pupils? These are only a

few of the questions raised by the kind of work reported in this issue. We hope to return to them in future issues; meanwhile, we would invite our readers to take up the argument with us.

How to Intervene: Clues from the Work of a Ten Year Old

Stephen Rowland

In the summer of 1978 Stephen Rowland was given leave of absence from his teaching post at Sherard Primary School, Melton Mowbray, to work for a year as teacher and researcher in a class of ten and eleven year old children in another Leicestershire primary school. During that year he made extensive field notes in which he recorded his observations of the children's thought and action. It is from these field notes that the episode described in this article derives. The final report of Stephen Rowland's research was submitted as an M.Ed., thesis to Leicester University in the summer of 1980.

The crucial question for me as a teacher is how and when to intervene in a child's activity. The conviction that children are essentially rational beings, able to appropriate knowledge, persuades me that their autonomy should be respected; that given the intellectual space to interpret and exert some control over their environment they will organise their knowledge in an appropriate way. But it is no simple matter to convert this conviction into practice, even when outside pressures are reduced to a minimum. The way I pitch my interventions, from the tentative suggestion to the explicit criticism or direction, allows the child more or less latitude in his interpretation of them. But I have often found that the interpretations which children make of my interventions are quite unexpected. No doubt many opportunities have been missed as a result of my unawareness of how the child had understood my ideas.

On the following occasion, however, we were lucky. Working with Dean (10 years old), who had already spent several days investigating some caterpillars which he and a few others had collected and housed, I realised just in time that my idea of classifying his caterpillars, and his idea of sorting them, following my suggestion, were subtly different. At the time of the following extract from my field notes, Dean was sitting next to his classmate William at a table. While William drew, I worked closely with Dean who had just completed some writing about his creatures. Before us was a pot full of grass with various caterpillars crawling about inside it.

5th June, 1979.

. . . we talked about species. We had not examined any reference books together and Dean did not seem concerned to find out the real names for the different varieties. Instead, he had invented his own names. A type of thin small caterpillar he called 'Mr Diet'; the black and yellow ones were 'Arthur'; the brown furry ones 'Stannage'. He did not use these as 'pet' names but as names which referred to any caterpillar which appeared to be of that type.

But as we watched William drawing a caterpillar a problem arose. William was carefully drawing a 'Cyril' which had six 'legs' and ten 'suckers'. Dean noticed that most of the ones he had called 'Cyril' only had six 'legs' and four 'suckers'. He didn't suggest inventing a new name for this different variety of 'Cyril'. Thinking that we should clarify our criteria for classification, I suggested that we

list the different varieties we had in a table in which the different columns registered the name, colour, number of 'legs', number of 'suckers' and comments relating to each variety of caterpillar.

While we were talking about my idea, Dean seemed to think it was a good one, but when he began to fill in the table, he became frustrated about the differing numbers of 'legs' and 'suckers' on the various 'Cyrils'. He said, 'I call all green ones like that Cyril. I'm not bothered about how many legs they've got'. It seemed that I had imposed my own system of classification and Dean did not like it.

We then talked about how his caterpillars differed. I was now keen not to impose my own ideas and Dean decided that these should be the attributes we should look for — colour; fat, thin or medium; hairy or not hairy; where it was found or what it ate (considered normally to be identical). He made a table like this:

Colour	Fatness	Hairy	Found on	Sameness
green	thin	not hairy	hawthorn	Not the same
yellow & grey	fat	bit hairy	hawthorn	
brown	fat	hairy	dock leaf	Not the same
brown	fat	bit hairy	hawthorn	

I asked him why he had headed another column 'sameness'. He said, 'So I can write down if they're the same or not'. My objection seemed to me to be too simple and obvious to explain. I had assumed that the purpose of such a table was to list the attributes of different *classes* of caterpillar. Dean, apparently, saw it as a way of recording the attributes of his different *individual* creatures. I did not explain my point except to say that I could not see the need for the last column. He explained that he would list all his caterpillars in pairs and say, for each pair, whether or not the caterpillars were identical. I said, 'But surely, if they are both the same, you wouldn't bother to list them both?' He said that he would and that he would show me how when I returned to school tomorrow. There seems to be quite an exercise in logic in all this.

One satisfaction of working with Dean (though at times a frustration too) is his willingness to reject or modify strategies that I suggest. In this business of classification I think that problems will be encountered by him following

his own strategies which would have been glossed over had he merely followed mine. It will be interesting to see whether the problem still interests him tomorrow. He does appear so far to have wanted to work at a level of abstraction beyond what I might have expected.

7th June, 1979.

Yesterday Dean *did* want to return to making his table of comparison for his caterpillars. He got down to it as soon as he arrived, ten minutes or so before the official beginning of school. He selected two caterpillars to record and wrote in the columns:

green & black thin	not hairy hawthorn
green,	not the same
black/white	medium not hairy hawthorn

Before completing the final 'sameness' column he did not look at the insects to see if they in fact were of the same appearance, but instead checked through his columns, comparing entries, to establish that the entries were different. Thus the 'sameness' column did not refer directly to the appearance of the insects or whether, on some other evidence, he thought they were of the same type, but rather was an identity relationship between the attributes which he had selected to compare. This is a subtle, but I think most important, distinction since it shows the level of abstraction at which Dean was working.

Dean then went on to show me how he would record the entries of similar caterpillars. He first selected two individuals to record. He was thus not merely going to write down the same entry twice. Each entry had to correspond with observations made of a particular caterpillar. For each he completed the attribute columns: green and white; thin; not hairy; hawthorn. 'Same' was written against the entries in the 'sameness' column. Dean then put on a perplexed and frustrated expression, saying that he needed an extra column. He said this should be a 'name' column. I asked him if he meant a column for names like 'Cyril', 'Stannage' and 'Arthur' that he had invented. He said, 'No, it must be for their real names'.

Dean seemed to have discovered the need for a taxonomy. Having selected (what he considered to be) criterion attributes by which to describe the caterpillars, he saw that a class could be made of those creatures with identical attributes, and that such a class should be given a name. It was this identity of selected attributes, rather than direct appearances, which characterised Dean's conception of class and is indeed central to any such system of classification.

By this stage Dean was ready to make use of a reference book, from which he identified his last recorded caterpillar as being that of a Winter Moth.

There is little doubt that had Dean uncritically followed my original suggestion of tabulating his invented names for the caterpillars against my selection of attributes he would never have confronted the problems of classification and taxonomy in such depth. His approach may seem somewhat eccentric (and therefore unpredictable) to us, but then we take for granted, or perhaps have never enquired into, the internal logic of the problem with which Dean was concerned.

So far, Dean had interpreted my idea in his own way and my involvement had been somewhat tentative. But a few days later, during the same sequence of investigations, he

seemed to be wanting much more specific, even 'formal' instruction; but instruction set in a context in which he exercised overall control.

12 June, 1979

. . . I suggested we weigh the caterpillar. Dean said that if we used the classroom scales 'it would weigh nothing'. I asked if he could invent a way of weighing such a small thing. After a while thinking he said, 'If you get a stick or something and balance it on something like this, then you can put the caterpillar on one end and weigh it against something on the other end'. It was lunch time by now and he said he would think about it over his meal.

On returning in the afternoon he said that his father had explained that using Dean's method he could compare the weight of the caterpillar with something else, say a feather, but could not find its actual weight.

Talking over the problem, I suggested that we could weigh the creature against centimetre wooden cubes (part of some classroom maths apparatus) using a metre rule pivoted at the centre. We could then find out how much each cube weighed by measuring a number of them against a standard 50g weight. Dean liked the idea, so we followed this plan. Using the classroom scales 103 cubes balanced 50g. Jason, who had come to join us, said that this was near enough 100 and that then each cube must weigh $\frac{1}{2}$ g.

We then pivoted the metre rule to balance at the 50cm mark. On one end we placed the furry caterpillar, on the other end the cube. The caterpillar weighed more than the $\frac{1}{2}$ g cube. Using two cubes we saw that it weighed less than 1g. I suggested we cut a cube in half to make a $\frac{1}{4}$ g weight. Using this we found it to weigh more than $\frac{1}{2}$ g but less than $\frac{3}{4}$ g . . .

. . . (the following day) the caterpillar was again weighed as being between $\frac{1}{2}$ g and $\frac{3}{4}$ g. Dean suggested that we could halve the cube again to get a more accurate measurement. I agreed and added that we could even make further halvings. Thus, we soon had a cube, a half-cube, a quarter-cube and an eighth-cube weighing $\frac{1}{2}$ g, $\frac{1}{4}$ g, $\frac{1}{8}$ g and $\frac{1}{16}$ g respectively.

Dean has not yet come across fractions in his maths scheme. (Throughout the school children use workbooks from a graded Primary Mathematics scheme.) We worked together at the blackboard for a while talking out how to write and name fractions and the various relationships involved in the fractions we required. He had no trouble in understanding this.

Using the new weights and the ruler, Dean measured the caterpillar to weigh $\frac{1}{2}$ g and $\frac{1}{16}$ g.

We returned to the blackboard for more talk about how we might add fractions, using diagrams to help in the explanation. I led him carefully through this, asking many leading questions; in this way, Dean soon found that $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{16}$ could be combined as $\frac{9}{16}$. Thus he recorded $\frac{9}{16}$ g as being today's weight for the caterpillar . . .

. . . I then suggested that since he had appeared to grasp ideas involved in fractions so well, he might like to find some work from his maths scheme on this topic. To my surprise, he took up this idea enthusiastically.

Dean is currently on Book 3 in this scheme (out of five graded books intended for use across the junior age range). He returned to me having found a Book 5 with a section on fractions. With practically no help from me he soon completed several of the tasks in this section. I do not wish to go into the details of this textbook work here, but merely to note that he had little difficulty in tackling an exercise that was 'theoretically' one to two years in advance

of the book he is currently working on. I do not here imply that his current book is too easy for him. On the contrary, I have seen it to present him with considerable problems on several occasions. Nor do I wish to criticise this particular graded scheme, one which is in common use in many English primary schools at present. Rather, my point is that where a mathematical idea has arisen from a meaningful context, and one over which the child exerted an overall control of the objectives, he was able to work at an apparently higher level than might otherwise have been expected. Furthermore, the assumption that the various 'levels' of mathematical competence are related in a rigidly determined and hierarchical fashion is strongly brought into question if a child is able to 'skip' at least a full year in a carefully graded scheme and yet have no difficulty in tackling the tasks set, so long as such tasks bear a direct and understood relationship to the activity over which the child has been able to exercise control.

The contrast between my role as 'tentative guide' in Dean's earlier sorting activity, and that of 'authoritative instructor' in the technique of adding fractions, is clear

from these extracts. I see no reason why both roles should not be consistent with the principle of respect for the student's autonomy and of his need to control his own learning. Many educational commentators have sought to categorise teachers in terms of the direct/indirect, didactic/exploratory, or traditional/progressive nature of their teaching strategies. But, as commonly interpreted, such generalisations easily lead to confusion since they miss the crucial question: where does the control over the learning process lie? Once the student is seen as a rational being, able to exercise control over the context in which he works, and therefore over the meaning of his activity, he is in a position to provide the teacher with clues as to which teaching strategy most adequately meets his needs, be it close instruction, tentative suggestion or even silence. The art of teaching then becomes largely one of sharpening our sensitivity to these clues, of following a strategy which permits the student to retain control and thereby appropriate his knowledge. It is a task which I find formidable even in the most congenial of classroom environments; but the promotion of learning demands no lesser commitment.

The World of Childhood: a 15 Year Old's Course of Study

Jeni Smith

Jeni Smith teaches humanities at Countesthorpe College, Leicestershire. Her article describes a course of study undertaken by one of her fifteen year old students in the summer term of 1980. For a description of the framework of organisation within which Jeni Smith was working, the reader is referred to 'Schools Within Schools: The Countesthorpe Experience', by Lesley King and Michael Armstrong, in *Forum*, Vol.18, No.2.

Gary first thought about going to help in the college creche when two boys, who were already working there one afternoon a week, told me they did not want to carry on any longer. It started a conversation amongst those sitting round the table, about what it is like helping there and Gary expressed a lively interest in going himself. I leapt at the idea because I felt sure that Gary would enjoy it, would be good working with under-fives and would probably learn a great deal. Gary is sensitive and thoughtful and has the kind of sympathy for other people which makes him a successful actor and potentially responsive to small children. I mentioned the idea casually and left it until he was alone to discuss the idea more seriously.

Gary remained keen to go. He could not persuade another boy to go with him and then began to get cold feet because girls began to tease him and tell him that he would have to take the children to the lavatory. However, I suggested that he should go to the creche with Jacqui, a girl with whom he works well in drama, and promised that lavatory visits would not be part of his commitment.

Before he went to the creche, I had only a very general idea of what Gary would learn from his visits there. Such visits provide an opportunity for students to discover what pre-school children are like, for them to consider their own relationship with young children and explore their own sense of identity within that relationship. Students are constantly delighted and amazed at the freshness and skill of young children and wish to observe them closely, fas-

inated by their growing awareness and their desire to acquire new skills and improve on old ones. However, visiting students often need help in focusing their observations, sometimes because they are simply not aware of what they might look for and sometimes because the wealth of material is overwhelming. Before their first visit, I suggested to Jacqui and Gary that they should spend their time getting to know the children and allowing the children to get to know them. I suggested that during the afternoon they should begin to think what interested them most about the children and to consider what they might focus their thoughts on each week. I mentioned some things that students had observed before: play, one particular child, painting, books, talk.

On the following day, Gary seemed delighted by his visit to the creche and talked most enthusiastically about what had happened. He had begun, he said, by 'talking down to the children' and by the end of the afternoon was speaking to them as equals. He was fascinated by 'the way they talk to you' and the games the play. 'They really believe it'. He mentioned a girl who kept calling herself different names — he didn't discover her real name until her mother arrived at the end of the afternoon — and a boy who seemed aggressive at first — 'Was he threatened?' — but joined in at the end, as a policeman when the Wendy house was on fire. What had caught Gary's imagination was the imagination of the children, and it was about this that he wanted to find out more. At first, the only reading material

I had was The Open University book, *The Pre-School Child*, which did not really fit his needs. He glanced at the section on playing mothers and fathers, but at that moment was more keen to talk. Memories of playing mothers and fathers, hospitals, school, drew others into the conversation and the group began to remember how they used to play, and to reflect on why certain things were played again and again. The girls began again to tease Gary for his involvement with the children but he was insistent not only that it was good but that it was serious. 'I was father. It was great. I put flour into the gravy because they told me to'. Gary's serious acceptance of the children and his involvement with them, I think, gave him a particular insight into their play, though, perhaps, it also made it more difficult for him to see clearly what the children were doing, to distinguish between how the children behaved and his own behaviour, between his perception of them and his perception of himself.

Gary's first piece of writing showed a good deal about what he had learnt. Observation is linked to reflection and the beginnings of analysis. There is a self-awareness and a sense of humour in the writing, together with a growing, if sometimes puzzled respect for the young children he had gone to visit. Here is what he wrote:

To tell the truth I didn't think I would enjoy helping out in the creche when I saw these horrible children running, screaming and generally making a nuisance of themselves. My feelings were not the ones I'd expected myself to experience, in my mind's eye I had pictured myself as a father-figure type of friend who they could turn to. My feelings were not particularly enlightened when I was nearly knocked over by 'James Hunt' riding a farm tractor.

At first a little boy called Gary (skill name) came up to me and asked me my name. I answered him but found myself talking down to him. He seemed to talk very well and soon put me at ease. He liked to play games such as football and tick and at first didn't seem very inventive.

After a while though, I found myself talking to the kids on their level, and they weren't just little babies screaming all the time, they became real people with whom I could associate.

In play, they came up with various games and their imagination was fantastic. They could transform anything at all into just what they wanted, a stick would become a snake, then a fire-hose, an axe – anything at all.

The particular theme that I played upon was one of a fire. The little Wendy house was suddenly ablaze with people trapped inside. As a group they played well but did not seem to notice what the others were doing. They were in their own worlds and could not make up their minds as to what they wanted to be. I think jealousy was partly responsible for this because everyone seemed to want to be what everyone else was. Then when they'd changed, after about five minutes they'd want to change again.

On his second visit, Gary was torn between total involvement and the desire to get the children to do things. He decided to read them a story and then ask them to paint something from the story. I did not encourage this, but did not stop him. I warned him they would probably not want to do as he suggested, that they were too young. He went off with *The Surprise Party* under his arm, saying they might draw *something*. When he returned, he reported that although they had enjoyed the story, not only did they not want to draw, they flatly *refused*. However, for Gary, the second visit had been as rich in imaginative play as the first. He was fascinated not only by the children's games but also

by their view of the world. It was at this time he expressed a desire to work later in an infant school, to observe how this view of the world changes, going on finally perhaps to look at still older children.

Gary also asked for a novel which explored this area of childhood imagination and at first I had little success in finding the right thing. I tried Susan Hill's *King of the Castle*, which didn't really fit the bill and which Gary didn't get on with. Then a colleague suggested *George*, Emlyn William's autobiography. It was absolutely right, fulfilling Gary's requirements for childhood fantasy and his own passion for the theatre. At the same time I gave him a chapter of John and Elizabeth Newsom's book *Toys and Playthings* to read, 'Props for Fantasy'. He said that he appreciated it, found it useful. It made him recognise the element of limitation in children's fantasy play. He mentioned that a girl kept telling the 'father' to 'stop reading the paper, George'. Was this perhaps a reflection of known adults behaviour?

For all its apparent success there were aspects of Gary's work which dissatisfied me at this time. I felt that we did not really discuss his reading sufficiently. I told him also that I was disappointed with what he had written in that it fell short of what he usually talked about on the day after a visit. I reiterated the importance of writing things down when they were fresh in his mind. Perhaps my concern was in part that of a teacher requiring, for the purpose of assessment, written evidence of what she already knew had occurred and yet I also felt that the writing was valuable as a way of recording such experiences accurately, of pinpointing ideas, of asking questions. As a result of my expressed disappointment with his writing, Gary did go away and re-write his notes. Later he confessed that he was aware that the first batch were skimpy, that they had been written because I pestered him to write up his visits as he made them, and that he enjoyed writing far more the second time round.

The contrast between his first and second drafts was instructive, as I began to appreciate when I compared the way in which he had handled the same episode in successive drafts. The second draft of the episode in question uses the first as its framework, adding new information, highlighting details, and interpreting events more freely. In both passages Gary's voice is clearly heard, in his choice of phrasing, and in his asides, but whereas in the first draft it is chiefly the tone of voice which makes us aware of Gary's thinking, in the second there is more speculation and explanation and a conscious, even self-conscious, attempt at something other than a purely anecdotal style. The added details are important also in providing Gary with further clues when he comes eventually to look back over his notes for recurrent patterns and questions, and to attempt to draw conclusions.

In subsequent weeks, Gary was fairly frustrated in his larger aims because Monday afternoon creche became filled with small babies whose mothers were at a post-natal shape-up and the last few sessions were usually spent 'working out imaginative ways of getting babies to sleep'. Nevertheless, Gary began to write some more generalised observations and accumulate more questions to be answered. Why do children enjoy the repetition of activities which he, Gary, would tire of very quickly? Was there a difference between what happened when he fully immersed himself in the make-believe play of the children and when he attempted to sit back and become 'more of an observer than a participant in their games'? Why do children choose to play the games they do, games which Gary perceived as

involving 'a certain amount of imagination but nothing that I at my age would have thought amounted to much'? How much are their own experiences reflected in the way they are? Which toys release the most vivid flights of fancy, 'can be flung into a whole new dimension'?

As far as I am concerned, these questions remain for Gary to return to. Meanwhile, soon after half-term, he began making weekly afternoon visits to what had been his infant school, as the next stage in his investigations. He spent his first visit in different classrooms, accustoming himself to the school and some of the children. His diary for that week records the afternoon in detail, including observations about the differences between classrooms, the youngest children's difficulties with handling scissors effectively, the popularity of maths in the school. Nevertheless, he returns to his quest for imaginative play, and at break was disappointed to find that 'imagination games were out and that more children enjoyed running races, various kinds of tick, and kiss chase'.

After each visit, Gary, in his discussion with me afterwards, has remembered his own childhood games and fancies and I have encouraged him to remember his own experiences when thinking and asking about what he sees. Gary plans to write about such memories in the holidays, together with a series of observations of a four year old and other children who play in the street where he lives.

On Gary's second visit, he took a book called *The Python's Party*, chosen from a small selection of books for younger children which we have in the library. He read the story to a small group and talked about having a party in the jungle. They discussed what food they might eat, and Gary records his own expressed doubts about the children's insistence on having iced cakes amongst the nuts, berries and fruits. Gary then took the children into the playground and each chose which animal they wanted to be.

'It was great to start with', he wrote later. 'They all understood what they wanted to be, adopting trunks for elephants, wings for birds, etc. . . . when I asked them to go and play "hide and seek" as the animal they were, they completely lost their mannerisms and shapes, and just became little boys and girls again. I tried again, but no success. I can't see why the kids lost their animal-like behaviour when they started to play'.

Gary's puzzled question here links back to some of the observations which he had previously made at the creche. I have found it hard to know how far to draw his attention to such links and how far to rely on his own judgement in identifying parallels and recurrent themes and questions over the course of time, as he reflects on his past work. It is important to avoid taking over a student's work, as it were, but equally important that a student should not be held back for want of a hint or suggestion that you could quickly give him. The introduction of information, ideas, skills, books is a crucial but subtle matter, often misunderstood, which requires much closer examination than I feel we often give it.

On the last visit Gary made to the school in the summer term, he took with him a large collection of cartons and containers with which to make robots. He had wanted to do something in preparation for the children's play which we were going to perform at the school in the following week (a play which Gary had written and in which he was to perform the part of the villain). The suggestion to make robots was mine since I thought he might observe and overhear more evidence of his group's imagination at work while they made the models. I remembered a very interesting

meeting in Leicestershire in which a teacher had talked about a group of infants making models (albeit more freely) in her own school, and this made me suggest that he should look at how the materials used and the different degrees of skill in their use affected the final object, and should see whether any of the children wove a story round the model they made.

The making of the robots proved a great success both for Gary (his diary entry begins, 'Yippee! We're going to make robots today') and for the children. On the following day we talked a lot about what had happened. I told Gary about the model which the infant school teacher had shown us and which its maker described as a factory, showing her where the men and women went in and what happened at the factory. Gary's subsequent writing included more detail than ever before and did not contain any personal asides or ironic comments. It includes this passage:

Robisus, Marco's robot, was the most ambitious of them all. It seemed a mass of rollo, spice containers and various sizes of boxes. I don't think that it was planned at all but when asked, Marco was able to tell me what each section's purpose was.

Marco was the only one who had really invented a story around his robot. I was told that Robisus was a giant robot that people could go inside. He lived in a giant house that was made of metal, and when he wanted something from a shop he would extend his mechanical arms and then retract them when he had made his purchase. Robisus really liked the moon, so one day he flew into space and captured it to take back to put in his house. I wonder if Marco knows that the moon is much bigger than it appears.

Soon after this, Gary contracted glandular fever and since then he has been away from school. This, therefore, is as far as he has taken his study of young children, for the present. Gary himself wants to go on now to spend some time with older children. He obviously needs time also to reflect on what he has seen and done already as well as to read some of the material written about primary school children's talking and writing. He perceives this particular area of his learning as a major project and already devotes a relatively large amount of time and thought to it. He envisages being able to work with at least one more age range and writing quite extensively about the changes and developments he observes. I want him also to read as much as he can, related to his experiences, and I expect that he will continue to discuss each visit as he makes it in order to sharpen his own perceptions and to allow me to make some useful contributions to his work. I look forward to observing what happens next.



Putting Your Own Mind to it

Pat D'Arcy

Pat D'Arcy has taught English in grammar, secondary modern and comprehensive schools. She is at present an adviser for English with Wiltshire County Council.

There is an ICI advertisement which appeared in *The Guardian* earlier this year, the opening sentences of which read as follows:

INSIDE YOUR HEAD IS A SUBSTANCE THAT'S FAR MORE VALUABLE THAN NORTH SEA OIL. It's called grey matter. And that, not oil is our greatest natural asset. After all, it's going to have to solve the problems that will remain when the oil runs out. Fortunately brain power is one commodity that Britain isn't short of.

I wish more teachers, parents, employers, politicians – and above all pupils, believed the truth of those statements. What a pity that we feel more inclined to dismiss them as nothing more than an advertising con trick – what a waste!

It is not of course a new idea that the best way to encourage people of any age to learn is to begin with the assumption that they *can*. Most parents begin with that belief about their own children and it is interesting to observe that children under school age learn more – and learn more effectively than at any other time in their lives. Educationists past and present – Tolstoy, Dewey, Ilich, Bruner, Britton – have similarly testified to the belief that human beings are natural learners, particularly children. And yet, and yet . . . whichever national system of state education we care to consider, what seems to happen is a movement *away from* a confirmation of that truth towards quite the opposite assumption: that there are a small number who can learn effectively but a much greater number whose learning is limited or for whom learning is at best a struggle and at worst a dead loss! The 'pass' rate of our external examinations in this country is decided beforehand on precisely this premise. The teaching profession accepts, apparently without any unease or sense of affront, that only a small percentage of students are capable of passing an 'ordinary' level examination at the age of sixteen after eleven years of full-time schooling and that grade 4 on a five point scale of a *sub-ordinary* level examination is the highest grade that most sixteen year olds can expect to gain! It is hardly surprising, when our expectations as teachers are so low, that students become disheartened, disillusioned and fail to prove us wrong. All too often self-fulfillment is really self-abasement and our response to that is the arrogant one of believing that our assumptions have been confirmed.

I do not want to speculate here about the reasons for this strange reversal from having confidence in the powers of the child's mind to a perverse undermining of the child's own confidence through our present methods of streaming, setting and examining. I want, instead, to ask how we can keep more steadily to a course which gives every student a sense of direction and purpose. How can we enable *all* of them to become increasingly confident that inside their

heads they *do* have 'a substance that's far more valuable than north sea oil'?

I am convinced that one thing we need to do as teachers is to interest children much more directly in the actual process of learning. All of us, whatever our age, or background, or ability, engage continually in processes of thinking, feeling, verbalising, communicating, observing and doing. They are functions of being human that we cannot avoid from the day we are born to the day we die. Increasingly, it has seemed logical to me that I should draw the attention of my pupils to this whole range of learning processes and that I should ask them, regularly, to consider their own thoughts, feelings, intentions, acts, observations, formulations and efforts to communicate. My objective has been to make them more aware of how they could operate successfully as learners. I have wanted them to be able to reflect consciously on how these processes have helped them to gain new insights and thus a clearer understanding of themselves and of their world. In pursuit of this objective I stopped focusing primarily on content and on product (what books had been read, what essays written, what exercises completed), and started focusing instead on process – what problems were being encountered, what insights achieved from day to day. This meant that I had to offer strategies, ways of looking at their work, that would help my students also to focus on what was happening inside their own heads. The most successful strategy and therefore the one that I want to describe here, chiefly through the work of a colleague who has been able to extend my original concept, is the daily use of a diary in which the pupil reflects back over whatever she has been doing inside the classroom that day. Such a 'learning log' differs from personal journal writing in that its central focus is on the school work that the student has been confronted with and on the questions that she needs to raise as a result of thinking further about her intentions, observations, thoughts and feelings during the school working day.

Anne Wotring is an English teacher in an American High School who joined a class of 15-16 year old students to study chemistry as a learner with no more experience than theirs for a whole year. She joined the class (in her own school) to find out whether writing logs in the way that I have described, could become an effective part of the learning process.

Here are some of the comments that she made later, in her dissertation, as a result of that experience:¹

I often felt that had I not been writing while I learned chemistry, I would not have worked with difficult ideas as long as I did without getting help. I often rely on others for

help when I think something is too difficult for me to do on my own or when I need to hear myself talk so I can know what I know. My urge to talk about anything I learn is very strong. I believed that chemistry was difficult so it would have been natural for me to seek out a willing helper and a willing ear. But when I did the writing, I no longer felt the need of another person. The writing enabled me to know what I knew and to figure out the difficult ideas on my own. I realised that I could listen to myself think while I wrote my ideas on the paper. I wrote down whatever I thought as if I were trying to capture the flow of ideas in my brain on the paper. Sometimes I captured tangential thoughts which always proved to be useful and interesting. Frequently I captured ideas which didn't make sense, or sounded silly, or were wrong. When this happened, my internal critic or common sense, for lack of a better word, interrupted the idea with an evaluative comment. I would write the evaluative comments on the paper as well. If the internal critic remarked 'that doesn't seem right', I'd write 'that doesn't seem right'. I learned quickly to trust my internal critic's intuition. And my internal critic didn't only tell me when I was wrong. She often made comments of encouragement, such as 'I think I'm getting it' which kept me going when I was on the right track.

I didn't cross out the silly, nonsensical or wrong things that I wrote. I also didn't cross out the internal critic's comments. I just went on writing. Crossing out wasn't necessary. I wrote not because I wanted to get all the ideas clear and correct on *paper* but because I wanted to get all the ideas clear and correct *in my head*. It wasn't important that no-one else would be able to read my writing and understand what I was saying about chemistry. What was important was that I understood what I was saying by the time I had completed my writing. The writing was for *now*, at the time I was doing it, not for later, and the writing was for me, not someone else.

The sense that first and foremost the student is writing for herself, in order to discover the picture that has been forming inside her own head, is an extremely important feature of the learning log strategy. The *act* of writing enables the student to develop that picture more fully – and to learn to trust her own ability to make sense of new information and unfamiliar concepts. At the same time, the student can sort out confusion from certainty and go back to the teacher with questions that, for her, need to be clarified further. One of the 16 year old students in the same chemistry class said:

I just started writing the things I didn't understand . . . I started writing questions which were all specific . . . then I brought them up to the teacher and she could answer them for me . . . that way all my questions were cleared up.

She went on to say that she would never even have thought of some of the questions if she hadn't been keeping a learning log and writing down her thoughts about the day's lesson as they occurred to her *in retrospect*.

Two points interest me here – that the logs help students to formulate their own questions, often closely related to what they need in the way of further explanation from an expert; and that their requests for help are much more likely to meet with success than if the teacher is guessing in the dark about the needs of the class. The reversal from most school situations, where the teacher presents to a passive audience and then tests by asking *his* questions, is marked. In this instance, it is the student who questions, freely admitting to 'weaknesses' in order to learn more. The

teacher is thus involved by the student as a partner in her learning, an involvement which leads to further insights and a growing sense of confidence and satisfaction.

Moreover, the confidence is well founded. Anne Wotring and the other students who kept learning logs, all found that when it came to a test, they no longer needed to make a desperate effort the night before to 'memorise' the teacher's notes – what was on the page was already inside their heads in a way that made sense because they had used their logs to clarify and reformulate as they went along:

I found that writing eliminated all my need to study the night before a test. I knew and understood everything already. I didn't need to memorise anything or cram anything into my head; and, because I didn't have any information precariously and hurriedly jammed into my head, I knew that I couldn't forget it in the middle of the test. I knew I had it all there in order, so it made sense, and I could call upon it and find it when I needed it. It was all neatly filed, not just thrown in. I was confident in this knowledge – in my knowledge. All the pressure I'd always associated with tests vanished.

Remember though, that 'write-thinking' will not fulfil many of the traditional expectations that we have about writing. It will not be orderly and sequential because the writer is finding out *as she writes*; it is process not product writing, expressive in the freedom that the writer has to voice thoughts, feelings, puzzlements, frustrations, satisfactions, as they arise. Here are four brief excerpts from learning logs or thinking diaries which I hope will illustrate these differences from conventional writing. The first three are from students in English comprehensive schools, while the last is taken from the thinking diary of an American 12 year old.²

The first comes from the notebook of an 11 year old. The class had spent several lessons on reproduction, starting with plants and culminating with a film that showed the birth of a human baby. After discussion the class had been asked by their teacher to spend 20-30 minutes concentrating on their own picture of how a baby grows inside the mother and is then born. The teacher made it clear to the class that he knew that all their pictures would be different and that they would be bound to miss some things out and probably make some mistakes. In other words, the teacher did his best to make it clear that this was more of a finding-out operation than a test and that he was interested in what their writing could tell him about their *developing* understanding of embryonic growth and birth.

This is what I think I know about the birth of a baby. The birth of the baby starts where the lady becomes pregnant. When her tummy gets very big this means that the baby is nearly ready to be born. The baby is kept inside the uterus which has a wall around it that is quite soft and is like a kind of cushion for the baby to move around in. The lady is brought to the hospital where she starts to feel pain because this means that the baby is going to be born. The lady has to put all her pressure on to help the baby coming out of the opening of the vagina. The baby's head comes out first, because this is the biggest part of his/her body. After the baby comes out the placenta wears away, because there is not a baby there to feed on it.

The baby has to be washed very carefully so as not to hurt it. I'm not really all that sure if the cord comes out as well. Does it? You can't really be sure. The baby has to stay in the hospital with its mother to find out whether it is

a boy or a girl. You can tell the difference because the boy has a sack of skin with (I'm not sure) the testis in the middle. When you start to get to the age of about one the baby might even just about start to talk. The baby can either be fed by the breasts or by a bottle. When it is fed by the bottle it should never be too hot. The most common one of the two is the breasts. How does the milk get to the breasts to feed the baby?

In the next two pieces a group of 5th year students studying 'O' level Physics were invited by their teacher to write a Learning Log for homework. He found the information that the writing produced for him so useful that this year he is going to ask his 4th year groups to keep Learning Logs regularly.

6th March

After knowing what everything was about last week I am totally lost this week. I know how to use $\lambda = d \sin \theta$ to work out a sum (although I've probably got the homework wrong). I get a kind of (?) about the second ordering. What I don't know is where the first ends and the second begins and how you know? At the beginning of the lesson I kind of got kinetic theory, I got it all right but I had to use a book. I managed question 111 and 112 but I couldn't do the rest on change of states.

Another student just wrote down his own questions:

Questions

1. In destructive interference does the crest sink into the trough?
2. Can one measure out where the calm and rough areas are going to be, and if so how? (Do you use the wavelength and speed of the waves?)
3. What happens when one dipper produces waves with a greater wavelength? How would one get it to do that?
4. If the dipper goes faster or slower than the other what happens?
5. What happens if one dipper is bigger than the other?

As a final example here is an entry from Bonnie's thinking diary:

Why is it that when kids teach a subject in class it is less confusing than if a teacher taught it? I think that a child who has gone through an experience in which something was confusing would know how and where it was confusing and then be able to teach it with less confusion. I am going to cite such an example.

We are doing map skills, and a lot of the time when Mr Jacobs tells us directions kids get lost. I think if one of these kids taught the subject they may be able to teach kids and have them less confused. The reason I say this is that the child that is teaching will have had the experience of being confused and be able to avoid more confusion.

On the other hand like Mr Jacobs says, 'Confusion is the beginning of learning'. In this case the kids would get confused and be continuously getting confused and finding out their mistakes they would probably learn better.

Logs certainly provide many opportunities for learners to learn from each other by sharing ideas, questions and suggestions, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in small self-chosen groups. The teacher is no longer in the lonely position of being the only learning resource for the class; write-thinking can be pooled and reflected on further by a group who are all engaged in the business of learning together, including the teacher. But most important of all, learning logs, as Anne Wotring discovered, are able to reveal

to any student who is willing to take her own learning seriously, the exciting, astonishing and immensely reassuring fact that to anyone who pays attention, the mind inside the head will reveal all sorts of thoughts which appear already to be there, waiting to be noticed by their owners so that they can evolve a verbal shape for themselves. As Berthoff says:

You don't have to philosophise or master psychological theories in order to learn to write, but it's important and I think comforting to know that the means of making meaning which you depend on when you make sense of the world and when you write are in part made for you by your brain and by language itself.³

In conclusion, although it didn't appear in his learning log, here is what one of my 5th year secondary modern school students wrote after he had been working in this way for a couple of terms. It is the final paragraph of an eight page piece in which he reflects on his own writing and on the growing sense of confidence and power to shape his own meanings in his own way that the process of writing has given him:

The following and concluding quotation is by Albert Einstein; I have only recently encountered a minute fraction of his work but I was completely amazed by its perceptiveness. 'The most beautiful things in the world are the mysterious for they are the only source of true art and beauty; he who cannot pause and wonder or stand in awe at these mysteries is already half dead.' My reply to that quotation is: the mind must surely be one of the most mysterious things in the world and I am definitely not yet half dead – on the contrary, I am wholly alive and kicking furiously and my writing takes the blows.

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FORUM Subscription

We have held the cost of a subscription to FORUM at £2.50 for four years (since 1976). However, with inflation running at approximately 20 per cent per year all over this time it has unfortunately become impossible to hold this level any longer. Our subscription will, therefore, go up to £3.00 from the May issue this year, while the price of a single copy will rise to £1.00.

We hope our readers will support us by renewing at this level when the time comes. At this critical moment in education it is clearly important that an independent journal like FORUM continues publication, as we certainly intend to, with your support.

The Editors

The Independent Learning of a Foreign Language

Margaret Bowyer

For some years Margaret Bowyer has been teaching modern languages in Malmesbury School, Wiltshire. She is now head of Modern Languages at Hope Valley College, Derbyshire.

'When I watch a foreign language lesson, I see an awful lot of teaching and very little learning'. A headmaster.

When I remember my first lessons teaching French I am appalled. I read the textbook, *Cours Illustré* out loud to the class because I had no idea what to do. The pupils, according to their degree of patience, either listened passively, switched off or misbehaved. One boy even built a bonfire between the desks and lit it while I rambled on about absent-minded professors and monkeys.

A few months later I learnt that you were supposed to read the textbook, digest it and regurgitate the information to the pupils, who reacted in much the same way as before.

Later still I discovered 'accessories', like tape-recorders and projectors. I continued presenting canned information to passive pupils but found they were behaving better because I could change the scene every ten minutes, leaping between tape, film, slides, blackboard and overhead projector. They didn't know whose voices, mine or the taped ones, were coming next and they watched, fascinated, like spectators at a tennis match. I was exhausted at the end of each lesson, but felt I had put on a good performance.

By the time *The New Textbook* arrived, in the form of Longmans, I realised that now you were not supposed to use a textbook at all. You had to write it all yourself. 'Resourced-based learning' had arrived. Thus nights and weekends turned into an orgy of production. Banda sheets and flash cards flowed from under my pen.

By now my lessons were reaching the heights of first-class entertainment. I heard children say they didn't want to leave the classroom when the bell went. I had become an 'Experienced Teacher'.

The truth came out one parents' evening. 'My daughter loves French. She looks upon your lessons as light relief.'

It was clear that I was working much harder than my pupils and that their involvement in the work required little more than applause.

I was very dissatisfied. On the one hand the pupils were happy and occupied and clearly they were absorbing some information, but on the other hand I had set up a situation in which the pupils were entirely dependent on me, my output, my performance, my energy, for their progress. I was virtually doing their learning for them.

I read about the work of the Resources for Learning Development Unit in Bristol and borrowed one of their 'Classroom Management Packs': 'Les Limaces Aiment Ça'. It's a project designed to encourage independent learning. In the pack were cassette tapes with instructions, a story in French, written and oral tests, pupil-progress charts, flash cards and a fascinating word list which the pupils had to stick on card and cut out individually.

I explained to my second year pupils that for the next few weeks I would not be giving them the lessons myself, but that they would be organising their own work with instruction and help on tape.

The pupils themselves set up the equipment for the next lesson, running upstairs to the resource room to borrow cassette players and extension leads. Since we only had three players, I put the children into three groups, two very capable and one weak group. The first two groups took their cassettes and began work. I introduced the new vocabulary to the third group and then left them with their tape.

I looked around the room and realised that everyone was busy while I was redundant; at least my earlier role was unnecessary. Instead of being a charismatic animator, I became a relaxed consultant. I went round from group to group putting in a word here and there, reinforcing new vocabulary. The pupils didn't need encouragement or pushing and not one child was left out. For the first time, the children were in charge of their own work. They pushed the button to listen to the voices and what was much more important, they could push the button to stop the voice — something they couldn't do when I was speaking. Each group had a leader who controlled the tape and the pace of working, but this leader was not a replacement teacher. The instructions required each child to participate orally and everyone to listen. The children began to notice and respect each other's work. Because the work was done in groups each pupil was able to speak French a lot during each lesson whereas previously 30 children in a 40 minute lesson could only have about 1 minute speaking time unless chanting in chorus.

At the beginning of each lesson I asked the pupils what they were going to do today, a refreshing change from my telling them.

Once the children had listened to the story on tape several times and had mastered the vocabulary orally and in writing, they began to produce their own plays. The three groups of about ten pupils broke up into smaller groups of their own accord. They used the original story of slugs eating radishes in someone's garden as the basis for their plays, but they were inspired to extend not only the plot but also the resources for presenting it. They made giant size paper slugs to pin on the walls and windows. They drew background scenes on the blackboard and made slides to go on the projector. The learning was still resource based but the pupils were making their own resources. They were totally involved in every aspect of their work and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

It is important, though, to realise that if you use one of these classroom management packs it is impossible to go

back to straight text book lessons. Once the pupils have found out how satisfying it is to organise their own work and how much more thoroughly they know the language at the end, they don't want to return to the textbook and their passive roles. Once the teacher has seen the active participation of the pupils, has relied for a month on the pupils' energy and has become a specialist consultant rather

than script writer, editor and producer, then he or she too will find the return to the textbook very difficult.

For a teacher who has already been weaned off textbooks it is a relief to find out that French, one of the most traditionally taught of all subjects, can, after all, be managed by children themselves independently of the teachers and in collaboration with her.

Closely Observed Children

Maggie Gracie

A member of the Editorial Board, Maggie Gracie has contributed several articles to Forum in the past. She master-minded the symposium of the Middle School in the last number of the journal. She has worked closely with Michael Armstrong at Countesthorpe and elsewhere.

As most readers will know, Michael Armstrong is a member of Forum's editorial board, and has contributed several important articles to the journal. *Closely Observed Children*, his first book, is likely to cause a wave of excitement amongst teachers and all interested in the process of learning (*Writers and Readers*, £2.95, pp.207, 1980).

Classroom teachers will immediately identify with Michael's book, for although it is a work of theory, the theory is developed with direct reference to the classroom, the children and their struggle to explore and master new ideas. Michael spent two years working as a teacher-researcher in the Sherard School, Melton Mowbray where he kept a diary documenting the learning experiences of particular children. These accounts are vivid and detailed and reveal a most important approach to understanding learning in the fields of mathematics, science, art and play.

'I spent the greater part of my first day in Stephen's classroom helping or watching Robbie as he constructed a cotton reel tank . . . As the morning passed I grew more and more anxious. Our first attempts to get our reel moving were total failures and I was afraid that Robbie would lose interest and drift away. So I suggested to him that we should put the tank away until after the weekend when, as I had already promised him, I would get in touch with a friend who I knew would remember exactly how a cotton reel tank worked . . . Robbie seemed pleased by this promise of more complete information but in the meantime he refused to give up. All morning and right through the dinner break he worked on his tank, continually adjusting and revising the propelling mechanism, until at last, by early afternoon, he succeeded in getting the tank to crawl forward smoothly and slowly, as it should. It was only then, as I watched him demonstrate the tank's performance, that at last I remembered clearly how it had been in my own cotton reel tank racing days. Robbie spent the rest of the day confidently experimenting . . . testing it out on different surfaces, seeing how far and how long it would run, how much time it took to cross a given area, how steep a slope it could climb, and so on . . .

'In successfully completing his cotton reel tank Robbie has resolved a whole series of mechanical problems, with little help from me, and some of that mis-

leading, except for the initial idea and the one tip which I derived from Stephen. I, indeed, had given up at an early stage and was all for waiting until we could be told by someone else what we were doing wrong and how to put it right. I had shown little confidence in Robbie's own ingenuity. What then had helped him to persist and finally to succeed: his eagerness to get his machine working properly, his own mechanical aptitude, or a series of intuitions, guesses and happy accidents? All of these had helped perhaps, but above all what mattered, I think, was his responsiveness to the materials, to toys and toy-making, and to a certain kind of playing, fiddling, experimenting, making do and imagining.'

I hope that this small extract from the chapter called, 'The Intellectual Life of Play' gives an impression of the style of Michael's work. It combines descriptions of children working with a framework for inquiring into the child's intentions and successes and a theory of learning which centres around respect for the child's ability to grapple with intellectual problems.

One of the ways in which children are so often undervalued by their teachers, even those who allow scope for individuality, is in the style of response to their work: the picture is 'very nice'; the writing is 'longer/neater/funnier' than usual, revealing a view that children's work is no more than 'busy' work, a way of keeping the child occupied until he is old enough to understand and operate with real meaning. Michael takes a contrary view that all children's work deserves to be considered as a serious search for meaning or as a deliberate attempt to achieve mastery in some medium. With this assumption Michael can present a seemingly undistinguished piece of writing, and go on to pose questions and advance ideas about the use of words, phrases and form which show the work to be that of a young writer with an intuitive grasp of literary style and a drive to convey quite precise meaning.

Paul, after telling me about his go cart adventures was keen to commit them to writing and settled down to the task with his usual concentration, by turns earnest, pensive, pained, listless, and sometimes all in one. It took all morning and the last sentence I had to write for him as his scribe, but the thought and language were entirely his own . . .

“My Go Cart

At Christmas I had a go cart. When I had my first ride on my go cart I was amazed that I could drive the go cart. The next morning I got up and went down the road and when I came to the end of the road and the go cart stopped and I tried to start the go cart I couldn't start it. I ran home to tell my dad. My dad came down with the trailer. Dad picked the go cart up and took the go cart and put the go cart in the garage and the next morning Kevin came up and Kevin said it is broken. The next morning Kevin mended it.”

Paul's writing here . . . is notable for . . . the fitting expression of felt incident by means of the written as opposed to the spoken word. The incident of the first breakdown of his go cart, so directly and baldly expressed, enables Paul to convey in a few simple sentences the excitement and exasperation his Christmas present had occasioned. Notice how effectively the word “amazed”, a word I had to help Paul to spell, is used at the beginning. Notice also how elaborate is the sentence that follows with its long delayed main clause and the sense it conveys of a single sustained burst of activity ending in misfortune. Although the technical means at his disposal are more limited than Debra's, Paul is no less successful at distilling a personal experience in narrative form.

In writing a short review, I have had to select some of the shortest extracts from the book. Some of the most interesting descriptions and analyses cover several pages, and focus not only on a particular incident but the development of mastery in the same child's work over a period of time.

What seems to be so valuable about this style of looking at children's work is that it offers a practical approach for other teachers to use when they are looking at their own children's work. It is a far more absorbing and rewarding way than the conventional approach which seeks to evaluate with reference to some apparent 'norm' of intellectual development. It results in a heightened interest in each child's work, to a better understanding of the problems a child is trying to solve, and to better classroom practice and organisation where the child's current concerns are the centre. Various groups of teachers have already had the opportunity to try to work in this style, some of them belonging to the group, *Progressive Education*.¹

I was recently involved with another teacher in a pupils' topic work about Frogs. The topic began one morning when William brought a frog to school, swimming for its life in a sweet jar half full of pond water. It was hard to know what to say, for I was sorry for the frog although I knew that William's attempt at housing him in the sweet jar was well intentioned – so I suggested that he adapted the 'habitat' straight away in order to give the frog some dry land. This frog and another, larger one remained in the classroom and in several ponds dug just outside it for about three weeks, while William wrote his topic amounting to some 150 pages of observations, drawings, stories, poems, speculations and background research work. William's dedication to his work was obvious – I doubt whether he did or thought about much else in those weeks, but the significance of his work was harder to analyse. I took the topic notebook to a meeting of colleagues and put forward my tentative views, some of which I suspected might be rather grand. But the group discussion offered encouragement and further ideas which enabled me to feel more confident in going on to reformulate and extend my analysis of William's discoveries.

His discoveries were about frogs, about comparing observation and accorded 'fact' in reference works, about man's relationship with the natural world and about the rewards of serious study. I have chosen one example because I think that it may represent a stage in the development of any young naturalist. Here are two pieces of writing, a story and a poem:

One day a little frog was hopping near a stream, when a wicked boy named Sam caught it. He took it home and put it in a plastic bag. Next morning he took it to school and put it in a jam jar. He kept it for three weeks and didn't know how to feed it. He gave it no stones to lay on no room to swim. The boy went home to tell his mother about the frog and she said You wicked boy. If everybody in the world took a frog there will be none left. Tomorrow I want you to let it go. And now you can go to bed without any supper for not telling me about it in the first place. So the boy went to bed and all night he was thinking about the frog.

Here there is a picture of the 'wicked little boy' with the frog in the plastic bag, and another of the boy in bed with a thought bubble, 'mother's right. I was very cruel. I wish I never caught it. I will let it go tomorrow.'

Next morning the alarm went off and he got up quickly and rushed to school without any breakfast. But when he got there he was too late. The frog was dead. The boy started to cry. He took the frog out and hugged it and he kept crying. He buried it and went home. He went to lay down still crying. His mum came up to him and said, "Now dry your tears", but the boy said, "I've murdered it". His mother said don't let it happen again.'

Newt Poem

I am a newt so small and smooth,
fitting into any groove,
I must be quick because danger's near.
It's too late Oh dear.
I'm stuck in a jam jar so very small
lid shut tight no air at all.
Slowly I am fading away, won't be here
another day.
It's so sad the boy is bad let me go
But no answer came.

We have all met the young naturalist who is so excited and curious about the natural world that he must possess it. He is the fisherman and the butterfly collector and the child who packs six lizards into a plastic sandwich box. While he builds up an amazingly comprehensive knowledge of the countryside around him, he also does much more to destroy it than the child who has no such interest. And this is a moral dilemma which continues to face the naturalist at any stage in his studies. William through his experiences with his frogs seems to be reflecting on this as a problem when he writes about the wicked boy 'Sam' (William?) and the plight of the newt. He seems to be emerging from the status of the catcher of nature to the young person aware of the need to conserve the natural world. As for William's linguistic style, there can be no doubt that he writes clearly, directly, and with sensitivity to the effect of words and phrases he has chosen. The last two lines of the event, and the funny little rhyme 'It's so sad the boy is bad' makes the line, and therefore the whole poem stick in the memory. I find myself saying it at odd moments.

Whether or not I was simply insensitive in my earlier years of teaching, I cannot say, but I do know that I never attempted such a scrutiny of a piece of writing, and that it

Educational Standards and the Present Cutbacks

Andrew Hunt

Andrew Hunt graduated in English at Durham after aircrew service in the RAF during the war. Teaching periods in grammar and modern schools on Tyneside were followed by a spell as head of English in a West Riding Grammar/Technical school. In 1959 he was appointed as head of a 11-18 bilateral school on Tees-side, moving in 1966 to Hull, where he opened the Authority's second purpose built 13-18 school, with provision for community facilities. In January 1974, he came to Rawlins as Principal of the Upper School and Community College.

Following the 'Great Debate' which was supposed to ensue after Jim Callaghan's comments about the state of education in 1977/1978, the present Government came to power over eighteen months ago with pious pledges about the future of state education. That there would be a tightening-up of finances was not in doubt but in no way would this be allowed to harm the essential fabric of the education service. On numerous occasions, both before and after the election, the Minister concerned assured the nation that it would be the peripheral (and hence, inessential) things which would suffer, school meals in particular being singled out as an unnecessary extra financial burden accruing to the education service. But time has gone by and we are in a more informed situation now and can reflect on the effect of what are claimed to be only limited cutbacks in state spending on education. Between the minister's claims and the harsh reality, a great chasm is beginning to loom . . .

Rawlins Upper School is a fairly typical Leicestershire example of the 14+ school which serves also as a community college. Its roll numbers about 1200 students in the 14 to 18 age-range. Annually some 500 students transfer from three feeder high schools, all of them taking up a basic course plus a series of options, so arranged that the number of examination subjects taken per student can

vary from four or five to nine or ten. A sixth form of over 200 students includes about eighty annually embarking on fairly traditional A level courses and an equal number involved in one year sixth courses – O levels, CEE and so on. Over the past five years or so, a pastoral system has developed on a year basis, with 'divisions' inside each year giving 'matched populations' which form the basis also of the academic organisation, with faculties receiving the divisions and arranging them as they wish – flexible setting in Languages and Maths from a fairly early time, later in English, not at all in Humanities, Design, Physical Education. Remedial provision has been organised on an individual withdrawal basis, including crash courses in such basic skills as reading and comprehension, handwriting, number, etc.

At the beginning of the school year 1979/1980, with a roll of 1200 and a teaching staff of 80, Rawlins was apparently well staffed by any standards and certainly in simple comparison with secondary schools elsewhere. The 14+ school, however, is by its nature an unusual establishment: the staffing 'bonus' available in all-through (or even 12+ or 13+ entry) schools because at least some of the students are on set, unchangeable courses, does not operate when options are built in from the very beginning. Further, a sophisticated and genuinely caring pastoral system needs

Closely Observed Children (continued from page 43)

is due to the influence of Michael's approach to children as learners that I now find myself trying to do so. It's an approach that I would commend to all teachers: to take the child and his intentions seriously, to scrutinise his painting, writing etc., to try to discover its meaning for the creator, and then try to respond in those terms. It may not be easy to get started. Some pieces of work often seem to convey little at first sight or reading. You could start by simply describing the work to yourself, 'The print shows a caribou running across the tundra. Above the line between earth and sky is blue, and below is brown. The caribou itself and several boulders are the stencil and so they are the colour of the background . . .' and you will find yourself asking questions about the effect of colour, the placing of objects and of the artist's intentions. Of course, two things will help in making a meaningful interpretation of a child's work, some background knowledge of the child and the processes involved in producing the work, and a colleague or a small group of colleagues who are prepared to join in a discussion. Here perhaps is the most valuable contribution that Michael's book will make to the educational world. Reading it will provide so many examples of how a piece of work might be approached, that it will

stimulate individuals and groups of teachers to attempt something similar themselves.

As you read **Closely Observed Children**, there will be times when you are doubtful or when you disagree with Michael's analysis. He would be pleased about such a response, but what I am sure will mark this book as one of distinction is the profound respect Michael has for children. One of the people to whom the book is dedicated is Carol Norton, 'a student of mine at Countesthorpe College who first taught me how to look at and seek to describe a primary school classroom'. Michael is always prepared to learn from the children he has around him. He does not imagine that he knows best how to teach, nor that he knows all of the answers to the questions posed in responding to children's work. He wishes to be part of a continuing discussion about the nature of children's learning, and has with the publication of this book made an outstanding contribution.

Reference

- 1 For further information on *Progressive Education*, contact Lesley King, 3 Gwendoline Drive, Countesthorpe, Leic.

a commitment in time as well as attitude from the teachers – careers work, general counselling, manning of year rooms, individual student-tutor work-reviews, vital links with feeder schools, close liaison with parents – all of these require *time* and thus *flexibility* inside the timetable organisation.

A deterioration in staffing ratios during 1979/80 meant that we had to lose five staff at least during that academic year and thus, from January 1980 onwards, we had to strive to stay in control of a situation where staff leaving were unlikely to be replaced unless a 'special case' could be made out. That we survived until the end of the summer term was largely a matter of good luck coupled with the commonsense and dedication of staff who buckled to it and kept our curriculum going. By the end of term, our cutback of five had been achieved; mainly by our seeing to it that able colleagues had gained elsewhere the promotion they richly deserved – but there were no replacements!

What has been the effect of this staffing deterioration on our present programme? Are standards really beginning to be lowered? We are fortunate at Rawlins in having a staff qualified and committed beyond the norm – the *quality* of their involvement and teaching is quite outstanding. Indeed our examination results last summer, both O and A levels, were the best in the school's history, well beyond the national average. Similarly, the quality of the school's pastoral system was highlighted by the lack of truancy and absenteeism during 1979/80 – again, our attendance record was way above the national figures. Can we continue to build on this, even in spite of the 6% staffing cut we have had to endure so far?

Sadly the answer seems to be that we cannot: we have had to increase our staff/student contact time, average group size has gone from 24/25 to 27/28 students, time for careers guidance, counselling and pastoral work generally has been seriously eroded. There has been a cut in the number of options available so that even our most able students are restricted now to studying eight subjects at most. Community Studies, Computer Studies, Crafts and Languages have all been affected in the general school – (Spanish as a third Language option has disappeared). Of course, Languages generally have been hit very badly by the non-continuance of provision for Assistantes operating on a part-time basis across the Authority's upper schools. Remedial work by individual withdrawal has suffered as the staff concerned have been redeployed elsewhere inside the school. The 'ends' of our timetable in some basic core subjects have had to become curtailed with (willing) staff volunteers filling in for colleagues no longer with us.

The same serious state of affairs is evident in the sixth form: a wide-ranging and carefully provided General Studies course, which has proved hugely successful in the past, has been badly affected, with no provision possible at all for students in the first half of their two years' A level courses. The size of A level group in Economics, Geography and Sociology is a matter of great concern. A level German in the first year sixth has disappeared, temporarily we hope, and our one year O level sixth form courses in German and Spanish have gone, probably forever. Other one year O level courses offered to sixth formers in the past which we cannot continue now include Commerce, Computer Studies (yet again and in spite of the phenomenal growth we have seen in this subject in recent years), Geology and Human Biology. We have over-subscribed one year courses in Economics, Geography and Mathematics. Private study time for sixth formers – about 5 weekly in the past – has jumped to 10 periods or even more – not a desirable or satisfactory state of affairs.

As I write (October 1980) two things have happened: the Assisted Places scheme has just been ratified with those schools involved named, and I have just been told that I shall have to lose *four* more staff during the current academic year. There seems to be an inescapable logic about this: cutbacks in the staffing ratios of state secondary schools lead on naturally to the provision of assisted places in private schools for those 'lucky' enough to escape! Already I am wondering if I shall be able to replace my Head of Girls PE who is leaving at Christmas, as well as an excellent young Humanities teacher who has had enough and is leaving the profession. If I am lucky, I suppose, I may be able to obtain one person to take on both roles – and my colleagues on the staff will have to fill in the remaining periods as well as they can.

How long can we go on like this? Teacher morale is at the lowest ebb I have experienced in some thirty years in the service. I have limited myself to the effect of *teaching staff* cutbacks – (so far we have lost the equivalent of 1.5 of our five ancillaries). And as for the proposed cuts in community education provision in Leicestershire . . . Perhaps our experience is unusual but I am afraid that this is unlikely. What we are witnessing is a steady decline in the educational standards that some of us have given up a lifetime to achieve and which, according to Mark Carlisle, were sacrosanct.



Correction

We deeply regret that an error crept into the symposium on the Middle School in our last number ('Time to look into the Water'). The Second Year Coordinator (pp 6 and 7), is **Lee Enright** (and not Joe Enright). Many apologies to Lee, who contributed a fascinating article, 'Learning in my classroom' in our Summer, 1979 number (Vol 21 No 3).

C.N.A.A. and Initial Teacher Training

Geoffrey Nokes

Formerly a tutor at the College of St Mark and St John, Geoffrey Nokes became responsible for the expanding work of CNAA in teacher education in 1973, and is currently Registrar for Education and Interfaculty Studies.

Reorganisation

The context of the trends in initial training in the Seventies is a well known slump in provision. It was interesting to hear a speaker recently refer to the 1972 White Paper as the one about teacher training – not an inaccurate reference, for all the emphasis at the time on wider frameworks, integrating this element with higher education generally and diversification of college courses. The curious price of that White Paper, 31½p, is an indication of the changed scale that has come about since its publication. The prospects for colleges of education were spelt out; some could develop into freestanding major institutions of higher education, and others ‘combine forces’ with neighbouring polytechnics or colleges of further education; the rest had a range of less alluring possibilities, ending ‘some may need to close’.

The dust has now settled on a very different scene after reorganisation. A tour of the north-east this summer for instance brought sharp reminders of change: Darlington, one of the old voluntary colleges, now an arts centre; Middleton St. George simply an airport again after its emergency service as a college; Alnwick Castle, where a splendour falls no longer on a student population; Ponteland of quaint tonic accent closed; Northern Counties in a third amalgamation of Newcastle’s teacher education made a campus of the Polytechnic, while the reprieved St. Mary’s has also ‘combined forces’ in an academic association. In London, another hard-hit area, there remain two voluntary federations and two freestanding ILEA colleges, one of them specialist, while some of those which merged with Polytechnics are sadly shrunk in size.

Choice of Validating Body

A change of validating body was another issue of the times, with various cross-currents of interest. Some Universities did not wish to embark on the new range of college-based courses heralded in the White Paper – DipHE, three-year BEd and four-year BEd Honours, BA degrees in other fields. Newcastle was the first to give notice; Cambridge made its position clear; Oxford engaged in protracted discussions before a dramatic debate in the Hebdomadal Council settled the matter. Some colleges sought a change of their own volition on the grounds recommended by the James Committee, that this would make colleges fully responsible for the design and operation of their courses and that innovation would be welcomed. In the Polytechnics there was a steady trend to bring teacher education under the same validation arrangements as other areas of study and the situation as regards the twenty-four ‘enlarged’ Polytechnics was already clear by the end of 1974, with the validation question still to be resolved in only one or two

cases. We now seem to have reached a steady state after a few rather belated upheavals, as in the London Institute, with the advent of Surrey University as an alternative validating body. All the Polytechnics, including Ulster, have now opted for CNAA and they account for about one-third of teacher training places; so have about one-half of the newly merged Colleges of Higher Education, and about one-third of the free-standing colleges. This amounts to over fifty institutions and more than half of the places in the public sector, together with some courses at three Scottish colleges of education.

The break in the Universities’ monopoly of validation raised two possible dangers, either that a new orthodoxy would impose a set pattern or alternatively that a diversity of practice would no longer ensure common concerns and standard practices in teacher training, which had been developed through the Area Training Organisations. The principle that Council reacts to proposals put forward by institutions made it unlikely that uniform patterns would be imposed, although rumours do build up about what is more acceptable in the CNAA view. Moreover, Council took very seriously the responsibility for professional recognition which it had assumed as a relevant organisation for teacher training, and which entails among other matters a concern for curriculum development and the provision of what are seen as necessary common components in courses of teacher preparation. The main agency for the exercise of this responsibility has been Council’s Committee for Education, which was enlarged to meet the new situation and includes, in addition to some members of Council and the chairmen of its four boards, nominees of UCET, CLEA and the General Teaching Council of Scotland and the main teachers’ associations, as well as a substantial proportion of members from college academic boards.

The New Awards

In order to maintain its chartered requirement of comparability with University standards, CNAA proposed joint Study Groups with the UGC to draw up guidelines for the two new awards, the Diploma of Higher Education and the ‘new BEd’. The DipHE has flourished more under CNAA, where it is seen as both a terminal qualification and a staging-post for transfer to more than one degree programme, while some top-up courses have been specially designed to accommodate individual Diplomas. In Universities, for the most part, where the DipHE has been introduced it has served simply as a step-off award for students not proceeding to a degree.

The new BEd did not harmonise altogether easily with the DipHE for the very reason a freestanding, autonomous

two-year programme could come into conflict with the coherence expected in a three-year professional degree. This created difficulties for some colleges which chose to make the DipHE their basic building block for BEd and for diversified degrees. It was agreed that to compress all professional studies into one year was unsatisfactory and would result in a kind of certificate built on the first two years of a degree, giving the worst of both concurrent and consecutive approaches; hence some educational studies and some kind of induction to school must be provided in the Diploma, which can be developed in a professionally oriented third year. Even so, this type of consecutive three-year course has been found a tight fit with some of the same short-comings as the short postgraduate year of training.

Length of the BEd

The significance of the new BEd was that a degree incorporating a teaching qualification should be available in three years, as opposed to the Robbins model whereby a minority of students could extend their Certificate course, which took care of the professional elements, to a four-year programme of more advanced academic studies. This was an alternative to the BA(Ed) proposed by the James Committee, which would have been closer to the structure described above as an unsatisfactory basis for a degree. It was argued however that, given normal undergraduate entry qualifications and a well planned programme at an appropriate level from the outset, a three-year course would justify a degree award; after some hesitation about whether teaching practice should be an additional element and the year extended beyond the normal undergraduate session to accommodate it, it was accepted that this was an essential element of fieldwork which should be incorporated in the degree programme; it was more akin to laboratory studies in other full-time degrees than to the placements of forty-eight weeks undertaken, as a more separable activity, in sandwich degrees.

Thus the degree in three years became the new deal, in which the minimum requirements for a teaching qualification and a degree would be completed, with provision for a fourth year leading to an Honours BEd. While the conception of the Degree was new, the similarity with the Certificate as part of a four-year course leading to a BEd, available with Honours in most but not all Universities, remained. The joint Study Group was aware of this further constraint, pointing to a three-plus-one structure, and cautioned against the drawbacks of this, urging particularly that the fourth year should not be devoid of teaching experience as was the custom in the existing BEds. Discontinuity would be increased where the first two years had also to meet the criteria for a self-contained DipHE. First, however, the question had to be settled as to whether an Honours BEd should be feasible in three years. The Study Group left the door ajar and one or two proposals were made to CNAA but were rejected as too congested for the time available. The arguments for a professional degree needing more time are more than quantitative; not only teaching practice but curriculum aspects take up time in three years, which is necessary teacher preparation but which only develops into Honours worthy study and reflection in a fourth year. To force the pace to Honours in three years would inevitably tend to erode the professional element. This consideration may be less apparent in modular schemes, where credit is accumulated according to the amount of work undertaken. One University was able to offer Honours in three years in one subject field in a

modular scheme. In a CNAA modular scheme where BA, BSc. and BEd awards are all available, a distinctive pathway was stipulated for students proceeding to BEd Honours. Another peculiarity of modular schemes, particularly those incorporating a DipHE, is that it is open to students to complete two degrees in four years, obtaining for example a BEd in three years and then by direct transfer of the DipHE component proceeding to a BA Honours in a fourth year. It will be for employers to judge whether this is a better preparation than a BEd Honours degree for teaching or for another occupation.

The question of three or four years has become a matter of keen interest in the different circumstances of the Eighties. Moreover, CNAA's traditional distinction between Degree and Honours degree programmes has been softened. The old Diploma of Technology was traditionally recognised as equivalent to an Honours BSc. The 'Ordinary' degree was introduced by CNAA as a less demanding alternative but was not normally available on an Honours course, as is the custom in many Universities degrees, including the BEd. CNAA's regulations now permit undifferentiated programmes and an increasing proportion of students in all fields are aspiring to Honours; this is part of the argument for recommending a four-year programme, normally leading to Honours, for all intending teachers.

In 1973 however the three- and four-year alternatives were accepted without question, and nearly all courses were planned on a three-plus-one pattern. Their intakes of course were much larger in those days and logistical difficulties less acute. About one-third of students on average have completed a fourth year. Variations on the pattern tended to run into the same difficulties that beset the old-style BEd. A further complication at this time, however, was the continuance of the Certificate. Students lacking degree entry requirements were barred not only from the new BEd but from the possibility of qualifying for an old-style BEd by virtue of a good Certificate performance assessed as Part I of the degree. In London particularly the ending of the old-style BEd before the ending of the Certificate has led to much bitterness, which transfer to CNAA courses has done little to assuage. This was undoubtedly a restriction on the potential of many aspiring teachers who would have benefited from a degree course as did their predecessors in the Sixties. The Study Group offered some guidance on possible transfers but the DES Assessors were understandably concerned not to devalue the standing of the new degree. CNAA makes no difficulties over acceptable subjects at 'A' level for matriculation purposes and allows colleges to admit suitable candidates without standard qualifications aged twenty-one or over. The recommendations of the Study Group to accept appropriate evidence in place of 'A' levels in practical and artistic subjects have not however been widely followed. The specialists prefer students to have an 'A' level in music, for example, as well as performing skills, while Physical Education can choose from a surplus of well-qualified applicants.

Elements in the BEd

The Study Group Guidelines were not prescriptive. The one firm requirement, taken from the White Paper, was a minimum of fifteen weeks' school experience, with latitude over its nature and distribution. The discussions centred on questions of structure — entry requirements, length, classification, relationship with other awards — rather than content which was referred to in fairly bland generalities. After so many inquiries into their work members showed

little inclination to enter this controversial field. By the time the Guidelines were published in March 1974, after some delay over the vexed question of transfer from Certificate, the first of the new courses had been validated. Case histories have developed more precise expectations and thinking has been refined through dialogues between college teams and members of the Undergraduate Initial Training Board.

A prime consideration has been to give due weight to the four inter-related elements commonly found in a BEd degree – education, subject studies, professional studies and school experience. This has meant redressing the balance between the first two, which figured prominently in the first University degrees, and the second two, which were relegated to the Certificate qualification. School experience has been given special attention in a research project commissioned by the Council. The report, shortly to be published, presents an analysis of the arrangements within the forty or so approved BEd courses and a more detailed case-study of six of these. The variety of practice is notable, not only in extent, which goes from the statutory minimum of fifteen weeks to twenty-five or more in a four-year course, but in the character, purpose and organisation of the placements. Occasionally there have been disputes with teachers in practising schools, especially when day attachments have been proposed by colleges in preference to block periods. The report suggests that no very convincing way has been found of linking school experience indissolubly to the college-based parts of the course and that this old theory/practice conundrum still needs deeper consideration. One approach to raising the status of school experience has been to make the assessment of practical teaching, the teaching mark, together with associated written records, count towards the classification for honours. This is done in only a minority of schemes but it has been taken up with enthusiasm by some colleges from a pioneering experiment at Ulster Polytechnic.

A professional focus is at the heart of BEd courses and this is a crucial aspect for validation, although it need not be identified as a particular ingredient of professional studies. Indeed the coherence of the course as a whole is of overriding importance, blending the professional aspect with all studies. Educational disciplines are not taboo, as is sometimes alleged, but courses which integrate them are popular. Subject studies are no longer a must, as was true of the first BEds, and a sharper distinction is made between programmes for primary and secondary teachers. Some of the modular schemes did not grow from a desire to offer a wide range of options so much as to accommodate different mixes of subject and professional studies to meet the needs of different age-ranges, which is much closer to the original intention of courses designed in units. The opportunity to recast the various elements into separate sections, whether designated units or not, was a stimulus to course planners, for whom the traditional syllabus had been too undifferentiated. Apart from increasing student choice, it permitted some overlap with other degree courses; it also brought out more sharply the need to ensure explicit links between parts and to set up a good counselling system. It gave an enhanced role to the course leader in maintaining overall coherence and, at least within the CNA system, welding together a team who would effectively present a proposal to a visiting party. This brought about important modifications in the departmental organisation of colleges. The James 'cycle' proved a useful concept, not necessarily in the strict sense of professional and non-professional, although this is a possibility in a four-year programme; one college

has limited its first two years to subject studies only followed by two years of professional preparation, and another precedes the professional cycle by a generic DipHE, relevant to but not specifically directed to teaching. A project, often a school-based exercise, has proved a valuable component for drawing together the various parts of a course and perhaps particularly for raising to Honours level the somewhat diffuse areas of curriculum and professional study with which a primary teacher needs to engage. The Committee for Education plans to hold a conference on the preparation of primary teachers, in order to exchange views on one of the most difficult areas for good course design, one which is always subject to revaluation and must not be allowed to go into hibernation on account of the discouraging omens in DES letter of July 1980 on balance of training.

The Great Debate brought back a concern with content rather than structure of degree courses, particularly with regard to the misgivings about initial training courses voiced in the Green Paper. Main subjects have been treated in various rounds of rationalisation, not very successfully since shortages persist and some subjects seem lost for the BEd. The concern on this occasion was more with the whole curriculum, with basic skills and with relevance to the contemporary world. Council had already insisted on a minimum competence in literacy and numeracy, later covered by DES regulations, but now the Committee for Education went further in specifying that a distinct component on language in education should be included in all courses of initial training. It was unwilling to stipulate other compulsory elements however, proposals for which are never ending – health education, politics, equal opportunities, micro-electronics to name but a few – believing that the priority should be to lead teachers to an up-to-date and lively view of the school curriculum as a whole, which is echoed in recent HMI documents.

Current Concerns

The validation procedures of Council now moving into a new stage of Partnership with the colleges, provides for a review of approved courses after five or six years. Thus the first generation of BEds have been renewed. In the light of fresh mergers and sharply reduced targets, however, the courses are often new creations, rather than updated versions. They continue to display variety, imagination and innovation. Some are firmly linked to other degree programmes for one or two years; one Polytechnic places all first year students in a School other than Education. Some have concentrated on a concurrent course, no longer concerned to provide delayed choice for uncommitted students in a small cohort. In all courses the professional aim is strongly asserted and some rely heavily on course work assignments, portfolios, tutorial groups and assessment of practical teaching as the means of achieving this aim. Validation of such arrangements is more demanding than traditional methods but the Committee is committed to facilitating developments of this kind, provided that standards are not compromised and that students are not admitted to programmes whose organisation is inadequately thought out. The most striking overall change is the move to an all-graduate entry, when three-quarters of the profession at present are non-graduates. The extension of the Certificate in Education to three years in the Sixties paved the way for the college-based graduates and the new BEd will finally close the gap, alongside the in-service version which has already produced 6,000 graduates and enrolled as

many more.

Paradoxically the role of the BEd is to some extent called in question by its very success; the proportion of students following the PGCE route has shot up to more than half the total. A variety of factors may account for the downturn in BEd applications, including the numeracy requirement and the bleak outlook for employment, though this does not seem to deter candidates in Physical Education. But students who possess standard entry requirements may prefer to opt for a straight degree and seek a PGCE place later; there is evidence that this is a popular choice where a BA exists as an alternative route on a joint programme. On the other hand, there is a strong case on academic and professional grounds for having a four-year programme for all, i.e. either a BEd Honours degree or a non-professional degree and PGCE. This is quite a strong trend amongst colleges with BEd courses validated by Council. Six colleges have adopted four-year programmes only and others intend to do so. Council has taken no policy decision but is encouraging colleges to consider whether they can afford to maintain both three- and four-year BEds. It is significant that in the seven Universities which have incorporated colleges and now have internal students studying for the BEd, a possibility not aired in the White Paper, the four-year course is the norm. In Scotland, a degree plus teaching qualification takes a minimum of four years but the recent consultative document on a replacement for the primary Diploma makes alternative suggestions. The Chilvers Committee recommended that four-fifths of BEd graduates in Ulster should do a four-year course. At the Polytechnic, however, reduced numbers have caused an abandonment of the BEd, which was a four-year course for both Degree and Honours candidates, in favour of a BA or BSc and Certificate model, in which an intending teacher defers one-fifth of his degree programme from the third to the fourth year and makes a start on his professional training. If this trend were to continue, four years' education and training for all teachers, as advocated by various associations, could come to mean a degree and PGCE for all. A four-year BEd removes most of the constraints on planning previously noted.

For its part, Council would not be satisfied simply with a standard length, but would wish to see further enquiry and experiment in content and structure: a sandwich degree pattern, for example, which is so highly esteemed in other sides of its work, might, if properly adapted to teacher training, provide a new form of organisation which would make school experience integral to the course in a way that seems not fully realised at present and secure a full involvement of teachers in the training process.

Meanwhile Council continues to hope for an extension of the PGCE course beyond one academic year. It expects that year even now to last thirty-five weeks and to include twelve weeks' school experience. Rather less of the PGCEs in public sector colleges have been transferred to CNA validation than BEd courses, but where this has happened a similar fresh start with a concern for coherence and professional relevance has been a stimulus to course teams. Council is now also the largest validating body for courses of training for FE teachers, not only the new Certificate ushered in by the Haycocks report, but also specialist BEds, with proposals to follow at Diploma and Master's levels. The division between schools and further education is seen to be a hindrance where there is an overlap of interest and age-range; the FE sector is peculiar moreover in blurring the distinction between initial and in-service training. Already there has been some collaboration over PGCE and

FE Certificate proposals. All attempts to increase mutual understanding will be welcomed and supported by our Committee for Education.



We Want CREEM (continued from page 50)

the able support of the leader of the local Tory education group of City Councillors, Donald Moore, and of the leader of the Liberal education group David Sandiford, a Manchester solicitor, and taken a delegation of parents to see Baroness Young. It has published two booklets setting out its own plan for retention of 11-18 system. It has held innumerable fund raising events including dances, concerts, bingo sessions, raffles and sponsored events.

The current task is the collection of Section 12 objections to the closure of individual schools, for the scheme involves the closure of all existing schools, mass termination of contracts, and the consequent possibility of the break up of many well established staff teams.

Immediately after the City Council makes its final decision in December, the objections will be forwarded to the Minister, appealing to him to leave certain popular and successful schools untouched. If he does, the whole scheme could be thrown out. Though Manchester parents have learned that so called democracy leaves much to be desired, the battle is not over yet, and CREEM still hopes for success, if only in part.

“We Want CREEM: Not Skimmed Milk”

Gerard Carey

Now Chairman of CREEM (parents' Campaign for the Retention of the Eleven to Eighteen Schools in Manchester), Gerard Carey reports here on the parents' movement in support of the present system of all-through comprehensive schools. Mr Carey is a cab driver with Manchester Hackney Carriages. He left school at fourteen (with four O levels including mathematics and physics) and has worked in Manchester Airport and as a buyer in wholesale and retail trades.

For over a year now, a vigorous parents' movement has been developing in Manchester, where, after thirteen years of comprehensive education, based on the 27, and more recently, 25, all-through schools of the state sector, the City Council has, after a show of consultation, which revealed overwhelming support for the existing system, approved, in principle, the reduction of the number of secondary schools to 17 or 20 11-16 schools, depending on which of its two schemes is adopted, the abolition of all school sixth forms, and the setting up of a tertiary system involving the eventual integration of three new sixth form colleges with existing Further Education Colleges; the changes to date from September 1982.

How Far are the Rolls Really Falling?

As on the national scene, the avowed reasons for these proposed changes are given as partly educational, partly economic. Rolls are falling, hence the need for fewer schools; the Manchester staying on rate is low, hence the need for a more 'attractive' system; the 'A' level pass rate is disappointing, hence the need for 'rationalisation' by concentrating experienced specialist A level teachers in fewer institutions. As soon as these changes were mooted, over a year ago, a group of Manchester parents met together to discuss whether the scheme would, in their opinion, bring about an improvement or a deterioration.

The founder member of CREEM (Campaign for the Retention of 11-18 schools in Manchester) were Gerard Carey a Manchester cab driver, Martin Harris a professor of Modern Languages, Brian Hargreaves, a lecturer in Education, Stuart Grundy a biochemist, and Tony Evans, a bank manager. Between them they represented five comprehensive schools, but as a result of the inaugural meeting of the Association of Manchester Parents in March 1980 representatives of nineteen schools became involved and CREEM was established as a subcommittee of the Association.

What Will Happen to Working Class Children?

A number of commonly held principles unites these parents; they believe that changes, if any, should be made on educational and not economic grounds; they have proved, by statistical analysis, that the roll numbers projected by the authority are conservative, taking into account population trends, housing, youth unemployment and future patterns of staying on beyond 16; they cite evidence that Manchester high schools, now settled after the initial years of upheaval since 1967, are showing improved 'A' level results, all the more creditable when viewed against the background of intense social deprivation in Manchester.

They disagree with the view supported by some of the trendier middle class Labour Councillors, and expounded by the loaded findings of the NFER Report on 16-19 Education, that sixth formers want a 'more adult' atmosphere. In their experience, young people, especially those of the working class, need constant supervision and encouragement from teachers who have known them over a number of years. This is borne out by the fact that only a very small percentage of 16 year olds moves to the existing FE colleges in Manchester, the vast majority preferring to stay at school. It is ironic, say CREEM, that it is the Manchester Labour Party which seems to be reducing the chances of working class children to obtain education beyond the age of 16.

Dilution of the Curriculum

The most worrying aspect, to parents, of the proposed reorganisation, is the probable dilution of the quality of education in the 11-16 section, when the best teachers of those chronically shortage subjects, the sciences, mathematics and modern languages, are inevitably drawn off to the sixth form colleges, to 11-18 systems outside Manchester, or indeed to the booming independent sector. The new schools will suffer a contraction of the curriculum both as a result of cutbacks in resources and the operation of the seller's market for shortage subjects. Some fear a return to the secondary modern type of curriculum with General Science instead of separate sciences, and the loss of opportunity to study languages below the age of 14, if not 16.

In 1967 Manchester adopted a whole-hog, 11-18 system for its county sector, and the proposed reorganisation, falsely compared with that of the Catholic sector which only two years ago moved from a tripartite system to a comprehensive one based on a break at sixteen, can only be seen as retrogressive.

CREEM's Activities

Despite the fact that the City Council has in principle taken the decision to change in 1982, CREEM still hopes that the plan will not go through. Their activities, so far, have included two public meetings; one in March 1980 addressed by Dr Walter Roy, a member of the NUT executive, and one in October 1980 chaired by Dame Margaret Miles, and addressed by Dr Brian Inglis of Bristol University, and Arnold Jennings, a former comprehensive school head. CREEM has raised a city wide petition of approximately 50,000 signatures (it hopes to double this), gained extensive newspaper and radio coverage, and has lobbied many Education Committee and Council meetings. It has secured

(Continued on page 49)

Discussion:



Curriculum and Staff Development

LEAs should consider giving greater emphasis to the training of heads of department in the management of innovation and staff development than to supporting too many curriculum projects. The aim should be depth rather than breadth, for even when fully committed to a planned curriculum change, it would appear that an authority finds it difficult to provide adequate support through the lengthy and complex process of implementing an innovation.

These observations follow a small-scale study of the use of the Geography-for-the-young-school-leaver (GYSL) project in one authority where the Humanities adviser had been closely involved with the research and development of project materials and was keen to promote its successful take-up by schools. Although GYSL has been rated by the Geographical Association, amongst others, as the 'most popular' Schools Council project, a report from the University of Sussex found that while 40% of geographers did make some use of it, only 16% used the materials extensively. It was the great variance in use that initiated this investigation into the factors, both outside and within schools, that influence the different degrees of implementation of a curriculum innovation.

The theory suggests that dissemination of a project is not merely a matter of communicating information to rational practitioners but a two-way negotiation between external change-agents and clients. This negotiation continues throughout the decision-making process to adopt the innovation and contact is maintained so that effective monitoring by the external agency can provide adequate support to overcome barriers as they arise.

The degree of implementation is difficult to judge for it can vary from a user agreeing to change but doing so without much conviction, to keeping very much to suggested guidelines or to substantially developing the original idea. In this study, one school was selected to represent each of these categories and the head of department and an assistant teacher were given an in-depth interview to examine the dissemination,

decision-making and implementation stages of the GYSL project. The adviser and the county's part-time co-ordinator were questioned in a similar way to assess the external element of the innovation.

Whilst a small-scale study is clearly subject to severe limitation it does suggest certain points for discussion about aspects of curriculum development. In the initial stages of dissemination, an external change agent, who is fully aware of the intended curriculum change, appears to be able to get across the message to headteachers, heads of department and assistants by courses and conferences and, when the number of schools is limited, by personal contact and visits to institutions. If, as in this case, the teachers perceive the project as likely to fulfill a need and there are additional resources provided by the LEA, such as the purchase of project kits, the decision to

adopt an innovation is not difficult to achieve. It is the stages following that seem crucial to the eventual degree of implementation.

The study suggests heads of department are left very much on their own to manage the introduction of an innovation into a school and to train their staff. Even when the external change agent is highly committed to the change, and is perceived as such, if he is an adviser, the multiplicity of his role and work over-load restrict the time he can allow for monitoring individual departments.

Indeed expediency would seem to demand that an adviser has to treat each school equitably unless requested to help or conditions reach the stage where the need for support is essential. In the majority of cases, the onus seems to be on the department heads to identify and remove any barriers to the innovation. Their success at these tasks appears to be the major factor in the eventual degree of implementation of the innovation.

Should the change agent be particularly effective in encouraging schools to want to adopt the curriculum project, his ability to monitor and support its use is further reduced as numbers increase. One solution to the dilemma would be to provide an assistant to support the adviser. Yet it should not be merely a sharing of the workload as this could lead to wasted effort, role conflict and confusion in the minds of the clients. The emphasis should be on training middle management in schools to develop the curriculum and their staff. There would seem several possible sources from which to recruit this person – colleges, universities, Teachers' Centres or, with falling rolls, from schools. From wherever, it would seem essential that any assistant was trained to teach others, understood the theory and practice of curriculum and staff development and was aware of the difficulties of managing innovations.

JOHN JOYNER and FRED WARD
*Melksham
Wiltshire*



Reviews:

Clever Children in Comprehensive Schools

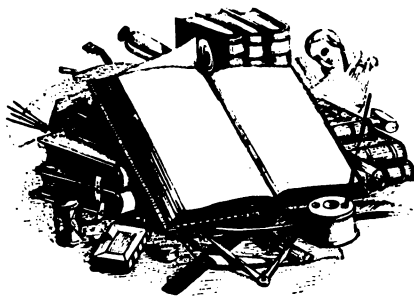
Clever Children in Comprehensive Schools, by Auriol Stevens, Pelican (1980), pp.171, £1.25.

It has certainly been my experience in meeting with parents that along with the question 'Is there any discipline' fears are often expressed about the able child within the comprehensive system. 'Parents want good teaching and good discipline' is how Auriol Stevens puts it in her Pelican Original **Clever Children in Comprehensive Schools**.

The book sets out to examine the effects of the development of comprehensive schools upon clever children. 'It is widely believed that they have suffered; that they are being held back academically in these common schools; that, in the cause of social justice, excellence has been sacrificed'. And this is a widely held belief particularly among parents. No amount of evidence to the contrary seems adequate to the task of persuading them otherwise. There is certainly enough evidence to show how important it is for comprehensive schools to have the full range of ability and how damaging it can be if the clever children are found alternative schools. An almost desperate situation exists if the parents of clever children cannot be reasonably persuaded to support their common schools when by doing so the comprehensive system so demonstrably works.

Clever children are defined as those who would have gone to a grammar school. What have been the effects of comprehensive re-organisation on this group of children? Proof does not exist and that 'renders speculation free'. Auriol Stevens has, by observation and careful scrutiny, concluded that 'the cleverest group are no longer reaching the same level of detailed, disciplined academic work at the age they reached it before. At the same time, the middle range of children have gained self-confidence and certificated success in a whole range of courses, conventional and unconventional'. Whilst nationally more young people are achieving some sort of exam success 'The top has stayed steady while the middle has expanded'.

This is not the damaging general conclusion it might at first appear to be. Whilst the clever child may not have done better in



comprehensive schools they have not been 'dragged down'. There is enough evidence to show that the performance of middle ability children has improved. More work has to be done on the relationship of these two factors but it would seem fair to conclude that clever children help to raise the performance of middle ability children. If the top have 'stayed steady' then this would appear to be a general trend applying to all schools. So Auriol Stevens puts the case supportively, but not uncritically, for clever children to attend their local common school. She urges that comprehensive schools give more attention to the able whilst recognising the difficulties and the size of the job. 'It is made infinitely harder by setting up alternative systems to "save" the clever by taking them out of the common school'.

A whole generation of children and teachers have grown up with comprehensive schools. Most of my generation of teachers worked in a grammar or a secondary modern school before, out of choice, moving into one of the developing comprehensives. Reorganisation often meant the amalgamation of a grammar school and a non-selective school. Therefore it could be argued that the early comprehensives were aware of the traditional way of doing things with the more able. The whole purpose of a comprehensive is to make available all its resources, both human and physical, to all the children coming through its doors. Clever children are part of that process and are not the sole purpose of the organisation. However, the concern has to be equal so absorption into the broader educational environment does not mean neglect of individuals or particular groups. If neglect does occur or it is assumed that clever children can get by on their own then the system is not working properly. 'The fate of the bright comes more than ever to depend on the teachers, for it is they alone who can make the difference between boring slog, debilitating time wasting, and stimulating and exciting work solidly based on essential intellectual skills'. My impression

is that much of the teaching is exciting, the facilities are usually good, the curriculum offered is broadly based and perhaps most importantly for the critics, the content and materials, even in mixed ability situations, is slanted towards the more able rather than the other way. I accept that rigour is not always there and care needs to be taken not to sacrifice excellence for universal gains in motivation and standards.

Auriol Stevens writes as a parent and very experienced educational journalist. It is an interesting book. She knows the problems, writes frankly about the weaknesses, but reveals a basic level of support. If the system is to work then it needs a total commitment. Given that commitment common schools have shown that they can be very successful.

ROGER SECKINGTON
*Earl Shilton Community College
Leicestershire*

Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom

Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom, edited by Maurice Galton and Brian Simon, Routledge & Kegan Paul, £5.95 (paperback).

Much of what happens in classrooms is a direct response to problems which arise during the daily work. This is super-imposed on an over-all scheme which combines teaching method with classroom organisation. The resulting amalgam is then controlled by a teacher with a particular personality, the traits of which will influence the affective quality of her work. How often have practising teachers tried to disentangle those inter-related factors for themselves to



try to determine which are responsible for the results of their work? It is impossible to do it with any degree of certainty and many teachers have a wildly erroneous view of their effect on pupils.

There has been little direct evidence from the heart of the classroom objectively determined which could help teachers to make any meaningful analysis. Teachers have used methods and techniques on faith and if they do not want a return to regular general inspections they require information on which to build up a method of evaluating their work.

The ORACLE (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) findings provide a mass of information which, along with background material (historical and other), interpretations and suggestions by various members of the research team, gives much food for thought in that direction.

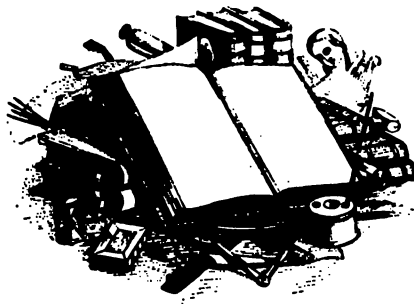
Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom is the second book in a fascinating series. The first, *Inside the Primary Classroom* described work which led to a classification of teachers tactics and strategies into six teaching styles and classified pupils into four types on the basis of their interactions with other pupils and the teacher. This second book goes on to examine how those styles affect pupil progress and how each pupil type fares under each style.

It is worth emphasising that this book is based on systematic observations in a number of classrooms, under normal conditions and that the observations were restricted to 'the cognitive and managerial transactions between teachers and pupils. Teaching style, as defined in this study, does not take account of differences in the affective behaviour of teachers'.

The call for school based evaluation makes the authors' statement, 'If teachers cannot define precisely what they hope to achieve and researchers are unable to develop procedures which measure those skills, then how can anyone know whether the teacher is successful', particularly relevant. There are, of course, some teachers who are very successful – by any measure – who never manage to define their aims. A happy state of affairs! But those of us (the vast majority) who are not 'born teachers' and who continually need to make improvements in teaching technique, will find the information in this book tremendously helpful. So, taking a positive view of the research and looking for helpful clues to improve one's performance, one can delve into the meat of the book, for instance, the many tabulated results which aim to show relationships between those factors which contribute to the effectiveness of the complex activities in a modern primary school.

For this study, progress in basic skills was measured by administering abbreviated Richmond tests of basic skills to pupils at the beginning and end of a year. It is pointed out that researching in the 'live' classroom requires that no 'undue burdens' are placed on the schools in question – hence abbreviated tests. The raw score results were then used to calculate residual-change scores which take into account the different levels of attainment which pupils show at the beginning of the year.

To determine how far 'style' alone accounted for progress the authors consider, in carefully reasoned argument, other factors which may have some effect on



pupil progress. These included class size, parental socio-economic status, time spent working (pupil), time spent on group and class work (teachers), time allotted to basic skills, age of teachers, sex of teachers, type of building – open plan or 'boxed' classrooms, and vertically grouped classes. The overall conclusion was that style was the major determinant of progress.

In their conclusions to the study on progress in basic skills the authors point out that each style has its area of 'best effect' – 'class enquirers' for maths and language, 'infrequent changers' for reading. But perhaps careful study of the work of 'rotating changers' – the style most consistently unsuccessful – is most illuminating. 'High levels of distraction' is a characteristic of this style and in the research was associated with the combination of open-plan schools and vertically grouped classes much more often than the others. The researchers claim a level of relationship here with which the reader might disagree.

Other relationships are interesting: class enquirers, the style one would associate with large classes, taught the smallest (on average) classes. Individual monitors, the style perhaps best suited to vertically grouped classes, had the least organised in that way. One wonders who made the decisions – class or head teacher – and what prompted those decisions – philosophy, convenience, buildings, resources, etc.

It seems that a crucial factor in determining the overall dominance of style is 'that causality cannot be inferred from the results of non-experimental research. This is because the observed relationship between two variables may come about not because one has a causal influence on the other, but because they are both dependant for their effect on a third variable', and there is



always 'uncertainty that all possible third variables have been taken into account'.

Could there in fact be a third variable in the area of affective behaviour (not studied here)? The researchers looked at the performances of the eleven most successful teachers (6 class enquirers, 3 group instructors, 2 infrequent changers) to see if these revealed a 'magic ingredient'. It was found that 'in summary the successful teachers all engage in above average levels of interaction with the pupils. They appear to devote considerable effort to ensuring that the routine activities proceed smoothly; they engage in high levels of task statements and questions and provide regular feedback. At the same time they also encourage the children to work by themselves towards solutions to problems', i.e. no one magic ingredient. Teachers can be trained in the above techniques but it appears at the moment that they are left to acquire them through experience since it was found that the more successful styles were used more often by older teachers. It is suggested that 'training in the skills of mixed ability class teaching, the management of the whole class as a unit, should be a component of primary teachers training'. This point is made because 'individual monitors' who, in general, were the more recent products of the colleges, may lack these skills, and indeed 'were perhaps never introduced to them'.

The investigation into study skills and pupil performance seems to me to be more important for its insights into the problems of evaluating this aspect of school work than for the actual results showing the relationship of performance with teaching style.

Teachers administering the tasks from which levels of attainment of study skills were abstracted were asked to do so under normal classroom 'study' conditions. This, however, makes it difficult to evaluate the results particularly in respect of such qualities as originality and lay out of work in practical activities, since children may have consulted each other.

The table showing the relationship of performance level to age showed that for five of the thirteen skills younger children scored higher than the eleven year olds. Inferring progress from a cross-section study rather than a longitudinal one can give a misleading impression but nevertheless this situation needs to be looked at carefully. The researchers suggest 'It may be supposed that where there was no significant variation between ages, the skill in question had reached a developmental plateau; or, in the case of the block graph concept, where scores were uniformly high, that insofar as it was tapped by the exercise the skill was fully developed in most children before the age of 9+'. It could also mean that there is little continuity in this area of work or that teachers are not extending children beyond the obvious.

It was useful to see, clearly set out, where abilities in study skills is related to ability in basic skills. They are perhaps somewhat obvious but nevertheless it is worth being reminded of them to see where specific teaching of study skills is required.

The work in this section of the book is largely exploratory since little has been done before. Perhaps the value of teaching study skills will be more fully realised as a result of it.

The more massive the intervention of statistical procedures, the more I tend to view the findings with scepticism. For that reason the chapter on pupil behaviour and progress, where the number of interacting variables reached a climax for this study, left me with certain doubts about the conclusions. Nevertheless, there was again much interesting material presented.

For instance the correlation between motivation, style and progress showed that the more successful styles required less motivation from the pupils for progress to be made. In fact for one style, 'group instructors', high motivation could be a slight handicap. Does this indicate that these teachers, rather than harnessing children's energies to take them along at their optimal rate, restrict and inhibit their progress?

On looking back to the distribution of pupil types across teaching styles we find that 'group instructors' produce a vastly greater proportion of 'quiet collaborators' than other styles. Referring them to the first book *Inside the Primary Classroom* confirms that 'quiet collaborators' 'rely heavily on teacher support . . . rather than seek for solutions to their problems'. The answer to my question would appear to be in the affirmative.

Many teachers believe that the behaviour of their class is due more to the pupil composition of that class in respect of the individual characters in it, than to their own teaching style. They make such comments as, 'I have got a noisy, or unadventurous, or confident, or unruly class this year' without realising that the same characteristic develops every year. With an objective means of identifying characteristics of teaching style (to be found in the appendix) perhaps, in conjunction with colleagues, teachers can now begin to identify causes of specific types of class behaviour, and to modify them where necessary.

MICHAEL CLARKE
Little Hill Junior School
Leicestershire



Teaching about Television

Teaching About Television, by Len Masterman, Macmillan (1980), pp.222, £5.95.

The study of television has for some years now enjoyed a pitifully low status in schools; in many it is ignored altogether. This is only partly due to lack of equipment and time – Television Studies makes significant demands on both, and in the present harsh economic and political climate it is hardly surprising that cost determines what is essential. Equally inhibiting, however, is the open hostility to Television Studies still prevalent in many schools. Indeed frequently it is seen as some sort of 'fringe' activity pursued by cranks and 'trendies' (enough in itself to condemn it in many people's eyes), or else it is regarded as a soft option; a crutch used by tired teachers to keep the fifth form docile on a Friday afternoon. All too often one hears the complaint from practising educationalists as well as those outside education that 'children already watch too much television'. And yet it is precisely this admission – that television is a much watched medium – that makes the case for Television Studies so compelling.

Research indicates that on average adults spend up to 20 hours a week viewing television; children up to the age of fifteen spend even longer. Figures also suggest that while not every adult reads a paper each day, most adults watch at least one television news bulletin a day as their main source of information. Most schools now attempt to educate pupils to read newspapers with discrimination while television is all too often neglected, despite the fact that it is a much more potent, subtle and widely used medium, capable of imposing and reinforcing values as well as presenting entertainment and slanted and selective news coverage (coverage of Rhodesia is one obvious and infamous example). The case for teaching about television ought to be overwhelming and yet it is still greeted with scepticism.

In *Teaching About Television* Len Masterman comprehensively and cogently sets out the case for Television Studies in schools. His first chapter is a thorough survey of the state of the art, detailing a wide range of justifications not only for the study of television in schools, but for its primacy over other mass media. This survey is followed by a closely argued section on 'Methodology and Organisation of Television Studies' which includes a lengthy discussion

of appropriate assessment. Students are experienced viewers and this together with the way the subject is taught – there is no fixed body of knowledge – fortunately militates against the worst excesses of the competitive banking/retrieval system which characterises subjects with a traditional and fixed nucleus of knowledge. But while this can positively encourage the development of awareness and skills rather than simplistic categories of right and wrong, good and bad, the absence of an established body of knowledge operates as a serious handicap to its acceptance as a 'respectable' publically examinable subject.

Before actually looking at television Masterman suggests in detail a series of orientating exercises in perception and non verbal communication designed to encourage students to look beyond the immediate and obvious message. The exercises, in ingenious game form, are a most pertinent preparation for looking beyond the mere content of television programmes.

The rest of the book is devoted to a series of thorough and stimulating chapters suggesting practical ways of approaching and analysing football on television, television news, comedy, programme planning, interviewing and a chapter on practical television which includes: simulating news interviews, making and dubbing advertisements and creating 'anti-advertisements'. All these suggestions are practical and concentrate on the McLuhanite principle that the medium is a vital and shaping element of the message.

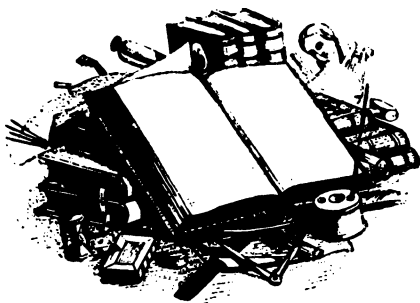
With characteristic thoroughness the book ends by including three useful appendices; listing relevant organisations with an interest in television education, relevant periodicals, and most encouragingly an EMREB Mode III CSE Television Studies Syllabus.

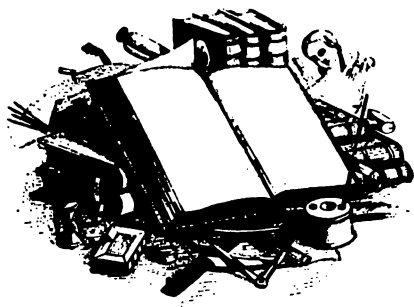
The book is necessarily something of a cross between a pioneering ideological guide and a practical handbook.

The book is very honest about the problems and failures which have faced Masterman and will inevitably face others. Many of the detailed activities suggested will inevitably be adapted and improved but nevertheless, the aims, general principles and areas of study recommended are likely to prove essential and frequent points of reference for anyone embarking on the teaching of Television Studies.

Over the last few years the claims of Television Studies to a place in the curriculum have grown; the excellent Thames *Viewpoint* series and recently Westward's *The Television Programme* have, by using the medium and reaching a wide audience, furthered these claims. This book is helpful because its very appearance is indicative of the irresistible logic of television education which will, in the next decade, take us towards teletiteracy.

PAUL McAREE





The Politics of the School Curriculum

The Politics of the School Curriculum, by David Lawton, Routledge & Kegan Paul (1980), pp.152, £3.95 paperback.

In the fifties and early sixties, when the case was being made for the abolition of selection and the introduction of comprehensive secondary education, there was comparatively little debate about the content of the curriculum. And since there was no controversy about the *content* of the curriculum, there was also no argument about its *control*.

Many of us have grown accustomed to an education service that is centrally supported and locally administered. This may be seen in terms of a triangle of power: the central authority (DES), the local authorities (LEAs) and the teachers. In the thirty five years since the war, the DES has exercised little formal control over the curriculum. The 1944 Education Act is usually interpreted as giving the responsibility for the content of education and how it is organised to LEAs. The word curriculum does not actually appear in the 1944 Act; and the only subject which all secondary schools have been legally obliged to teach is religious instruction.

It has been one of the tasks of local education authorities to interpret the legislation and Circulars from central government; and then they, in turn, have traditionally left the control of the curriculum to governors, who have normally left it to head teachers, who may or may not have involved the staff of their schools. It all seems terribly amicable – a partnership model of control that does not bear close analysis and that works well only so long as there is relatively little to argue about.

It is Denis Lawton's contention in this stimulating and polemical little book that this is all beginning to change: the partnership model of control is giving way to a complex system of accountability in which teachers' professional autonomy is increasingly being challenged. What we are now witnessing is a quiet struggle for control and influence; and a significant element in the changing scene is the shift in the dominant metaphor. 'Partnership' indicates satisfaction and trust, 'accountability', dissatisfaction and distrust.

One aspect of this new and worrying development is the current debate about the common curriculum. If we accept Denis Lawton's definition of the curriculum as 'a selection from the culture of a society', the central question then becomes: 'who selects?' One obvious answer might be 'teachers', but this is only partially true since there have always been various constraints on teachers' freedom of action. Moreover, it is now becoming increasingly clear that curriculum content could be centrally prescribed. In the words of the 1977 Green Paper *Education in Schools: A Consultative Document*, 'It would not be compatible with the duty of the Secretaries of State to "promote the education of the people of England and Wales", or with their accountability to Parliament, to abdicate from leadership on educational issues which have become a matter of lively public concern.'

Not that the motives for central government's new-found interest in the curriculum could be said to be purely altruistic or philosophical. One reason for the demand for greater accountability in education is the prevailing economic climate. When funds are in short supply, there is a tendency for politicians, and rate-payers, to demand value for money. At the same time there is a general disillusionment with education which has been exploited by the anti-progressive movement. The Black Papers of 1969 and 1970, James Callaghan's famous Ruskin College speech in October 1976, the general reaction to the William Tyndale School affair – all can be seen as contributing to a general demand to put the clock back to a mythical age when standards were universally high and education really did serve the needs of the community.

Denis Lawton does not claim that accountability is necessarily bad in itself.



It could well be argued that certain kinds of accountability are highly desirable in an open society. Parents have a right to expect that their children will receive effective teaching; and assessment of pupils' performance is a very important aspect of education. At the same time, teachers would do well to be suspicious of anything which might lead in the direction of certain kinds of 'evaluation' and 'testing' as now being widely applied in the United States. And as a good example of a disturbing trend, the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) merits a special chapter to itself.

It was a Conservative Minister of Education, David Eccles, who used the phrase 'secret garden of the curriculum' in 1960 to indicate his dislike of an important area of educational policy which seemed to be closed to public scrutiny and open discussion. In July 1977 Senior Chief Inspector Miss Sheila Browne sub-titled an important lecture on the curriculum: 'The secret garden seen by the secret service'. It may have been a good joke, but, as Denis Lawton points out, the vision of HMIs acting as 'secret agents' on behalf of an all-powerful DES is in some respects 'too close to the truth for comfort'.

CLYDE CHITTY
Earl Shilton Community College
Leicestershire

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