

FORUM

for the discussion of new trends in education

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This Issue

Standards at Risk

**in infant, junior and
secondary schools
and adult education**

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The Next Forum

Conscious of the threat to teachers' morale posed not only by the education cuts but also by the almost concerted attack in recent years on progressive teaching and comprehensive education by government, media and pseudo research, the Editorial Board has planned the September number as a symposium to assert the legitimate aims of comprehensive education for the 1980s. Social and economic change and the gradual emergence of a comprehensive structure over the last two decades call for an assessment of educational developments and an evaluative statement of the concept of comprehensive education.

We have accordingly invited articles from those who have been working within a variety of comprehensive schools during these critical years and who collectively draw on a wealth of experience.

Contributors will include Bernard Barker, Caroline Benn, Clyde Chitty, Andrew Finch, Margaret Maden, Harry Ree, Roger Seckington.

Standards at Risk

That education is under threat is by now such a truism that there is danger lest deteriorating teaching conditions become accepted as inevitable by both teachers and parents. HM Inspectorate is therefore to be congratulated on their dramatic exposure, made public in March, of the effects that expenditure cuts are already having in schools and their dire warnings of cumulative future repercussions unless urgent preventative action is taken. Such action is clearly not the intention of the present government. The complacent response by Secretary of State Mark Calisle was downright irresponsible and itself exposes the dishonesty of his and the Prime Minister's pretended concern for educational standards and quality in the maintained system.

The buck is therefore firmly passed to teachers, parents and local authorities to devise strategies for minimising the damage for the present and compelling a change in government policy before the damage assumes irreparable proportions. Both strategies require all involved in education — teachers, parents, teacher educators, local authority advisers, officers and elected members — to cherish memories of and aspirations for the good practices that were being developed and disseminated in the best schools and recognised by earlier HMI reports.

This is the context that has led **Forum** to depart from its normal policy of discussing promising new trends in education, as befits its sub-title, and instead to focus attention on ways in which expenditure cuts are undermining sound educational practice from infant school to adult and community provision.

Three members of the Editorial Board have therefore drawn on their own immediate experiences to write about this, and we have secured a further article which examines the effects on science education as a crucial area in secondary schools. As falling rolls are often used as justification or excuse for cuts, another member of the Editorial Board presents an extended review of the Briault report, undertaken by the NFER, on this factor in secondary schools; and the Editor of this number also contrasts ILEA's achievements, as reported by HMI, in using the opportunity created by this demographic phenomenon for improving their school service with the HMI catalogue of devastation by cuts in the country as a whole this year.

An ironic twist in the pathway of education cutback is given in an account of a pre-school project funded by the Manpower Services Commission to provide job creation for unemployed teachers and school-leavers at a time when so many LEAs are drastically reducing their service to the youngest.

The battle to defend the education service from axe-wielding marauders at national and local levels must be engaged on the economic front and sustained by argument in the field of economic theory. To encourage this strategy **Forum** starts this number with an article in which the case is argued for recognising education as investment in human capital and a service vital to economic health.

Thus we must guard against being forced into a purely defensive position of mere opposition to the current round of cuts. Many schools have been adversely affected by cutback since 1976/77, and the situation was by no means perfect before that. Lack of resources has persistently undermined structural comprehensive reorganisation and lack of in-service re-training for teachers has undermined many attempts to introduce mixed ability teaching. What chances are there that LEAs will be able to adapt ordinary schools to cater for handicapped children so that many may be integrated rather than segregated, as the latest Education Bill before Parliament in the wake of the Warnock Report envisages? What chance is there for the curriculum development and in-service education of teachers demanded by the latest Schools Council report on multi-ethnic education, at a time when racial tension poses a frightening threat exacerbated by rising unemployment especially among school-leavers? Rapid technological and societal change places additional demands on the education service and thus justifies increased investment.

As the educational aspect of the tertiary debate on comprehensive provision for 16-19 year olds is so often obfuscated by the twin issues of falling rolls and expenditure cuts, we publish an article on the newly devised scheme for collaboration between sixth forms and further education in the Bradford district. This, along with a short item in our Discussion section, follows on articles in previous numbers in which we have endeavoured to foster rational debate over the past year. The extension of the comprehensive principle beyond sixteen becomes a matter of urgency in the context of rising youth unemployment and calls for imaginative solutions to suit local circumstances.

The latest DES dictum, **The School Curriculum** — a modified and less prescriptive version of **Framework** — significantly undermines its professed concern for the quality of education by calm acceptance of decreased resources. More humane in its focus on children's educational rights and in tune with teachers' just desire to improve their professional judgement in the context of individual schools is the Schools Council's latest booklet, **The Practical Curriculum**.

High standards for all children are what comprehensive schools should be seeking to establish. Present government policy, however, is endangering educational standards for the majority by running down the maintained school system through expenditure cuts while spending selectively on the new assisted places scheme, encouraging choice of the private sector by those who can afford it and relying on parental contributions to supplement resources in socially favoured maintained schools. **Forum** therefore welcomes the founding of a new pressure group campaigning for 'the Right to Comprehensive Education' (RiCE) and was proud to be represented at the launching press conference at the end of January.

Education Cuts — Economic Consequences

Colin Jackson

A Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Leicester Polytechnic, Colin Jackson argues the case for regarding education as investment vital to the nation's economy and hence refutes the monetarist view which justifies cuts in expenditure on the education service.

The provision of education for children and adults cannot be denied a central place in the complex relationship involving public spending, the nation's economic performance and the supply of a qualified and educated workforce for every form of manufacturing or service industry. This crucial economic activity — educating our people — is facing its greatest crisis since the war due, not only in part to economic difficulties beyond one state's control, but caused more by the deliberate ending of the political consensus concerning the relationship between education and the economy that existed until the present government made, and proposes to continue making, huge and arbitrary cuts in educational spending as one essential element in its monetarist strategy for economic recovery. The purpose of this contribution is to offer an alternative to the economic consequences of cuts in educational expenditure.

The academic argument as to the precise contribution of education, treated as investment, to both economic growth and performance continues, but all the evidence gathered in both developed and developing economies shows that education can be regarded as productive investment. In short, without spending on education productivity would be less than is in fact achieved. It is also clear from studies undertaken in advanced technological societies that the provision of further and higher education, including continuing adult education, is intimately linked to the successful, and thus productive, operation of large sectors of industry. Nevertheless, the argument has to be faced, since it appeared to have considerable popular appeal as recently as May 1979, that educational spending and public spending generally damage prospects for investment in 'productive' industry and thus stifle industrial growth. This argument is false and may be countered with evidence relating to comparative public spending and fiscal policies, and with arguments defending the cost of education as investment rather than consumption spending.

Taking firstly the size of the British public sector and the taxes that provide for it. It has been claimed recently that British public expenditure is the virtual root of all evil; indeed the Chancellor in his 1981 budget showed very clearly his convictions in this matter. Similarly disincentive effects have often been attributed to taxes. Studies by economists and others lend no great support to this view and international comparisons demonstrate the weakness of the argument. Of ten European countries in the late 1970s only France devoted a marginally lower proportion of her gross national product to public spending; while no country of the ten had a lower

percentage than Britain of its GNP taken in taxes. Britain's economy was already in deep trouble when these figures were published by the present government, and despite being bottom of the taxing and spending leagues Britain suffered from the most marked recession and has since declined further. Our levels of unemployment and production, after two years of major public expenditure cuts, are still respectively among the very highest and lowest in the whole world. This is a scandalous state of affairs when it is the case that public spending has nevertheless remained the favourite whipping boy of government and large parts of the media.

This popular mythology has proved particularly unsusceptible to dents even though the Treasury, in evidence to the 1977 Wilson committee, expressed the view that the level of public expenditure made no difference to the flow of funds to private industry. In a recent Select Committee report (Monetary Policy, March 1981) the Treasury, when questioned in detail on the 'crowding out' of private by public spending, said of the latter that the effects 'are very uncertain and the econometric evidence . . . not easy to interpret'. In short, there is no respectable evidence to support the Government's assault on our schools, hospitals and public services generally.

If, as seems clear, public spending is not economically disadvantageous, it may be that it has the effect of sustaining or increasing performance. Spending on the education service is a case in point where it is arguable that cuts damage the economy, while increases would assist the rebuilding of our sorely injured economic system.

Firstly and most obviously, education involves buying the services of teachers as well as a variety of other skills and resources. Teachers are relatively expensive and education a labour intensive industry, yet such industries actually offer one escape route from the economic madhouse in which we now live. A madhouse where public money, about £7,000 million pounds per year and rising, of tax revenue to maintain the millions who are totally unable to obtain employment. For each married couple with two children the state pays over £6,000 per year, including lost tax and insurance contributions but not the growing cost of administration of benefits. Thus employment in education, while it can be shown to have other economic advantages, not only removes a burden but generates payment of tax and social security and further creates demand for other goods and services, thus reducing expensive unemployment. The advantages of expenditures on education, as

with other public sector spending, *which leads directly and indirectly to spending in the private sector*, may well be advantageous even by crude monetarist standards, and certainly by human ones. This argument is unashamedly Keynesian; better, though, the tried techniques of post war prosperity, at home and abroad, than the blood letting of an unproven dogma. The evidence cannot be denied. After twenty years of demand management, in 1966 unemployment stood at 1.6% and our industry was more competitive than today with around 10% workless.

Spending on the service and its suppliers is only one aspect of the possible gains. The value of the product of schools and colleges — educated manpower — is even more significant. Education is a prime and crucial part of the economic infrastructure without which advanced economies cannot function. The contribution made by nursery schools and all intervening stages to the sixth forms provides the basic building blocks from which the economy can grow. The further and higher sectors could not even begin unless an effective base existed on which the essential training and retraining, with its massive relevance to work, may be firmly placed. Industry has signally failed to provide from its own resources this vital post-school education and training, even when offered collaboration with the colleges of further education for 16 to 19 day release. The current shameful cuts in the neglected post-school public sector further education system is one more economic nonsense attributable to the worship of monetarist gods.

Public sector colleges and the state funded universities contribute directly to the economy by undertaking research, both pure and applied, which so often leads to clear gains for industry. However, even work of obvious relevance is being destroyed in the mistaken belief that economic performance is better served by adopting the crude and simplistic approach that treats education costs as consumption spending not as investment — a belief at first subtly and now openly fostered by politicians and others. Their standards are the standards of the market, but it is clear that these are false standards. The ideology that treats as important only those investments where results, meaning profits, appear quickly and are easily measurable would presumably treat as ideal an investment in importing Hi-Fi equipment for rapid sale at a profit. Education cannot produce 'profits' like these. But this makes no case for refusing to treat education spending largely as investment in productive activity.

An example from current economic debate may further this argument. Economists agree generally that much of our unemployment is structural, meaning that it arises not simply from temporary shortfalls in demand but is due to replacing labour with new technology — a process forecast to accelerate rapidly as micro-electronics are applied to many tasks. The job losses are also likely to be permanent because imports of certain goods (e.g. motorcycles) appear for the foreseeable future to have replaced home suppliers, or simply because demand for certain products and services has gone for ever. There is only one solution: new productive investment where demand does exist.

The British Rail scheme to electrify its main network, published this year, receives support from public opinion and economists alike; and it is hard to conceive a

better investment than in speedier, cheaper and less energy consuming transport with its gains for the whole economy. The irony of policy today is that those industries, like British Rail, that happen to be nationalised are 'wasteful' and unfit for investment. If the plans were to go ahead they would certainly create demand for education, since the truth of the essential need for mid career re-training would have to be recognised and provided, as education in electrical and electronic engineering was extended to replace vocational education relevant to older technologies.

Retraining in the post-school system would, of course, be best based on a flexible and more wide ranging curriculum in the school sector — such curriculum development being another valuable investment. The reconstruction of the railways is but one example of the rethinking of directions to be taken by Britain in accommodating to new technologies and to the challenges to our outmoded economy, so much of it developed in the days of the Empire but now facing a post colonial era with new trading patterns.

Some of our education system too was developed to meet the needs of the late nineteenth century. New educational investment can help industry to catch up with the twentieth century. The appalling facts of today's economy indicate that industry and education are not able to interrelate productively due to the mauling they have received during years of major and arbitrary cuts and lack of investment in both.

The failure to develop a healthy and expanding education system as part of a positive economic strategy must be attributed to the preference of successive governments for short term savings. The fall in the birth rate between 1965 and 1977 was not used as an opportunity to extend participation in post-sixteen education by, in particular, the children of manual workers. Indeed, as Professor Halsey showed in 1980, the proportion of such children going into higher education, largely stable for 50 years, is actually in decline. Rather it has been the case that all governments elected in the 1970s have chosen the cheap and easy response to the temporary respite occurring in numbers at school and college.

The rapid run down in the teacher education system, with further major cuts almost certain in the 1980s, not only damaged provision of teachers of mathematics and science, especially for primary and younger secondary pupils, but is about to lead to a less well publicised problem. Indeed, it is a problem that in certain areas was never fully solved and during the recent years of creeping sickness has begun to get worse. The problems are those facing the primary sector, never relatively well treated, which is once more having to deal with classes of forty. This is yet another sign of the futility of an economic policy which leaves teachers unemployed while their colleagues struggle to make the best of diminishing resources, both human and material. The policy of reducing teacher training is given spurious justification arising from starving LEAs of funds; thus no jobs, thus a no hope profession. Yet, by 1983 primary rolls, at first in infants and soon throughout the schools, will begin to climb. That this must happen is clear from comparison between the years 1978 and 1980: in the latter year almost 60,000 more children were born than in the former. In spite of this, talk of falling rolls remains the conventional wisdom mouthed

Salt in the Cuts

Annabelle Dixon

A member of the Editorial Board of **Forum** and Deputy Head of an Infant School, who analysed her experience of teaching a smaller class in Vol 22 No 3 a year ago, now considers some effects of the cuts as they affect infant teachers.

Everyone has their favourite conspiracy theory: from the one about the Russians' secret support for the present Tory party because they will bring about this country's downfall quicker than any carefully planned revolution could ever do, to the one about Cortinas only being sold to those who promise faithfully they will overtake any and every other car on the road whenever possible and sometimes whenever not.

Personally, I contribute to the one about the silencing of infant teachers. They know too much. This particular theory holds that if what most infant teachers know about learning and children were to be become public, it could be highly embarrassing educationally and the repercussions endless. Every now and then a leak happens as is inevitable. It was not so long ago that a research group, looking into the predictive value of school reports and records, found that those made about children at the end of their infant schooling were the most consistently accurate from the point of view of future achievement. As far as I know, the implications of such a finding have not been followed and the whole affair has been quietly hushed up. It has always been assumed — and notice the artfulness here, the manipulation of public opinion — that infant teachers

were largely a-political, were not interested in current educational issues or in defending even themselves or proselytising others. Not so, the real truth is that they were usually tired to the point of speechlessness.

This is the moment, of course, where those who subscribe to this particular conspiracy theory make their most telling point. How do you go about silencing those who have most to tell? Wear them out, exhaust them so that they have no energy left to do anything other than their appointed task. It has been seen, correctly, that this system, up to now highly successful, was in danger of breaking down in the last few years. The fall in birth rate was, amazingly, not noticed for a time and classes dropped to a dangerously low level in some areas. In the nick of time action has been taken, however, and stringent though the cuts have had to be, it is hoped that with more children, less money, less equipment, less books and less welfare help, a dangerous crisis has been averted.

An alternative theory runs along the lines that once you give an infant teacher the chance to teach smaller numbers and they translate into classroom action that which was purely wishful thinking beforehand, their consciousness will have been raised, to borrow a term

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by certain politicians unable or unwilling to see the crude and damaging simplicity of their position.

Education has a further economic role: it has increasingly become widely recognised as part of the social wage. Evidence is fast accumulating that as incomes are squeezed people are noticing that education is bearing the lion's share of the cuts in all the social services. An NOP survey in February 1981, taken as yet more cuts were being announced, showed that many parents support state spending on education. About 6 in 10 would accept a higher rate and tax burden for education purposes; 92% wanted education in school for their children beyond sixteen years; and 80% believed their local state secondary school to be good or very good. A survey published in **Engineering Today** showed similar indications early in 1981, where 75% of respondents named teaching as the job most vital for national prosperity, a figure far higher than achieved by any other other occupational group.

The incipient policy of privatising the provision of education seen, for example, in the assisted places scheme and the continuing tax and other financial advantages retained by the independent sector, must be seen in the context of the running down of the state system and related to the willingness of parents to pay for something which, as the evidence shows, they

believe in deeply. Education is seen as a personal asset, but if the state withdraws its support only a minority have the means to secure access to that asset in full measure, and a national asset is diminished.

The arguments put forward here suggest that the huge burden of unproductive unemployment would be significantly reduced by educational investment. Even governments have tacitly recognised this truth but only in the ad hoc crisis response of the relatively small injection of funds via the Manpower Services Commission, thereby making some contribution to the re-generation of industry, but in no way compensating for the cuts already made to the education service and the failure to adopt the reformist and expansionist approach advocated in this article.

No discussion of education and the economy, in what has been called a post industrial society, should ignore the probability that we are moving into a time when our commitment to a work ethic devised in the early industrial period will become more obviously inappropriate. In such a time the education industry has one other vast potential, still largely overlooked and for which we are almost totally unprepared. Education will continue to supply much of the yeast for the bakers of the national cake but, in a society of shorter working hours and working lives, it must become, along with many other good things, part of the cake to be consum-

ed for the sheer joy of eating it.

from elsewhere, and they will not return to the same passivity as before. I'd be pretty certain the French didn't originally mean 'L'appetit vient en mangeant' to apply to teaching; but once having tasted the opportunities that smaller numbers bring, there would be far greater resentment at the resumption of larger classes, so any chance of letting infant teachers near smaller classes must be minimised. In most areas this challenge is now being successfully met it seems.

I am one of those who slipped through the net. For a year I shall have taught a class that is less than twenty-five children; for the most part the number has been under twenty as the school admits new children each term as they become eligible. Next year, because of the school's low numbers, a member of staff has to be redeployed and classes will be over thirty again. To be fair, I recognise that I am fortunate enough to work in an area that does support the idea of smaller class numbers and until the cuts came from above, translated such principles into practice. The only crumb of comfort one can offer local administrators is that the pupil-teacher ratio will now begin to reflect more nearly the true classroom picture, inflated and statistically distorted as it once was by ancillary help that now no longer exists. Parent support against such cuts might then be more readily mobilised, for if there's one thing parents seem to recognise intuitively, it's that large classes are not desirable.

I don't think I'd realised till now that to ride a pendulum while it swings is to induce the same kind of feeling I used to get on the swing-boats at a fair. At best a sinking feeling in the bottom of my stomach, at worst a positive dread and near vertigo. For those who have taught for more than fifteen years, the familiarity of the coming situation is not going to be in terms of a friendly re-acquaintance. For infant teachers 'Back to Basics' means just this: What are the rest of your class going to be doing for 15 to 20 minutes while you clean up an unfortunate child who has been sick/having a nose bleed/needs washing down, clean pants, clean socks and some sympathy? Without welfare help it is bad enough with a small class; the probability of such events is obviously magnified with a larger class and more time is lost from the very children who are having less to share in the first instance.

Not so long ago, I read an anguished article in the educational press which pointed out that children who had access to only one computer terminal in the classroom had to wait their turn before they could each have a go and that they had to wait another 25 (sic) turns before they got another. The implication seemed to be that it was hardly worthwhile *having* a computer terminal if that was all the individual time that was going to be allotted to each pupil. Because the box of tricks is now not a computer but a teacher 'terminal' the logic of sharing the valuable resource amongst too great a number is seen anew. Unfortunately the obvious analogy was not taken up and we may yet see more computer terminals per child in schools than we shall ever see teachers.

In practical terms I know that the following, though it hasn't happened to me yet, is going to, next autumn: a scenario of less than five months in all probability, yet to be repeated again and again. With fewer children and some practical assistance it would read completely dif-

ferently.

. . . Kelly is wanting to make a ladder of pipe cleaner men to see how many will reach to the top of her brick building. I go to fetch them, being pretty sure that due to cash cuts we've not been able to afford many of them and we've run out. My hand on the door, I hear the unmistakable sudden hush that descends on a class when Something Awful happens and they don't know how I'll react. It's probably Gareth dropping the glue/paint/guinea-pig. He's got problems with co-ordination and is painfully aware of them. It's paint and I'm as patient as I can be as it matters to him so much that he does the 'right' thing. The extra patience will take its toll though — there are others like Gareth who need extra time and patience this year, albeit for different reasons — and I'll probably be less than patient with some poor undeserving child later in the day when its worn very thin. I get Gareth a clean shirt and put his other one into the sink to soak.

It is no accident that there are children who should be elsewhere in classes specialising in their problems. The cuts inevitably mean there is slower assessment and even then there is no guarantee that once assessed a place can be found in a special unit. Where then *do* the children stay? In the ordinary non-specialist oversize class where the disturbance or special needs of a particular individual can, by common consent, take up the time of five normal children. A class of apparently 32 children, for instance, can mask a psychological reality of around 45 children as often as not.

Bridget brings me her writing as I kneel on the floor cleaning up the worst of the paint spill — I can see that she's started her letters in all the wrong places. If I'd had time to be beside her I could have watched how she went about it. As it is she has now repeated a bad habit enough times to make it that much more difficult to shift. I was hearing Sally read at the time as I recall: she's just got into reading now and this is absolutely the time to hear her read as often as I can. I get up off my knees to see about the pipe-cleaners for Kelly and notice that Jason has finished a lovely painting. He usually quickly secretes these away in a drying place and I'm not usually able to ask him about them — maybe he dreads my asking! He's poor at getting out what he wants to say and needs time to find the words he wants. Michael wants to tell me something while I'm listening to Jason, but I motion him away. Jason has priority, but I later regret the possible fate of a frog that Michael was drawing in the little vivarium. He'd wanted to tell me of it's leap to freedom . . . I go to tell Kelly I'm sorry I'm being so long with the pipe cleaners, but see that the building has been dismantled (this is what working with the concentration span of five-year-olds means) and the chance of developing an interesting mathematical situation has now gone. I'll probably buy some pipe cleaners and I'll look for the frog at dinner time after I've had dinner with the children and heard the extra readers. Wonder if I'll have time to make some more books for the group who wanted to work on their own stories this afternoon about 'Batman, the Wedding and the Tarantula Under the Belfry' (a true title this . . .)

There *are* easier ways of teaching, and easier age groups, come to that, and I recognise that accommodations have to be made to the reality of a situation. But who wants to be forced to eat educational Stork when you can still tell it from butter?

Class Size and Standards

Michael Clarke

A member of the Editorial Board of **Forum** and Head of a Junior School examines some of the effects of cuts in education budgets for the work of primary schools.

Teachers are seldom given the consideration they deserve when changes in their working situation are implemented. The introduction of wide ranging changes in method over the last twenty years is a good example. Children's needs and characteristics were then the factors given first consideration; re-organisation and extension of subject material were a second consideration; apparatus and equipment to implement the new methods were examined also but teachers were largely left to sink or swim in the new situation.

In the absence of any analysis of what could be reasonably expected from teachers, they themselves made personal adjustments. It was they who decided what to include or omit from the extended range of activities when too much was expected of them, and their choice was usually on the basis of personal preferences made in the light of their existing skills.

We are now experiencing more changes, this time in class sizes and the provision of books, apparatus and equipment. Will teachers again be left to make their own adjustments as they find that the classroom procedures which they have adopted are unsuitable for larger class sizes? Her Majesty's Inspectorate has mentioned the incidence of teaching according to 'whims and fancies of individual teachers' (**Primary Education in England, 1978**), and I believe this is inevitable in circumstances of rapid or sudden changes which take place without adequate consideration for teachers. New situations require careful planning and usually require training for staff.

When a particular teacher in a particular school is planning his work he will consider the age of the pupils concerned; the composition of the teaching group in respect of sex, range of ability, socio-economic background; available space and length of teaching sessions and the school day. These factors are virtually constant within a particular school, but the two factors, size of teaching group and provision of books, apparatus and equipment can and do change from year to year. Their effect on classroom practice ought to be analysed carefully and then suitable adjustments made whenever significant changes occur. It is inevitable that generally, standards will have to fall when class sizes rise or the level of provision of equipment and apparatus falls. Careful planning can and should determine exactly where that fall in standards should operate. Parents and administrators must then accept these inevitable consequences of lower financial provision for education.

I would like to describe what happened in a Junior

School which had to adjust to a lower staff-pupil ratio.

Sometime in October last year, two teachers were heard to remark that they hated their respective classes. This reflected a situation which I would not have associated with these teachers and was therefore disturbing. Investigations revealed that they were not adjusting to an increase in class size to thirty-five from the previous year's twenty-five.

This school has an annual intake of around one hundred children, normally distributed over four classes. When school numbers dropped by twelve we were required to reduce staff by one. This left us to determine whether to redistribute all the children in the school to give equal sized classes with some mixed age groups, or to keep the new intake in three classes of thirty-five each. From experience we have found that disturbing the composition of a class from year to year has a disadvantageous effect upon the learning atmosphere within that class. In these cases there has to be a re-adjustment of friendship groups, the disruptive children have to be re-assimilated and the 'pecking order' has to be re-arranged. This process would have had to be repeated the following year as well, and we therefore agreed to arrange the children coming to us in three groups of thirty-five.

I had discussed the implications of a larger class with the least experienced of the staff involved, assuming that the other two would remember the days when this size of class was the norm, and would adjust accordingly.

I under-estimated several factors:-

1. that appreciating the problem at an intellectual level does not automatically bring about an emotional adjustment in teachers;
2. that even over the last ten years primary school work has changed considerably;
3. that changes of habits are a disturbing and often a lengthy process.

It was really the last of these three which gave rise to the remarks which began my investigation.

A teacher's work consists of applying a large number of techniques which, in order to be effective, have to reach the operational level of habits. This then allows the teacher time and energy to consider and attend to the individual characteristics of particular children. The habits form in the area of class organisation and routine and these in turn are assimilated by the children and form a great time saving device. This also gives a sense of security.

When a new situation arises to which these habits are inappropriate, then first there is emotional conflict and then there has to be readjustment. In many areas of class organisation the teachers involved found themselves trying to implement procedures which either wouldn't work with their new class size or would only do so with a great increase in effort and committed time. The latter could only be found in playtime, dinner times or after school. That is, time for teaching such groups as backward readers, slow learners or gifted pupils was extended. But this is not always satisfactory since it can give the impression that favours are being bestowed or punishment meted out.

The way that the teachers involved reacted to the situation was largely dependant on their length of service, ie the longest serving teacher tried to carry on as before — increased his committed time and ended the year with a health breakdown; the next longest serving teacher retreated into 'holding' tactics, and the youngest became very worried and sought help.

It was at this point that detailed planning had to take place rather than the formulation of a general strategy which I had thought would be sufficient. We had to analyse very carefully where standards could be allowed to fall or alternatively which activities could be omitted. One tenet of the school's basic organisation, which I wasn't prepared to change, is that children should follow the path of learning with understanding. This meant that time had to be allowed for work on basic skills in English and Mathematics — sufficient time to enable each teacher to examine carefully what each child was doing. For primary school children one can do introductory teaching of a skill to a small group or even a class, but correction of faults must be done with individual children.

While this time consuming work with individual children in reading and mathematics is taking place the remainder of the class must be engaged in interesting activities. This then allows the teacher to devote full concentration on the child being taught. Interesting activities require space. As class numbers rise, more space is required. When children are spread over a larger area, it becomes more difficult to keep a 'roving eye' on everyone. It is at this point that some teachers abandon activities and revert to the peace which comes from having the whole class sitting still, quietly engaged on 'busy work'. It is a short step from this to formal class teaching. Such is the 'knock-on' effect of having large classes. This we had to guard against.

Lower standards in art and craft had to be accepted and much of the individual tuition in instrumental work in music had to be stopped. This was the greatest effect in attempts to keep individual work where it was most needed, but was accepted in our efforts not to decrease the children's range of experiences too much. That is, the children would still have art and craft experiences but close supervision and tuition for this would be reduced. Certain potentially dangerous activities had already gone with the reduction in ancillary time — eg cooking, local history and geography trips requiring two adults with the group, pond dipping — for the same reason.

One of the fixed factors operating in schools, as already mentioned, is time. In an attempt to find more teaching time I looked carefully at administration activities. It comes as something of a shock when one ap-

preciates the difference in these when you have a class of thirty-five as opposed to twenty-five. Registration, collection of dinner-money and swimming money alone adds half an hour a week at least. Add to this marking and completing children's records, parents' interviews and writing the end of year reports and one begins to appreciate the extra time involved which can only come from 'preparation' time, which I consider to be most important. I believe that our administration chores here are an absolute minimum and no saving of time could be found there.

There are then those irritating diversions which must increase in number with bigger classes — eg children with cuts and bruises, sickness, lost personal belongings, parents calling in as children arrive with the 'I thought I'd just let you know . . .' messages. All these are important to the children concerned and cannot be brushed aside. A more crowded room gives more incidents involving child disturbing child. A child has less opportunity of personally confiding in the teacher. There is less chance of each child having work displayed. These conditions can affect children's morale and motivation.

In 1962 as a class teacher, I remember discussing the changes in teaching methods which were then taking place, with an LEA advisor. I suggested that the next big step forward could only come with smaller classes. He disagreed and maintained that greater efficiency was what was needed and that classes of thirty five were not impeding progress. There are areas in which one can become a more efficient teacher but they are mainly in regard to display, classroom organisation of materials and equipment. One can improve one's techniques for explaining or demonstrating certain ideas or skills, but one cannot hasten the contacts with individual children — and if one is to teach thoroughly those contacts are vital. I believe that for modern teaching methods primary school classes of twenty five are ideal, that classes of thirty start to impose restrictions, but that classes of thirty-five dictate a more formal and therefore less personal approach. One then has the choice of reducing standards somewhere or reducing a school's range of activities (which of course can be looked upon as reducing standards in the activities which are cut out). We have seen staffing levels reduced to a situation where no 'floating teacher' is possible, ancillary time is now minimal and Heads are covering for absent teachers. This must mean that standards are at risk, and with the cumulative effects of teachers having larger classes the present educational approach could possibly be replaced with another which would be less personal, less individual and perhaps less caring. It would take a long time to recover from that.

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Cuts and Science Education

Ted Wheatley

The Head of a Science Department in an 11-14 High School discusses the effects the cuts are having on secondary school science teaching and offers some suggestions for minimising the dangers.

Cuts in LEA budgets vary sufficiently around the country to make it difficult to present a clear pattern of the effects on science education in schools as a whole. However, it is possible to identify reductions in capitation, teaching staff and ancillary help as three main areas of cuts with direct implications for science teaching in schools.

Capitation Reductions

The most obvious effect of capitation reductions is less replacement of equipment and therefore an increasingly thinner spread of resources available for the courses and classes taught. This evidently is occurring, and at a faster rate than can be attributed to falling rolls which the government would like us to believe is the main cause of capitation loss. The situation is worsened by cuts at LEA level which have removed contracts for maintenance of certain science equipment. In effect, this means that science departments may sustain a greater percentage reduction of funds than other subject departments.

There are several implications for science education. Initial capitation losses will put science teachers in the position of deciding which courses take preference as funds run low. Are gardening tools for rural studies more important than ammeters for physics, for example? The nature of parental pressure or support locally may well decide something like this. Decisions as to the curricular importance of certain resources may be made when choosing whether or not to replace as equipment reaches the end of its life.

Decisions over which direction the curriculum must move will have to be taken if changes are unavoidable.

If the direction is to abandon those courses seen as 'luxury' or 'peripheral' sciences such as applied science, photography, rural studies, etc., then the criteria for doing this, and more importantly, maintaining those that are left as the mainstream of school science, must be justified. This may be an easy task for those capable of academic science, or who have academic aspirations, but will be more difficult for pupils of lesser ability deprived of the opportunity to do science, and even more difficult for staff teaching the abandoned science subjects.

Even traditional sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) pose financial difficulties. Modern courses are resource intensive, requiring large quantities of consumable materials and access to expensive equipment (pupil ammeters cost about £15 each, an 'ordinary' electric balance around £600 and even 250ml beakers cost

60p each and test tubes 8p). Even non-consumable material has a life span and is subject to expensive repair or replacement.

The underlying principles fundamental to Nuffield-type science courses and others initiated by the Schools Council or Association for Science Education (ASE) are threatened. Acquiring practical skills and competence, learning from experimental experience, interpreting practical results, designing experiments to test hypotheses, have already been affected. Limited practical experience and teacher demonstration have become more common and are less demanding on pupil involvement, acquisition of scientific skills, knowledge and confidence. Yet this trend is against the recommendations of DES in **Framework for the School Curriculum** (1977) and of HMI in **Aspects of Secondary Education** (1979), against the work of the ASE and, in some ways more importantly, against the expectations of pupils, employers, further and higher education. It also, incidentally, contradicts the government's stated belief that the education cuts will not affect the quality of the education provided.

Reductions in Ancillary Staffing

The effects of this have been felt keenly in local schools where it has hit at science particularly heavily. A tendency to preserve staff in resource centres has meant harsher cuts in laboratory ancillary help than the original overall reductions. The loss of this assistance has drastically affected the quality and frequency of practical work in science. Fewer practical sessions become possible, necessitating alternative non-practical work for a basically experimental subject. Even in the planned situation the collection, delivery and return to store of equipment for one lesson takes up considerable teaching time, demanding unreasonably long absence from the classroom, which is not normally professionally acceptable to teachers.

It has been suggested that pupils and students should be involved more in the preparation and clearing away of apparatus, an activity which many science teachers believe and encourage anyway. There is a limit, though, to what one can expect of pupils, and for teachers to take on this responsibility would consume virtually all preparation and marking time.

Another facet to the reduction in laboratory assistance is the flexibility of approach and air of genuine investigation intrinsic to the majority of modern science courses. As one science teacher said: 'That aspect of opportunism which I think is very important

in science, the seizing of an idea which comes from the kids themselves, the trying out of an experiment, or procedure, or something you haven't done before will disappear. It will be impossible to go into the prep room and say to your technician "Will you rustle me up . . ." because it's the morning she's not there'.

Staffing Reductions

Several authorities have already initiated teacher reductions over and above those which would naturally occur as a result of falling rolls. Where this is being done through natural losses, there is a real problem of maintaining a proportional representation of science staffing in schools. There is already a shortage of physics and chemistry teachers, especially the former, so vacancies in those subjects are greater before cuts are considered. Consequently, these vacancies, treated as teaching cuts, are unfilled. This solves part of the problem for a school but not for science teaching. Even where the posts are kept open, theoretically for science appointments, there are fewer science applicants to fill them and heads may feel compelled to appoint teachers with unsuitable qualifications, or non-scientists, thereby necessitating curricular changes to the detriment of science education.

If redundancy notices are issued and policies adopted of removing most junior staff, science can suffer more than other subjects as science teachers constitute a younger element of the profession than staff in other subject groupings.

With loss of staff comes a loss of teacher expertise. Whereas falling rolls gives a chance to stabilise staffing gradually, cuts applied rigidly over short periods of time produce curricular gaps which can have repercussions for several years. The recent loss by a local upper school of two out of three physicists, for example, will limit the number of CSE and 'O' level physics students now and will have repercussions on career prospects of 16 year old school leavers, 'A' level physics courses in 18 months time and, eventually, on college and university entrants.

Additionally, loss of teacher expertise can affect the distribution and timetabling of remaining staff. The biologist finds himself covering a physics group, the physicist has to cover the lower ability combined science groups and all staff have larger classes. Consequently, teachers have more unfamiliar material to teach, greater variation of pupils in one class, increased marking loads, and loss of free time to cope with these extra pressures.

While these considerations are serious enough in themselves the implications could well be much more complex and far reaching, in particular for the curriculum and science teacher morale, and hence on science teaching.

Science Curriculum

The general view among those immediately concerned with science teaching is that the real implication of the cuts is for the science curriculum as it has developed in comprehensive schools. The over-riding pessimistic view of teachers is that there will be a retrenchment to pure sciences for the most able pupils at CSE and 'O' level and a reduction in the amount of science taught at the lower end of the school and to less able pupils. If this

view is realised, then it is possible that the swing from science experienced in American schools in the mid-seventies, when economic restrictions similarly affected school science teaching, will be repeated here. Experience there showed that, once established, the restricted course became further restricted to an increasingly small minority of students, with the consequent disenchantment and loss of interest and motivation by others.

Comprehensive school science has generally attempted to encompass the full-ability range of pupils with a variety of science-based studies and activities, from the most academic theoretical approach to the simplest practical courses. Even so, according to the 1979 HMI Secondary Survey this has not meant adequate science provision as schools were short of science staff and resources and unable to meet social, industrial and higher education demands for people with scientific education and understanding. Cuts are taking us from this already unsatisfactory position to a worse one in which those schools offering a broad scientific education will lose teacher expertise and be able to provide a limited science curriculum only, while those with an already restricted science curriculum experience further restrictions. It is quite possible that schools will just not offer physics, for example, to the large majority of its pupils or, indeed, offer it at all if this specialism is lost as teachers leave and are not replaced.

An alternative approach to cutting particular science subjects entirely from the curriculum, and one already being tried, is to move towards integrated science curricular up to 16+, leading to CSE and 'O' level in science. The course can be taught and examined as one or two subject equivalents at CSE and 'O' level according to the ability, interest or academic and career aspirations of the students. This requires resource provision for only four courses compared with, for instance, offering biology, chemistry and physics to CSE and 'O' level, with combined science, rural studies and aviation studies CSEs which needs resourcing for nine. 'O' level and CSE courses in biological and physical science have been suggested as more economic alternatives, too, but not as 'extreme' a move as adopting integrated science.

So it would be possible for purely economic reasons to be pushed into teaching integrated science curricula which are favoured for educational reasons by the HMI, and the ASE in **Alternatives for Science Education** (1979). Integrated curricular would preserve the teaching of all science disciplines in the school. It would also mean, though, that all science staff would have to teach all sciences to some extent, but close collaboration would be facilitated by timetable simplicity (compared with schools teaching many science subjects) and the necessity to share teaching materials and resources. Quite clearly, it demands considerable teacher commitment to be really successful.

Styles of teaching science will change too. It will no longer be possible to carry out experimental work in which large quantities of materials are used up. More careful costings of individual practicals, identifying important curricular objectives necessitating expenditure, deciding on class experiment or demonstration, looking for cheaper alternatives, making equipment, etc., will become economic normality. Alternative teaching techniques and curriculum material requiring no expense will have to be found to take the place of scrapped

practical work. Greater use of audio-visual material, consideration of sociological implications of scientific and technological developments, use of different discussion and writing techniques, etc., could all play a larger part. Local biology teachers have already reported their efforts to decrease the amount of practical work needed for CSE biology course and have said that 'If it cannot be done with beakers, test tubes and bunsens, it won't get done'.

The danger is that alternative teaching styles and pupil activities may not be used, because practical time cut through lack of resources may be seen as just that and not as time which could be beneficially used. Indeed, practical time is already admittedly being used for note taking, dictation of 'the experiment' which should have been done, and for text book learning of science.

Science Staffing

While preserving the science curriculum may be foremost in the minds of teachers, heads, advisers, parents, etc., it may not be the factor of prime importance. It seems to me that the curriculum, which is the most important activity of the school, is dependent for its successful functioning on the whole hearted co-operation and support of the staff. Capitation cuts, reduction of ancillary help and loss or non-replacement of teachers could damage staff morale and lead to an attitude of self preservation, detrimental to maintaining a broad based curriculum, in an atmosphere of increasing pressure and tension.

There are several reasons for thinking that science staff will be a group with the most shaken morale. Science is more resource intensive than most subjects, relies on ancillary help to maintain these resources and employs staff who are mostly experts in a relatively narrow field. Yet resources and ancillary help have been reduced. Reductions in staffing will remove expertise, but not the demand by government, parents, HMI and pupils, to maintain existing curricular and if possible expand and develop science education.

Until four or five years ago science teachers entered schools where conditions were relatively good. For the most part they taught the science specialisms they wanted, with tolerably adequate resources and laboratory technical assistance and a minimum of unwanted classes. At worst, new science teachers saw their ways clear to eventually teaching their specialisms at the level they wanted.

Now, natural wastage and possible redundancies mean that there is a greater proportion of lower ability and lower school science classes to be taught by all. More diverse teaching expertise and wider subject teaching capability is expected with larger classes in attempts to cope with lost staff but not lost pupils, and extra preparation is required to compensate for reduced technical assistance.

It is consequently not surprising that the reaction is to eliminate the so-called peripheral sciences and return to chemistry, biology and physics. Here at least they are secure with familiar material, even if mixed CSE and 'O' level and mixed first and second year 'A' level groups have to be taught, as well as having to prepare much more equipment. It is an understandable defensive step to protect their own professional status, self

esteem and public confidence in their competence to teach.

It is also entirely predictable that in the few areas where cuts have forced certain changes, such as integrated science and greater variety of approach to science teaching, that while these exhibit visible educational advantages, they will be viewed with scepticism as resulting from economic necessity, not educational philosophy. Those opposed to such changes on their own philosophical reasonings will find such changes irritating.

To achieve something from the potential chaos that could ensue in science education there needs to be some positive action to build the confidence of teachers in schools and encourage their active participation in appraisal of the situation.

Of prime importance is the part which heads of science will play. They will need to have the strength of character and abilities to lead their department into progressive, not retrogressive, thinking, and in a way which involves staff and boosts their morale. There will be little room for the head of department who, however, efficient, directs a biologist to teach physics, or a chemist to teach CSE combined science, without involving them in discussions of how this can best be done and with what resources. To them it would be unfamiliar science to unfamiliar groups with limited resources — hardly likely to boost anyone's morale. The success of whatever science education is the outcome will rest on the participation of all teachers involved in its development.

This will not be easily achieved. Yet pressures will increase as the HMIs have noted in their recent report on the effects of spending policies on education, with larger teaching loads, fewer in-service courses and less inclination for heads to release staff in an already tight timetabling situation. Pressure must come from science teachers themselves, through heads of department, advisers and head teachers, to provide the training seen as necessary to maintain and increase their professional expertise and competence.

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Community Education at Risk

Gordon Dryden and Peter Thomson

Gordon Dryden worked in Nottinghamshire and Peter Thomson in ILEA before taking up posts as Assistant Principals of Leicestershire Community Colleges. They here present a case study of the situation in Leicestershire where a group of users and staff formed The Association for Community Education to protect the community education service.

Leicestershire has enjoyed a high reputation for its provision of Community Education though there is some question as to how the success on which this reputation is based was achieved, and on that issue rests some of the justification for recent cuts.

The line adopted by the Chairman of the Further Education Committee in February, 1981, and by the Vice Chairman of the Education Committee a year earlier — both on Radio Leicester — is that Leicestershire has spent more on Community Education than any other Authority in the country. The argument continues that cuts are inevitable but should still leave the service rather better off than elsewhere.

The main alternative line adopted by The Association for Community Education (ACE) is that Leicestershire spends no more than other Authorities but that it is the decentralised nature of the organisation that has generated a great deal of community education activity at low cost, and that even small financial savings will result in disproportionately large cuts in provision.

The detailed arguments are put forward by Paul Pittam, Assistant Principal of Bosworth Community College, in a discussion document for ACE. The broad line of this argument is that Leicestershire's claim is made on the basis of budget headings whereas the majority of Authorities do not use 'Community Education' as a budget heading yet still make adult, youth and various forms of leisure provision. An official from the Association of County Councils agreed with an ACE delegation that there were 'grave statistical dangers' in trying to compare spending by one authority with the spending of another on the basis of budget headings. Consequently, Pittam offers a more detailed breakdown of activities financed by Local Authorities and finds that the figures used by Leicestershire need adjusting to include Adult, Youth, Community, Social, Recreational and Amenity services which gives the following profile:

Derby	£3086 per 1000 population
Nottingham	£2734 per 1000 population
Leicestershire	£2564 per 1000 population
Northants	£1962 per 1000 population

On the basis of these figures Pittam argues that Leicestershire's claim to be a high spending Authority is spurious. Certainly the figures are less flattering to Leicestershire than statements from the County Treasurer and undermine justification for the cuts, leaving two questions to be considered.

What aspect of Leicestershire's provision has enabled success at a relatively low level of expenditure, and what

kind of impact have cuts had over the past few years?

On the first question there is little doubt that Leicestershire's success has been achieved by placing full-time organising staff in colleges to increase the use of one of the communities biggest capital assets — its schools. The full-time staff advise their College Councils and Management Committees but it is these committees, made up of elected representatives of College users and students, that make major decisions affecting provision by the Colleges. It is this realistic influence on decision making that generates voluntary support and involvement which, in turn, creates a level of activity that could not be achieved by leaving decisions in the hands of paid staff. In much the same way that Adult Literacy Projects throughout the country have achieved a wealth of voluntary effort co-ordinated by paid staff, so the provision of Community Education has developed well beyond the initial provision of a class programme and booking agency for affiliated organisations. Colleges have increasingly taken on a role in initiating groups and services, especially for the disadvantaged sector, and the generation of private funds has led to a complex system of joint ventures on the provision of facilities within and outside the Colleges.

The principal areas of expansion have been:-

- a. The use of large profit-making classes to subsidise small specialist classes; subsidised places for those on a low income (those in receipt of a State Pension, Supplementary Benefit or Family Income Supplement); provision of free classes for Adult Literacy, outreach senior citizens groups and disabled groups;
- b. Development of pre-school provision which tends to become self-sufficient in the case of playgroups, whereas creche facilities are usually subsidised as are summer playschemes;
- c. Provision of facilities such as swimming pools and changing rooms, darkrooms, decoration and maintenance of art buildings, etc.;
- d. Provision of equipment for adult classes which is shared with the school;
- e. Community service by members of the school organised by adult and youth community tutors;
- f. Subsidy of additional youth leader nights, activities and exchange visits.

Across the County ACE found the provision was varied but averaged some £4000 per college in 1979. Fund raising activity is not central to the role of the Leicestershire Community Education worker but an important side effect of sound educational practices which

now include the careful nurturing of fund raising areas and allocation of surpluses. The product of this extension of Community College activity has been a total adult involvement in Leicestershire, according to figures from ACE of 63,000 class enrolments and 85,000 adults in affiliated organisations for the 1979-80 academic year. This is over 15% of the population which, when added to youth activities and various occasional college users, means that Leicestershire's Community Education service was reaching a sizeable proportion of the population.

On the second question of the impact of cuts, the problems arise from how the cuts have been made and the actual amounts to be cut. From 1974-75 to 1978-79 there was a 19% cut in the community education budget in real terms, over a period when the number and status of colleges and centres was being increased. From September 1979 the cuts have been implemented with increasing severity.

During enrolment in September 1979, the Authority further reduced the level of subsidy for adult education classes to approximately 10%, leaving Colleges facing a deficit because programmes had been arranged and contracts issued on the basis of much different provisional figures given months earlier. In January came the first of the cuts of 1980 which included loss of travelling expenses for part time tutors, substantial cuts in the adult literacy services, loss of two youth training officers and two further education officers. It was also decided to impose a levy of £100,000 on Colleges and Centres, which was promoted as an alternative to redundancies.

By September 1980, in spite of much discontented murmuring, it was apparent that these savings were on target, including the levy. Nevertheless it was announced on 3 September that all adult tutors were to be made redundant. It was also decided that all College out-centres and Community centres would close in the Spring Term of 1981. This last proposal was not implemented, in the case of Community Centres because of legal problems, but it had the impact of persuading people not to enrol because at the time of enrolment the ruling still stood.

The plan was to impose cuts of £400,000 in addition to the £100,000 levy by 1982-83 (approximately 30% of the Community Education budget). It was quite apparent that savings of this magnitude could not be made unless establishments were closed. At first proposals were made to close 10 Colleges. By January 1981 it was thought that 14 Colleges were listed for closure. However, it seems that this was a difficult decision for the controlling group of members to take — particularly in the run up to the local elections — and by February the suggestion of closures was dismissed by the Chairman of the Further Education Committee.

By March 1981 (the time of writing), Community Colleges and centres were enrolling for the summer term courses but had received no information on how proposed cuts were to be carried out. However, by this time it was certain that the adult community tutor posts were lost to the service.

The main impact of the succession of cuts has been felt in two ways. The undermining of staff morale and the elimination of flexibility within Colleges to develop or even maintain much needed community education provision.

Leicestershire Community Education staff are ap-

pointed under conditions of service which naturally involve evening work, as for any Further Education lecturer, but with the additional loss of weekends and reduction of holidays. These conditions have been imposed without negotiation, which in itself gives rise to some discontent, but the arbitrary decision to sack all adult tutors means that Colleges are undergoing crippling disruptions to the work of over-stretched departments and this has inevitably built up frustration and resentment towards the Authority. There is no tradition of effective union activity and it is the users who have best been able to co-ordinate resistance to attacks upon the service in spite of the divisions that inevitably exist in a fragmented and decentralised system. The lay members of Community College Councils are particularly dismayed at the erosion of their independence by elected members who seem alienated from Community Education.

For two years the progress of Community Education through council meetings has been marked by increasing uncertainty and confusion. This has left members of communities who are involved in their colleges without any firm idea of how to budget for future years, particularly since the figures openly proposed by councillors are of a magnitude which take no account of how colleges actually operate. At present the more Centres and Colleges succeed in attracting groups with particular needs (mothers with young children, the over sixties, the disabled, the unemployed, 16-19s) the more the Centre or College needs to generate funds. Centres in disadvantaged areas can become caught in a situation where they are unable to maintain a general provision of adult education opportunity or to service target groups.

Colleges have met the £100,000 levy by giving County Hall money that was previously spent on maintaining facilities in Colleges, or by reducing the numbers of groups receiving subsidies. The long term effect of a continuing levy even at the £100,000 level will be a contraction of provision for the elderly, disabled, unemployed and young people; and if the Authority finally decide to cut a further £400,000 from the Community Education budget, the result will not only be the closure of 14 Colleges but probably a massive cut-back in the provision made by the remaining Colleges, since there is no reason to suppose that the Authority will abandon its new-found faith in Community Colleges as profit making institutions.

The situation in Leicestershire is one of an area of educational provision built up mainly by goodwill, but with only a low budget, being destroyed by unrealistic financial demands which have already done much to alienate the goodwill of some members of the public. The County no longer provides a level of Community Education of which it can be proud and insofar as it has greatly deteriorated in a short time, elected members should perhaps reflect on how easy it is to destroy something which is too little understood.

It is true that large numbers of people have been angered by the Authority's behaviour and rallied to defend their colleges, but what has been destroyed is the atmosphere of partnership fostered over many years by sensitive handling by officers, and a sense of co-operation between County Hall and local College Councils cannot be quickly restored.

Birth of a Tertiary System: a case-study

John D. Anderson

The development of a local scheme of collaboration between sixth forms and further education to extend educational opportunities for 16-19 year olds is explained by the Head of one of the participating schools as a further contribution to the tertiary debate which we began in **Forum** Vol 22 No 3 and continued in Vol 23 No 1. John Anderson was a Vice-Principal at Bosworth College, Desford, Leicestershire until 1978 and is now Head of Beckfoot Grammar School, Bingley, a 13-18 mixed comprehensive.

Tertiary Colleges, although comprehensive and comprehensible, are inapplicable in many areas. In the City of Bradford Metropolitan District, a region half-rural including Ilkley Moor and other areas of bracing climate, a 13-18 Upper School system is well established, supported by 5-9 First Schools and 9-13 Middle Schools. Sixth and Seventh Year students make viable groups in most subjects and there are few Sixth Forms about which politicians can say the dreaded words of dismissal to outer darkness: 'They are uneconomic'.

Many of the Upper Schools are close together, either in the urban area of Bradford itself, or concentrated by the effects of the harsh sword which cut in the landscape deep valleys where people cluster near the Aire and Wharfe rivers. The District has four Colleges of Further Education — Bradford, Ilkley, Shipley and Keighley Colleges. Thus, proximity makes possible a co-operation across the margins of FE and school work where so many misunderstandings and conflicts have arisen largely because of the historical separation of the two systems. It is plainly not in the interests of the 16-19 age group which attends both schools and colleges that this divisive split, reminiscent of that between Grammar and Secondary Modern Schools, should continue. Since 1975 Bradford has had a 16-19 Working Party embracing representatives of schools, colleges, advisers, officers, the Careers Service, elected members and the Unions. For years it was sterile, but by December 1980 a remarkable accord had been established. A joint document advocated groupings of schools and colleges to improve the education of 16-19 year olds. How did this come about?

The Schools and FE panels approved **Document O**, 'The Provision of Educational Opportunities for 16-19 Year-olds in the District'. It was a far-sighted paper directed towards genuine comprehensive aims, stating: 'It is suggested that the opportunity to select, with guidance, from the following, should be available to all pupils reaching the statutory school leaving age: (i) A range of O levels which should include English, Maths, Physics and one modern foreign language. (ii) At least 10 A levels including two Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, two Modern Languages, English Literature and any two of Economics, History, Economic History, Geography and Sociology. (iii) A BEC General and a TEC course. (iv) A course providing a vocational skill or skills, and a work experience element, appropriate to girls, and a similar course appropriate to boys in the lower ability ranges. (v) The current range of further education in the District's

colleges.' The emphasis was on the dynamic provision of such courses, not a theoretical offering of them in a distant location impractical to reach.

The Shipley-Bingley Educational Commonwealth

Contemporaneously with political activity, practical educational developments had been showing what was possible. Shipley and Bingley are proud Aire Valley towns joined by a busy road. A kilometre away from Shipley College is the Salt Grammar School; two kilometres in another direction is Nab Wood Grammar School; and a kilometre and a half beyond that is Beckfoot Grammar School. Two kilometres in another direction from Nab Wood is St Bede's RC Grammar School. All these are 13-18 comprehensives. Nab Wood and Beckfoot Schools were already discussing 16-19 co-operation, but the remarkable change in relationships between the College and the schools came largely through the initiative of the College's new Principal.

In Spring 1980, it was decided by a Steering Group of Heads and Timetablers together with the Principal and Heads of Department at Shipley College to co-operate in providing certain courses for Sixth and Seventh Year students. The group adopted the name 'Commonwealth' since 'consortium' sounds like a Big Business arrangement and 'co-operative' like a kibbutz. 'Commonwealth' is used in its original sense of 'shared riches' and of a group held together by a 'strong but elastic bond'. How does the Commonwealth meet the requirements of **Document O**?

In each school and the College it is possible to take the range of 'O' levels specified in **Document O**. At least ten 'A' levels are offered in each institution but a second Maths 'A' level is not available for some students. The irreducible minimum of 'the ten' was not enough for the Commonwealth, whose members had already decided that the attack on 'small A level groups' was not always educationally valid despite criticisms by some politicians. They saw teaching sixth and seventh year students simultaneously or with an 'O' level or other group as pedagogically unsound. To abolish 'A' levels taken by small numbers seemed to the Commonwealth a capitulation which destroyed the whole package of some students' subjects, preventing them from obtaining the right qualification to be, for example, a nurse or Design teacher. It was agreed to start by looking at Music, Art, Home Economics and Design 'A' levels as vital but vulnerable.

Groups of teachers and advisers convened by

members of the Steering Group discussed each of these areas. Considerable curriculum development took place as new possibilities were seen. No school offered Design 'A' level, but jointly it could be done and was agreed to offer the more rigorous science-based JMB course in Home Economics. The parameters agreed by the Steering Group provoked much discussion and some argument. Courses were all to be taught from 1600-1800 on two week-days. Bradford FE panel allocated money to pay teachers the evening class FE rate. Many teachers said that they could not teach effectively at this time after a full day's work, but would take part with time-off-in-lieu — a highly respectable professional argument. This has been agreed for 1981-1982, but was not approved in time for 1980-1981 because negotiations had taken place at neighbourhood level and the union leaders were not initially involved. This is a difficult issue since, until ideas are worked out, it is impossible to know exactly what union leaders need to consider. Grass roots innovation is obviously a good idea but fit into a wider context. No art teachers wanted to be involved without time-off-in-lieu, so Heads agreed to appoint a lecturer for 'A' level Art teaching since the principle of shared provision was at stake. Design, Home Economics and Music teachers agreed to participate. Most taught in their own school and all institutions provided the location for at least one course.

With some trepidation, the 'A' levels were offered to students in September 1980 together with 'A' level Law and Accounts taught at the College in the conventional school day but fitted into most schools' options. Seventy-two students, including a few adults, wished to do the courses, an average of twelve per subject. The initial hopes of the steering group were fulfilled.

Students may work in their own untimetabled time at projects in each subject in their own school: since they had time-off-in-lieu for the late afternoon sessions, there were periods available when they may come into school if they wish. Finances were arranged so that each school contributed £50 from its capitation to each participating department, and Bradford provided £100 per subject per school in the grouping, assigned to a Suspense Account at Shipley College on which each subject could draw. Each field of study appointed a Convener who attended some Steering Group meetings and was authorised to spend the money after discussing with his colleagues in the subject area. Equipment bought belongs to the Commonwealth which thus becomes a property-owning democracy in which shared ownership should encourage shared commitment to continuity.

Document O also specified BEC and TEC courses. The need to programme these provided the impetus to reconsider timetabling for 1981-1982. The College plays a key role in these courses, offering BEC General to a few students in the Commonwealth in 1980-1981, but expansion necessitates more co-ordinated timetabling. Certain days and part-days are now set aside in each institution for BEC and TEC. These are partially integrated in schools' options and a combination of BEC with 'O' levels will be possible. Some of the components of BEC will be taught in schools, which should stimulate both staff and students. The typing option will be taught in one school, but core modules can also be school-based. Offering BEC and TEC courses in the Sixth Form should reduce the irrelevant, sterile and un-

successful retaking of 'O' levels which leads to a national success rate in terms of Grades A, B and C for sixth year retakers of 1.2 subjects each.

'A course providing a vocational skill' is required in **Document O**. 'Vocational skills' do not usually lead to a job sanctified with the title 'A Vocation'; 'job-related' would seem a better term. St Bede's is already running a City and Guilds Foundation Course in conjunction with Shipley College. Other schools are following suit. Distributive Trades, Commercial Studies, Community Care and some Engineering will be offered in the Commonwealth in 1981, timetabled at the same time as the BEC and TEC courses. A problem is that the groups doing these courses are likely to form separate layers in the sixth form sandwich. Such segregation is not ideal but may be a price which has to be paid for certain courses and to engage some young people who at present leave education. Some classes in school which embrace City and Guilds' students together with BEC and TEC students are possible. Through Registration Forms or Tutor Groups and General or Minority Studies time, those doing these courses can be integrated for some of the time with all other Sixth Formers.

The last requirement of **Document O**, 'the current range of further education', is met in the Commonwealth only when that range does not clash with what is done in school at the specified time. Bradford College has suggested sessional half-day time-tabling for all 16-19 years-olds, to facilitate such interchange. Attractive though this is organisationally, the effects on schools, particularly for the pre-16 age groups, are unacceptable. To follow in total the current range of FE provision a student would transfer to an FE College.

Much has been achieved. More schools wish to join. If they do so, the vital geographical cohesion will be lost and organisational problems will multiply. Probably the Commonwealth will stay a relatively tight-knit group but accept individual additional students as the need arises.

Information, Guidance and Counselling

Information, Guidance and Counselling are vital for the 16 year-old seeking further education of some sort. A Bradford working party is just completing its deliberations on this. It has agreed that complete co-operation between Colleges, Schools and the Careers Service is vital and recommends an impartial information system for all pupils in the autumn term of their fifth year to provide details of all 16+ courses. All pupils will hear College, School and Careers representatives speak on this. In August at the end of the fifth year, individual counselling will occur, based on the teachers' knowledge of each pupil. This will be co-ordinated by the Careers Service.

Conclusion

The above pattern is now being modified to meet the needs of the whole of Bradford.

The future is exciting, not depressing. Much goodwill is present. Given a modicum of central government finance and moves to rationalise the differences between school and FE financing and conditions of service, a great step forward could be made in enhancing provision for the 16-19s in Bradford. Can you hear this up there, Macfarlane?

Discussion

Tertiary Debate

I was surprised to see in **Forum** Vol 23 No 2 (Spring 1981) such an elitist article as 'We Want CREEM: Not Skimmed Milk'. If Mr Carey were to drive his taxi up the A6 to Preston he would find it hard to maintain his skimmed milk theory in the 11-16 Comprehensive High Schools of a town where open-access transfer to post-compulsory education has been available since 1967.

Mr Carey's article is so riddled with prejudice that when he ventures into argument he reveals openly the intense fear which is the inspiration of this defensive campaign. There is no evidence that any of the management of CREEM have taken seriously the benefits of the tertiary solution, by finding out what is happening at Colleges like W R Tuson College, Preston, Accrington and Rossendale College, and Nelson and Colne College in Lancashire. I would have expected that the article 'Working On The Wide Front' by Laurie Bullas in **The Manchester Evening News** of 15 July 1980 would have done something to allay any fears of the unknown that Manchester parents are said to entertain.

If 'the most worrying aspect, to parents' is 'the probable dilution of the quality of education in the 11-16 section' then the less worrying aspects will be trivial indeed. What evidence has Mr Carey, other than the fears in his pulses, that 'the best teachers of . . . chronically shortage subjects' will be 'inevitably' drawn off. What evidence has he that the 11-16 sector will suffer 'a contraction of the curriculum'? Why does he pin his faith in 'separate sciences' as a proper provision for the majority of children? And why should the shortage of modern language teachers be any more severe than it is at the moment, and has been for the majority of the nation's children for many decades?

The fact is that an open-access Sixth Form College serving a number of schools is far more comprehensive than the Sixth Form of any one 11-18 School in terms of the range of its provisions and the social spectrum it serves; an open-access Tertiary College under FE Regulations is even more comprehensive.

In his retrogressive article 'Death of the Sixth' in **The Sunday Times** of November 30 1980, Peter Willy wrote, with typical journalistic poison, 'potential Oxbridge entrants will be studying alongside apprentice plumbers and brickies in revamped technical colleges'. Few of his readers with any sensitivity to the class-ridden nature of British society would have objected if he had written: 'parking their motor-bikes alongside', or 'drinking coffee alongside', or 'scrumping down alongside' — that would have been too reasonably egalitarian. But 'studying alongside'! Peter Willy, as much as anybody, knows that it would be indefensible in the

most egalitarian of worlds for the vocational training of the potential University graduate and the apprentice plumber to be met in the same study-groups, though there are areas of even formal learning where an opportunity to share experiences would be of inestimable benefit to both.

The teachers in Tertiary Colleges have no intention of betraying the youth of this country by exposing them to the excesses of experimentation. We too have high standards and our expectations of the potential of our students range far more widely than do those of the 11-18 school, for whom the leaver at 16+ is often considered a kind of disappointment.

The supporters of CREEM stand squarely in support of a traditional view of the excellence of the English Sixth Form. One of the features of such excellence is reputed to be the ability in debate to base arguments on fact and to treat a different view with balance and openness. They seek to ignore the success of open-access provisions at 16+ operating increasingly throughout the country; if they continue to do so they will find themselves preserving for their children systematic disadvantage.

D. IAN MORGAN
*W R Tuson College,
Preston*

Partisan Research

A statement from the British Educational Research Association.

Education influences the lives of millions of families and costs millions of pounds. It is entirely right and proper, therefore, that educational research, especially where it might influence pupils' welfare, teaching styles, school organisation, the distribution of resources, or policy and planning, should be subject to the most rigorous scrutiny when it is published. This critical examination should come both from professionals engaged in the education service, including the educational research community, and from members of the public interested in the education of the nation's young people.

The Executive Council of the British Educational Research Association is deeply concerned, however, at the methods used by the Centre for Policy Studies in its attack on the National Children's Bureau Report **Progress in Secondary Schools**. The Centre's pamphlet **Real Concern** by C Cox and J Marks accuses the National Children's Bureau of 'doctoring' data, being 'excessively partisan', and contains several other examples of personal vilification of the researchers. Whilst we believe that analysis of this or any other publicly funded research should be rigorous and, wherever necessary, critical, it is our view that the language and tone of the Centre for Policy Studies pamphlet go beyond what is normally acceptable.

Furthermore we are equally concerned that in some press accounts the Centre for Policy Studies, the National Council for Educational Standards, and certain other groups closely affiliated to or supported by political

parties of the left or the right, are given the standing of objective educational research institutions. Usually their 'reports' are ideologically biased in the direction of their associated political party's policies, and in any case fall well short of the rigour that would be expected from a research critique or a properly conducted piece of educational enquiry.

Bruce Choppin, President	
Ted Wragg, Vice-President	
Peter Chambers, Secretary	
Sara Delamont	
Jim Eggleston	Ray Jackson
Lewis Elton	Geoff Elliott
Michael Shayer	John Nixon
Mike Smith	Iain Smith
Lawrence Stenhouse	Brian Wilcox

RiCE

The Right to Comprehensive Education

RiCE is campaigning for the RIGHT to a genuine comprehensive education for everyone. It aims to act as a co-ordinating body. To achieve this RiCE will liaise with all those local campaigns and national bodies which include a commitment to comprehensive education in their general aims.

RiCE will expose the developments which erode the comprehensive principle, such as the re-introduction of selection in schools and the diversion of public funds to private education. RiCE will also aim to publish policy statements on all aspects of comprehensive education.

The following general principles have already been drawn up by RiCE, and express the group's philosophy of comprehensive education:

1. During the whole period of compulsory education all children should have the right to attend a local state school with adequate resources to ensure a fully comprehensive structure and curriculum.
2. A comprehensive system is incompatible with selection. All state schools should therefore be open to all children, regardless of ability, sex, race, or religion.
3. In each school all pupils should have the right to experience a broadly based curriculum and have equal access to all the opportunities offered.
4. All pupils should have the right to be assessed within a common system.
5. All pupils have the right to a totally free education service. All public money available for education should be invested only in the maintained system.
6. All those over 16 should have the right to continue their education, full or part-time, without financial hardship. RiCE supports moves towards an integrated system for educating 16-19 year olds with the expansion of existing schools and colleges, to enable academic, vocational and training opportunities to be freely available.

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MSC rescues under-fives

Jill Webberley

The Head of a 5-8 First School at Melton Keynes, with varied teaching experience in England and the Third World as well as experience of working with the Pre-school Playgroups Association, describes a project funded by the Manpower Services Commission to provide job creation for unemployed teachers and school leavers in work with pre-school children and their parents.

The Milton Keynes Home-School Link project, in operation since January 1978, is concerned with developing a partnership between home and school. It aims to draw parents into the educational process by making them aware of the developmental needs of their young children and, with the help of professionally trained teachers who act as home-visitors, increase the parents' confidence and competence to assist this development. Through the experience of home-visiting, schools are able to gain some insight into how early learning occurs in the home and to value what the parents are contributing to the child's education.

The project is principally funded by the Manpower Services Commission with supplementary funding from the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. The LEA acts as sponsor and gives help in administration but does not provide funds.

A number of factors led to the initiation of the project. Milton Keynes is a new city with a considerably higher than average number of young families. At professional meetings in the area teachers expressed concern that children from homes with young inexperienced parents without the support of the extended family were often ill-prepared for the tasks which confronted them on entry into school. Many five-year olds had poorly developed perceptuo-motor and language skills and were unable to meet the demands for school-based learning. A screening programme (Tansley Rawthorne), carried out by the remedial team on one thousand six-year olds at schools within the city, indicated that a larger number of children with poor developmental skills could be considered to be educationally at risk. Nursery provision in the area was extremely limited and schools were finding it difficult to provide compensatory programmes due to cut-backs in educational expenditure. Most schools in the area could no longer admit rising-fives as the LEA had ceased providing staffing and capitation for this age-group in 1976. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that many families were highly mobile within the city itself, and schools were concerned about the difficulties of sustaining home-school contact and collaboration. It was suggested that some problems might be overcome before entry to school if educational home-visitors were appointed to visit the homes of pre-school children.

After consultation with teachers' professional associations a proposal for a home-visiting project was submitted to Manpower Services Commission with a request for funding. It was agreed that, as part of the 'job creation' programme, work would be found for twenty

unemployed school-leavers and ten unemployed teachers. The Development Corporation generously made a grant towards travelling expenses and the provision of toy and book libraries which would be based in schools for the use of parents of pre-school children. The project was funded for a period of fifty-two weeks in the first instance and, since that time, it has been necessary to make application each year for further funding. In the current year Manpower Services Commission has provided funds for twenty school-leaver assistants and five unemployed teachers. The Development Corporation has provided additional funding for the employment of five part-time teachers.

Recruitment of teaching staff has caused some difficulties. It is important that the teachers should be in sympathy with the aims of the project, be willing to recognise the role of the parents as educators and understand that prescriptive advice might undermine parents' confidence. For a number of reasons, some applicants for posts have been rejected. The terms of MSC funding mean that it is not possible to advertise for staff other than through Job and Careers Centres. All employees on the scheme must have been registered as unemployed before recruitment. The maximum period of employment offered to teachers is fifty-two weeks, with a possibility now of some extension of this time. The assistants, who must be under nineteen years of age when they join the project, can be employed for a period of only twenty-six weeks. In addition MSC requires the provision of a clearly defined on-going training programme for project personnel. The teachers' training includes seminars and lectures which cover child development, home-visiting skills, interview skills, identification of children with special needs (including problems with sight, hearing, speech), uses of television and books in the home, familiarisation with the work of other family-support agencies and pastoral care. The programme for the assistants includes talks on child development, parenthood, the function of play in learning and practical training in art, craft, display and library skills. Part of their training is concerned with 'life-skills' which are aimed at helping them to organise their personal lives and assist them in finding alternative employment on leaving the project. Teachers and assistants attend half-day training sessions on a weekly basis throughout the year. Health visitors, community and social workers, education welfare officers, playgroup organisers, school psychologists, members of the County Advisory staff, the remedial team, careers service and parents are among those who have actively con-

tributed help in the training programmes.

After initial training, the teachers, now called home-visitors, are given an attachment to two or three schools (depending on intake numbers) and have the responsibility for undertaking visits to the homes of every 'rising-five' child due to enter those schools the following term. After familiarisation with the schools' staffs, methods and aims, the teachers visit children's homes on appointment and take with them games, toys and books which can be left in the home for use over a specified period. The home-visitor, together with the parent (or child-minder) plays with the child and together record any progress made or difficulties encountered. These records, with the parents' approval, are later handed to the headteacher of the appropriate school. Parents are helped to see the educational opportunities presented in play with their child and, in discussions, can be made aware of aspects of the child's needs not previously considered. The home-visitor is also able to give the parent information concerning the teaching methods and educational philosophy of the local school. Parents and children are invited to attend regular school-based play-sessions, organised by the home-visitor, and to visit the toy and book library to borrow equipment. The home-visitors also have the responsibility of supervising the work of the assistants who help to stock, maintain and run the libraries and assist with play-sessions.

A number of interesting points have emerged from home-visitors' reports of their experiences. Parents have shown great enthusiasm for the project and the visitors have encountered little hostility. Parents have involved younger siblings by bringing them to play-sessions and discussed their development with home-visitors, so that the work of the project has reached a greater number of children than had been planned originally. Many parents suggested that visiting should take place over a longer period of time so that children were involved at a younger age, and a number wished that older children could have benefited from the scheme. Home-visitors have been able to help families in crisis by informing parents of other caring agencies. A number of children with special needs have been identified and referred to appropriate sources of help. Parents of children due to enter special schools have shown great appreciation of the help of home-visitors who have tried to dispel misconceptions of the purposes and processes of special schooling. The home-visitors are enriched as teachers by their greater understanding of home learning and family interaction with schools.

Head teachers, whose views of the project were canvassed by questionnaire, made the following points:-

1. Relationships and communication between home and school had improved leading to greater collaboration between parents and teachers;
2. There was an increased understanding on the part of parents regarding school aims and processes, and similarly the school had gained some insight of parents problems and aspirations;
3. School entry for the five-year old was easier;
4. Parents showed greater interest in school work and there was an increase in parental visits to schools;
5. No difficulties had been encountered in introducing the project to parents, but initially in one or two schools there were objections from teachers.

One of the main benefits of the project might be seen in terms of the changes in parental attitudes to school and teacher attitude to parents. The head teachers criticised the project on a number of grounds. Because of the terms of the funding, project staff are employed on a restricted-term basis only which has given rise to difficulties in continuity. The head teachers felt that the benefits of the project would be greater if home visiting could take place over a longer period before entry to school. Nevertheless, all the head teachers wished the project to continue in their schools and many suggested that home-visiting of pre-school children should be part of normal educational provision. The views of parents regarding the project have not been deliberately sought on any large scale and, so far, it has not been possible to carry out a full objective evaluation of the project.

The project has led a very precarious existence since its inception. It is managed by a committee, which wrote the original proposal, composed of a group of six head teachers, the head of the remedial team and a representative from the Development Corporation. Twenty-two schools are project members. More local schools wish to take part than funds allow although there is cautious optimism that there may be some small expansion next year because of the high rate of unemployment among local school-leavers.

It is ironic that when other forms of pre-school provision are under threat, this project may be a little safer for one more year because of the nature of the funding and the growth in youth unemployment



The ILEA and cuts elsewhere

Nanette Whitbread

One of the joint editors of *Forum* examines the HMI report on the ILEA and their exposure of the effects of cuts in educational expenditure throughout the country.

When the HMI Report, **Educational Provision by the ILEA**, was publicly released in November 1980 most of the media focused on the criticisms of shortcomings. Yet a different portrayal emerges if this report is considered in the perspective of three recent HMI national surveys — **Primary Education in England** (1978), **Aspects of Secondary Education** (1979) and **The Effects on the Education Service in England of Local Authority Expenditure Policies** (1981).

Significant contextual features of the ILEA are recognised by HMI. London's schools have to contend with a greater concentration of social problems than elsewhere. 'By national standards there is a very high number of single parent families (14.2%)' and 'urban decay with its demoralising effect on the young' is evident as ILEA has 'many of the most deprived areas of England' according to the Department of the Environment's index of social and housing deprivation. Moreover, 'one in ten children in inner London speak English as a second language'. School rolls have been falling more rapidly than nationally 'because of movement from the inner city' coinciding with the birthrate factor, whereas until five years ago both primary and secondary schools suffered from overcrowding.

Contrasts are continually made between the encouraging situation in 1980 and that in the early and mid 1970s when 'there were considerable grounds for dissatisfaction with children's performance in many of the Authority's primary schools' and secondary schools 'were having considerable trouble with discipline'. By 1980 HMI describe the curriculum as 'similar to that commonly found elsewhere in England' while their criticisms of deficiencies in both curriculum and teaching echo those in the national surveys of 1978 and 1979. Thus they draw attention to problems arising from 'national teacher shortages' in sciences and modern languages and to the 'heavy emphasis on the basic skills and less thorough work in activities such as science, art and craft, history, geography and music' in primary schools, and deplore that 'many teachers underrate the capacities of pupils whatever their level of ability' especially at the secondary stage.

HMI portrayal of ILEA primary schools is particularly encouraging and improvements are largely attributed to Authority leadership and resource support. Favourable attention is drawn, for instance, to the positive effects of ILEA's requirement in 1977 that primary schools produce their own language policy statements in response to the Bullock Report, and of ILEA 'curriculum guidelines on language, mathematics

and drama', while it is noted that 'more planning for science is slowly emerging'. Such curriculum development is essentially dependent on the 'network of 53 teachers' centres, of which ten are multi-purpose (one in each division)', which seem to serve primary schools particularly well.

These teachers' centres form only part of the extensive in-service provision for which 'ILEA is among the most generous LEAs'.

The criticisms levelled at ILEA secondary schools have to be considered in the context that most have never been fully comprehensive in intake. As long ago as 1968 *Forum* published an article by an ILEA Head, E.H. McCarthy, entitled 'The Comprehensive Myth' (Vol 11 No 1) in which he showed that London's so-called comprehensives lost 19% of eleven-year-olds to selective schools, which meant that in terms of intake they were similar to Secondary Modern Schools in many other LEAs. HMI notes that it was as recently as 1977 that 'the last 37 grammar schools (including 32 voluntary) accepted their first comprehensive intakes', and hence the ILEA secondary schools described by HMI in 1980 were comprehensive only up to the third year. This is a significant context for HMI criticism of 'undifferentiated teaching . . . leaving the least able unheeded and the most able unchallenged'. It must also be noted that 'ILEA inspectorate and teachers have given much time and attention to devising materials for use with the pupils in years 1-3' and that HMI are at their most critical when describing teaching of the non-selective (creamed) years 4 and 5.

Moreover, contrasts with five and more years ago show that secondary schools 'have become more disciplined communities' with improved pastoral provision which 'should be a suitable basis for future improvements in pupils' learning'. This has come about 'largely thanks to the Authority's willingness to allocate funds towards meeting some of the social problems, to the greater stability in staffing and to the fall in school rolls'.

ILEA's 'policy of continually expanding its nursery provision' has produced some form of nursery education for '30% of three year olds and 78% of four year olds' — which begins to approach that of France. 'The authority aims eventually to make provision for 60% of three year olds and 80% of four year olds'.

Tribute is paid throughout the HMI report to ILEA's more favourable resourcing of its education service. This applies to teaching staff, in-service provision and capitation ('the highest in the country'); helpers and

other ancillary support for primary schools: a laboratory technician for every two laboratories, qualified librarians, modern language assistants and media resources officers for secondary schools. It is undoubtedly through such support that schools facing the greatest social problems have made such marked progress over the past five years. The ILEA has pursued a policy of taking the opportunity presented by falling rolls to invest in improvement, allocating 'extra teachers on the basis of an index of need'. HMI comment that the principles of its staffing policies 'are sound and constitute a good model for other authorities'.

This portrait of the ILEA in 1980 stands in stark contrast with the scenario reported by HMI throughout the rest of the country's education service in 1980/81. For most other LEAs have been suffering sequential cuts since 1976/77 which have been especially stringent and hence devastating in their effects over the past year, and augur very badly for the future as these effects are cumulative.

Inevitably, LEAs with a parsimonious tradition of pride in low rates are those most immediately damaged by cuts, 'many shire counties being among those with less favourable ratios' of teachers to pupils despite falling pupil rolls. The supply of books, teaching materials and equipment 'is slightly less satisfactory in shire counties than in metropolitan districts'. In both primary and secondary schools special remedial provision for children with learning difficulties has been cut.

HMI warn of the long term effects on the secondary curriculum of reduction in specialist teachers and ancillary support, especially as further 'contraction in the secondary school population lies ahead'. Reductions in all forms of ancillary support are adversely affecting primary and secondary schools and have particular impact on certain secondary subjects such as science, art and craft, technology and home economics, and even on mainstream primary work in English and mathematics. Staffing is classed as 'unsatisfactory' in more than a fifth of secondary schools, with 'teachers teaching subjects (not only those in which there are national shortages) for which they were inadequately qualified or not

qualified at all'. Book supply is 'unsatisfactory' in nearly half the LEAs and is resulting in 'the curtailment of homework'.

When staff redeployment and reductions make in-service retraining more urgent, both take-up and provision has been declining since 1978 'as a result of the problems of reduced supply cover and because of the greater difficulty . . . in obtaining financial assistance', and through reduced advisory services and their pre-occupation with 'redeploying teachers rather than advising them'.

Noting an increasing reliance on 'contributions from parents in cash, kind and labour' the Inspectors comment: 'A disturbing outcome of such practice is that it makes more pronounced the difference in levels of resources between schools . . . and schools in areas of socio-economic difficulty tend to remain at a disadvantage*.

That HMI already categorise 15% of LEAs as in 'the lower baseline group', which they register as giving 'cause for concern', is indeed ominous in view of forthcoming further cuts, and cannot justify the complacency voiced by the Secretary of State when the report was published in February.

In the face of this deterioration in provision, what are the chances for progress and responses to the various shortcomings previously identified in the HMI national surveys at the end of the 1970s? 'Teachers cannot be fully effective if the resources needed to support their teaching are absent or if their qualifications and experience are not matched to what they are asked to teach'.

A government which has persistently shouted its concern for educational standards rests condemned as currently destroying the human and material fabric of the nation's education. That same government wanted to abolish the ILEA where standards have been rising over the past five years. Local public outcry saved the ILEA from execution. Can national public outcry save the nation's education service from slow, insidious death from malnutrition?

Falling Rolls in Secondary Schools

Harvey Wyatt

Deputy Head of a Comprehensive School and a member of the Editorial Board of **Forum**, Harvey Wyatt reviews the NFER study **Falling Rolls in Secondary Schools** by Eric Briault and Frances Smith, published by the NFER.

The Briault Report on **Falling Rolls in Secondary Schools** carries that happy blend of detailed scholarship and hardy realism that was the hallmark of Dr Briault's work throughout his period of service with the ILEA.

The report, based on detailed case studies of twenty secondary schools covering a wide range of authorities studies the way in which they coped with falling rolls and discusses the implications at both LEA and school level. This somewhat belated research into problems that could have been forecast by central government a decade ago, is to be welcomed for future reference. It

was funded by the DES at a cost of £37,000 and supported by eight LEAs who seconded members on full pay to assist in the research. The findings of the project are of immediate importance to all in secondary education, bearing in mind that the secondary school population will decline by one-third over the next ten years.

One of the major aims of the project was to study the outcome of the contraction of schools for pupils, teachers, schools and LEAs and as a result to concentrate on management issues that would arise. Part 1 of the record attempts to draw together various common

threads from the detailed case studies present in Part 2, under a number of topic headings. These include pupil admissions, the teachers, accommodation and resources and the curriculum. This review in part attempts to critically assess some of these findings.

The report's recommendations start from the premise that the major objective of government, LEAs and teachers must be 'a system of good secondary schools'. Another assumption is that secondary schools will not be selective at the point of entry — a hope not entirely supported at the present moment by the removal of some able children from the state system by the introduction of the government's assisted places scheme.

There can be little dispute regarding the definition of a good secondary school:

'It would offer a well balanced curriculum to all its pupils, with sufficient choices for older pupils to meet their varied needs. Its intake would be neither selective, to the detriment of other schools, nor over-weighted with less able pupils, with disadvantageous outcomes for pupils in general, as Rutter, 1979, (in **15,000 Hours**) has shown. It would be well staffed with teachers teaching those subjects for which they are well qualified. Teachers' morale would be sustained by reasonable assurances as to their future and by a general consensus as to the curriculum and organisation most appropriate to the school, taking pupils' needs and wishes into account. Since parental support is so important to pupils, the school itself must needs enjoy general parental support; this is likely to follow if the conditions suggested are met.'

The question of the effective size of schools to meet these criteria is discussed and the conclusion reached 'that authorities ought to consider how *few* secondary schools can sensibly be provided, for those few are most likely to be large enough for all of them to be good schools'. There is no attempt to define economic size in terms of pupil numbers. Perhaps we would be better placed with smaller schools with a more flexible teaching force, more prepared to teach a wider range of subjects, particularly in the early years of secondary schools. The view could be stated that early specialisation by both staff and pupils have caused some of the present difficulties. If there are any advantages in falling rolls perhaps it is that it will produce a more sensitive professional teaching force, adaptable to changing needs in medium sized and *manageable* schools. One of the recurring themes of the past decade has been that big is not always beautiful. Witness the enormous problems of some of the monolithic comprehensives in Dr Briault's own authority, the ILEA.

There can be little but complete support for the contention that medium and long term planning over the next decade of planned capacities is of paramount importance. This, allied to the view that this planning must be led by the professionals — administrators and teachers — and implemented by the politicians on the basis of consensus, will be widely acceptable in teaching circles. The vision is an ideal one but the practice appears less promising in a period where there are bound to be serious financial constraints, considerable antipathy by the public to continued expenditure on education by an increasing proportion of the population who will not have children in full time school education.

The recommendations that there should be medium and long term planning strategies based on 1986 and 1991, with margins of at least 10% on maximum pupil capacities is a sound and sensible strategy in view of a recent upturn in the birth rate. Again, educational priorities may be overturned by the pressure of economic constraints.

The report also concludes that the authorities must come to clear decisions on principles and states that this is of paramount importance for pupils above the statutory leaving age. It states that 'planning all-through schools on current sixth form numbers will not do'. The report goes on to argue the case for wide choice and a rich sixth form environment based upon viable groups and contrasts this with the disturbing situation in many authorities, of very small groups and limited subject choice. In line with Macfarlane the report argues the case for separate sixth form provision.

This separation at sixteen plus is quite distinct from the issue of main school education prior to it and the director of the project argues the case for the large school on the basis of the case studies. He states that there are great difficulties in meeting the educational needs of all pupils in the small school. He relates to the question of age of transfer and states that LEAs will need to look carefully at this and have clear policies regarding it.

The issue of keeping open popular and successful schools chosen by parents is raised and the conclusion reached that there can be no case forwarded for closing successful schools. Indeed, the schools should be encouraged to grow to reconcile the need for planning and provision of parental choice. Hence another argument for the large school. It will indeed be interesting to see how LEAs manage this situation and marry the greater freedom offered to parents, as defined in the 1980 Education Act, with the need for planned school intakes.

In addition the case for large schools is strengthened by evidence that as schools shrink in size their intakes become unbalanced and semi-selective popular schools emerge. The case is argued for more careful monitoring at LEA level to ensure that more is known on this score. To protect the contracting smaller school the plea is for more favourable staffing, but certainly unless there is more planning than at present we will continue to be faced with the annual panic measures, based on local rate demands and the way in which this relates to government rate support policy, with sudden last minute changes of direction over staffing. This brings us back to the central theme that owing to the complex interactions and the need to plan ahead for change, within a secure framework of commitment to size of intakes and schools and to predetermined changes in their pattern, planning ahead is critical.

The question of payment of teachers is raised and arguments advanced for the need to radically alter the structure of rewards, based on service and experience. This, it is claimed, would be a more appropriate system in a period of contraction, with many promotion avenues blocked, than in a period of expansion. Perhaps it would have been a better system in the last twenty years and have reduced the 'merry-go-round' of movement between schools by staff, resulting from a fragmented series of graded posts. This was anyway largely unrelated to the need for stability and concern for continuity in schools. It is ironic that difficult times may enforce that greater stability.

In Part 2 of the report the commentary (Chapter 14) looks closely at the curriculum of the contracting school and the issues associated with it, the management in the school of the curriculum, the decision making processes and the maintenance of morale in the school. It lays par-

Research on Comprehensive Schools

Harvey Goldstein

The Professor of Statistics at the Institute of Education, University of London, previously worked at the National Children's Bureau and was a member of the DES advisory group which was given responsibility for advising the Secretary of State on the results of the comparative study of selective and non-selective secondary schools. Here he reviews this study, published last year under the title **Progress in Secondary Schools**, and discusses some criticisms of it.

Having more or less lost the political struggle against secondary comprehensive reorganisation, in the early 1970s the supporters of the selective system began to marshal a variety of statistical evidence in attempts to compare the achievements of children in selective and non-selective schools. Most of these attempts have used public examination results to compare achievements in grammar and comprehensive schools. One of the most sophisticated was that of Baldwin (Black Paper, 1977) who recognised that simple comparisons of comprehensive and grammar schools were invalid because the in-

ticular stress on the unique role of the head in the management of change, and of the need for decisive and clear leadership. It stresses that his role is 'to be alongside his staff in their concerns, to be ahead of the staff in his thinking . . . to bring his colleagues and his school to a broader view of the school, and of the school in its setting within the authority, than anyone else can do'.

The report interestingly divides the attitude of schools into three main categories: (1) 'wait and hope', where no new appointments are made to replace staff who leave until the target loss is achieved, thus causing a danger of imbalance in subject provision; (2) 'plan and persuade' — timetable planning takes place in advance and an attempt is made to encourage the required losses and new appointments are made to cover the timetable; (3) 'plan, redeploy and appoint' — where the timetable takes precedence with its effect on staff losses, new appointments and redeployment.

In conclusion, it is probably not in the area of its recommendations that the report is going to be of the greatest value to teachers and LEA administrators, but in its carefully accumulated case study material that represents a vast range of possible management strategies. Those who are faced with the major problems of falling rolls in the next decade (and they will be in the majority) will constantly find detailed supportive information related to their own strategies, which may modify their own thoughts and actions. The collection of data and its careful presentation in graph and table form is illuminating, and remind one that Dr Briault is by training a geographer and those associated skills are well used in this area. The range and type of information on the background to the schools, the number and range of pupils, teaching staff resources, curriculum changes, use of accommodation, sixth form provision, use of ancillary staff, pastoral systems and remedial provision make a valuable, if salutary, study, and will be an extremely valuable source of reference.

take to many comprehensives had been 'creamed' by the grammar schools. Thus the better examination performance of grammar schools might be reflecting simply a higher ability intake. Baldwin, however, was unable to make a proper adjustment for intake differences because such measurements were unavailable, and instead he used an indirect method to estimate how the extent of creaming had changed over time and used this to 'adjust' his comparisons. Unfortunately, such a procedure fails to take account both of the increasingly selective nature of many grammar schools and of the fact that comprehensivisation began first in Labour-controlled, and hence largely working class authorities, where one might expect in any case a lower performance.

At about this time, a new attempt to compare the performance of children in selective and non-selective schools was started. The Department of Education and Science, after hesitating for some time, funded a project at the National Children's Bureau using data collected in the National Child Development Study (NCDS). This study not only contained data on the educational attainments at 16 years of a large representative national sample of children but also had measures of attainment on the same children at 11 years, before transfer to secondary school. Thus the study was able not only to make comparisons between children attending different types of secondary schools, at the end of their compulsory schooling, it was also able to adjust for intake differences and thus obtain valid estimates of progress. Moreover, the children in the study were 11 in 1969 and 16 in 1974, a critical period during comprehensive reorganisation when sufficient schools of all types were in existence to provide useful comparisons. Thus, these data were the best available, or ever likely to be available, for comparing the different types of school. At the very least, therefore, even if the final results were to turn out equivocal, it should put a stop to any future attempts to use crude comparisons of examination results.

In July 1980 the results of the NCDS study were published, some of them having previously been leaked to the **Sunday Times** (16 March 1980). The report contains over 250 pages and is full of detailed statistical evidence and comment. I shall first summarise the main findings and then look at some of the political reactions to the report.

The principal results concerned tests of attainment in mathematics and reading at 11 and 16 years. For the purpose of comparisons between school types the analysis was restricted to those comprehensives which

had been comprehensive prior to 1969 when the children transferred to secondary school and likewise the grammar and secondary modern schools were those which had kept their status during the period 1969-1974. At 11 years, the scores of the children subsequently going to the different types of school predictably showed that those going to grammar schools had higher average test scores than those going to comprehensive schools who in turn had slightly higher average test scores than those going to secondary modern schools. Also, there was a marked social class difference, with about a quarter of comprehensive and secondary modern children coming from middle class (non-manual) backgrounds compared with just over half in the grammar schools. The crucial analysis was that which compared the average 16-year-old test scores in the three types of school, *at each level of eleven year attainment*. Thus the average 16 year reading test scores were compared for those with high 11 year reading scores, as well as for those with every other eleven year reading score. In this way, children with the same intake attainments at 11 in different types of school at 16 could be compared, constituting a valid allowance for the intake factor. In addition, social class and other variables were allowed for in this analysis. The main findings were as follows.

For both reading and mathematics, for those children in the 11 year old top 20% of the ability range, for given eleven year scores, the average scores of those in comprehensives and grammar schools were no different. While there were few secondary modern school children in this group, they did rather worse than those in grammar or comprehensive schools. Moving down to the next 20% of the 11-year-old ability range, the average score of the comprehensive children, for given eleven year score, comes closer to that of the secondary modern children with that of the grammar school children becoming rather higher than the rest. For the remaining 60% of the ability range the average score of the comprehensive school children is very nearly the same as that for the secondary modern school children at each 11 year score. The study carried out a number of other analyses on other aspects of schooling. It found that 16 year olds were more likely to stay away from school if they were in comprehensive or secondary moderns. The 16 year olds in secondary moderns had a higher reported rate of 'liking school' than those in comprehensives or grammar schools, whereas those in comprehensives were keener to stay on at school beyond 16 than those in secondary moderns with those in grammar schools the keenest of all. When questioned about choice of job, it seems that factors such as social class, parental education and sex were far more important than the type of school attended, which seemed to have little effect.

On reading the report one is struck by the care and thoroughness with which the issues are discussed. No attempt is made to oversimplify and the results are presented with all the qualifications they merit. It is pointed out that the study relates only to one historical and largely transitional period. Caveats are made about the particular measurements used, and there are reservations about the extent to which the study was able to make proper allowance for creaming. In my view, partly derived from being a member of the DES advisory group to the project, this research was as thorough and as competent as any in education. Most importantly, it

demonstrated that *on the best available evidence*, there is little case for claiming that comprehensives are overall better or worse than selective schools or that they 'penalise' the high ability children. Of course, it must be admitted that no research is 'perfect'. Compromises usually have to be made and decisions have to be taken on the basis of accumulated experience and knowledge. While it is quite legitimate for critics to debate particular assumptions or conclusions, therefore, such a debate needs to be carried out responsibly, with a proper appreciation of the exigencies of research. In the remainder of this review I shall argue that much of the recent criticism of this research is in fact both misguided and irresponsible, and actually provides a useful object lesson in how not to carry on a public debate.

Two months after publication of the report, a long critique was produced by Cox and Marks (**Real Concern**, Centre for Policy Studies), and elaborated in the correspondence columns of the educational press. There seem to be four principal criticisms, focused on the analyses of mathematics and reading attainment. Firstly, they criticised the report for failing to set out the raw data. Secondly, they criticised the reading test in particular, on the grounds that it had too much of a 'ceiling' effect at 16 years, ie too many children were obtaining full or nearly full marks to make it a sensitive discriminator. Thirdly, they accused the author and research team of emphasising only those results which conformed to their predetermined view, thus presenting a biased and distorted report. Their final point, subsequently reiterated by Naylor (**Times Educational Supplement**, 22.11.1980), is that the grammar school children will tend to have had more test practice due to the presence of the 11+ which will have 'artificially' increased their scores, thus making their progress between 11 and 16 years look less than it really was.

On the question of presenting details of 'raw data' such as frequency distributions, there is an interesting area for debate. On the one hand, for experienced researchers such extra information should enable them to gain further insight into the results. On the other hand, report length is a consideration and it can be a fine judgement about what to include and leave out. Thus, although some disagreement is possible, any dispute is essentially marginal to the results themselves. Unless the critics argue that the omission per se actually threatens the validity of the conclusions (and Cox and Marks do not claim that), such a criticism is more in the nature of a debating point. To give it high prominence, especially in press correspondence, leaves the impression that they consider it to be a serious threat to validity. Such behaviour constitutes irresponsible criticism.

The issue of 'ceiling' effects is somewhat more substantial than the previous one. The author of the report herself raises this problem but concludes that it does not invalidate the results. Nevertheless, such a view is a judgement and hence a potential source of weakness. Cox and Marks say about the use of the reading test at 16 that 'the National Children's Bureau knew the test was virtually useless at 16 for high attainers at 11 but presented the results in a way which conceals this fact'. Such a statement is not only immoderate and outside the normal canons of academic debate, it is also irresponsible, as before, because it gives the issue greater importance than it really deserves. In a response to Cox and Marks (**Real Research**, by Jane

Steedman et al, National Children's Bureau), the full distribution of the reading test scores is given, from which it is clear that any 'ceiling' effect will not be serious.

According to Cox and Marks the report 'is so biased in its interpretation of its own data that it is hard to avoid the suspicion that those concerned with its production, including the Advisory Group on which the DES were represented, were capable of gross partiality and/or influenced by vested interests'. In subsequent letters to the press (eg **Times Educational Supplement**, 3.10.1980), this point was reiterated and emphasis given to the claim that the National Children's Bureau had made it difficult for them to gain access to the data, claiming that the research was 'shrouded in such secrecy and made so inaccessible' (**Guardian**, 7.10.1980). The issue here is not whether views about bias should or should not be entertained. Different researchers confronting the same analyses might well give different emphases which will reflect their own experience and views. To call this 'bias', however, with that word's popular overtones, is misleading. To come to different conclusions and to say so publicly does not exclude a constructive debate. In such a debate, however, the issues in dispute must be stated clearly so that, like all good criticism, the ordinary reader can understand and even take part in the controversy. Almost inevitably, once accusations are made such as the above, the real research issues tend to become lost and tempers rise. This then may alienate the interested bystander who will often declare a curse on both houses. A more responsible and moderate approach could easily have been used which did not impugn the motives of the researcher. Furthermore, the data themselves were publicly available through the Social Science Research Council's Survey Archive so that it is incorrect to claim that they were inaccessible.

Finally, there is the question of the 'artificial' raising of the test score of the grammar school children. The implicit assumption behind this criticism is that, in some sense, those children whose scores are increased by practice will, if placed in a similar environment to children whose scores have not been so increased, show relatively less progress. This is, of course, a possibility, but there seems to be no real evidence to support it. Among other factors one would expect the quality of the later en-

vironment to be important. For example, if this is designed to enhance the skills which 11+ tests are meant to tap, which might be the case in many grammar schools, then one might expect the children exposed to practice to respond more favourably than the children who were not. The issue, therefore, remains an open one. Cox and Marks nowhere provide any discussion along these lines, but instead claim that the taking into account of their criticism 'would show the comprehensives in a less favourable light', and suggest that 'perhaps this is the reason why it has not been included'.

It is as yet too soon for many serious reviews of this research to have appeared in educational journals, although one fairly lengthy and balanced review by Colin Lacey (**Times Higher Education Supplement**, 16.1.81) attracted further responses from Naylor (**Times Higher Education Supplement**, 23.1.81) and Cox & Marks (**Times Higher Education Supplement**, 30.1.81) along similar lines to those referred to above. One minor academic criticism which had surfaced at the time of writing is a short article by Preece (in the **British Educational Research Association Newsletter**, December 1980). Although rather obscurely framed in terms of hypothetical IQ measurements, it raises the question of whether there are other intake measures which are relevant to the choice of school, for example, the number of older children in the child's family, which should have been allowed for in the analysis. The report itself does indeed recognise this problem and certain factors such as social class and sex were allowed for. It is to be hoped, nevertheless, that other researchers, who can now gain access to the data, will be able to pursue this topic.

I hope that, in defending this study against mistaken and irresponsible criticism, I have not given the impression that I believe it to be above criticism. It is no more immune from criticism than other competent pieces of research in education or social science more generally. As with other research, reanalysis by independent researchers is to be encouraged as one of the best safeguards against either incompetence or fraud. Until such work has been undertaken by the research community, however, it is my view that none of the criticisms so far made of the research poses any serious threat to its conclusions.

Back to Basics versus Freedom of Choice

Joan P. Shapiro

A further contribution from the United States is presented by Dr Shapiro who is now Assistant Director of the Higher Education Resource Service, Mid Atlantic, at the University of Pennsylvania. She spent 1978/79 as an Honorary Research Associate at the University of London Institute of Education.

'I only took the regular course.'

'What was that?' inquired Alice.

'Reading and Writhing, of course, to begin with' the mock turtle replied, 'and then the different branches of Arithmetic — Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision.' (**Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**.)

The mock turtle had its own glib answers to queries relating to the content of the curriculum. In reality, as

we enter the 1980s, educators, ratepayers and politicians appear to be as concerned as Alice about what the 'regular course' in state schools should be.

In the UK, there appears to be increasing emphasis on the need for curricular reform. The government is focusing on a 'core curriculum' while some professional educators are advocating a 'common curriculum' (Lawton, 1980). Although a philosophical gap exists

between these two points of view, there still seems to be a willingness to at least pay 'lip service' (Chitty, 1980) to a concept that would enable all children to receive a balanced selection of knowledge from culture.

In the US, there is no such agreement. Typically, in America, where fads in education tend to appear in a ten year cycle, polarization of ideas and ideals exist. Specifically, I have noted with increasing concern that two opposing views have emerged. These antagonistic camps, I would argue, have succeeded in inhibiting the development of a much needed balanced curriculum.

I would like to discuss, in this article, the two polarised groups. For the sake of convenience, I have labelled one group 'The Back to Basics' advocates and the other 'The Freedom of Choice' disciples.

The Back to Basics Advocates

It has been claimed that the Back to Basics movement in the US has emerged as a reaction to the curriculum innovations in the 1960s. However, it is my contention that this group has always existed in some form and has only become more noticeable and vocal when the country moves towards the political right. The Back to Basics movement is led by conservatives who desire their own children and American youth to receive an education that is familiar to them and, therefore, synonymous with stability. The 'regular course' for them is primarily the 3Rs with none of the 'frills'. 'Frills' are seen in numerous ways by this group; however, they are usually viewed as accoutrements to the curriculum, which may include such diverse areas as the instruction of instrumental music, the teaching of a modern language, or the introduction of famous Blacks and women in to the history syllabus.

At the present time, the Back to Basics movement is very much in fashion in American schools. In my last post, as a university supervisor of student teachers, I had the opportunity to visit many state secondary schools. In the classrooms, I was struck by the increasing emphasis on skill development, on computation, on the memorization of lists and facts, and on tests. The clear and simple message, of the Back to Basics advocates, had indeed filtered into the schools.

For example, in one affluent suburban high school, a concerned and dedicated history teacher explained to me that his unit on American traditional values would no longer be presented in a *two week* timespan. Instead, he indicated that he would compress the Agrarian Myth, Social Darwinism, the Frontier Thesis and the Puritan Work Ethic into a period of *two days*. Value education, I was told, had its place in the curriculum, but facts must be learned. In retrospect, it is my opinion, that a reflective, sensitive and knowledgeable educator had succumbed to the external pressures of those who advocated a 'basic' education and who defined it in the narrowest of terms.

In an urban junior high school, once an alternative, experimental school of the 1960s, Black and Hispanic lower class youngsters spent their time answering multiple choice questions and practicing the process of following directions. Naively, inquiring as to the reason for the narrowness of the curriculum, the defensive teacher condescendingly explained that the results of the California Achievement Test (CAT) will determine the future of these twelve year olds. He reprimanded me for

not realising that, on the basis of their scores on the CAT, the students would be selected for positions in the few academic high schools in the city. In this classroom the drill continued daily; in addition, the tension grew as the teacher attempted to prepare his minority students for the correct one word answers that would determine their fate. Is it not ironic that in America a version of the 11+ has evolved spontaneously as the Back to Basics movement increases?

The Freedom of Choice Disciples

Opposing the Back to Basics advocates are the Freedom of Choice disciples. This group can be defined as child-centred educators. Many of these disciples emerged in the neo-progressive movement of the 1960s advocating that each child should learn in his/her own way and at his/her own pace. They contended that first a child should be encouraged to develop a positive self-image and then be offered a wide assortment of relevant courses, using diverse teaching techniques, in different kinds of institutional settings. In this way, education could be tailored to a child's individual abilities and level of emotional maturity.

To meet both the positive self-image and basic needs requirements of the Freedom of Choice disciples, small alternative high schools, varied educational programmes, innovative curricular materials and diverse courses were developed.

These neo-progressive educators also focused on the concept of a changing world. To enable the child to cope in a society of flux, flexible scheduling was in vogue; open education, without the barriers of classroom walls, was attempted; avoidance of subject matter division and age differentiations became very popular.

I believe that the neo-progressives of the 1960s provided us with many exciting and innovative concepts and techniques, but they have also left us with some serious problems. Carl Popper explained this phenomenon so well when he wrote that for each intended action, there are some unintended consequences. (Magee, 1973)

In this instance, one unintended consequence was 'the patchwork curriculum' (Cawelti, 1974). The patchwork curriculum is clearly demonstrated in a recent survey of secondary schools in the state of Illinois. There, it was discovered that over 2,000 course titles were listed in state schools at the secondary level. Such a diversity of electives existed that Humm and Buser (1980) found it 'difficult to determine commonalities in content, purpose and expectations of instruction' among the courses.

The patchwork curriculum has resulted in confusion. For example, college students have claimed that their secondary education had primarily given them the expertise to select easier courses, at better hours of the school day; parents have questioned how their teenager could have completed an advanced mathematics course and yet never fully mastered the multiplication table; minority parents have complained bitterly that their children, with high school diplomas, still cannot read; business and industry spokespersons have remarked that potentially employable youths have no basic skills to prepare them for available posts; college board officials have noted that scores on entrance examinations

to universities have markedly declined; women have charged that they were not encouraged to select enough mathematics and science courses, thereby unknowingly closing off whole areas of potential employment.

Another unintended consequence was that evaluation of innovations of the 1960s were seldom performed using appropriate and consistent methodologies. Longitudinal studies were also neglected. Cogan (1973) charged that educators were 'unwilling or unable . . . to develop the processes by which innovative ideas are critically and exhaustively examined prior to being adopted by the schools' (p 2).

Some of the charges levelled at the Freedom of Choice approaches to education represent gross oversimplifications that can be answered. Nevertheless, the majority of American students in the 1960s have experienced some of the drawbacks of the movement. Without the assistance of an able guidance counsellor or a knowledgeable adult, the student is left to drift, trying to discriminate between interesting and detached course options.

With regard to the lack of evaluation of innovations, clearly in the absence of formative and summative assessments, how can it be claimed or determined that a new programme has succeeded?

British educators have discovered that the option system has had its limitations and has not provided children from all social classes with a worthwhile and balanced education (Chitty, 1980). In the UK as well as the US, there have been difficulties because the success and failure of innovations were measured by inadequate psychometric approaches (Hamilton, 1976).

The Curriculum Debate in the 1980s in the US

Although I believe that the polarisation of views of the curriculum is not healthy, realignments and re-evaluation of views and positions are currently taking place. This flux is described well by Neil Postman (1979) who wrote:

'In America, as Lawrence Cremin once wisely observed, whenever we need a revolution, we get a new curriculum; which is to say, more than we acknowledge, our public (state) schools lie at the centre of our own civilisation. When the tide shifts, as in the course of things it must, there will be another crest of criticism. And perhaps we will have learned something from the last wave.' (p 11).

Postman is one educationalist who has openly discussed a broad-based curriculum for state schools. Although I do not endorse his 'thermostatic' view of education, which asks that a curriculum be developed in opposition to television and the cult of relevancy, I do believe that his curricular model has at least stimulated debate and has made educators think of curriculums of scope and of substance.

Another positive sign of curriculum development can be found in the Essentials of Education movement. Currently, eleven professional educational organisations have publicly stated that American society must reaffirm the value of a balanced education without reducing the curriculum to the 3Rs. These organisations have drafted guidelines defining the need for subjects, previously dismissed as non-essential by the Back to Basics advocates.

In addition, Harvard University has recently redesigned its undergraduate curriculum. In it, disciplinary boundaries have been erased and areas such

as anthropology, computer logic and ethical decision-making have been included. As America's most prestigious postsecondary institution, these new requirements will no doubt rebound on the development of curriculums at the secondary school level.

Conclusion

Clearly, we in America have just begun to grapple with the concept of a balanced curriculum. I believe that we have a long way to go before we can attain the level of debate, reflection and definition you have reached in the UK.

A common curriculum, which is based on 'the principle of social justice' is a profound notion. In 1978-79, I had the good fortune to spend a year at the University of London's Institute of Education. The scholars I met there had begun to design balanced, commonsense curriculums which had the potential to benefit British youngsters of all social and economic classes.

In the US, pendulums of educational trends swing in the most dramatic ways. Currently, with a right-wing government, the Back to Basics advocates are 'legitimate'. Under the rubric of this movement, with the major objective of providing ratepayer relief, fine arts can be easily omitted; curriculum projects can be no longer utilised; varied teaching methodologies can be discouraged; alternative educational institutions can be closed. These are only a few examples of changes which can be made in the name of a 'basic' education. The irony of this situation has not gone unnoticed by Longstreet (1979) who wrote:

'There can be little doubt. Public (state) education is on the verge of total irrelevancy . . . The world is staggering through a maze of unknowns — uncertainty is an integral part of our daily lives. Yet what we do in schools is being progressively pushed towards the clearly discernible and the easily described.' (pp 129-130)

On the other hand, the legacy of the Freedom of Choice disciples has caused increasing concern. The 'patchwork' curriculum has left many students to flounder. Unless proper assistance is provided, many youngsters can be set adrift without a solid knowledge base and without any skills for future employment.

The mock turtle has warned us about curriculums which teach not what was intended and end in derision. In both the US and UK, there is a need to carefully consider what we will offer our youth. Perhaps, standard subject matter divisions will not suffice for children who will be working in the year 2000. Perhaps, rigid, inflexible requirements are not the answer. It will be no simple matter to provide guidelines which blend the study of history and traditional values with the awareness of relevant needs and a changing world. It will not be easy to consistently design a curriculum which embodies beliefs in social justice and ethics and takes into account the needs of emerging pressure groups, such as women and minorities, to study their own rich heritage. It will not be simple to encompass C.P. Snow's belief that we will not instruct our children properly 'unless and until the Americans and we educate ourselves both sensibly and imaginatively'. (Schumacher, 1973) But at least we can continue the debate, introduce balanced and stimulating curriculums, evaluate their effects, and constantly modify the original designs.

Sex Role Stereotyping and Ladybird Books

David S. Whiting

This article on sex role stereotyping follows on and up-dates that by Glenys Lobban in 1974 in *Forum* Vol 16 No 2.

The content of basic book schemes for children who are learning to read has not escaped the attention of the increasing body of researchers who concern themselves with the detrimental effects of sex role stereotypes. The leading papers in the field have been those by Weitzman et al (1972) in the USA, and by Lobban (1974) in Britain. Both appear in the Children's Rights Workshop publication *Sexism in Children's Books* (1976). The tendency for early reading schemes to portray traditional sex stereotypes was noticed by HMI who produced the *DES Education Survey 21* (1975).

Lobban's work remains the main systematic study of reading schemes used in British infant and junior schools. One of the six reading schemes studied by Lobban was Ladybird's *Key Words*. She describes it specifically as showing 'a white middle-class world peopled with daddies in suits, and mummies in frilly aprons, who take tea on the lawns in front of their detached houses' thus incorporating, like Dixon later, incidental criticism of race and class stereotypes also. In this article I propose to re-apply the mode of analysis used by Lobban to one title in the scheme.

The choice of Ladybird rather than one of the other publishers is deliberate. In 1978, there appeared from Ladybird a book which seemed to reveal a strong commitment to putting the ideals of Dixon into practice, in a form that was widely available to parents and teachers. The following extracts from *Telling The Time* by Lynne Bradbury (replacing a completely different book of the same title) illustrate its freedom from stereotypes:

'It is 9 o'clock. Older children go to school'.

(Several children go in, accompanied by one mum and two dads, one of whom is black.)

'At 9 o'clock Mummy is working, Daddy is working'.

(Two daddies are in an office and on a building site, one mummy is vacuuming the carpet, the other is in an office interviewing a man. She is also black.)

'It is 10 o'clock. Everybody is busy. What are they doing?'

(A Dad is shopping with the kids. Boys and girls are painting at school. Several men and women, black and white, are working on a factory production line. Everyone appears to have just been told a huge joke.)

'At 11 o'clock grown-ups have a drink too'.

(While the workforce enjoys a cup of tea, a white man who has dropped his on the floor mops it up, watched by women.)

'At 2 o'clock the grown-ups are busy too'.

(Occupations shown include hairdresser — male — and police officer — female.)

'At 7 o'clock, when the children are ready, it is time for a story'. (Brother and sister sleep in the same room. Daddy tells it.)

'At 8 o'clock Mummy is going out'. (To her evening class.)

Lobban asserted that the schemes she studied depicted a world that was 'more sexist than reality'. Without detracting from the great worth of the book described here, it could be said that parts of the text were more

non-sexist than reality.

The existence of the McGraw-Hill Guidelines (issued 1974), in which a prominent American publisher made clear recommendations to its authors concerning the avoidance of sex stereotypes, might make it a valid hypothetical assumption that a publisher such as Ladybird, responsible for a book such as *Telling The Time*, may be developing a similar positive commitment to reform. The Guidelines are limited by the statement that the 'language of literature cannot be prescribed' but there is no reason to include children's readers on this plane as they are constructed, even contrived, for a specific teaching purpose.

The title from the Key Words series that is to be used as a basis of comparison of the 1964 and revised 1980 versions is *Things We Do* (4a). The most immediately obvious difference between the two versions is the transformation of Jane from the 'Alice band and white dress' image to that of a modern miss in T-shirt and blue jeans. The textual and pictorial details which have relevance to stereotyping, with commentary on retentions and changes, are set out opposite.

Each textual or pictorial element considered to have any relevance at all to stereotyping has been given a numerical coding. The coding system is as follows:

1. Stereotyped situation retained
2. Natural situation retained
3. Stereotyped situation neutralised
4. Natural situation made stereotyped
5. Stereotyped situation reversed
6. Neutral situation made non-traditionally stereotyped
7. Non-traditionally stereotyped situation made traditionally stereotyped
8. Non-traditionally stereotyped situation retained

Lobban's (1974) analysis has been used as a means of classifying situations. The asterisk* against certain elements coded as 2 identifies elements concerned with taking charge of pets. This is apparently shared between boy and girl, though Lobban classifies it a 'boys only' skill. Close study of the three instances here will, however, reveal that in each the boy or girl is taking charge of the pet because the other is engaged in a traditionally stereotyped activity. The question mark against certain elements indicates that they are only weak examples of that coding.

In total 60 elements have been coded. The totals for each coding are as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. 35 | 5. 4 (all of which are ?) |
| 2. 10 (of which 6 are ? or *) | 6. 0 |
| 3. 8 | 7. 1 |
| 4. 0 | 8. 2 (both ?) |

Page	1964 version	1980 version	Coding
cover	Page 4 picture — Peter painting car, Jane looking on	Page 15 picture — Peter painting while Jane prepares tea	1
4/5	'Peter wants to make a car . . .' 'Jane looks on.' "Yes", says Jane, "make it red"	'They want to make a car . . .' 'Jane helps Peter.' "Yes", says Jane, "we can make it red"	3 3 3
6/7	Picture — Jane looking on "We will make some cakes for Peter and Daddy"	Picture — Jane with brush in hand No change	3 1
8/9	Picture — Jane helping Mummy Both drawing, initiated by Jane	No change except clothing No change	1 2
10/11	Picture — Jane with drawing "Will Daddy let us . . . make a house in a tree" — asked by Peter	No change No change	2 1
12/13	'Daddy lets the children have a house in a tree. He draws the house, and helps the children make it.' (and in picture) "It will be a good house" — initial statement by Peter	No change	1
14/15	"Let us have tea here", says Jane. "Yes", says Peter, "you make the tea". "I like to get the tea, like Mummy"	No change No change No change	1 1 3
16/17	"No", says Jane to the dog "Look", says Peter. "There go the Police"	No change No change	2* 1
18/19	Picture — Jane carries shopping basket Peter holds the dog Peter points to the shop	No change No change Jane points to the shop	1 2* 5
20/21	"I will be the man in the shop" says Peter "I want some things for the house", she says, "and then I want some things for tea"	No change No change	1 1
22/23	'Peter has to help Daddy with the car' 'Jane has to help Mummy work in the house' 'She likes to help Mummy'	No change No change 'She and Peter like to help Mummy'	1 1 3
24/25	Picture — Jane helping Mummy 'Peter is at work with his Daddy' 'He likes to work with Daddy'	Picture — both helping Mummy No change 'He and Jane like to work with Daddy'	3 1 3
26/27	Picture — Peter with Daddy 'Peter helps his Daddy to make a big fire'	No change No change	1 1
28/29	Picture — Jane holds the dog 'You can see Daddy at his big fire' 'Jane has a big boat and Peter has a little boat'	No change No change 'Jane has a little boat and Peter has a big boat'	2* 1 7
30/31	'They want to fish' 'Peter has a fish. "Look at my big one", he says' 'Jane says, "Look, I have two little ones".'	No change No change No change	2 1 1
32/33	'The two children are at the farm' 'Jane likes her little horse' 'Peter has a big horse'	No change No change No change	2 1 1
34/35	"Let us help with the cows" — initial statement by Peter	No change	1
36/37	"Let us help the man milk the cows" — initial statement by Jane. "Can we help you?" says Peter — initial inquiry to stranger	No change	8? 1
38/39	"What will you do?" says Jane "I want to help you make the farm", she says	"What will you do?" says Peter "I want to help you make the farm", he says	5? 5?
40/41	Text and picture — Jane has a little cat, Peter has a big rabbit "Is it milk? Give some to my rabbit, please" . . . "Keep the cat away"	No change No change	1 1
42/43	"Away we all go to the sea" — initial statement by Peter. "What can we do at the sea, Daddy?" "You can all do what you like"	Initial statement by Jane No change	5? 1
44/51		No change	1, 2?, 2?, 1, 2?, 1, 8?, 1?, 1, 1, 1

A clear majority of elements remain in coding 1, traditionally stereotyped situations. The aspects of sex roles conveyed by these elements include the following: separate activities for boys and girls, boy initiating joint activities and verbal exchanges with others, boy has bigger animals, boy expected to lead dangerous activities, parents engaged in separate activities, father considered car owner, father has final decision on family activities. Out of 47 elements classed as traditionally stereotyped, only 8 have been made neutral and 4 reversed, and all 12 are surrounded with reservations.

One aspect of traditional sex stereotyping noted in Lobban's work, yet which is not apparent in the text of the book analysed here, is the predominance of male central characters. At least it may be said that the Peter

and Jane stories have a central character of each sex. Their centrality recedes, however, after books 9a-c. Even Peter becomes peripheral, while Jane is to be found firmly back in the traditional role.

It must be clear that, though Ladybird have been prepared to publish the highly progressive **Telling The Time**, there can in fact be no overall policy on stereotyping, such as that shown in the McGraw-Hill Guidelines. Although social change too is relatively slow in the area of stereotyping, there is no evidence that the book analysed here, and therefore the series which it represents, has moved any faster ahead in relation to the society it serves than when Lobban asserted the reading schemes were more sexist than reality.

Reviews:

Something wrong

Tell Them From Me, edited and introduced by Leslew Gow and Andrew McPherson, Aberdeen University Press (1980), pp 125, £5.50. flexi, £12.00 hardback.

I can still recall being deeply moved, a decade ago, by reading **Letter to a Teacher** by the School of Barbiana, a passionate denunciation of the Italian school system by eight young boys from the mountains outside Florence. This book set out to show, and indeed demonstrated eloquently, that attitudes towards class, behaviour, language and subject-matter militated against poor children, while the offspring of the middle class were absorbed effortlessly into the schools as teacher's favourites. The message of the book was clear and devastating — school is a war against the poor, the underprivileged and the unqualified.

Much the same message comes across loud and clear in a recently-published anthology of comments made by pupils about a year after they left school. **Tell Them From Me** is a selection of 'vivid and urgent stories' drawn from two very similar postal surveys of representative samples of Scottish school leavers conducted in 1977 and 1979. The school leavers write frankly and forcefully about their experiences of searching for employment, about their disillusion, about their views of school: the subjects taught, examinations, relationships with teachers, discipline, corporal punishment and truancy. It is a special feature of the book that it reproduces faithfully the style and the spelling of the original comments.

Particular prominence is given to the experience of pupils and leavers who achieved few academic qualifications whilst at school, if any at all. In recent years, roughly 30 per cent of Scottish secondary pupils could be described as 'non-certificate' in that the courses of their final years did not lead to their sitting the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE). A further 15 per cent or so of pupils were entered by their schools for the SCO 'O' grade examination, but they failed to achieve any awards in the range A to C. Almost half of Scottish pupils, then, approach the end of their school life with little or no hope of attaining a substantial qualification.

The editors feel quite justified in placing the spotlight on the rejects of the system. Ordinarily (they argue), their views and prejudices receive scant attention; moreover, they were the ones who seized the opportunity to comment freely and at length on the blank back page of the questionnaire; and their responses tended to be more interesting, passionate and controversial than those of

the academically successful. Whereas the comments of the highly qualified tended to be longer, the 'non-certificate' writings had qualities of insight, vigour and expression that the others simply lacked.

Very little of what they have to say makes for comfortable reading, especially from a teacher's point of view. One reviewer has already asked: 'what teacher is going to lash out £5.50 to be drubbed into despair?' But this, of course, is to miss the point. We need to know what pupils are thinking if we are ever to create an education system that is tailored to their needs. And this *must* include all those kids who get a raw deal at present. As the editors say in their sensitive Introduction: 'if we are reluctant to listen to pupils and engage them in dialogue, then we are almost certainly also reluctant to educate them. And that is exactly what many pupils say is the case'.

In a section of the book entitled 'No time for dunces: rejection is mutual', one girl writes:

'The reason I never went to school the past year was because I was in a non certificate class and the teachers had no time for dunces. we did not get any work of any kind every day at our different classes we just sat all day doing nothing . . .'

And in the words of another girl who truanted 'weeks at a time':

'I didn't attend school regularly because in my last year the school didn't give us any thing of intrest, I was in one of the lower classes and we didn't get O level work. I myself think that all classes should be made the same because if you are in the Lower classes you lose all intrest in school.'

In the five years from 1972, unemployment among young school leavers more than doubled in Scotland. In the light of this fact, it is hardly surprising that the writing of the 'non-certificate' unemployed expresses great frustration and bitterness at a situation of 'no vacancies'. One boy, unemployed for nine months, writes:

'I have been looking in most every place in for jobs, and I still haven't had a job. Sometimes I sit in the house with nothing to do and other times I go out with my friends who are also on the dole. When we go about the streets the police usually pick us up for know reason at all. Some people thing we are to lazy to work, but little do they know.'

A bleak picture, then, admittedly; but awareness of the situation is an essential prelude to coming up with some answers. In the words of one fourteen-year-old comprehensive school boy in Edinburgh: 'my best teachers are the ones who recognise that there's something wrong'.

CLYDE CHITTY
Leics.

A model defense

Middle Schools: Origins, Ideology and Practice, Edited by A Hargreaves and L Tickle. Harper and Row (1980), pp 319.

Middle schools, being relatively new, have not yet been the subject of much research. This book takes us through their emergence and development, then reviews such data as exists in the hope of influencing decision-making about the schools, their purpose, organisation and day-to-day activities.

The contributions, selected from the recent work of members of the Middle Schools Research Group, reflect an enthusiasm which tends to weaken a statement in the conclusion that the book is not really a defence of middle schools.

The opening section introduces a history of middle schools over the last two decades in spite of introductory comments that this is already well-documented in previous publications. Early ideas put forward for the necessity of 9-13 schools in parts of Worcestershire are a welcome addition to the usual West Riding story. Colin Marsh, a middle school headmaster, gives a careful, reasoned account of the spread of middle schools in Worcestershire to almost the whole of the county today.

Educational reasons for middle schools abound, but the message comes through strongly that initial progress would have been unlikely had economic and demographic reasons not prevailed. The use of existing buildings and the spread of population, particularly in rural areas, were the deciding factors when coupled with a movement towards comprehensive secondary education in the 1960s.

Mundane reasons of this sort are strongly reinforced in Dennis Warwick's chapter which probes into school governing bodies. He also adds fire to the opinions of many educators that governors often exert little influence on educational interests and cultural provision in a school. To help offset 'cuts' and their deadening effect on the life of a thriving school, governors should take courage and accept the wider role which is rightly theirs.

What should an ideal school be like? A grand sweep into myth and unquantifiable assumption is narrowly avoided by attempts to secure ideas to practical ends. Readers are made to think about the uses and abuses of abstract terms like democratic egalitarianism, responsiveness, inventiveness and integration, and the hint seems to be that we should be careful how we use them as a basis for practical operations. Jennifer Nias's chapter parades a procession of 'ideals' but lack of evidence prevents an assessment of how far

schools go towards meeting them. They should, therefore, be subject to critical appraisal. But it makes interesting reading.

James Lynch, Head of a School of Education in Australia, takes a different stance, noting the importance of goodwill, commitment, application and creativity of the teaching force in the initial success of middle schools. To maintain such success may prove difficult due to a variety of circumstances, one being the extent of deterioration caused by three years of cuts. When discussing teaching styles, he points out, using the 1978 Primary Report in support, that progressive teaching can't be blamed for supposed fall of standards if three quarters of teachers use a mainly didactic approach.

An investigation of teachers' relationships with colleagues in first and upper schools reveal that less actual contact is made than one would hope. This does not hinder opinion, which is fully quoted. The most pungent statement is from an upper school teacher who sees middle schools only as extensions of primary schools, for which he apparently has scant regard — 'they play for two extra years'.

Will middle schools be able to justify their continued existence in the present climate of financial restriction and falling rolls? Can they survive? Should they survive? If, as Jennifer Nias reports, middle school 'morale is high, the present is rewarding and the future exciting', further research should be able to buttress the arguments of those who wish them well.

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Once upon a time

The Leicestershire Plan, ed A N Fairbairn, Heineman, £9.50.

As falling rolls and cuts in public expenditure bring to the fore the debate on the organisational structure of the education system it is worthwhile reviewing present structures, particularly those that developed from earlier desires for educational and social change.

The Leicestershire Plan is a commemorative and celebratory volume on the coming of age of one such organisational structure of 'secondary' schooling — the 11-14 High School and the 14-18 Upper School. The volume, edited and introduced by the present Director of Education, contains thirteen essays by present and former teachers, mainly heads, within the authority and in this sense it is very much a personal and enthusiastic statement of belief in the strengths of the plan although one that lacks distanced objectivity. A point that is perhaps only being furthered by my own parochial comments.

The introduction of the innovatory Leicestershire Experiment in 1957 in what is traditionally a very conservative county, would appear to be very much the outcome of political expedience. The twin educational bogies present in the 50s, of selection at 11 and the threat posed by the huge comprehensive schools, would appear to be solved by creating a break in secondary schooling at 14. The creation of reasonably sized comprehensive high schools for 11-14, based on the

former secondary moderns, and the creation of an upper school for 14-18, based on the former grammar schools, with a maximum size of 1400 seemed to be a suitable solution. Twenty years later, though, the Leicestershire concept of transfer at 14 has been taken up by few other authorities, only 3% of the country's comprehensives have adopted the same pattern of transfer and those mainly in authorities where there have been Leicestershire disciples. The transfer at 14 is defended by Fairbairn on the grounds that the post-14 age group is not tampered by pre-puberty and the 'tiresome antics of "children"' and the upper school spans the great 'divide' of the school leaving age of 16, whilst the high school generates 'an atmosphere of enthusiasm, questing curiosity, and sheer joy of living untouched by the more cynical, worldly-wise, slightly dour post-puberty atmosphere introduced by the older age groups'. Another contributor, though, more cynically attributes the 14 transfer as a *post hoc* rationalisation, in order to bring about the required school sizes and groupings.

The contributions are grouped under the four headings: the High School, the Upper School, Curriculum Development in the School and Curriculum Development Areas outside the School. They follow the two themes of, firstly, describing the evolution of a school organisation pattern that developed whilst attempting to match comprehensive aims and the resources made available and, secondly, how the administrative set up encouraged and enabled stimulating and creative educational experiences to take place within the authority's schools. The essays in the volume outline and describe with enthusiasm many innovative and exciting practices within Leicestershire schools; the ideals behind 14+ transfer; the desire to reduce the age of transfer to high school to 10; the visionary approach to Design education; the almost unique opportunities for links with Europe; the desire 'to encourage students in their self confidence which will enable them to live with change, and the flexibility which can, where necessary, adjust to it', links with the community and industry and so on.

Play is made, in the introduction to the volume, of the opportunities the upper school provides in breaking down the great 'divide' between those students leaving at 16 and those staying on. However, those students who still wish to leave at 16 either for work or further education only have five terms in which to settle into a new institution. Furthermore, even though the concept of the 'open' sixth has developed well in Leicestershire there is still a great difference in the educational opportunities provided by the 'open' sixths and a technical or further education college. The traditional role of the 'tech' has not been radically affected by the Leicestershire Plan, the 'comprehensiveness' of the Upper School would appear to have failed to assimilate this whole area of educational activity.

The Leicestershire Plan describes a plan and education authority that certainly did provide an enrichment of educational opportunities. It is a selective description and on the whole an uncritical one. The merits of the Leicestershire structure are extolled in this book and make very interesting reading, but surely any structure is dependent on those resources provided for it.

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Radical nostalgia

Finding a Language — Autonomy and learning in school by Peter Medway, Chameleon Books, published by Writers and Readers (1980), pp 95, £1.95.

Yes, I'm afraid so, groan, groan and take a deep breath, it's yet another book with 'Language' and 'Learning' in the title. If publishers' lists were any sort of guide to teachers' new insights and schools' new practices, then the flood of literature about how people learn and how schools frustrate them should be provoking major change in secondary school procedure. The truth of course is otherwise: the times don't seem right for any brave change (did they ever?) and some of the books, to be fair, are less useful than they promise to be. But if you read no other book about education this year, read this one. It's very short and very well-written, so that it manages to state a theoretical case in a couple of marvellously concise and lucid chapters, and then, at the point where most books stop, goes on to show the theory put to work in a team-taught Humanities scheme begun in a Yorkshire comprehensive in 1975. Medway begins by asking what is crucial about the best of current English teaching; not, he argues, its content, often indistinguishable from other disciplines (Animals, Seasons, The Family, War) but its broader definitions of what counts as Knowledge (other subjects stressing facts and devaluing personal experience), its insistence on the idiosyncrasy of the individual learner (other subjects favouring objectivity) and its encouragement of a wide range of language styles (other subjects insisting on the adoption of their own specialist language). 'Under the guise of just another curriculum subject', he claims, 'English has come to enact nothing less than a different model of education'. The point is not that English is out of line, but that all the other subjects are; the model should be adopted by the rest of the curriculum. As he describes the work of the team of teachers he was in, the projects undertaken, the diaries and logs kept by teachers and pupils, we realise how far-reaching the implications of the alternative model are. If you're used to keeping a tight hold on the reins it may all seem a bit messy; Medway doesn't pretend that it isn't. He's after a model of schooling based on 'student consent', and few of us have begun to tackle that.

But though it's a radical book, it's also a nostalgic one. The experiment he took part in is over, and the chances for innovation seem slimmer all the time. 'If the late sixties had continued instead of turning into the mid-seventies...' muses Medway; they did worse than that, kid: they turned into the early-eighties. Given the present state of things, maybe we don't have much to lose; but desperation is a bad reason for making changes. This little book offers a human rationale for change and perhaps we should swallow hard and heed it before desperation is all we have left.

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