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This Issue

A reappraisal of Primary Schools within a comprehensive system

Editorial Board

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The Next Forum

The next number of **Forum** focuses on the 11 to 16 age-range, the central years of the comprehensive school. Desmond Nuttall contributes a critical assessment of present plans for the new 16 plus examination, which will determine for years to come the internal organisation, structure and content of comprehensive schools. Patricia Broadfoot writes (also critically) on the 'profile' system of assessment, as it appears to be developing, and John White writes on present proposals relating to the common curriculum (or common core).

Related articles include Derek Roberts on the successful mixed ability approach in his school (Bugbrooke, Northants), Peter Mitchell, head of Quinton Kynaston school, London, writes on the use of primary school records and assessment, while Harvey Wyatt contributes a critique of the NFER's research report on mixed ability teaching. In addition a further instalment of Caroline Benn's article on 'The Myth of Giftedness' will be included in this number.

The ideology of cuts

The Autumn 1981 number of **Forum** presented six personal statements which reaffirmed the philosophy of comprehensive education, reviewed and assessed progress achieved in the past quarter century since **Forum** began campaigning, and discussed some of the shortcomings and problems of the movement to create universal comprehensive education in this country. With this number we begin our phase by phase examination of where we are now and what needs to be done, starting with an appraisal of the effect on primary schools of the structural reorganisation of secondary schools as comprehensives. Our contributors are mainly concerned with the effects on the process of primary education, on the nature of primary schools today. They are also concerned with the persistent recurrence of certain attitudes and practices from the pre-comprehensive selective era, or their revival in apparently new guises.

Aspects of this revival can clearly be attributed to deliberate strategies pursued by the present government to sabotage the successful momentum towards a genuinely comprehensive system and the concomitant of progressive developments in primary schools which had been encouraged by the Plowden Report. The 1980 Education Act, which enshrined in law the mystique of parental choice, was a critical landmark in this subversion. The Assisted Places Scheme is the most blatant revival of the discredited selective principle.

That the insidious effects of repeated cuts in public expenditure on education have steadily eroded improvements in the quality of educational provision and accentuated contrasts between more favoured and already disadvantaged schools was incontrovertibly documented by HMI last February — since when the situation has undoubtedly deteriorated further. HMI then admitted that 15% of LEAs already gave 'cause for concern' and observed that 'schools in areas of socio-economic difficulty tend to remain at a disadvantage'. In December a joint local survey of Leicestershire schools by the NUT and the Child Poverty Action Group revealed many alarming effects of education cuts combined with the impact of parental unemployment on the health and general welfare of children from the most deprived environments, where larger classes and lack of remedial teaching were particularly damaging.

The repercussions of so-called parental choice must inevitably be to discriminate against those children whose parents cannot afford either the bus fares for sending them to a more fortunate school or the voluntary contributions and fund raising on which schools increasingly depend. Children's educational opportunity becomes more unequal and the basis for an effective comprehensive system is further undermined.

The effects of Michael Heseltine's schemes to compel LEAs to curtail education expenditure still further in 1982/83 will be to make an already serious situation even worse. Not only is central government's rate support grant to local authorities to be cut by 3%, but those authorities whose local conditions have made it essential for them to spend heavily, or which have tried to maintain reasonable services, will be penalised by a reduction of up to 7% to force down their level of provision. By the application of an arbitrary, mechanistic formula Michael Heseltine has decided that their 'needs' have now suddenly to be less — they are to be punished for their supposed excesses. Local authorities as a whole are to be forced to cut their expenditure so as to spend £1,000 million less than they calculate they need to maintain services at last year's already reduced levels. As education is the largest item in local authority budgets, schools can expect to be very hard hit.

As we go to press the exact details of Heseltine's Local Government Finance Bill are uncertain because the government has undoubtedly been taken aback by the extent of the campaign mounted against it and the consequent revolt among Conservative MPs. But it is the government's clear intent to curb local democracy and to seek ways of preventing LEAs from providing a maintained education service to meet the needs of local children and the aspirations their parents have for them.

This is an attack not only on comprehensive education but on the right to state education in any meaningful sense. It is part of a dogmatic policy of privatization of education whereby more parents feel compelled to seek to buy private schooling or to subsidise inadequate public provision through purchase of textbooks and materials. This is perhaps the most insidious undermining of the basic comprehensive principle.

Simultaneous cuts in higher education, at a time when there are more 18-year-olds than ever, means that many youngsters who have worked hard at school to obtain the requisite qualifications will be denied admission to universities, polytechnics and colleges. The generation for whom comprehensive schools have striven to open up opportunities is being told by Sir Keith Joseph that the Robbins principle is now dead. This threatens to lower morale in comprehensive schools and revive pressures for pre-selective grooming and identification of supposed high-fliers at the dictate of expediency.

This scenario will test the conviction of the adherents and protagonists of the philosophy of comprehensive education. The achievements of a quarter of a century are under attack and must be defended. We can now see more clearly where we went astray, where we compromised with the past, how we faltered in the realisation of goals. Despite the difficulties, we must hold fast to our educational principles and beware the revival of discredited theories and practices disguised under new terminology. Honest reappraisal is a necessary adjunct to charting the way forward. **Forum's** phase by phase assessment aims to contribute to this: our May number will focus on the 11-16 phase of comprehensive education.

Meanwhile **Forum** calls on its readers to expose the ravages being inflicted on the public education service and to urge colleagues, parents and all who value children's right to a genuinely comprehensive education to campaign for its survival.

Comprehensive reorganisation and the primary school

Brian Simon

Any appraisal of the effect on primary education of comprehensive reorganisation must reach the conclusion that, overall, very positive changes have resulted. We have now almost forgotten that one of the main educational arguments favouring the comprehensive secondary school was precisely the elimination of the 11 plus examination, whose backwash effect on primary education was increasingly regarded as disastrous.

One effect of the 11 plus was the imposition of rigid systems of streaming on primary schools. In the period following World War Two, nearly half the all-age elementary schools in the country were finally reorganised into separate primary and secondary schools. The imposition of the tripartite system, however, ensured that the new junior (or primary) schools streamed their pupils in the insistent effort to groom the few for the available scarce grammar school places. While the move towards abolishing streaming in primary schools began in some areas before the abolition of selection, the fact is that this movement, finally supported by the Plowden Committee, took off with extraordinary rapidity from the mid-1960s. The 1978 HMI survey showed that streamed schools were a rarity — the great bulk of primary schools had, by this time, deliberately abandoned the practice of streaming.

It is extremely doubtful if this move would have taken place if the tripartite system of secondary education had continued. Certainly the actual abolition of the 11 plus made this transformation of primary schools a practical, and educationally desirable, possibility. The swing to comprehensive education from the mid-1960s was, in fact, paralleled by the swing against streaming in primary schools. These developments can be seen as two sides of the same coin. (Both, incidentally, can be traced in detail in back numbers of **Forum** over the last twenty plus years, since from the start, **Forum** has seen both movements as closely allied.)

But this was not only an organisational change. The abandonment of streaming and the abolition of the selection examination liberated the primary school from the straitjacket of the past. Many, for instance Sir Alec Clegg, the well-known CEO for the West Riding, held that a primary school revolution had taken place in the 1960s. There is a good deal of evidence that this period saw a significant broadening of the curriculum, a more humanist approach in teacher-pupil relations, and in particular (though this may have been taken too far) the individualisation of the teaching/learning process, as strongly recommended by Plowden.

As an aspect of this movement there developed what may best be described as the 'informal classroom', where, instead of the children sitting in rows facing the blackboard and the teacher, the children are seated informally round grouped tables or desks. Group work as well as individual study became the rule, as exemplified in the findings of the ORACLE research; class teaching, though still utilised, was radically reduced. Further, with the demise of the 11 plus and its concomitant, the discrediting of intelligence testing, a more positive approach to children's capacities and the possibility of their development became more popular. The iron laws of psychometry no longer held the field. Instead the concept that the child's development depended in part at least on his educational and other activities began to gain widespread support. It is symptomatic of the new dispensation that the ORACLE research found that teachers do not discriminate in the distribution of their attention against (or in favour of) any particular subgroup in primary schools — either by sex, age, level of achievement, or social class. This is a far cry from the situation obtaining under streaming.

The situation in primary education, then, was transformed in the 1960s and early 70s as a result both of comprehensive reorganisation and a radical change in the theoretical outlook of at least a proportion of teachers, advisers, etc. Certain developments in the 70s, however, operated to constrain primary schools in the new context. Here the **Black Paper** propaganda and (at the other extreme) the Tyndale school affair both left their mark; both acting to put a stop to advances that some saw as too revolutionary. There can be no doubt that in the mid-70s a heavy pressure was put on primary teachers by politicians, in the media and elsewhere constraining them not to step out of line. Since then the schools have felt the pressures of declining rolls, and, although the teacher-pupil ratio declined considerably in the 70s (from 27.2 in 1970 to 23.4 in 1978) circumstances have made it difficult to gain full advantage from this while the trend is now deliberately being reversed. At this time, too, severe cuts in finance have reduced the options available to primary teachers.

In the present climate new pressures are being felt in the primary schools, as several of the articles in this issue make clear. These, however, are not so much the result of comprehensive reorganisation as of the failure to carry through this reform fully and effectively, as well as of recent legislation by the present government which is in no way concerned to make comprehensive education a success — rather the contrary. Nevertheless, in drawing up the balance sheet, we have to recognise that the primary schools today have been freed from the main institutionalised external constraint of the past — the 11 plus (or at least the vast majority of them). Educational principles, rather than those of selection, can now provide the objectives for their work. The contrast with the position fifteen to twenty years ago must not be forgotten — the massive and essentially arid coaching on intelligence tests in the A streams (and at home); parental offers of bicycles, radio sets and the like — and their obverse, nightmares and illness — these no longer obtain. And a base exists from which all those concerned can ensure that these practices have been consigned to history — never to return.

How liberated are primary schools?

Graham Jameson
On the basis of his experience as a class teacher in various inner-city London primary schools and then as advisory teacher for primary education in Lambeth, the Head of Walnut Tree Walk Primary School in South London reflects on the impact of comprehensivization on primary school teaching.

Let me take you on a selective guided tour of an apocryphal Group 6 south London primary school. It is a fortress-like three-decker, just south of the Thames in an educational priority area. (The immediate environment around the building shows few signs of other priorities.)

The children who attend the school are almost exclusively the offspring of parents occupying the last two or three of the Registrar General's occupational categories — they are working-class children. Many of them are from one-parent families. Many of the parents were immigrants from the Caribbean, a few were from North or West Africa, a few from Asia and a few from Cyprus, Spain, Turkey or Portugal.

Our tour will take a brief look at the three fourth year junior classes in the school. On, say, a Friday morning at 11 o'clock in the classroom of Mr X, the children are having their spelling test. They have this every Friday at 11 o'clock. They take the words home during the week and learn them for Friday. Some of the words are common mistakes that the children make and some are words that Mr X thinks they ought to be able to spell. Mr X's room is neat and tidy. The furniture is arranged in more or less orderly rows. The children have their trays ready on their tables so they don't have to keep 'wasting time' on going to get things from the trolley. On the walls of the classroom are some paintings and drawings and many felt-tipped illustrations. The room is silent, save for Mr X's enunciation of the tested word.

In Ms Y's classroom there is more noise. The children are doing a project around a TV series called 'How We Used to Live'. One group is transcribing a tape-recorded interview with the school-keeper who was educated during the war. Another is working on a detailed drawing of a gas-mask sent in by someone's granny. A third is devising and then painting propaganda posters derived from looking at postcards bought the previous week on a visit to the Imperial War Museum. The work in progress is clearly evidenced in the detailed display that surrounds the children.

On to Mr Z's class where you tread very softly, the proverbial pin would sound like a ship-yard's siren. The children here are doing a 'mock' (the irony is unintentional) verbal reasoning test. In a few weeks time they will be doing the 'real thing'. Mr Z is giving them old copies of a test from previous years and is doing so under 'test conditions'. There is an atmosphere of sustained, pencil-chewing concentration mixed unmistakably with a dash or two of despair. Some children scribble at the test, some stare blankly ahead or out of the window or at the various charts and pictures that randomly adorn the walls. The sweaty intensity of the room is disagreeable. Just now you are not welcome here and you leave quickly.

Here for the moment our tour ends. This school and its inhabitants are fictitious but from a world that most inner London primary teachers know about. Naturally, none of the very competent teachers in my own school is exactly like X, Y or Z, nor could they be identified as one of the many and variously talented teachers that I met in my time as advisory teacher.

However, they are all distinct possibilities, familiar compounds and illustrations of the possible forms of pedagogy on offer. In some ways what they do in their classrooms is similar but in lots of very important ways it differs in purpose and/or style and/or content. In fact what could loosely be called the primary curriculum is a rich and varied beast. Where, then does it come from?

Curriculum and freedom

This question has a fairly straightforward answer with regard to secondary education. The curriculum comes from the syllabus and the syllabus comes from the requirements of public examinations. Of course there are other more general and vocational 'aims of education' within which the syllabus is placed, but the content, if not the style of a child's time in the classroom is closely related to an exam that he or she will at some point have to take.

Before secondary re-organisation this was in many ways also true of the primary school. It was certainly true in fourth year juniors. Classes were invariably streamed (naughty word for banding) into A, B, C, etc., and a large chunk of a child's fourth year work was spent in training for the 11 plus — thus the daily jog of chanted tables, the time-trials working on 'intelligence' tests (naughty words for verbal reasoning test) against the clock leading to the final race itself, the examination where one won or lost.

Before secondary re-organisation, lots of 'good' things went on as well. At its best, and particularly at the nursery and lower junior level, the primary school has historically provided a good liberal education, an education in people rather than subjects, an enlargement of skills and talents, a drawing out of potential. One might have hoped that the removal of the necessity to train for the 11 plus would make this more generally true, would even liberate primary schools, setting the curriculum free to meet children's real educational

needs. Some of the rhetoric on offer at the time of secondary reorganisation indeed advertised these possibilities.

And to be sure, there have been real gains. There is now less pressure on primary schools for examination success, less pressure on children, less early sense of failure. Coupled with that is more imaginative and adventurous curriculum planning. Yet, just as comprehensives have delivered only some of the educational goods they offered, so secondary reorganisation has not lived up to all that it promised in terms of primary advance.

Verbal reasoning tests

To start with, the 11 plus may be dead and buried but its heir, the verbal reasoning text, lives on to carry on with much of the bad work. Children (in ILEA at least) still have to take a standardised, timed test in the fourth year of their junior school. The test no longer assesses what was called 'intelligence'. It now assesses something called 'verbal reasoning'. There is still a certain tautologous symmetry involved in the proceedings.

The test tests verbal reasoning which is a facility to do well or badly in the test. Outside of that it is nonsense being neither verbal (but literary) nor testing 'reasoning' (whatever 'reasoning' is a test for it would surely have to exclude reading attainment and general knowledge).

In the instructions for administering the test, one is urged to treat it as far as possible as part of normal school routine. That of course is laughable and children still worry and fret and sweat before and during the test. The VR designation (no longer passé A, B, or C but new computer-style 1, 2, or 3) appears as the secondary transfer form. Parents see this and inevitably most children somehow learn of their designation and if you are a '3' it does not feel good.

A number of schools still coach 11 plus style for the VR test. They either do lots of VR tests as practice-runs for the real thing with the fourth year or withdraw a group of potential '1s' and coach them intensively, or they do both.

The children are told, correctly, that the VR designation makes no difference to their chances of a particular secondary school and, again correctly, that the test is anonymous and the 1, 2, or 3 is given by the school on the basis of its performance in comparison with the rest of the sample.

But what we should know from common-sense as well as from evidence from Rutter, Rampton, the HMI Primary Report etc., is that what counts very largely in a child's educational performance is how he or she feels about him or her self in the context of school life. Here the rhetoric of fair-minded, systematic procedure that attaches to the VR test is irrelevant. A sense of failure is still something that can haunt the child throughout its educational career and can originate very early in that career.

We are learning our identities before we start school. School helps to shape us, to fix us as well as to develop us. What X, Y or Z do in their classrooms actually affects how we think about ourselves, what we think we are capable of, who we think we can be. In view of the awesome power they hold perhaps we should look at why X, Y and Z are doing what they're doing.

Alas, the picture is far from clear. It may be that what they are doing works as it always has, occupies children in an ordered fashion, gives them a structure. It may be a matter of whim, it seems like a good idea at the time. It may be a coherent and planned educational programme that nevertheless capitalises on the children's interests and is open to interpretation by them.

Whatever the rationale at work in a particular classroom and even where there is no conscious or articulated rationale, the shape and format of what actually happens there are born of a rich, even miasmic mixture — a combination of training, personality, school policy, curriculum guidelines, what is felt to be expected attainment at secondary school, educational styles and prejudices, what are thought to be the demands of society and even what is seen as the needs of the child.

Lurking in all of this are major and minor organisational changes. How central are they to real change? Can we take out a list of, for instance, all the beneficial effects of secondary reorganisation on the primary school? I've tried to indicate that there have been some real gains. However, I'm forced to conclude that the educational progress we have made throughout the system has been too much about form and not enough about content. The statistics are stark and depressing. The chances of a working-class child going to university have hardly improved at all. The chances if that child is female or of certain ethnic origins are even less.

What we, as a profession, badly need to address ourselves to is the question of practice. How do we contribute to the poor educational performance of black working-class girls? What do our visible and invisible curriculums tell children about who they are and who they can be? And how far has our interest in changes in the structure of the system, informed by concepts like equality of opportunity that are rich in resonance but sloppy in content, been a way of distancing ourselves from what we actually do in schools?

LOOK AFTER THE RICH & THE POOR WILL LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES

Comprehensive Education & Parental Choice

Michael Clarke
Head of a primary school and member of **Forum's** Editorial Board, Michael Clarke discusses parental influences on schools in the context of parental choice of school.

If cuts in the financial provision for education, the assisted places scheme for children to participate in private schooling and moves towards positive accountability of teachers have shaken the superstructure of comprehensive education, giving parents the right to choose which school their children will attend might well shake the foundations. The success of comprehensive schools depends on a co-operative effort by all levels of society, for comprehensive education implies that all children will receive what is best for them irrespective of their ability or parentage. If segregation of any sort is produced by a move which encourages individuals to work for their own advantage without consideration for all other members of society, then that co-operative venture would end. It seems to me that parental choice would trigger off such a movement.

Co-operative efforts have to be nurtured very carefully for we are all so easily motivated by promise of personal benefit. Parents and teachers will be put in this latter position by this part of the 1980 Education Act. It has often been said that so much time and effort was spent on debating and deciding the forms of secondary reorganisation whereas the important point was what happened in the schools afterwards. But then, the forms of reorganisation affected teachers' career prospects and job security. In this present issue a similar factor will be involved. Falling rolls are necessitating schools being closed, and the decision on which schools might close in a particular area could be decided as a result of parental choices.

Headteachers are employed to promote the interests of a particular school. Governors expect their headteachers to put all other considerations into second place. They both, firstly, want to be proud of 'their' school and only secondly to be satisfied that they are promoting the overall interests of a local authority's educational policy.

Parents put the immediate interests of their children first and for them this must be so. If a school organises an event of general educational interest then few parents will attend. If the event is geared to the concerns of their individual children, eg parents' interviews, then nearly 100 per cent will attend.

When free to choose a school for their children, parents will exercise that choice according to the only criteria they have available to them. These are nearly always severely limited and often based on hearsay evidence. They always refer to facets of a school which either have public manifestations or are related to the personal experiences of one or two children. These facets are often relatively unimportant in themselves — eg school uniform, concert performances, speech day pronouncements and in a sense even examination successes and sporting achievements. These latter of course can be the outcome of fundamentally worthwhile work in the whole school, but a school may be providing an excellent educational atmosphere without overt signs of success eg in areas with many disadvantaged children.

All parents, then, decide educational issues on the basis of what they feel is best or what they would like for their children. It would be no good appealing to parents on the grounds that a particular school might suffer because of a trend of which their action was a part. If they thought that school 'A' was best they would not opt for 'B' because it might have to close or for 'C' because it might not be able to offer a full range of courses in the future.

Who will choose and why?

Which parents will be making choices? First of all it will be the ambitious, energetic, confident and articulate group. I suggest that they will want the opportunity for their children to gain qualifications which will enable them to progress up the academic ladder, the opportunity to mix with other pupils whose behaviour they consider to be socially desirable and the opportunity to engage in prestigious activities, like skiing holidays and foreign exchange visits.

These parents, then could start a move which would change the characteristics of schools. As those characteristics became more marked others would follow the fashion. The more successful a school is — in the academic sense — the more able children it will attract. In a falling rolls situation this movement could be quite rapid. At times of bulges in population, schools would be full and the scope for accepting children from 'choice' would be small. But with schools half empty the balance of ability could be dramatically changed in a couple of years. There was a report in the **TES** recently of sixty parents in Wiltshire asking for children to be moved from one secondary school to another, on the grounds of the way the first school was run.

The movement of children might be made also on the grounds of race or religion. The nation's denominational schools have always had a privileged position in that they have been able to accept or reject pupils where parents have made a choice on grounds other than catchment area. A recent report, **Race and Church Schools** by Ann Dummett and Julia McNeal for the Runnymede

Trust, shows how an element of choice in intake has produced schools which are unbalanced in both race and religion. It also points out that distance of home from school is not always an inhibiting factor when parents make a choice.

Schools must now produce a booklet of information for parents to enable them to make an informed choice. Presumably secondary schools will receive all of their 'requests' before informing parents which of them have been successful. Some schools will be able to accept all who wish to go there, but in the case of schools which have more requests than their 'planned operating maximum' will allow, the headteacher would have to make a selection. I doubt if this will be made on the grounds of the order in which the requests are received. If an appeal is made againt rejection what criteria will be used to judge the appeal? Will the comprehensive ideal be foremost?

There are certain schools which will start with disadvantages which they can do nothing about. These include old buildings with poor facilities such as no playing fields, being situated within low value housing or popular immigrant areas, primary schools with no nursery facilities, and all overcrowded schools.

There are some factors which will make a school attractive to some and unattractive to others, which again the school itself is unable to control. Included here is the age range for which the school caters, eg all-through primary as opposed to separate infant and junior schools; 11 to 16 with sixth form colleges or middle plus upper schools. Already there is the choice at sixteen of continuing to sixth forms or moving to Colleges of Further Education

School response

Schools will of course react to the new situation as it develops. My fear is that those qualities of a school which I consider to be valuable, but which are not easily identified by 'outsiders', might be given less priority. Among these is the quality we know as 'caring'. In fact certain aspects of the caring school could have an adverse effect on the school's public image. Some headteachers accept children with behaviour difficulties from other schools, to give those children either a new start or to remove them from an unsympathetic environment. The presence of disruptive children becomes known very quickly in a catchment area. Disruptive children make academic progress in a class more difficult. In 1979, the magazine **Teaching London Kids**, gave figures to show that in 1977 certain Voluntary schools in London were not taking a fair share of referrals. This trend could spread as Head Teachers tried to improve their school's image.

Some schools may make changes in their curriculum and methods to produce the sort of results which parents can recognise and believe to be worthwhile. In the primary school these are reading, writing, spelling and rapid recall of tables, and in secondary schools, examination passes. Again, these can be associated with good, comprehensive teaching but they can be produced at the expense of a broadly based curriculum.

If, for any of the reasons mentioned, there is such movement across the catchment area boundaries, which many schools have at the moment, liaison between various groups of schools, eg between primary and secondary, middle and upper, will inevitably be reduced. Falling rolls present us with an element of uncertainty which we can do nothing about, any extra degree of uncertainty must be avoided if at all possible. Secondary schools' range of courses and closures of primary schools could be two casualties and the reduction in security for staff could be accelerated.

Already the fear of competition between schools is being voiced as schools produce their handbooks of information for parents. Glossy, coloured magazines will compete with simple, factual typed sheets. Headteachers will, naturally, try to make their school seem more attractive than others. Attractive that is, to those parents who are likely to exercise their right of choice.

Whose right to choose?

If parental choice is being implemented to allow market forces to operate in removing or improving the poor schools, I think there are better methods of achieving this aim. The Taylor Report's recommendation of more parents on Governing bodies would be likely to produce much more debate on important school issues, with the possibility of changes being made to benefit all the children in the school. If it is being implemented to encourage schools to specialise, then first that development should be debated and then if deemed desirable, brought about by planned, co-operative efforts. If it is merely to satisfy a vague doctrine of 'individual rights' then more debate is required to determine whose rights have priority and whether the right of every child to obtain a comprehensive education would be lost in the process.

If we agree that comprehensive education is desirable, and if we agree with the **Circular 10/65** definition of a comprehensive school as one '. . . in which pupils over the whole ability range and with differing interests and backgrounds can be encouraged to mix with each other, gaining stimulus from the contacts and learning tolerance and understanding in the process . . .' then the right of parental choice should be replaced by the right of parental involvement.

When schools have become unbalanced by the exercise of parental choice there will be no way of redressing the balance as long as that right remains. We do not know how great the effect will be, but if we are aware of the possible harm that could be done perhaps those of us who care about comprehensive education can prevent it.

Records and Assessment

Charles Frisby
The author worked with Penguin Educational on the first three units in the **Primary Project**, has taught in various schools and colleges in Yorkshire, Coventry and the USA, and is now headteacher at Manor Park Junior School in Coventry.

When I started teaching twenty years ago I didn't bother much about keeping records. I suppose (but I can't remember) that I might have had an exercise book into which I entered a tick against a child's name when I heard him (her) read, but the schools where I worked did not require me to keep such records, and there did not seem to be any systematic approaches to record keeping at all. College had not mentioned them; I had never seen them on school practices; it simply never occurred to me that records might be useful to someone else besides myself. I had the responsibility for ensuring that thirty eight children made some progress, and my performance was checked at the annual standardised testing festival, when children were required to bark at a piece of paper which began 'Tree, little, milk, egg, book . . .' I do remember the occasion though when an eight year old read fluently up to 'university' and then stopped dead. 'That's all I've done' he said. His dad was a primary school teacher.

When I moved to another school in another LEA I did have record cards to complete. Some were pink and some were blue, and I had to assess the performance of pink and blue children in English and arithmetic, perseverance, initiative, sociability, and emotional stability.

Like a lot of teachers who find themselves locked into something less than 200 cubic yards of space with thirty five children for a good portion of the day, I had some difficulties completing these every year before parents' night. Presumably I was meant to regard perseverance as positive only if Jason managed to knuckle down to the arithmetic tool box for forty minutes without a sigh or an upward glance. We were, I think, to disregard the knowledge that Brian could persevere for four hours on a chilly Saturday morning by the canal attempting to catch a pyke; or that Dorothy's initiative and sociability might best be expressed in the way she entertained her friends while their mums and dads were visiting the club.

So fairly early on I came to regard record cards with some scepticism. So did most of my colleagues, because the cards appeared to be filled out in a very haphazard way, at least the parts concerned with educational development were. We all thought that the cards could not *really* reflect the life of classrooms or the behaviours of children. We had disturbing thoughts too. We recognised dimly that Sharon's failure at long division might well have had something to do with our own failure to present it in any way which made sense to Sharon. Besides, Sharon was a nice little girl who liked to bring her teachers bunches of flowers. Blowed if we were going to mark her innocent, earnest efforts with a D, however objective we might have thought it to be. Give her C minus.

We seemed to get along alright. At the beginning of each new year the teachers sorted out their classes in their own ways while the pink and blue cards lurked in the Head's filing cabinet. They became useful after about a month in order to confirm maybe that Dawn should be wearing her glasses, or that Mark did indeed have some history of bladder trouble. And the occasional ritual of 'Tree, little, milk, egg, book . . .' seemed to show that most children were about right when an Adviser popped in. In any case, at that time, as I recollect, Advisers were more concerned with what went on the walls than with what went on in heads.

Grades of confusion

When I became a Headteacher though, the perspective changed. Comfortably installed in an office, I would greet parents who wanted to know something about the progress of their children. Mostly I would refer them to their child's teacher, but they didn't seem to want that, or they had already had that. Somehow they thought I ought to know more than the teacher, being higher up the ladder. I think they really *expected* me to have detailed records on their children. I must confess I was excited by the thought of being able to swivel round to the filing cabinet, or (better still), of being able to call on an intercom, 'Bring in 3842's record Mrs Briggs', and have access to 3842's total developmental progress. Good thing these records, I thought. But still my earlier scepticism remained. It seemed useless as well as unkind, to be able to tell 3842's mum and dad that 3842 was not very good at maths. 'D' again. 'Just the same at his other school. Is there anything we can do at home?'

I remember when I first began to introduce Dienes's logic games to young children. What surprised me immediately was that many of the children who were considered to be failures at maths were very good with the games. They seemed to enjoy the challenge of solving problems and they were able to do all kinds of mathematical gymnastics. Recently, colleagues who have worked with young children on micro-processors have said the same (and teachers of mathematics ought to stop and wonder at the continuing popularity of puzzles like the Rubic cube). Why can't they do long multiplication then? Why are they so slow with their reading? Some work had to be done.

So I began to spend much more of my week visiting classrooms. Teaching, yes, but mainly working with teachers and with groups of children, or freeing teachers to work with other teachers. We found that the best way of trying to find out how children learn was to observe them engaged in some mental activity as a group. Naturally we couldn't spend all day talking to each other about what we had observed, so we started to write notes to each other. Case studies if you like. After a quite a short time we found we were compiling anecdotal records of development, particularly in reading and mathematics, which we could share and compare. 'Profiles' as they later came to be called. We learned very quickly that some children would resist the most patient efforts of their teachers when they were given individual attention but were quick on the uptake when they had to justify a process while working with a group, especially if the teacher spent most of the time listening and not interfering, except to reassure. 'A' for long multiplication in group work, 'D' for long multiplication in solitary effort. Our assessments depend on the context. Far more than we realise.

Observant teaching

It wasn't long before our notes were written on specially designed school forms, which could be collected together in A4 ring binders. And it wasn't long after that that the school had to buy 12 rather battered two drawer filing cabinets to store the profiles in each classroom. They had to be in the classroom because we thought that the children needed to know how they were progressing by having access to their own files. They needed to know what the teacher had commented about their reading progress last week (or last year), and they needed eventually to be able to use the records of their progress to begin to set their own aims.

Our record keeping influenced our actions. We found we could observe children learning for quite long periods if we cut down drastically on the individual attention and tried to train them to work in groups. We did not at that time have the benefits of **Oracle** or Miss Southgate's work, but group work became an important means of enabling children to extend their reading skills and to evolve strategies for problem solving. And it was certainly more efficient. As teachers we found that much more of our energy was spent in cognitive contact with children, and that we knew that the more retiring child could not be overlooked. We realised that because we were observing more, we were teaching more effectively. Our curriculum planning was more and more based on our collective observations of the ways in which children were learning, and the attainments and attitudes of the children were enhanced. In short the record system became rather more than a simple device for collecting and transmitting information. It determined the way we worked.

During this time I was invited to join a working party to draw up and implement a profile record system for the LEA. The idea is that the record should be maintained from the moment the pupil enters the system until he leaves it — though at that time the notion of 'Education Permanente' was not widely recognised. The profile now in operation in the schools is quite a hefty package. It consists of a (pink or blue) folder on the front of which is written essential information which all educational institutions need to know. Inside, pockets for samples of the pupil's pencil to paper output,[1] and for the record itself. The Infant record has six pages: home background information which may affect the child's progress in school, physiological factors; emotional and social development; development of play; early skills development; language and communication skills.

The Junior record continues with language and communication skills; a mathematics profile; social and emotional factors; reference and survey skills. The profile is accompanied by detailed notes and suggestions as to how it might be completed. Many Authorities are no doubt working on similar systems. But the Coventry profile contains an unusual feature. This is the language appraisal. Heavily based on the work carried out at Leeds by Joan Tough,[2] it offers the teacher a check list by means of which she can focus on certain aspects of language use by young children. Some will argue that the Tough model is not the only useful one. Others will say that *any* check list used universally throughout a LEA's schools is bound to ensure that many essential things will be missed. Both views are right. But I think it is important that observations of children are based on *some* detailed theoretical model because it enables meaningful communication to take place between teachers and others concerned with educational development. Besides, teachers are not stupid. If enough of them realise that the theoretical model is out of phase with their own experience, then they will say so, and the model will be accommodated, or a new one substituted.

Changing classroom practice

The difficulties of using the profile successfully relate to aspects of classroom organisation. At present I think most teachers see the profile as a not so simple substitute for the old record card. Not only is it fifty times as heavy, but it takes twenty times as long to fill it in, and the filling in has to be done every year, in some cases every term. Items have to be ticked off and comments written in, dated and initialled. Since there are over 100 attributes for each child (say 3,000 for each class) in the Junior profile alone, which have to be assessed, this is quite a handful for weary teachers trying to reconstruct the events of the past few months. The obvious answer is to be able to record significant events as they happen. But this cannot be done in classrooms given over to the predominant ideologies of individual attention or to class instruction. In the one, any attempt to sit back and observe and record for a few minutes leaves the teacher with a queue of eager individual attention seekers, and in the other an abdication from stage centre by the teacher will give the usurper on the front row his chance. So a profile system of this complexity can become an instrumental feature in changing the teacher's role, since it can lead to the adoption of classroom practices which encourage teachers to develop skills in participant observation, rather than didactic skills. This has interesting implications for Secondary schools, and some Coventry children will go on to Secondary schools next September with their Primary school careers fully documented in their profile.

A good way of judging the quality of a school, I think, is to eavesdrop on the staffroom. In staffrooms teachers' talk is usually full of amusing and interesting comments on the minute events of classroom life. Insights, experiences and ideals are shared. Children, and the ways in which they learn, are the never ending subjects of discussion and argument. It is in staffrooms that the teacher's real professional socialisation takes place. Perhaps I have been lucky to have shared so many staffrooms where such talk has been so interesting, educative and humane. But then perhaps not lucky, for I suspect that most staffrooms are like this when they are not being observed by ethnomethodologists. Millions of children in daily contact with tens of thousands of teachers, and yet we have little in the way of systematised bodies of knowledge which really assist us in doing the job better.

Record systems now are an industry. Encouraged no doubt by the rumblings following the Black Papers and Bennett, the mutterings about accountability and the strange events at Tameside, politicians and Officers, Advisers and Headteachers see the detailed profile record as a handy bureaucratic device for enabling decisions about schools, teachers and children to be made without moving too far from County Hall. Richard Winter has made the point nicely about the political and administration uses of such files.[3] Clearly, information can be misused.

However, I do know that their use can very greatly assist the professional development of teachers, and I really do believe that the more highly developed our professional knowledge is, then the greater will be our effect upon the community we serve.

References

1. The value of collecting samples of pupils' work is acknowledged in the Bullock Report, para.14.11 (1975).
2. Joan Tough **Listening to Children Talking** Ward Lock (1976); **Focus on Meaning** Allen & Unwin (1974); **The Development of Meaning: A Study of Children's Use of Language** Allen & Unwin (1977).
3. Richard Winter 'Keeping Files: Aspects of Bureaucracy and Education' in **Explorations in the politics of school knowledge** Ed. G. Whitty & M. Young Nafferton Books (1976).

Talking it through

Maureen A.A. Hardy
An ex-College of Education Lecturer who has returned to the classroom, Maureen Hardy is now in charge of Language Development at a multicultural school, Sandfield Close Primary, in Leicester. Simultaneously, she is undertaking related research for a higher degree at the University of Leicester. This article is the sequel to 'Talking in School' published in **Forum** Vol 22 No 2 (1980).

Action research within the school context has produced a relatively simple approach to fostering and assessing communication and comprehension skills, which may be of use to busy teachers. Memorisation of the criteria involved is aided by the symmetry of the design — four clearly defined objectives as a planning guide and four main dimensions for monitoring the growth of both effort and quality of response. A visual method of analysis speeds interpretation of results, thus providing readily available feedback for future planning. Before describing the approach, it is useful to consider its relevance.

The importance of oral development in education tends to be overlooked in practice. As Leicester University's recent ORACLE study indicates:

'Most pupils return home after a day in school having had very little conversation on matters relating to work either with the teacher individually or with their fellow pupils. If they do interact with the teacher, they probably will be "talked at" not "talked with" and conversation between pupils will, in many cases, have nothing to do with work as such.' (**Inside the Primary Classroom**, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.)

Thus many children read with apparent fluency, but look blank when comment is required. Similarly, older students gain credit for blind regurgitation, instead of being encouraged to think, discuss and make sense of the knowledge transmitted to them. The written word is overemphasised, while discussion and comprehension deficiencies remain hidden, because verbal presentation is rarely required. The fallacy of equating performance with learning covers a multitude of such weaknesses. In consequence, many are ill-prepared to face an increasingly complex world in which the ability to adapt and apply knowledge and facility in verbal communication are key factors. In this context, a concentration on the development of discussion skills appears imperative. It is by talking it through that understanding grows, issues are clarified and rational decisions rendered a possibility. Further verbal competence is essential for effective self-presentation. True talent may remain hidden because verbal inadequacies hamper or conceal its development.

Current research indicates the connection between talking and learning, eg the extensive Schools Council study directed by Joan Tough. Douglas Barnes (especially in **From Communication to Curriculum**,

Penguin, 1976) implies that exploratory talk is important if students are to make valid connections between existing and new knowledge and between ideas and their application. A point raised in the 1975 Bullock Report (4.9.):

'The development of the individual context for a new piece of information, the forging of links which give it meaning, is a task we customarily tackle by talking to other people.''

Further, the **ORACLE** study concludes that the most successful teachers are those who engage in above-average levels of interaction with their pupils, encouraging the use of higher-order reasoning skills. (**Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom**, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.)

How to encourage talk

Paradoxically, few teachers give sufficient attention to oral development, yet many acknowledge that verbal facility aids conceptual development; deepens comprehension; produces satisfactory and satisfying self-expression; fosters rational judgement and prepares for the world beyond school. It is not as if time has to be found for yet another curriculum subject, since to be effective discussions must relate to topics of current significance. Accordingly, it should be a way of rendering more efficient the learning opportunities already available. Class discussion takes place, but tends to be rigidly structured leaving only predictable slots to be supplied by the already verbally fluent and a few willing listeners — inattentiveness being an easy option. Spontaneous discussion, a useful first step, is inadequate without appropriate follow-up. Group discussion, potentially more fruitful, tends to be regarded as difficult to organise, but the problems are not insurmountable.

My school has a high proportion of children working in their second language, so a focus on discussion and meaning is essential. We have discovered that many first language children require similar help. It is easy to assume that they can cope, when in reality their comprehension may be limited and their verbal skills underdeveloped. Shared comprehension cannot be assumed even in an everyday context — for instance, an intelligent girl suggested that owls might live in a trunk in an attic. Later it transpired that she had visualised a tree trunk. Abstract ideas must cause even greater anomalies. Satisfactory learning takes place when the pupil forms a bond between underlying ideas and the language used to express them. To aid this process, teachers and pupils must become partners in shaping the discussion and seeking mutual understanding. The following excerpt from a transcript illustrates the process in action.

Topic work and talk

The topic was 'Books' and the six to eight year olds involved were discussing a Japanese story which they had enjoyed. Notice how initial useful disgressions are gradually brought to focus on the main topic:

A. 'Are there any shops in Japan?'
T. 'Yes, there are many shops and many things to buy from them.'
B. 'They have got buckets with things in . . .'
C. 'He just sits there with all the ragged cloth and with sort of tins.'
D. 'But that's made in Japan.' (pointing to the tape-recorder)
(The teacher explained that modern Japan is very different from the situation at the time of the story.)
T. 'If you were going to Japan, what would you want to know about the place?'
E. 'Has it got horrible food — not English food?'
T. 'You would eat Japanese food in Japan.'
E. 'Eh! — Horrible.' (All pull faces)
T. 'How many of you like going to Chinese restaurants?'
Chorus — 'Yes, yes — yum, yum!'
T. 'Well if you like Chinese food, you might like Japanese food too.'
(The theme was discussed further and then a child's question changed the course of the conversation.)
A. 'Are there monkeys in Japan?'
T. 'That's a good question — how could we find out the answer?'
F. 'You could go there or ring them up.'
T. 'Good idea, but can you think of another way?'
E. 'Ask someone who was in Japan.'
T. 'Yes, if we knew such a person — I would try to find out in a simpler way.'
A. 'In a map.'
T. 'Good idea, but would a map tell me whether or not there were monkeys there?'

The conversation continued discovering exactly what information different types of maps might provide. Eventually, a girl suggested consulting a book. This led to discussing where relevant books may be found and who at the library might help locate the answers to the growing list of questions.

Small group sessions

In our school, in addition to regular class discussion, we have explored ways of organising for small group sessions. Our open-plan situation, flexible approach and urge towards co-operative teaching helps, the Head being an active member of the team. Shortage of space is a handicap, but successful sessions have taken place amidst general activities. When possible, we use one of our few small rooms or even the medical room or staff room. On a rota basis, groups of from six to twenty may be withdrawn from multi-class activities (eg singing or watching a film) for blocks or several consecutive weeks. Similarly, reciprocal arrangements can be made between two teachers. Extra groups are possible when students are present. Partially supervised groups may prepare a tape for later follow-up. Groups may be class based or range across age-groups. Some have a remedial function; others stretch children intellectually. Frequent review and revision is aided by use of cumulative language records designed to identify specific needs. Organisation is not easy, but it is proving worth the effort.

Through intensive analysis of several groups, I have discovered that in many cases verbal abilities can be extended with a minimum of instructional time. My groups had a half-hour per week for periods varying from a term to a year. Most improved considerably, despite unavoidable breaks in the programme and the presence of some children with behaviour problems, poor English or lack of verbal motivation. Initially, some were very poor; the best began at a mediocre level. Some children made only moderate gains, but several exceeded all expectations. The Hawthorne effect does

not apply, since group work is a norm in the school and they were unaware of special monitoring. My own enthusiasm may have been a factor, but anyone who opts for the approach must reflect some of it.

Aims and objectives

I began my research by considering which factors seem to help nurture verbal fluency in some children. Possibly their parents 'talk with' them, not 'at' them and expect sensible comment on shared activities. If schools are to educate children adequately for the modern world, they must create similar opportunities for all children so that relevant skills may be fostered. As a starting point, I suggest adopting the following aim: THE CHILDREN WILL DEVELOP AND EXTEND THEIR INQUISITIVENESS AND WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN INVESTIGATIONS. With that as a goal, interesting situations should be explored by motivated teachers and children.

In order to achieve such an aim, relevant sub-skills have to be developed. Children require encouragement to:

1. Observe carefully;
2. Listen attentively;
3. Describe accurately;
4. Comment sensibly;
5. Recall relevant information;
6. Use their imagination to link strands of knowledge;
7. Project beyond the immediate;
8. Predict plausible outcomes;
9. Frame reasoned answers;
10. Formulate relevant questions.

All these aspects can be summarised as four objectives, few enough to hold in mind when planning relevant learning experiences:

OBJECTIVE 1: THE CHILDREN WILL DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO *OBSERVE* CAREFULLY AND *DESCRIBE* AND *REASON* ABOUT WHAT THEY *SEE* AND *DO* AND ABOUT *QUESTIONS* GENERATED BY THE STIMULUS. (Here a visual or active stimulus is used, eg a picture or making a model.)

OBJECTIVE 2: THE CHILDREN WILL DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO *LISTEN* ATTENTIVELY AND *DESCRIBE* AND *REASON* ABOUT WHAT THEY *HEAR* AND ABOUT *QUESTIONS* GENERATED BY THE STIMULUS. (Here an oral/aural stimulus is used, eg a story.)

OBJECTIVE 3: THE CHILDREN WILL DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO *ANSWER QUESTIONS* CLEARLY.

OBJECTIVE 4: THE CHILDREN WILL DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO *ASK RELEVANT QUESTIONS.* Progress towards these goals may be either carefully assessed or summarily reviewed, but at least they indicate the path to be taken.

Most teachers will find it practical to concentrate on the above. However, future elaboration of the research may provide useful extensions for the specially interested, eg objectives concerned with recall. At present, one such extension relates to OBJECTIVE 3 and assesses responses to different types of questions. Questions may be classified as follows: SIMPLE SPECIFIC — eg 'What is a galleon?', which the child may or may not know. COMPLEX SPECIFIC — eg 'How does it move across the sea?' to which he may be able to conjecture a plausible response. GENERAL QUESTIONS, open to varied interpretations, eg 'How can we find the answers to our questions?' or 'Who can tell me or ask me something about these stones?' Perhaps it is more important for the teacher to ensure that he presents the children with a variety of questions, both to probe their thinking skills and to present models to help them to frame their own questions.

The teacher is an important member of the group. It is interesting and informative to analyse one's own performance. It is useful to be aware of how far one might dominate the situation and which tactics are the most successful. Joan Tough's 'Teacher Dialogue Strategies' are helpful here (**Talk for Teaching and Learning**, Ward Lock, 1979 — PART 2). For instance, her 'enabling strategies' throw light on whether one is effectively assisting children to extend their ideas, focus on important details and check their own statements. I have added categories fitting my own situation, eg organizational strategies, since arbitration is necessary with larger groups. Also, categories concerned with different types of questions. Analysis is simplified by drawing the grid of an appropriate histogram and completing it by classifying one's own comments directly from the tape or transcript.

Evaluation techniques

Discovery of a straightforward method of evaluating the children's contribution to the discussions took much experimentation. Basically, it proportionally compares each child's scores for effort and provides a guide for monitoring progress in terms of quality of response. Both dimensions can be charted using simple histograms. The explanation may sound complex, but the approach quickly becomes routine. Teachers may choose to analyse sample sessions only. However, results at odds with general impressions must be carefully considered, as weekly fluctuations occur according to state of health, interest in the topic, or social factors at home or school. Trends of growth can be traced over a period, but lapses do occur.

The first essential is to secure willing participation (effort) — improvement in quality then usually follows. To assess EFFORT, it is first necessary to tape four sessions (ignoring the first one). The total number of responses for each member of the group is then charted in histogram form. The tallest column represents the initial 'GOOD' standard; subsequent progress beyond this becomes 'Very good'. Between half and three-quarters of the 'GOOD' standard is rated 'ADEQUATE'. Between a quarter and a half rates as 'FAIR'. Below a quarter is 'POOR' and a nil responses 'Very poor'. The histogram shows the ratios at a glance. Eventually, as the standards become familiar even reasonably accurate estimates become possible.

Assessment of QUALITY can be charted in histogram form also, the children's responses being categorised under four clearly defined headings, which help to minimise subjectivity. In each case one or more combinations listed below determine the category of response:

GOOD — Clearly expressed significant responses, demonstrating precise observation and careful reasoning; also, well expressed appropriate responses which are verbally justified.

ADEQUATE — Appropriate, but superficial responses; responses resulting from incorrect, but plausible reasoning; unjustified correct responses.

FAIR — Slightly inappropriate responses; partial responses; slightly obscure responses; responses resulting from faulty reasoning; repeating the correct responses of others.

POOR — Inaccurate responses; illogical guesses; poorly expressed responses; irrelevant responses; repeating oneself unnecessarily or repeating unsatisfactory responses already discussed.

Note that the form of the initiating comment or question must be considered, eg if a one word answer is appropriate, a full sentence need not be expected. Similarly, a GOOD response from an infant would be normally of a lower standard than that expected from an older student. To evaluate OBJECTIVE 3, the answers to questions must be isolated from other types of responses. In the case of OBJECTIVE 4, slight modifications are necessary, eg one does not usually justify a question. The following diagram should clarify the approach:

RATING	GOOD			ADEQUATE			FAIR			POOR		
	x			x								x
	x			x	x			x	x			x
	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
NAME	Jo	Ja	Re	Jo	Ja	Re	Jo	Ja	Re	Jo	Ja	Re

Jo and Re have similar scores for EFFORT, but Jo is better in terms of QUALITY of response. Ja is mediocre on both counts. Clustering of results presents a clearer picture of attainment. A predominance of GOOD/ADEQUATE responses may be considered as SATISFACTORY. A predominance of POOR/FAIR as UNSATISFACTORY. A near balance of all four categories is rated as FAIRLY SATISFACTORY. Note that results in both dimensions do not always agree. Impulsive children can gain in effort over quality and vice versa for timid children who only venture when sure of their ground. However, the aim is for all round progress for as many as possible.

Final results may be presented as a group table, eg OBJECTIVE 1/2 (Note these are alternatives depending on the stimulus used).

	Mary	Peter	Jack	
SAMPLE 1	Fair	Good	Poor	. . . EFFORT
	U.S.	F.S.	F.S.	. . . QUALITY
SAMPLE 2	Fair	V. Good	Fair	
	F.S.	S.	F.S.	

Alternatively, individual records may be prepared showing each child's average performance, compared with his starting point and best achievement over a term. Analysing the results is interesting and useful, because each child's attainment, strengths and weaknesses are easily differentiated and thus appropriate learning experiences can be devised.

The following is an example of what may be revealed by adopting this approach. One of my groups contained ten children aged six to eight years. After eight hours instruction spread over two terms, several had made satisfactory progress; first and second language children reaching high standards on some occasions. Excellent progress had been made by a West Indian boy and an English girl. An Asian boy with a second language problem had made significant progress considering his low starting point. Two sessions were initiated by his questions — 'Why do we need hands?' and 'Why do we need hair?' when studying 'Ourselves'. Two timid Infant girls, one English and one Asian, made only slight gains, but probably required more time to develop; a not unusual factor with such children. With this particular group, progress in relation to asking questions was a little disappointing. However, from work with older groups, I have noticed that children are over eight before the facility develops significantly. This is an aspect which requires positive encouragement at all levels, in view of the norm that teachers ask and children answer.

This research is on-going and as the aim is to produce as practical an aid as possible, comments and criticisms would be welcome. For any who wish to try out the approach, a booklet of instructions is available on request (9″ x 6″ s.a.e. please, forwarded to the writer at Sandfield Close Primary School, Leicester, LE4 7RE).

Reading: an individual approach

Pat Godfrey
After considerable experience of teaching in primary schools, Pat Godfrey was appointed head of Aston Rowant school in Oxfordshire in 1972. She writes here on her own experience and approach to teaching reading.

Every child is different; unique. Ask any parent about stages of development in speech, eating, walking, manipulative skills and toilet training, and it is obvious from the answers that even within a family group of brothers and sisters in one generation of children, sharing parents and growing up in an identical environment, that there are many variations. Each member of the family will need encouragement to a greater or lesser degree to achieve satisfaction in acquiring and using skills. Only a very unwise parent will expect the same reaction to stimuli from each and every child in the family. Nevertheless, all the children who fit into the wide spectrum referred to as normal, do manage to achieve the basic required social skills and in the area of language they sooner or later repeat words and engage in conversation, but they will only do this satisfactorily in their own time. In the meantime, it is important that each child feels secure and gets approval of achievement, however seemingly insignificant the achievement may be at times; and also is encouraged to build on to these experiences with further exploration.

Most children find the spoken language a very useful and enjoyable tool, and are extremely pleased with themselves when, from baby days they make sounds which are recognised, and responded to. However, some youngsters lack confidence in expressing their thoughts aloud — perhaps they fear that their contribution will not be acceptable for some reason. I had a child aged 5½ years admitted to my school after about two terms in another school. He was feeling very insecure in the new school situation and there were family difficulties to contend with as there was a marriage break imminent for his parents. S retired from language totally for several weeks and would not contribute words of his own volition or in answer to a question. However, he was part of a busy, very talkative group of children aged 5, 6 and 7 years, and he was obviously enjoying their company and listening to their conversation. One day, during a games period a group of older children were preparing for Sports Day — a very popular event — and they were practising lining up for the beginning of the races and giving the instruction Ready, Steady, Go. After a while S, who had been watching intently, went up to a line of children who were ready to run and shouted the instruction Ready, Steady, Go, and the children moved off down the field. S was full of excitement at the effort of using his voice and delighted at the evidence of his own eyes, as the children raced away, that he had used the right sounds and gained a very active response. From that seemingly insignificant event S realised that his voice was just as effective as any one else's and that words were useful and fun. Language became necessary for him to share fully the many and varied experiences around him.

It is in school, in the reception class, that most children find that the words and expressions and conversation that they have experienced are a useful tool in the day to day business of managing a degree of independence, as instructions and suggestions and relating of events are given and received in accordance with the needs of the moment. There are tremendous variations in the interests and ability range of the children in a class of several ages (eg a 2-3 year span) as they share experiences. When the children are using books for research for topics and discussing their findings with other children, the younger children tend to see the value of a reference book for themselves because the older children are naturally turning to books to seek further information. It is in the finding out area, or reference library, that much shared conversation can guide younger children to use language and books to extend their knowledge. Teachers in this situation will be watching and sharing also, and there are obvious benefits in having an interesting class reference library which holds the interests of all the children available all the time. In a small school where the children tend to be in classes of mixed ages and abilities, the flow of speech and the development of the potential in each child for using and understanding language are a natural process. There is no possibility of 'talking down'. The widespread ages, abilities, and interests of the children within the group will ensure this.

Group discussion

Discussions with groups of children or the whole class on themes of particular interest provide a useful extension of language, and contributions at each age level are valuable. Children confined to a narrow age or ability range, particularly the very young or the less able, are unlikely to have the advantage of hearing other children using words to express their thoughts and feelings. An interesting discussion arose one day with a group of children aged 6 years to 9 years about home making. It was Autumn and the children had been thinking about animals preparing for the winter — especially hibernation, and I asked the children how they would begin to make a cosy home for themselves outside. 'I would make myself a nice grass nest', said one of the younger children. One or two of the middle range boys began

describing how to make a sort of wigwam with sticks stuck in the ground and leaves to fill the cracks. A nine year old girl stated she would 'dig foundations and then mix thick mud to put between stones to build the walls. Then I would get branches and place them across the top and use straw and mud to make the roof waterproof. Moss would be useful as a lining to keep out the wind'.

Having briefly outlined a pattern of language development, it is logical to follow this through from the spoken word to the written and thus to the need for reading. It is at this stage that mental, physical and emotional approaches need to be naturally blended to achieve success; and in this respect I mean enjoyment and excitement and discovery — not just making the correct sound for the correct symbol.

Very few of us can really remember learning to read — especially those who did not experience difficulty. I have been teaching children to read, or more accurately enabling children to achieve in reading, for more than twenty years and I must have either used or at least pursued most of the usual standard reading schemes available. I have observed that an excellent reading scheme, used unwisely, can produce reading failure, whereas a collection of graded material presented at the right moment physically, emotionally, mentally, and psychologically, produces success. Those of us who managed the business of reading without difficulty do not really remember the actual mechanics of the experience. They were a means to an end — not the end! It is, therefore, very important to me that any child in my school should see for himself or herself that reading is pleasurable, exciting, and very necessary.

Individual profiles

In practical terms I have evolved a system which is as individual as it needs to be. When children are admitted to my school I have usually met them and members of the family on several occasions in and out of school, so that I have some background knowledge and can begin to make up a profile of relevant information. To this we add information concerning eyesight, hearing, speech, manipulative skills, and also note whether a child is crosslateral, i.e. right handed and left eyed, or left handed and right eyed. During the first weeks in school we learn much about the personalities and attitudes of the children — how independent they are; how they mix with other children, and how they relate to adults in and out of the school environment. All these factors help to establish whether a child has interest in and command of words. It will be seen that there is a very obvious connection between the use of the spoken word and the written word. A child who has interesting experiences and relates them confidently, usually takes delight in seeing them printed out and having them read to them, even 'reading' them back. Thus by realising the need for these children to read we can make their first reading book and the children are themselves the authors. We are merely the secretaries in printing out the text. These may be very simply: 'This is my dog', or in more complex style, but still at the request of a child at the very threshold of reading: 'My dog is a Labrador. She had six puppies on Saturday. I like the little one best'.

The question of Reading Readiness arises here. Some children will need many opportunities for creating pages of text of their own before they are really taking the step of reading back the script. For other children the skill of reading seems almost as natural as breathing and they are reading or attempting to read any written or printed words they can see around them. The vital thing is for each and every child to have many interesting opportunities to use words and to need to interpret their own and other people's ideas when expressed in written form. If there is no interest and no need to read then children are not ready to read. It is a certainty that if children are not ready to read, as ascertained by the criterion of interest and need outlined here, then there are no reading books printed yet that will help. It is possible to negotiate any average child around the symbols and hurdles of graded readers and produce a 'reader' who makes noises which express the sounds as printed in word form. It will not produce a child who picks up books eagerly, who laughs aloud at the fun of the story, who becomes so engrossed that the classroom is forgotten for a while for the thrill of entering the story-book world, and who turns naturally to books for information. With time and encouragement there are very few children who cannot learn to read in this sense.

Choice of reading

This does not mean that Reading Schemes are not needed. I am simply stating that they must be used in conjunction with the children's interests and vocabulary. In my school the majority of the books are story-books, graded (by me) for interest, word usage, size of print, etc., and alongside such standard reading scheme books that are needed (this varies from child to child) we have sufficient books to allow children to choose whatever they would like to read (non-fiction books are included at very early stages). I am continually re-assessing these books and adding new ones to the various sections. Thus the Reading Scheme and the world of books are not separated but are integrated from the earliest possible opportunity. An additional interest is maintained by running a Book Club in association with a local book shop and introducing books from this club into the scheme. Books from the library shelves are also used as selections by the children for their reading.

We are fortunate in having a very good School County Library service. I have found that the children very soon learn, by the nature of our individual choice of books within our Reading Scheme, how to select books that they will enjoy and so the children themselves choose the books from the library van, and the librarians concerned have been most impressed by the interest and ability shown by the children in their selection. There are additional advantages in involving the children in this way in that firstly they are prepared for choosing and using books in all libraries and bookshops, and also the books are so obviously just what the children wanted that 'care of books' does not have to be 'taught', it is caught. By apparently taking Reading from its formal elevated position we have put reading in its natural place, right in the heart of our school day, constantly needed and in use by each individual.

Home-School Contact

David Webb
After teaching for a number of years in primary schools, David Webb was appointed as Senior Lecturer in Education at Edge Hill College of Higher Education. He has recently completed a research study which examined parental perceptions of the effectiveness of home-school practices.

Over the last twenty years educationists have acknowledged the need to develop relationships between the home and the school. The Plowden Report[1] recognised the importance of this relationship, while the Taylor Report[2] offers more recent official approval. The recent NFER study[3] in its summary suggests that schools are becoming more successful at involving parents, while pointing out that the potential benefit of such involvement in terms of children's improved school attainments is still open to question. This study also points to two major constraints in the development of the relationship. Teachers it appears remain wary of going into full partnership with parents, although Midwinter[4] has argued strongly that they should not ignore the help that parents can offer in the education of their children. The second constraint is that caused by parental apathy. It seems that parents for the most part neither wish nor feel the need to become involved in their children's school lives.

The study reported here seeks to highlight one cause of parental apathy. The kinds of contact that schools have with homes are almost exclusively determined by the teachers. Yet if education is, as Midwinter[4] says, a product to be sold to the public, there is perhaps a need for market research to assess the public's reaction.

What kinds of contact *parents* want with schools is therefore a surprisingly neglected area of concern. For this reason a sample of 160 parents were asked which forms of home-school contact they preferred. The results and discussion of this survey have been reported elsewhere,[5] but the rank order of parents' preferences can be found in Table 1 (right hand column). In order to see whether schools were satisfying parental preferences, a follow-up survey of primary schools in three LEAs was undertaken. The schools involved included all those attended by the children of the parents sampled in the original survey.

The headteachers of 279 primary schools were asked to indicate on a questionnaire which practices they employed in fostering the relationship between the home and the school. An overall response rate of 86% (241 schools) was achieved. The results of this survey are shown in Table 1, the items being listed in order of frequency of use (left hand column). To aid comparison between parents' preferences and what schools actually practise in the field of home-school relations, the rank positions of the same items in the parents' survey are also included (right hand column).

When parents' preferences are compared with school practices there appear to be overall agreement. For example, parents preferred contacts which fall into what Cowen[6] calls the 'personal' category. These contacts satisfy the parents' 'appetite for information' about its child (Items 3, 4, 5, 11). It was this category of contact which was also most frequently used by schools. On the other hand, parents preferred least contacts of a social, recreational, or community nature, and these were least practised by the schools (Items 6, 14, 16, 18, 19).

Table 1 Forms of home-school contact as practised by the schools

Order of frequency of use by schools	*Form of contact*	*Order of preference shown by parents*
1	Circulars	9
2	Attendance at assemblies	5
3	Open Evening with an interview	1
4	Teacher available at any time to see parents	8
5	Appointments system to see teacher	7
6	Contact via an outside agency	20
7	Evening lectures on the curriculum of the school	12
8	Interview with the headteacher before child enters school	6
9	Parent as manager	11
10	Mother allowed to stay with child when child first enters school	10
11	School report	3
12	Parents help in classroom	16
13	Parent-Teachers' Association	4
14	Parents' Association	18
15	School prospectus including accounts of educational policy	2
16	Room for parents in school	19
17	Teacher who visits home	15
18	Club for pre-school mothers	13
19	After school clubs for parents and children	17
20	After school 'lessons' for parents and children	14

However, on examining closely the two rank orders it becomes clear that there is considerable discrepancy in certain items between what parents prefer and what schools actually practise. Three of four most preferred items in the parents' survey, for example, do not occur in the first ten most frequently practised contacts in the schools (Items 11, 13, 15).

The availability of the prospectus was the second most preferred item in the parental survey. However, in only 13.69% of the schools is one produced. This can be explained in part by the fact that in subsequent discussions many headteachers seemed to be unaware of the prospectus as a potential form of contact between home and school. Indeed they said that they had never considered a prospectus for primary schools which contained details of the educational policy of the school.

Generally, however, they thought it a good idea, and some said that they would introduce it at the earliest opportunity. On the other hand, a few headteachers expressed reservations about putting in writing statements concerning educational policy and teaching methods, since they feared that they were open to misrepresentation of many kinds.

Parents chose the report to be their third most preferred form of contact, but only 52.82% of the schools issued one. This figure is itself misleading since many of the primary schools surveyed prepared a report for only the parents of junior department children. Very few infant departments felt it necessary to prepare one. The comments received in discussion with headteachers revealed that many considered the report to be relevant only to secondary school children.

The items concerned with PTA provoked a different response in the two surveys. The parents ranked it as the fourth most preferred form of contact, although only 6.61% of the parent sample were members of PTA committees. Of the schools sampled, however, only 30.29% actually had a PTA. There seems to be a long-standing, though generally unsubstantiated belief among headteachers that the formation of a PTA can mean handing over the running of the school to a group of parents. Additionally, teachers are sometimes reluctant to give up their time to the necessary meetings which they do not always see as being beneficial in fostering home-school relations.

Contact via an outside agency was the parents' least preferred form of contact. In the schools' sample, however, 80.91% used the Educational Welfare Officer or the Social Worker for contact with parents. This does not mean of course that headteachers necessarily feel that this is an effective means of contact. On the contrary, many felt that it was not. In this case so much seems to depend upon the industry and ability of individual members of these social agencies.

Table 2 A comparison of Plowden's recommendations for a minimum programme with the forms of home-school contact practised by schools and those preferred by parents

	Plowden recommendations	*Schools' practices*	*Parents' preferences*
1	System for head or class teacher to meet parents before child enters school	8	6
2	Arrangements for formal private talks	3	1
3	Open Days		
4	Information booklets	15	2
5	Written reports	11	3

Numbers in the columns indicate the positions of these items in the two surveys.

A comparison of the survey of parents' preferences with Plowden's recommendations for a minimum programme of home-school contact (para.130) showed considerable agreement between the 'official' line and parents' wishes.[5] On the other hand, a comparison of the survey of the frequency of use by the schools and the same recommendations does not reveal a similar agreement between Plowden and what schools actually practise (Table 2).

The practices of a particular school do not of course necessarily reflect the preferences of the headteacher or teachers of that school. For example, all the schools surveyed issued circulars to parents. However, this was not because headteachers believed that they were an effective means of fostering good relations, but rather because circulars are a relatively simple and efficient method of giving information to parents. Similarly, no headteachers interviewed suggested that the Educational Welfare Officer or the Social Worker could bring the home and the school into a closer working relationship, but they did help to relieve the pressure on the headteacher, especially in the more difficult cases. Indeed, in the case of the parent-manager very few headteachers seem to have been involved in the decision as to whether to have a parent-manager or not.

From this survey, however, it does seem that schools continue to try to forge links between the home and the school using some forms of contact which are not highly valued by parents. There are also other contacts which parents prefer and which many schools do not practise. Until such consumer preferences are taken into account by the teachers who generally determine the means of contact with parents, there seems little chance that the relationship between the home and the school will be as close as possible.

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The Children's Revolution

Colin Collins
Born in South Africa, Colin Collins now teaches at the University of Queensland, Australia. While spending the major part of his life in South Africa, he was for many years involved in administering the African school system. He played an important and formative role in the early years of the Black Consciousness Movement, and was a close associate of many of its leaders such as Steve Biko. Since leaving South Africa, he has maintained a continued interest in education and social change in developing countries.

"Rounds fired by police : more than 16,000
Killed by polilce : 172 blacks
Injured by police : 1,439 blacks
Injured by "other elements" : 5 whites
: 1 Chinese
: 1,001 blacks

Property damaged:
24 schools, 3 clinics, 9 post offices, 18 bottle stores, 18 beer halls, 14 private business premises, 3 libraries, 1 court building, 19 shops, 2 community halls, 42 administration buildings, at least 114 vehicles."

So reads a police report published on 16 September, 1976. A report for one town in South Africa for one short period. Having started on 16 June, 1976, the 'Children's Revolution' spread to most South African cities and towns and went on for many months (in some senses until well into 1980). And police reports are universally conservative in their estimates. The 'Children's Revolution' of 1976 was of far greater magnitude than the Sharpville massacre of 1960. And the revolt of the coloured children in the early part of 1980 was of enormous significance, allied as it was to strikes and other protests.

Before analysing the 1970s as a decade of student revolt, a few comments should be made about earlier resistance to white domination. Resistance to the original colonisation of the african peoples of South Africa by Dutch and then British colonisers was in the form of open warfare by two mainly pastoral peoples fighting over the same land. These conflicts lasted from the first 'KAFFIR' war of 1779 to the ZULU rebellion of 1906. As the whites were better armed, they won. As a consequence, the black peoples lost their means of survival, the land.

The second phase of resistance was from the end of the nineteenth century to the Second World War. It was a time in which the missionary educated black elite formed (in 1912) an organisation which was eventually called the African National Congress. The purpose of this organisation was to argue for political and social rights of blacks in a liberal democratic state. Their efforts to do this were mainly unsuccessful.

As proletarianisation of the black peoples increased rapidly during the forties a new militancy became evident, this ushering in the third period, that of confrontation. Many smaller strikes culminated in the great Gold Mine Strike of 1946. The entire decade of the 1950s was a period in which strikes, boycotts, and protests brought both black workers and intellectuals into a major confrontation with the Government. The unrest of the 1950s culminated in the massacre at Sharpville during which the police killed sixty-nine and wounded several hundred black protestors.

The most obvious effects of Sharpville were: a significant withdrawal of foreign investment, an initiation of massive police repression on the part of the government and a move underground by the two main black political organisations, the African National Congress and the africanst Pan African Congress. After a series of counter-moves and a number of notorious 'treason trials', these underground movements were destroyed within the borders of South Africa. By 1964, resistance had been all but silenced; foreign investment was returning and South Africa was set on a period of growth and political calm.

This calm was not to last. In 1968, the parent organisation of the Black Consciousness Movement was started by black (ie african, coloured and indian) university students. Within five years, this group, the South African students organisation, had spawned some 17 other organisations. Although many of these organisations were for adults (for example, the Black Peoples' Convention) yet the initial and continuing strength of the BCM lay within the founding university based SASO (South African Students Organisation) and SASM (The South African Students Movement), the latter being for the black schools. Particularly due to the efforts of these two organisations, the black segregated universities were to remain in a state of constant turmoil during the entire 1970s; schools were to be centres of politicisation and the government became increasingly challenged in the educational sphere. The two momentous events of this period were the 'Soweto Riots' of 1976 and the coloured school boycotts of 1980. In order to understand these two major school disturbances, they need to be related to other resistance events, particularly those of a more economic nature. Unfortunately at the time of writing, there is not very much analytical material available on the coloured schools upheavals of 1980. In many ways, however, they follow the pattern of the almost constant student upheavals that took place during the entire decade of the 1970s. Perhaps the most significant differences between these protests were the degree of mass support that was acquired by the students among the coloured community and the explicit relationship that these protests had to the ongoing strikes among coloured and black workers in the Western Cape. The Meat Workers Union strike was a case in point.

The 1976 events have, on the other hand, been far better documented and some significant factors need to be described so that the events can be properly situated. On a mainly descriptive level, the 1976 revolt was quite predictable — as a revolutionary act or spontaneous uprising, whatever point of view is taken. As already mentioned, the 1950s had been a decade of confrontation between the black oppressed and the government forces. Between the Sharpville massacre of 1960 and 1963, the police had moved to destroy the ANC and PAC and their subsequent two underground arms. For the rest of the 1960s, political trials emanating from the crackdown were much in evidence, especially during 1965 and 1966. During the rest of the decade, the government kept a firm hold with regular bannings of people and organisations and the implementation of continuing oppressive laws.

Almost a decade passed. Few, if any, concessions were made and conditions were not any easier for the oppressed; the state looked more firmly ensconced and the effects of the economic boom were felt albeit mostly in the white group. In this decade, 1960-1970, a new generation of blacks had grown up. They knew what their fathers and mothers had attempted; now, in the early 1970s, the time had come for a new generation of the oppressed to make its presence felt. Of course, even the more simplistic descriptive analyses of 1976 go beyond this generation argument. The South African Institute for Race Relations (Annual Survey, 1976) states, for example:

> *'June 16, 1976 saw the outbreak of race riots on a larger scale than has ever been experienced in South Africa. Although it was the language issue (the teaching through the medium of AFRIKAANS in the black schools) which proved to be the flashpoint, the general consensus of opinion amongst most Black and White leaders is that violence on such a vast scale could not have resulted from this issue alone. It seems evident that the underlying causes of the initial riots are the poor socio-economic conditions in the townships and the lack of security and deep-seated resentment felt by urban Africans.'*

In an excellent review of the literature of the 'Uprising of 16 June', Frank Molteno (**Social Dynamics** Vol 5, No 1, p.54) summarises the interpretation of the Institute of Race Relations which, predictably, calls the events 'race riots'.

> *'The fundamental "cause" of the major "grievances" of "urban Africans" is located in the refusal to accord Africans the status of permanent residents, together with associated rights, in the urban areas of what the government calls "white" South Africa. Their "grievances" include: the pass laws and the system of influx, controlled harshly and inhumanly administered by police who are feared and mistrusted; a chronic housing shortage with consequent gross overcrowding and slum conditions; the denial of the right to freehold ownership of land for homes or the erection of trading premises; compulsory "BANTUSTAN" citizenship; the attempt at centralization through the imposition of "ethnic" grouping; unequal, inferior and inadequate educational transport, recreational, sporting and social welfare facilities; poverty; the takeover of the Bantu Affairs Administration Board as the local authority in control of the townships; and the lack of any voice in the decisions which effect them. The prediction is made that "if the government does not accept the permancy of urban Africans, fails to grant legal relief from the discriminatory pass laws, and continues to force millions to become foreigners in the places where they live and work in order to enjoy the most elementary human rights then it is virtually certain that South Africa is entering a long period of civil unrest" (SAIRR/1978:49)'. Molteno 1980:61*

Molteno makes a telling comment about this kind of explanation, namely that stating the facts of the grievances can never constitute an explanation of the uprising. He states that such a semi-psychological explanation of uprising — as if there is a threshold of endurance that is periodically reached — is not an adequate one as it does not take into account the 'intolerant legislative and socio-economic burden under which black South Africa labour' has to exist.

Although another major work on the uprising (John Kane-Berman, **Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction**) is far more complex and takes into account interlocking, social, economic and ideological factors, it suffers from similar disadvantages as the Institute of Race Relations publication in its inability to inter-relate these dimensions. This work, does, however, at least to some extent, describe why the uprising took place in an educational setting.

The first and most obvious organisational factor was the presence of the South African Students Organisation and one of its other satellite organisations, the South African Students Movement. SASM operated in schools as opposed to SASO's presence which was largely in the segregated black as well as the coloured and indian universities. SASO had been established by a group of black students in 1968. Politically influenced by the Black Power movement in the USA, and the world-wide student uprisings in that year, and, more importantly, disillusioned with collaborating with liberal whites in multi-racial organisations, they had viewed the time opportune to set up an africanst-style blacks-only movement. The time proved to be opportune and SASO generated a galaxy of other movements and organisations collectively known as the Black Consciousness Movement. And although one of these organisations was the Black Workers Alliance, the participation of the workers en masse was not to be realised until the events succeeding 16 June, 1976.

SASO's presence and activities generated continuing unrest on the segregated campuses from its first inaugural meeting in 1968. The most significant of these was in the largest of these institutions, the University College of the North, or, as it is better known, TURFLOOP. The close-down of this university in 1974 became the subject of two government commissions and reports (the Synman and Jackson reports). Other than the presence of SASO and a set of predictable reasons for the student disquiet (such as the racialistic attitudes of staff, physical conditions at the university, the lack of africanisation) the Synman Commission points out how enormously significant had been the effect of the liberation of Angola and Mozambique on the minds of the young black students. His comments have been echoed by almost every other writer on black students protests.

By the beginning of 1976, however, a much more significant factor was in evidence. 1974-1976 had not been good years in the South African economy and unemployment was on the increase. For example, the number of blacks registered as unemployed by the Bantu Administration Boards (which excluded unemployed people in the homelands as well as those who do not

register) increased by **9.4%** in the first quarter of 1975 and the comparable quarter of 1976. The official figures are thought to be less than half of the real figure and these figures are further increased if the 15-25 *urban* group of the black population is considered.

This fact of rapidly decreasing employment opportunities was coupled in 1976 with a large increase in the number of secondary school students and matriculants leaving school.

> *'Since 1955, the rate of increase of entrants into Term IV had jumped six fold. The year 1975 in particular saw a large rise in the number of pupils passing through Term III and matriculation examinations: the numbers passing Term III had grown by 1.4% in 1974 but in 1975 had grown by 25% from 24,142 to 35,214. Those obtaining matriculation had increased in number by 15.5% in 1974 but in 1975 they grew by 36%: from 4,930 to 6,720' (Kane-Berman, 1978:49).*

These concomitant factors — increased secondary products of the black schooling system and increased unemployment are not merely interesting as a cause of the Soweto Uprising. They also reveal a significant trend, namely the need to produce more semi-skilled black workers. Although the vast majority of black students still acquire only a low-grade schooling consonant with the production of unskilled labour, the economic confidence of the early 1970s made the government secure larger numbers of high-schooled black scholars. That they did this in a temporary economic setback is no doubt due to mismanagement or lack of economic vision. This was a mistake not to be repeated in the latter part of the 1970s when the state went out to buy off the labour aristocracy and petit bourgeoisie among the blacks. The labour concessions suggested by the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions and the emphasis on technical schooling were both attempts to establish a docile buffer-zone of blacks who would cushion any revolutionary tendencies among blacks and provide some workers of higher skill. The 1976 congruence of increased graduates and increased unemployment will probably not take place again — if the government can help it.

A further question that can be asked is concerned with why the 1976 uprising and the many events that preceded and succeeded it were located in the educational sphere, the schools. Some authors cite the fact that the isolation of almost two generations of black students who had been schooled under the segregationist 'BANTU Education' was the major factor. At the same time, they state that Bantu Education also stunts the growth and intelligence of blacks because of its inferior nature, thus making them more prone to anger and revolution. The length, breadth and quality of the statements issued around the 1970s by black students gives the lie to this latter assertion. And although, at an organisational level, SASO's importance was paramount, a description of its establishment and the brilliance of some of its leaders (such as Steve Biko) do not account for its strength and ability to rally support. The Institute of Race Relations approach is to cite the many generalised grievances of the urban blacks and the black school and university students in particular. And, indeed, the initial spark of the 1976 uprising was the 'language' question.

In my estimation the underlying cause of the 1976 and other student uprisings was the increasing realisation that black schooling was schooling for cheap black labour (or, alternatively, unemployment). As Molteno points out, concessions in schooling are always minor.

> *'Thus, the increases in the finance available for African education are to be understood largely as a reflection of the changing needs of the economy. As long as Black children were seen as little more than potential unskilled labourers, there was no need to educate them beyond that and every reason not to. As the economy has manifested a need for more skilled black labour the government has paid more attention to secondary schools, to reducing the drop-out rate and to industrial training.' (Molteno 1980:67).*

Black schooling is designed to suit the needs of the white dominated capitalist economy; the structure of schooling remains in the hands of the government for the promotion of the skills relevant to the economic needs combined with an ideology of servitude. Schooling serves both an ideological and economic purpose. The black students of the 1970s saw this. Nowhere was it realised more clearly than in the uprising of the coloured students of 1980. One of the main captions of that uprising was:

"GUTTER EDUCATION FOR SLAVE LABOUR"

It is the escalation of this kind of awareness linking schooling to the total socio-economic reality that is of great significance. This awareness was still somewhat diffuse in the 1976 school uprising. It had become much clearer in 1980. A series of quotes from one of the students' documents in the events of early 1980 are illustrative. (These come from a document, 'The Victories and Achievements of the Boycott'.)

> *'The understanding of the exploitative and oppressive nature of society by many students and their parents prepares the ground for action towards constructing a new society.'*
>
> *'Students who have been conscientised now will enter into the factories and workplaces at the end of the year. A new layer of militant workers who would want to fight for equality will feed the growing discontent on the factory floor.'*
>
> *'Students see the lack of textbooks and poor library facilities as a sign that they are trained to fit into the workers class in the capitalist system. Their whiter counterparts are trained to become managers and bosses.'*
>
> *'The parents see their low wages and poor housing conditions as being tied up with the political and economic systems . . . the root causes (of our problems) lie in an exploitative economic system and an oppressive political system.'*

A question can be asked about the uprisings of 1976 and 1980, namely as to whether they were 'successful' or not. Molteno (1980:67) cites Kane-Berman's statement, in obvious agreement with him, that the (1976) uprising was not:

> *'As far as changes in the structure of the system are concerned, in Kane-Berman's view, the uprising achieved nothing. As he puts it, "June 1976, like Sharpville, 16 years before, was another turning point where South Africa did not turn". (JKB 1978:232). Apartheid remains intact as a "comprehensive and technologically sophisticated system seeking continued political and economic mastery, of one race and class by another". (JKB 1978:232).' (Molteno, 1980:67).*

While not achieving success, some of the writings of 1976 and comments of 1980 do reveal two related important factors. The one is, as the coloured students'

The myth of Giftedness

Caroline Benn

This short piece introduces Caroline Benn's detailed critique of 'The Myth of Giftedness' to be continued in the next number. Here she traces the origin of the movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Right to a Comprehensive Education (RiCE) Campaign argues that selection will not be ended by merely pleading a cause, asking for 'more' comprehensive schools, or by time wasted demonstrating that the minority in comprehensive schools who sit for the 'grammar' examination of GCE can do as well as the minority of the same age group in grammar schools sitting the same examination, since research shows it can. Comprehensive schools are not supposed to be only as good as grammar schools are for a minority: they are supposed to be as good as comprehensive schools: better for everyone.

RiCE argues that they will not reach this higher standard until we mount a truly popular campaign for certain clear universal educational rights, beginning with the right of every neighbourhood to be served by a genuinely comprehensive school (giving everyone right of access to a named, local comprehensive school or college), followed by the right of everyone to experience a fully comprehensive curriculum, common assessment at leaving age, and after this, financially supported education to 18, with free choice from a full range of general, vocational and training opportunities.

These are the bare minimum conditions of comprehensive education almost anywhere else in the world. Yet in Britain hundreds of thousands of children and young people lack most of them, and nowhere yet do all apply, to say nothing of comprehensive rights after 18.

Revive critique of selection

If the first requirement is to demand comprehensive education as a basic right (defining it carefully so that it can be demanded easily), the second is to revive the critique of 11 plus selection. The open selection of the 1950s and 1960s — the old 11 plus — was demolished by persistent argument and research; but we have mounted no such campaign against the far more pervasive and dangerous hidden selection which has replaced it between and within schools.

A major barrier is that the new selection is not publicly admitted. Since 1976 all governments and the DES have maintained the fiction that selection has virtually ended. Allocation procedures for secondary education are no longer monitored, the NFER having stopped its yearly analysis after 1972. Both the popular and educational press, long captive to the Black Papers' directives, if not always to their perspective, were long ago willingly diverted to 'basics', 'standards' and 'discipline'. Few discuss selection now, and all have failed to report the many ways in which it still operates, particularly the way the ubiquitous 'parental choice' campaign has been misused as its cover.'

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statements reveal, the increasing alliance between the students and black workers. More than 80% of all workers in South Africa are black. Such a factor scarcely needs further comment. As Callinicos and Rogers (1978) point out in their work on Soweto, the crucial problem of the 1980s for the black peoples of South Africa is to be able to translate the political militancy of the black youths into revolutionary leadership in the factories. Going into the 1980s, the strikes increased and the government seems to become increasingly aware of this possibility.

The other is the linkage between the student uprisings and the armed struggle. In 1976 alone, it has been estimated that from 4,000 to 20,000 black students fled South Africa. Many of them have linked up with the external ANC and PAC and are going back into South Africa as highly trained urban guerrillas. With almost every extended black family affected by the shooting of school children, they have a receptive community in which to operate. The rapid escalation of acts of sabotage which have included as targets police stations, banks, railways, and petrol installations (SASOL) bears witness to their success. The increasing expenditures of the government on defence is a consequence of this escalation.

All these comments lead to a simple conclusion. Nowhere else in the world has there been a 'Children's Revolution'. At no other time has the connection between schooling and economic control been so clearly established by those who are victims of restrictive educational institutions. It has been stated in simple terms by the students themselves: **Gutter Schooling for Slave Labour.**

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'The choice of school' campaign has now elevated to national policy what is merely one allocation criterion among several. Most of us want choice of school to be one factor, but not the only one. The legal right of those who live near a school or college over those who live further away — all other factors being equal — is central to comprehensive systems anywhere else in the world — coupled with the legal requirement to provide a comprehensive school for every neighbourhood. These two laws are the only way the rights of every parent can be safeguarded. Without them, 'choice' can, and does, become just another way of giving priority to the educationally knowledgeable, or the privileged.

Nothing did more to pave the way for the new selection than the Labour Government's (never enacted) Education Bill of 1979, which made parental choice the only allocation factor in school entry — despite repeated requests from Labour Party educators and others to balance it with the essential 'living nearest' clause. This refusal allowed Conservatives a year later — in their 1980 Act — to make what was already *de facto* selection in some authorities, the law of the land, by merely writing the clause to this effect: all parents are free to choose comprehensive schools, *but only parents whose children pass tests may choose grammar schools* (or 'assisted places' or selective comprehensive schools). For it was in the parental choice clauses that 11 plus selection was written into law for the first time in British history.

Anyone who looks straight at our school system, sees it is still deeply divided between selective and feepaying schools on the one hand, and, on the other, non-selective schools of many types — with uncontrolled 'parental choice' increasingly misused as the mechanism by which children are now being segregated. Uncontrolled 'market forces' now select those who 'deserve better', thereby leaving the majority to take the increasingly unequal and uncertain lesser opportunities which any selective process always produces. Cuts only accelerate the process of rich getting richer, poor getting poorer.

Anyone looking closer sees that the new selection-by-choice is no longer the open, universal objective process of the old 11 plus, but a covert, self-selecting, subjective activity, far more often depending upon what a single headteacher decides behind a single closed door than upon openly stated criteria monitored and decided by democratically elected education committees. Restrictive as it was, at least the old 11 plus had an honesty about it that the new hidden selection completely lacks. Nor can the new Appeals Committees change it.

It is time public consciousness on this issue was raised — not only about the socially dangerous way selection is now operating, but about the fraudulent nature of some of the new theories which give it spurious credibility. Chief among these is misuse of the concept of 'giftedness' and the need to fashion the formal education process to serve the so-called 'gifted'.

The 'Gifted Child' is born

The gifted child is a difficult concept to challenge, since it enjoys a fine public image (one reason it has been misused so easily) and because most of us accept willingly that some children are possessed of extraordinary talent. It is only when we look behind the scenes that we see quite clearly the way 'giftedness' has taken the place of the old 'ability at eleven' as the justification for continuing with academic selection.

Those who support the gifted child cause will quickly say they do not equate giftedness with passing 11 plus tests, nor do they argue that grammar schools are necessarily required to keep giftedness serviced. To this one can only reply that the original idea may have been to further gifted children's interests as an independent exercise in a comprehensive system, but the reality has turned out differently. One has only to hear one local authority after another citing the need to cater for 'giftedness' as the reason for maintaining (or starting) grammar schools, express streams, or private-school place buying, not to mention its use as the justification for national Conservative policy — to which we return later — to know that it is not the education of rare human genius being discussed, but selection.

Nor is it hard to see how giftedness got misused. The mid 1960s saw the old 11 plus losing credibility. It was not only that testing was unreliable (even before Cyril Burt's research was discredited), but that deciding children's futures at eleven was socially unacceptable. So too were such overt divisions between first and second class schools as were represented by grammar and secondary modern schools, not to mention evidence that mass testing seemed to favour both white and middle class children over blacks and the working class.

If selection was to be retained, it urgently needed a new theoretical justification — to single out certain children agreed by all to 'need' a more advanced education and more resources.

The advantage of 'giftedness' was that it looked at first sight as though it could preserve all selection's essential features without its obvious disadvantages. It did not seem to require a divided school system, for giftedness could be forwarded in a diversity of ways. Secondly, it was widely believed to favour no class, race, or sex. Thirdly, it was supposed not to need the crudities of mass testing; it did not appear to threaten anyone or imply those not found gifted were failures. Lastly, its numbers were supposed to be miniscule, so that it created no creaming problem for the new comprehensives.

Every one of these theoretical suppositions has proved false in practice, although it has taken a long time to see just how subtly the giftedness machine, having first won public acceptance for the idea that a substantial minority of children 'need' extra care — extra teacher attention, extra facilities, extra programmes, and some separation socially — devised a system indistinguishable from the old 11 plus system to obtain this.

Perhaps we should have been more alert to the relatively sudden creation — out of the educational blue — of the giftedness movement in the 1960s, the very decade when the nation committed itself to comprehensive reform. It stretches credulity to believe the two events were not connected.

The National Association for Gifted Children,[1] formed in 1966, one year after the issue of the comprehensive circular asking all areas to reorganise, has always posed as neutral on the comprehensive issue. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of its Newsletter output has sent out subtle counter-comprehensive messages. Its members claimed it was needed because ours was an age of great 'mediocrity', although no evidence was ever

produced to justify this (indeed, anyone claiming any age to be mediocre will always find support). If we look back we could say that, if anything, the decade of the 1960s was particularly rich in talent, especially among the young.

The 'mediocrity' complaint was undoubtedly supposed to link in our minds with the campaign against the comprehensive movement — as fostering 'dull uniformity'. The giftedness movement put itself forward as an antidote to a disease no one had yet caught, and having created a demand for itself, went on to involve us all in 'trying to define the nature and extent of the problem of giftedness'. Note the use of the word 'problem', to which we shall return, suggesting something amiss which attention to giftedness would put right. In short, what was created was a new national guilt at 'neglect' of giftedness.

Harrying Comprehensives

Indirectly, the comprehensive idea was harried by the new giftedness guilt in two important ways. First, it was argued that although comprehensives could deal well with the vast majority of children, there were some (the 'truly' exceptional) with which by nature comprehensive education could not deal. No evidence was ever produced (and as we see later, evidence to the contrary was ignored), but the acid implication that comprehensives, even when fully developed, could not really 'cope' with the gifted, was left to fall drop by drop on the struggling new reform.

The second function of the giftedness lobby was to make sure that wherever comprehensives were established, selection was retained in their inner workings. The giftedness lobby appeared to — and did — concede that all abilities could often be admitted to a single school, but constantly argued against further development of the comprehensive idea. For example, many of the articles published argued against mixed ability; or claimed that to end streaming in comprehensives would be 'the death of giftedness'.[2]

The giftedness machine 1970s

By 1970 the giftedness movement had established itself quickly and easily, and had good support in the media (of which more later). What had once been a rare quality called genius, easily recognised but hard to analyse, had become a commodity like the old '11 plus ability'. Not always easily seen, but we were assured nevertheless 'born in' certain people. It could be detected if we tried, and it was the duty of formal education to identify it by special means and then to give a substantially better education to the gifted (not 'needed' by the majority). Like the old grammar entrants, the gifted had to be spotted young. Giftedness in adults or in old age — the Grandma Moses minority — were not included in the new movement. It was a movement arbitrarily relating exclusively to young people — often children before they got to 11 plus age.

The gifted needed separation, although exactly how much and of what kind, was open to argument. Just as in 1945 the grammar lobby found that the percentage of grammar places available conveniently matched the numbers selected as having 'grammar ability' — even though these percentages could differ markedly from area to area — so too the 1970s gifted movement was to find that gifted pupils could be accommodated in all kinds of ways: in the grammar schools not yet reorganised, in places bought in private education on the rates, in selective comprehensives, and in express streams inside schools. The essential vagueness of the giftedness idea was what permitted it to be even more elastic than '11 plus ability'; and this was exploited fully by those who wanted to retain selection.

It was also made the end product of a great deal of the educational industry. By the early 1970s a quality called giftedness that had not existed at all in the formal system ten years earlier, had developed into a major responsibility for educators and researchers. By the mid 1970s, the giftedness machine was grinding away in every corner: HMIs were investigating giftedness, local authorities devising special programmes to cope with it, researchers commissioned to study it, colleges of education training teachers to teach it, schools encouraged to organise for it, and parents told to be on the lookout for it from birth.

No definition exists

When we survey all this educational activity and expenditure, we naturally assume everyone involved is in full agreement that they know exactly what they are talking about and that they are all talking about the same thing. However, even the most basic survey of research, opinion and practice reveals there is no agreement whatsoever on what giftedness is, how widespread it is, or what to do about it even supposing we could agree what it is.

Giftedness turns out to be all things to all men, in short. Indeed, the late Edward Boyle, a patron of the Gifted Association, said he personally knew of 167 definitions of a 'gifted child'.[3] Many are hopelessly generalised: any child

'who shows consistently remarkable performance in any worthwhile line of endeavour'[4]

Or

'who is outstanding in either general or specific ability in a relatively broad or narrow field'[5]

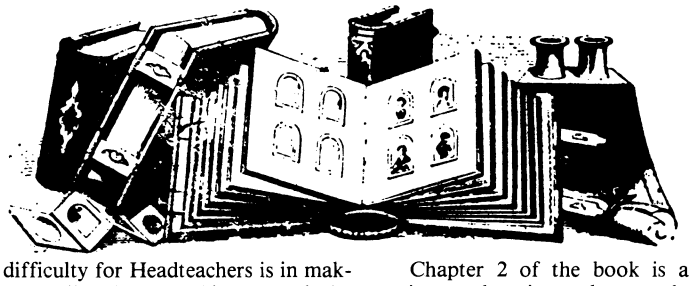
These may be good enough for a club of enthusiasts gathering to spend charity funds (the last is from NAGC sponsored research) but it isn't much use in a formal school system which will immediately want to ask awkward questions on behalf of the taxpayer, like: what is 'worthwhile endeavour' and what is not? What 'general' and 'specific' attainment is meant? How narrow is 'narrow' and how broad is 'broad'?

Parents and teachers want to know what qualities qualify for all this extra expenditure, and schools want to know why what they are already doing isn't good enough, since many think it is.

References

1. The story of the Association has been told in many places by various of its members. This account is from **Teachers World**, 8 March, 1974.
2. NAGC Association Newsletter, December, 1969, Andrew Crowcroft.
3. NAGC Newsletter, Spring, 1972.
4. JB Shields, **The Gifted child**, NFER, 1968 quotes this as typical. It is from the National Society for the Study of Education, USA, 1958.
5. One of the definitions from the NAGC sponsored research carried out by the Schools Council, published in **Gifted Children in Primary Schools**, 1973, ed. Dr E Ogilvie.

Reviews



A school's ethos

Personal Values in Primary Education by Norman Kirby, Harper & Row (1981) 136pp, cloth £6.95, paperback £3.50.

The publishers note that' **Personal Values in Primary Education** is a statement of values arrived at through a lifetime's teaching experience and reflection'. The author is insistent that children should be understood and treated as individuals and that the teacher's part in that individual's education is all important. He cites many examples of childlike behaviour and describes the characteristics of the Primary and Middle School child to support his view. He embraces the progressive movement's ideals that the process of education is more important than planned goals, and that experience gained is more important than facts stored.

In total, the book certainly conveys the author's feelings about the above and one is left in no doubt that he believes passionately in those views. This is no pure academic argument reasoned from philosophical principles but comes from a love of and feeling for children gained from practical teaching experience.

I felt that the author tended to digress from particular themes due to his enthusiasm and intimate knowledge of the subject. But the book has hidden in it many perceptive comments which epitomise the change from mass instruction to child-centred education: eg (a) If a teacher was really concerned with individuals his 'main interest would be in terms of "What do you think?" "What is going on in your heads?" "How do you feel about this task or this experience?" rather than "Guess what is in my head and give me the right answer" '; (b) On the theme of understanding young children — you would find the teacher 'listening to them and asking them questions with a real wish to hear their answers'; and (c) when pointing to the disturbing effects of a timetable straitjacket, 'Education requires conditions in which there is time to work, time to think, time to grow, time to come to your own conclusions'.

The book includes a mass of detailed descriptions of the sort of behaviour, attitudes, observations, methods and organisational strategies which a teacher using progressive methods should encompass. It shows clearly what a difficult task this is and how important is the teacher's initial and continuing training. The author's advice to young teachers is to follow the history of primary teaching methods starting from an earlier stage ie first get the environment right, then introduce individualisation gradually by way of groups. Excellent advice, but I wonder whether all teachers would be able to go all the way. Some may not have the temperament to cope with his ultimate situation.

One difficulty for Headteachers is in making sure that all staff are working towards the same ends. The school, the author envisages 'cannot be achieved by teachers working in isolation'. But he also points out that 'given room to manoeuvre, the good teacher will strain every nerve to create, within his sphere of influence those conditions, environmental, physical, social and emotional which he believes to be in the best interests of his pupils'. In the light of that and the observation in the recent HMI survey of primary schools, that too often they found work was being done 'according to the whims and fancies of individual teachers', can Headteachers allow that freedom?

How does a school achieve a uniformity of approach from all staff? I suggest that this book with its enthusiastic insights into what makes a regime geared to caring for all children, whatever their personality or ability, could be a useful starting point for any school wishing to produce the same.

Curriculum design

The Primary Curriculum by Geva M Blenkin and AV Kelly, Harper & Row (1981) 216pp, cloth £7.50 paperback £3.95.

This is an excellent and timely discourse on a currently important subject, having the merit of being both comprehensive and compact.

The authors of **The Primary Curriculum** are convinced that this curriculum is 'unique and valuable' and that it 'has developed in a different manner and in a different context from that to be seen in other educational institutions'. Current trends and pressures may cause teachers to judge this curriculum and its results by inappropriate criteria and thus make adjustments along different lines in order to meet recent criticisms and demands.

The book analyses what has come to be called the 'progressive' movement in primary education from its beginnings to the present day, examining the philosophical and psychological bases from which it has developed.' This should 'help teachers to understand the principles behind their work and enable them to make a proper assessment of proposals for change'.

For several years we have watched this progressive movement taking hold in secondary schools and I for one have wondered why the early attempts have appeared to repeat the same mistakes as those which primary schools made twenty-five or more years ago. The authors point out that curriculum theorists could well 'see what lessons can be learnt from there for the planning of the secondary curriculum rather than to continue to work things out from scratch on the mistaken assumption that what is emerging in the post-primary sector is something completely new'. But very little has been written on the Primary Curriculum and therefore this book should be most welcome to primary and secondary teachers alike.

Chapter 2 of the book is a critique of primary education and argues the case for the theory of knowledge on which progressive methods are based. This gives rise to a view of teaching which is not 'telling, but rather as facilitating learning, helping pupils to learn for themselves'. A distinction is made between 'gross physical activity' and 'the direct personal, intellectual or "mental" involvement of the pupil in the learning process'. The former is not essential to active learning, the latter is. It is important to recognise distinctions like this, which years of refinement of primary methods have brought out.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the Objectives model of curriculum planning, then the view of education as 'process'. There is a world of difference between the practice which each of these two produces and judging the results of implementing a process ideology by criteria appropriate to an objectives model of education is what the authors fear the teaching profession might be hastened into doing.

Chapter 5 — The Unified Curriculum — places the aquisition of skills and knowledge, and cognitive development in the context of that educational process, seen here as essential for the continued development of progressive education. In fact true comprehensive education might well depend on this approach to the curriculum because 'this also contributes to the development of the intellectual capacities of the individual and of a meaningful structure for his own knowledge and experience' at whatever level the pupil operates.

The book ends with an examination of recent developments in the primary curriculum to determine which fit into the 'process' view of education. This chapter shows that the statement 'It is the view of the authors of this book that discussions of education have little value unless they are rooted in first-hand experience of relevant educational practice', has indeed been put into practice. Here the theories mentioned before begin to emerge in a practical form which teachers can recognise.

We know from HMI reports that the progressive movement is not as widespread as critics of it would have us believe. I feel that this is because the movement is a difficult one to understand and put into practice. This well organised and eminently readable book on a subject of vital importance and practical urgency, could give new heart to those who are wavering due to attacks by outsiders looking for recognisable results from a previous era.

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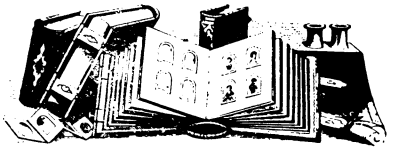

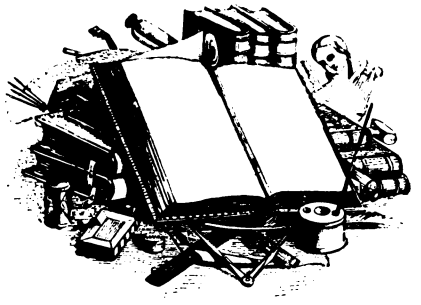

The ORACLE Programme

Research and Practice in the Primary Classroom, edited by Brian Simon and John Willcocks, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1981), pp.198, £9.75.

This is the third volume reporting the findings of the first large-scale observational study of primary school classrooms to be undertaken in this country. Funded by the Social Science Research Council during the period 1975-80, the ORACLE programme (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) was concerned primarily to study the relative effectiveness of various teaching styles across the main subject areas of the primary school.

The findings of the first volume **Inside the Primary Classroom** were discussed by Brian Simon in **Forum** Volume 22 Number 3. As a generalisation, ORACLE found the fifty-eight classrooms investigated to be orderly and well managed, the pupils highly involved in their work which consisted largely of developing skills related to literacy and numeracy. The research findings supported the view of the primary school classroom as a complex organism and called into question the traditionally accepted dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'progressive' teaching.

The second volume **Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom** dealt with the relation between different teaching styles and pupil progress and was reviewed by Michael Clarke in **Forum** Volume 23 Number 2.

The third volume, published in September 1981, extends the themes already examined. Brian Simon contributes a discussion of "the primary school revolution: myth or reality"; there are chapters outlining significant shifts in teachers' aims and organisational practice since 1970; new material is presented on the ways in which teachers conceptualise and perceive anxiety in their pupils, and on the extent to which their expectations appear to influence pupil achievement; and there is an analysis of the thorny problem of the relation between social class and pupil achievement.

Covering such a wide range of topics, and firmly based on data collected by systematic classroom observation, this third volume of the ORACLE project seems certain to receive the same high praise already accorded to the previous two.

CLYDE CHITTY

What went wrong?

Unpopular Education: schooling and social democracy in England since 1944 by Steve Baron, Dan Finn, Neil Grant, Michael Green, Richard Johnson (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, 1981) 307pp, paperback £4.95.

This is a serious, impressive, and in some senses a disturbing book — the product of a team of five from the Centre of Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, of which the present head, Richard Johnson, is one. It is a closely argued analysis of what the authors see as the failure of social democratic (or the Labour party's) educational policy since 1944.

It is impossible to do justice to the book in a short review. Historically based, it contains a (difficult) theoretical chapter in which the authors set out their views as to the complex relations between education and society. This tackles this issue from the standpoint of a 'complex Marxism', but one embodying also 'theoretical innovations'. In essence the authors reject determinist and mechanist interpretations, recently widespread and popular among a section of the left, in favour of an elaborated analysis bringing out 'the complexity of the determinations on educational policy' (p.31). This, it seems to me, is all to the good.

The essence of the argument, as I understand it, is that the Labour party early turned its back on seeking to transform the schools in a socialist direction through direct involvement with the content of education, the ethos and ideology within the schools, in favour of a neutral approach in all these areas with concentration solely, or largely, on the *extension* of provision by the state. This policy is defined as 'statist' rather than 'substitutional'. That trend, or tradition, based in the Labour movement and dominating its history throughout the 19th and to some extent the early 20th century, by which independent policies and activities seeking social transformation was primary, came to be ignored, played down and forgotten. Instead a 'statist' campaign was waged for the extension of actually existing norms and practices.

This policy, it is argued, ran into the ground in the 1960s and '70s — hence the title **Unpopular Education**. Its bankruptcy left space for an ideological counter-attack which, gathering pace in the '70s, resulted in the return of the Thatcher government having quite other educational, social and economic objectives than those espoused by both major parties in the years of 'consensus' politics.

The book contains a radical critique of education in capitalist society — drawing on the work of Paul Willis and others from the Centre for Cultural Studies and elsewhere — in an analysis of the actual role of education in social reproduction. There is also a penetrating critique of 'mainstream' sociological research which underpinned (and legitimated) the expansionist phase of the 1960s. The attitude to comprehensive education seems somewhat ambiguous; defined as 'a real advance' towards the end of the book (p.254), the authors are critical of the half-hearted manner in which this reform has been implemented and clearly do not regard it as of primary significance. The chapter on the 'Conservative Education Offensive' is first class, while those on 'The Great Debate and After' (including a section on the role of the media) and 'The Rise of the Manpower Services Commission' are illuminating and very much to the point. In a final chapter, appropriately entitled 'By No Means Concluded', the authors spell out their own programme for change, both in terms of education and of its politics.

This is a challenging book, raising a number of fundamental issues relating to educational and social change. In calling for a new approach it is in line with much current thinking, especially among those who do not make a sharp division between education, politics, and economic and social change. It deserves a warm recommendation to **Forum** readers.

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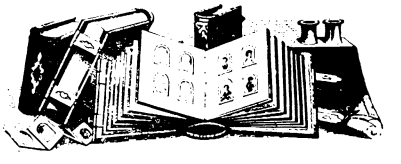

A craftsman's handbook

An Introduction to Teaching and Learning by Denis Lawton. Hodder and Stoughton (1981), 142pp, £2.95.

It was difficult not to give an inward groan at the prospect of yet another series. Already well known to teachers is the Heinemann Organisation in Schools Series under the general editorial direction of Michael Marland; and there are others. At times I wonder what more can be added to the existing store and whether we are not often just dressing up much the same material. But that is an unnecessarily cynical view and in this case the author, Denis Lawton, is positive introduction enough.

An Introduction to Teaching and Learning describes itself as a short book on a vast topic. The style is brisk and clear. An amazing amount of detail is packed into its 142 pages. I am reminded of those occasional lecturers who through their sheer command of subject matter can romp through their material selecting and highlighting key issues, and pointing their students in the best direction for further and more detailed study. At times the clear and precise layout of the text made me feel that somehow an OHP was being used. Each chapter ends with a comprehensive series of notes: indeed in the first chapter they are equal to half the text. These notes are valuable. Nothing is left to chance: all references to people, events and key issues

carry an annotation. This technique does seem to me to illustrate the art of a good teacher. References are made not to impress but to inform, and the notes are meant to explain or amplify the points as they are made.

The opening chapter, 'The Social Context of Education', has the almost obligatory brief survey of the English education 'system'. It is concerned with the control of the education system, the de-centralised nature of that control and the different ideologies that under-pin control and that are relevant to more recent secondary school curriculum and organisation debates. The reader is then taken through chapters on the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning in School, The School as an Organisation for Teaching and Learning, The nature of Education, Social and Philosophical Issues, Curriculum Planning, and finally Teachers and Pupils. It is really a course of study and I can think of nothing that is left out. Along the way there is quite detailed coverage of, for example, Bruner's Theory of Instruction. Reference is also made to less standard thinkers such as Professor Edwin Peel's work on adolescent thinking and his view of cognitive growth, and a section on John Rawls' Theory of Justice. The book is at its best when the author is exploring his own view. On the curriculum his 'approach is based on the definition of curriculum as a selection from the culture of society'. This approach is laid out in a useful five-stage model. On the rights of pupils he has a clear list. 'All pupils who are compelled to attend school should be regarded as having the following rights:

1. to have the respect of their teachers;
2. to have a worthwhile curriculum;
3. not to have their time wasted unnecessarily;
4. to be treated fairly;
5. to be a member of a community or organisation with an adequate rule system;
6. to complain:
7. to choose some activities;
8. to participate in some aspects of decision-making.'

Some sentences are in themselves clear statements on major issues.

'The curriculum is common in the sense that it must be available to all pupils, but the approach to it is not a single channel'.

'The essential point being made by egalitarians is that all children at, say, the age of eleven (or any other age) should have equality of access to worthwhile educational experiences irrespective of sex, religion, race or social background'.

'It might also be argued that in England examinations dominate the curriculum and play the most significant part in secondary education, including curriculum planning. They have become objectives rather than a means of evaluation'.

An altogether useful, compact book. It stresses 'that individual teachers and schools do matter'. It argues for 'increased professional awareness and better teaching methods'. It asks fundamental questions. 'In a democratic society, can we continue within a tradition that is basically elitist?' This should help teachers to a better understanding of the craft of teaching and 'how to structure learning situations more effectively'.

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Sound advice

Effective Classroom Control by John Robertson, Hodder and Stoughton (1981), 128pp, £2.95.

Most everyday school problems resolve themselves into questions of order. No teacher who cannot control his classes can expect promotion, and to vary Mr Robertson's final quotation, unless we can do something *with* pupils, then we can do nothing *for* them.

It is the more surprising, therefore, that short, business-like handbooks of advice suitable for student teachers or for professional tutors to slip into the hands of probationers are not so commonplace as, for example, guides to passing the driving test. A useful 1960s pamphlet of this kind is WJ Gnagey's **What Research Teaches Us about 'Controlling Classroom Misbehaviour'**. Since then, there has been a deal of relevant research as Mr Robertson's bibliography in this excellent little book reminds us. Maybe the dismissive phrase 'tips for teachers' has summed up a professional snobbishness about guides to the art of class management, effectively deterring authors and arousing guilt in would-be readers such as they might incur in asking for a book on halitosis.

It also postulates a firm and probably unfashionable posture on the part of the author. Mr Robertson accepts, without apology, a trenchant, teacher-centred, non-permissive position. He takes it for granted that if a child's voice is to be heard in the classroom, it will be at the teacher's behest. Silence is golden. Few teachers working with typically large classes would quarrel with his assumption, and those who struggle daily to retain their professional self-respect will welcome this realistic book.

The author's tough-minded position hints that the teacher should wait till Christmas before smiling and certainly be the only comedian in the classroom. **Effective Classroom Control** is not much concerned with the environmental causes of deviance, with issues of principle, with possible cultural conflicts between teacher and taught, with the relevancy of subject matter, or indeed with techniques of presentation except in promoting efficient teacher talk. Even the possibility of improving relationships outside the classroom is barely mentioned. It is assumed that 'teaching is caring' and that the good teacher has something worthwhile to say. He is advised how to be enthusiastic in saying it in a context strictly defined by himself. One senses that the teacher in mind is envisaged as acting out his role before secondary pupils, rather than conducting a classroom workshop or teaching infants.

This is a pragmatic investigation of deviant behaviour, and how teachers should act and react in order to establish and retain a legitimate and respectable classroom status. In developing a sophisticated version of the old formula 'firm, fair and friendly', he reckons implied threats of force to be counter-productive, advising strongly against laying hands on children or indulging in 'physical assists'. Occasionally he is detected flirting dangerously with official corporal punishment, though ultimately rejecting it.

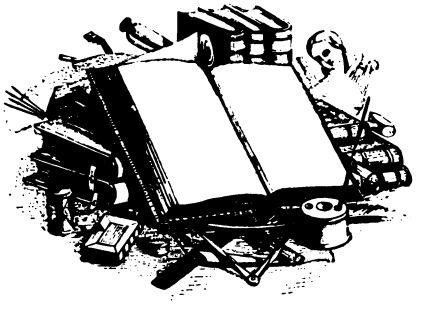
Mr Robertson's advice shapes a model teacher whose actions are the sum of the findings of widely varied research and his own perceptive experience. Such a teacher would make a good colleague — the kind of disciplinarian one would prefer to take a class over from. The advice on control is so interrelated with effective communication that the emergent model is of a teacher who gets it right by focusing persistently on the proper completion of the pupil's task, rather than by dwelling on his own hurt feelings, or the moral turpitude of his pupil.

Every teacher can learn something from this closely argued and tidily organised book. True, it has plenty of attractively repackaged staffroom 'chestnuts' such as always making threats into promises, winning the first tackle decisively, getting silence before delivering the message, naming a pupil early and not losing sight of the group in dealing with the individual. But it is also full of fresh insights, reminiscent of Desmond Morris's field guides to human behaviour. He is, for instance, excellent on the status symbolism of a relaxed, confident style, the management of eye contact, use of pupils' personal space, on the hidden curriculum of non-verbal signalling, on 'withitness', on lesson momentum and the avoidance of 'act-one over-dwelling'.

Every staffroom should have a copy of this book, but those encouraged to read it should go through it twice. The general tone is of unpompous, humorous advice in the first person, spiced with embarrassingly revealing transcripts of awful moments in the classroom. This readable style is intermingled with less personal summaries of other people's research findings, where the jargon of the original work is transmuted, but still sufficiently in evidence to give pause to unsophisticated readers.

Discerning students of the book may, one hopes, finally aspire to that blessed state of composed aplomb of the young lady, said to have walked into a frenzied classroom where a maladjusted pupil was brandishing an iron bar. 'Right! Pokers away. Pay attention' — and normal service resumed immediately.

GEOFFREY LAWES
The Weald Comprehensive School, Billingshurst, West Sussex



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