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Editorial Communications: typescript articles (1500-2000 words) and contributions to discussion (800 words maximum) should be addressed to The Editor, 11 Pendene Road, Leicester LE2 3DQ. Tel: 0533-705176.

Business information: correspondence relating to subscriptions etc. should be addressed to Anne Warwick, FORUM, 4 Bourton Crescent, Oadby, Leicester LE2 4PA. Tel: 0533-716284.

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The Next Forum

The focus of the next number is the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. Denis Lawton writes on current centralising tendencies, while a related article discusses Sir Keith Joseph's initiatives concerning criteria for the sixteen-plus examination in science. The head of French at Sheredes School writes on the successful experience there of mixed ability French teaching up to the fifth form. John Elliott, of the Cambridge Institute, presents his research on the 'quality of learning'. It is intended to include a memorial article about Brian Jackson and his contribution to the move towards comprehensive education. The continuing debate on the TVEI will feature a response from Maurice Holt.

Taking up the Challenge

Over the last couple of years **Forum** has been reappraising the principles and practices of comprehensive education in the context of the 1980s and in the face of concerted attempts by a hostile government to undermine the gains and progress made both within committed schools and within the system as a whole. This has led us to range our focus across curriculum issues through the phases of education from infant to post-sixteen and on the impact of central government policies from schemes such as Assisted Places to the Technical and Vocational Initiative. We have also been concerned at the continuous onslaught on teachers' morale through the erosion of standards of provision by cumulative cuts in expenditure.

Most opportunely as we enter 1984 Caroline Benn invites us, in the opening article, to take stock of what the comprehensive education movement has achieved, to put the interest of the majority firmly at the centre of our endeavours and regain the confidence to move forward again. Bob Moon then challenges us to grasp the 'opportunities for significant change' in the secondary curriculum in ways that could free teachers and students from the straitjacket of obsolete assumptions and thereby enfranchise all with their educational rights. And Annabelle Dixon analyses the meaning and working of the non-differentiated infant classroom where all children can begin 'to understand what learning is truly about'. A firm note of realistic optimism also runs through Peter Worrall's portrayal of a multiracial inner city community school.

Forum is confident that the comprehensive education movement can forge ahead, despite current vicissitudes and the threatening postures and tactics adopted by the present Secretary of State. The true weakness of the reactionary, opposing case is demonstrated in Professor Harvey Goldstein's exposure of the gravely flawed methodology in the latest Black Paperite contribution to debate. When the enemies of comprehensive education resort to debasing the standards of academic research in this way for quasi-political ends, we can indeed take confidence in the inherent rightness of our convictions.

This is not to deny that there are many old and new problems whose resolution will not be easy. Established modes of thought and teaching methods exert powerful constraints to deter innovation even among those eager to break new ground, as is illustrated by John Turner's study of the movement to develop integrated humanities courses with teacher-control over assessment. Teachers need in-service support and encouragement in such ventures. We must ensure that this is forthcoming to sustain the vitality so crucial for improving 'teaching quality'.

Committed to promoting discussion of new trends in education, **Forum** welcomes the continued debate on the challenge presented by both the TVEI and the CPVE, the latter described by the DES as the education service's 'counterpart' to the YTS. Here is an important curricular debate which must be firmly located within the context of a unified system of comprehensive education and its extension beyond sixteen. We should not confuse the intrusion into the schools of an alien, unaccountable ad hoc body entitled MSC with the message it brings: this message is not new; it may have been unduly neglected, even rejected by the grammar school model; it merits discussion within debate about the comprehensive school curriculum. Nor should we allow our educational principles to be confused or diverted by alien forces ignorant about their impact on such sensitive social organisms as the learning institutions for which we, as teachers, are accountable.

Forum has always been concerned with the process and content of education as a continuum through the phases by which this is structured. We fought against the selective eleven-plus as a divisive device in that continuum, damaging in its impact on both primary and secondary phases. We have supported moves for a common sixteen-plus as mitigating pressures for differentiation within the secondary phase: we cannot compromise with a new intervening fourteen-plus divide. Now, as we move our sights to focus beyond sixteen as the target, we have to examine our objectives for extending the comprehensive educational continuum. In so doing we cross an already weakly defined phase boundary of secondary and tertiary structures where many schools have been developing 'new sixth' courses and forging links with further education, thereby cracking the template of the grammar school model.

A generation has now moved right through the compulsory school system since RoSLA. Now primary schools are normally nonstreamed, 85 per cent of secondary schools are comprehensives and take over 90 per cent of the relevant age range. These gains are best safeguarded by forging ahead with confident determination to continue developing the curriculum to serve all participants in the educational process within the framework of a comprehensive education system that ensures open access at every phase.

Secondary Reform: time to move on

Caroline Benn
Information Officer for the Campaign for Comprehensive Education, last year Caroline Benn exposed 'the myth of giftedness' (Vol.24 Nos.2 and 3) and four years ago forecast how the 1980 Education Bill would bring ' new 11-plus' through the Assisted Places scheme (Vol.22 No.2). Here she takes stock of centralist tactics to undermine comprehensive education.

Twenty years ago, when comprehensive reform was about to start, 11-18 schools had the field to themselves. As the 'orthodox' form of comprehensive reorganisation, they were prized because they replicated the grammar school's age range and included its GCE examination system. For the previous two decades any comprehensive sixth form had had to be the same size as a grammar school's for the school to be 'accepted' by ministry mandarins, which is why both Conservative and Labour ministers had been insisting for years that 2,000 was a reasonable size for a school.

By 1964 dissatisfaction among comprehensive reformers at such a size promoted other forms of organisation. These boiled down essentially to two: those with a break in the middle of the secondary course, including Leicestershire's, and schemes where the break came at 16. Despite the fact that most reduced school size significantly while not affecting sixth form function, all were discouraged. Again the reason given was the welfare of that same 'grammar minority': they would be disadvantaged in the new system by not having the continuous 'run up' to GCE 'O' level and continuity beyond to 'A' level.

The majority's interest as a criterion for decisions about the development of comprehensive education, by contrast, was rarely discussed. This interest had to be fostered and fought for assiduously over the last twenty years by countless comprehensive reformers, and so it has been. Perhaps it is time to take stock of how successfully the case has been made, although paradoxically, we are seeing its full strength only as a result of the present government's attempts to turn the clock back and reimpose long discredited selective divisions.

Organisational change still in progress

Twenty years on from 1964, for example, the 11-18 comprehensive school is in retreat, under siege by both pro- and anti-comprehensive forces, many the same as once favoured it. Latter-day opponents of a fully comprehensive system, still measuring comprehensive success by the GCE minority's welfare, now perversely favour schemes that break at 13 or 14 precisely to give this minority a separate existence — or to accommodate a private sector suddenly wishing to 'assist' comprehensives (and increase its share of public funding) by acting as the new grammar schools. Other opponents favour break-at-16 schemes — but only because they are the easiest way to rationalise resources, cut the teaching force and reduce running costs in the state system. Their assumption is still that the majority's interest is less important than the minority's.

Meanwhile, the pro-comprehensive movement is being diverted by a failure to agree on institutional organisation, and is now divided between those who still favour the all-through model as the true comprehensive experience, able to sustain pupils from the cradle to the grave of secondary schooling, and those who see a unified tertiary arrangement as the only model able to include 'all' young people and 'all' learning experiences in any comprehensive way.

Neither model is the answer, in fact, for both are in the throes of transformation. In any case, the crucial arguments on behalf of the majority today are taking place over the organisation of the curriculum, not that of institutions. Comprehensive reformers who hold to the pure 11-18 model are having the leanest time of it because theirs is least equipped to stand alone against both cuts and curriculum proliferation (not the same as curriculum change). Tertiary networks — both formal and informal — spread between them like spider webs in almost every area. Some involve co-operation of comprehensive sixth forms one with another (of which the sixth form college is the most condensed version). Others are schemes where sixth forms — separately or together — co-operate with further education colleges, each type remaining discrete; while still others integrate all post-16 education under one further education umbrella.

The 11-18 comprehensive which does not co-operate with other schools or colleges will soon be very rare. Some will be prestigious comprehensives serving more advantaged areas, others those 'omitted' from local 16-19 reorganisation by ministerial decision — one of the government's many clever tactics to keep division alive. If such schools come to identify more with private or selective secondary schools than with other comprehensives, we might see the wheel coming full circle and the all-through school — selective or non-selective, private or state — once again identified as the prestigous, self-sufficient institution catering in the main to a privileged minority and limiting itself largely to academic courses.

Education and Training

But tertiary colleges aren't comprehensive yet either. Even the most open-access doesn't reach that half of the age group which still gets no education at all. Except that some are now being offered a pale imitation in the form of the thirteen weeks off-the-job programme

inside the Youth Training Scheme. So far, however, even the 'best' of such programmes fall well below the standard of most nineteenth century extensions to the majority's education. Imagine what the worst are like.

Yet there are worse still: those training schemes where there is no education at all because those in charge believe education is just a frill, or what the managerial and clerkly classes have, not what 'this lot' need or want. Such opinion is commonplace, spoken by many to whom taxpayers are giving large sums for the specific purpose of educating these same young people. Nor is it confined to the proprietors of cowboy colleges or grasping employers out for all the cheap labour they can get and incapable of offering training, let alone education. It can come just as easily from the Education Officers of multi-national corporations.

Without doubt the failure of this government — and to some extent all previous ones — to encourage the education system to concern itself with the development of education for this age group inside a quality training programme for all, in any planned or integrated, let alone comprehensively compatible, way — coupled with a dangerously repressive policy towards the majority's academic freedom (as in a government directive that none should be allowed even to discuss the way society works) — is the single most urgent problem facing education at the present moment.

It is certainly the most crucial issue facing comprehensive reformers. Yet few educators, comprehensive or not, are concerning themselves — for the simple reason that none of it comes under the heading of 'Education'. Our attention has been diverted by another clever tactic: making it all a matter for the Employment Minister and the Manpower Services Commission, not the DES, the Education Service, teachers, lecturers, parents or young people themselves — even when it is absolutely crucial to all of them.

The DES in particular exudes supreme disinterest, but any who support comprehensive education cannot accept the view that 'it's not our job'. It is, and we should long ago have been forcefully and directly challenging the Manpower Services Commission, starting with frank comment on many of its educational initiatives — including praise for the tiny number which are compatible with comprehensive development and need to be widely discussed and promoted.

Most, however, need to be opposed — not so much because the role given to education is so meagre, although this is bad enough, but because the thinking behind them is so ignorant of what has been happening in education in the last twenty years. The 1982 Task Group document, for example, assumes our education system is still in 1964 — where a grammar minority will obviously have separate education and consideration from aged 11 onwards as well as exemption from the 'harsh realities' of the training world. But is this surprising? Most MSC policy is not prepared by educators or teachers for young people themselves but by officers and consultants attached to employer and trade union organisations for their own respective bosses.

Divide and Rule

The real question is, why aren't a whole range of educators doing this essential work, and especially why aren't we as comprehensive reformers right in the thick of it? One answer is because everyone's energies are consumed with promoting or resisting the attack upon the comprehensive reform by this government and its many allies which has been going on since 1979.

Almost every day since it seems we read of fresh attempts to subvert the gains made on behalf of the majority. We recall the legislation which cleverly appeared to promise 'choice' but is turning out to promote the privilege of those with wealth or those with children who have passed attainment tests earlier than others. We are constantly assailed with news of assaults on educational standards caused by cuts at the same time as we hear of increased sums being put into private education in the form of public payments of private school bills for diplomats and military officers, increased local authority place — buying on behalf of the knowledgeable and advantaged who 'win' places in exclusive schools at ratepayers' and local comprehensive systems' expense.

All this reinforces 11-plus selection which, we tend to forget, was still operating in over a third of all local authorities in 1979. Today selection operates everywhere else as well because the 'Assisted Places' programme has imposed it on every Local Authority, even those which have expressed their wish to end all selection. This scheme not only transfers yet more public money to private schooling and away from the majority's education system, it also guarantees to remove half the university-bound students from any local comprehensive system, whatever its post-16 institutional arrangements.

More selection is rumoured daily, including, spreading 'Assisted Places' to private boarding schools (which, in contrast to private day schools, have been losing customers for years). And there is always a story in the headlines about vouchers to keep us agitated, or about 'open enrolment' — a policy Alec Clegg warned against twenty years ago because it would risk making half the schools over-favoured while the other half disintegrated before our eyes. Lately there is talk of reviving direct grants — no doubt to give extra financial support to those schools whose selective practices (internal or external) the government decide merit it — at the expense of other schools' support, of course.

The tactic of dangling cash above the heads of a resources-starved system is already being used to promote the tripartite NTEVI from 14 to 19, and is forcing authorities to initiate educationally narrow and socially divisive programmes which many must know they will have to undo or transform sooner rather than later.

After 16, while public service further education is cut back, cash is on offer to private schools and colleges, springing up overnight to collect the MSC payment that goes with providing 'education' and training for young people in Youth Training Schemes. Almost anyone can start a course or a college — for this or any other purpose. That the longer established private colleges are now getting uptight about scandalous imposters moving in — and making moves to 'licence' each other — gives us some idea of how many rotten private sector initiatives there are around.

No 16-19 Policy

At 16-19 major changes are being forced on everyone at

the speed of light, while essential reforms languish (a unified curriculum and the end of 'A' level being one), because no-one has any grasp of 16-19 development as a whole, nor any coherent plan for education's development within it — certainly not the MSC. YTS is not, as is claimed, a new system of education and training for all. It is merely an extension of the old nineteenth century elementary education and training tradition for the working class majority in response to the needs of employers who stand to improve their position by schemes providing cheaper labour. The word 'comprehensive' is consistently misused in MSC documents and proposals. No unified system is being proposed; not even in the most distant future is there any suggestion that every young person is going to be offered choice from the same range of opportunities at 16, or even, now, at 14.

To oppose YTS is not to oppose education and training, but to oppose a thoroughly misguided and anti-comprehensive version of it, at a moment when we are in a position to promote a version that is compatible with the extension of comprehensive education and the majority interest. If we want the radical reform of 16-19 education, we must fight for it just the way we fought for every other reform — by forcing the majority's interest into the centre of the stage.

Fighting Centralisation

This means forcing our campaign into the path of the central political engine, for this same government which talked about increasing 'choice' and 'standards' and yet has reduced both, is also the government which talked about respecting local wishes and yet is clawing every decision back to Whitehall. Every measure to reinforce selection described above is one the government operates centrally — from apparently simple decisions, like refusing permission for tertiary reorganisation plans (where, as in Rossendale, it would mean the loss of a grammar school) to major obstruction like the long, slow tactic of taking no decision about a single 16-plus and a more common curriculum — because 'doing nothing' is by far the most effective way of keeping the minority's selective GCE system in being.

Yet at 16-plus there is now widespread agreement among teachers, HMIs, and other educators that a single (and more varied) system of assessment and a more common curriculum would be desirable. This is why any decision will probably have to claim to be in favour of a single system, even when this turns out to include only 60 per cent and may well have separate 'papers' for the 'top 10 per cent' — the surest way possible to strengthen the selective system by manipulating from the centre. At the other end, it is hardly likely that a government which virtually invented the bogus concept of 'the bottom 40 per cent' will do other than try to segregate this group further, possibly by sending more to vocational training under the MSC, the supreme centralising agency.

Anti-Comprehensive Policy Isn't Working

But look carefully at this long list of tactics, and ask how many have been or could be successful? The decision on 16-plus has already been so long delayed that local curriculum and assessment initiatives are going ahead without it. This healthy spate of UDI threatens to make any anti-comprehensive government decision if not obsolete, certainly lacking in moral authority. The YTS Scheme is already in serious difficulties and it has barely begun. Policies — like vouchers — have detonated themselves, and those which have got through — like 'Assisted Places' — have met widespread resistance, and won hardly any popular enthusiasm. Were this not the case the Independent Schools Information Service would not now be talking about the days of private schools as charities being numbered, and the need for such schools to start contributing to the comprehensive system in some acceptable way. Lastly, there is the government which insisted all comprehensives publish their results now refusing to publish its results of the report suggesting pro-grammar research is seriously flawed.

Isn't it possible that it is the government's anti-comprehensive policy that is in retreat, not the comprehensive reform? Are we not perhaps mistaken in thinking that the government's attempt to reimpose the past will not largely defeat itself? That most people don't want to 'go back' and anyone who tries it, will be in for a nasty shock? Come to think of it, has not this government and the Black Paper movement had a series of nasty shocks already?

Almost every local authority which has tried to reintroduce grammar schools — even, in some cases, super-selective streams inside schools — has been defeated, starting with Bexley in 1979 and coming up to Solihull in 1983. What we don't realise, perhaps, is that the media is not going to trumpet out our victories in the way it used to headline those of the Black Paper campaigns, so we are left unaware of having had any. We are also left unaware of how flat the other side can fall. In the case of Solihull it wasn't only the government and a few local councillors who got rebuffed, including by their own supporters, it was also the 'national crusade' to return to grammar education which the **Sun, Mail** and **Express** burst forth with to accompany the Solihull exercise. In the end, media blather was almost the only real support the move ever had.

More Faith Needed

We should have a lot more confidence in the rightness of our reform, and in the good sense of the majority who will find in it just what we expect them to find: the best and fairest solution to the problem posed by educating everyone up to 16. And if we need further boosting, we should call to mind that if there is so much agreement now just below the surface over making the majority interest at least as important as any minority one, when the recession is with us, think what kind there will be when the upturn really does come and expectation is actually rising?

As educational reformers, all signs point to our major problem today as being one of excess conservativism. Unless we move on very quickly, and resume our traditional role of argument for the bigger changes which must now take place in the education of the majority, particularly after 16, we will not only fail to gain what is within our reach, but risk losing what we have already gained, which is a great deal more than we realise.

Challenging the Deference Curriculum

Bob Moon
After teaching for eight years within the ILEA Bob Moon moved to Stantonbury Campus in Milton Keynes where he eventually became Head of Bridgewater Hall School. In 1982 he moved to Oxford to become Head of Peers School, an established comprehensive upper school serving the BL area of the city. Last year he edited **Changing Schools . . . Changing Curriculum** with Maurice Galton and **Comprehensive Schools: Challenge and Change,** a study of six progressive schools as they developed over the past decade.

> 'I want to begin by reminding you of the context in which we are working. This country has two educational systems running in parallel — the private system and the state system — and although they are not the same size it is difficult to decide which carries more weight.' (Lawrence Stenhouse in an address delivered a few months before his death).[1]
>
> 'Like a teacher's report. Teachers must always be right, they've been appointed. The child can only ever be wrong.' (Arnold Wesker in **The Listener** 25 August 1983).
>
> 'She'd been bossy as a kid, but not grouchy the way she was now. Well, it couldn't be easy having someone as great looking and popular as Sally for a sister, if you yourself was nothing but a brain. Most of the kids over at school resented her because she always raised the grading curve of any class she was in.' (Lisa Alther in **Original Sins** Penguin 1981).

Four related ideas, inspired by different people and experience, are holding a central place in my thinking at the present moment. Firstly the practical implications of 'deference theory' as it is applied to comprehensive schooling. Secondly, the way in which the deferential curriculum has come to circumscribe teacher identity and ambition. Thirdly the restricted and, I believe, erroneous understanding of ability that pervades schooling, and finally the way in which uniform and inflexible curriculum structures maintain the inadequacies (and injustices) that arise from each of these influences. It is through these themes that this article tentatively explores the issue of differentiation in secondary schooling.

Sociologists, I believe, began developing ideas of deference theory to explain patterns of voting behaviour. Why was it that certain groups, against their own self-interest, consistently voted for the established and traditional ruling cliques? Answer . . . deference, the capacity to suspend judgement and, take it for granted that your betters know best. In the mid-sixties when I began teaching in Inner London the comprehensives were involved in fierce combat to prove their worth against the grammar schools. It was a complex and muddled struggle, fuelled by a hostile media.[2] Twenty years on, however, the problem persists despite the virtual disappearance of selective schooling within the state system. The reason, it appears to me, is because the grammar school ethos, developed from public school traditions, is still deeply embedded in national consciousness. Few parents, for example, mind their children watching Billy Bunter films. Many, I am told, turn off Grange Hill. **The Times** is a good source of evidence. A few months ago the literary page headlined one review 'Radical, Raffish and Tough'. It was the biography of a school. Radical and Tough, applied as adjectives to a comprehensive in the winter of 1984 would create in many areas a significant outflow of parents. Raffish could hardly be applied in cultural terms, to such a school. The review, however, an approving one, would have little impact on the fortunes of the school in question, Eton.

Look at the way in which the schools to which mine and your children go are evaluated by top people. The television review of the same paper commenting upon the Kingswood series was able to note that it:

> 'has the limitations of being somewhat impressionistic: it would be impossible to tell, from the first programme at least, whether the comprehensive system is good, bad or indifferent' (25 October 1982).

I wonder how many people reading that realised how nonsensical the statement was. Would he ever have been able to write such a sentence following the first few programmes of the Radley series, or about grammar schooling where it exists? And so it goes on. My son's **Playfair Cricket Annual** is only just giving comprehensive school mentions in player biographies. Players who attended secondary moderns are not accredited with any school experience at all.

I dwell at length on this, not through any sour grapes motivation, but because it does have practical consequences for schools. Clearly it has influenced the traditions of internal organisation and behaviour. Secondary schools are often extraordinary places, with their peculiar rituals, statutes and dignatories, guaranteed to alienate all except a small minority. Equally clearly, it has a direct impact on curriculum and student differentiation and it is to this that I want to focus attention.

The newly emergent comprehensives of the sixties adopted the curriculum style and structure of the grammar schools. The few interesting ideas developed by people such as Albert Rowe in secondary modern schooling failed to gain a foothold. The status of the majority of secondary school teachers was improved through reorganisation and the development of subject-based CSE examing further rooted this in the subject role. As the comprehensive schools grew in the boom years so it became possible to specialise in a narrower and narrower subject range. Teacher identity became increasingly restricted and subject orientated. Attempts in the sixties and seventies to overcome this in Schools Council and other projects met with stiff opposition.

The school curriculum became a grid of vertical options tacked onto the normally compulsory English

Compulsory core: English, Mathematics, PE and RE for all

Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E	Option F
Latin					
History	Geography	French	Biology	Chemistry	Physics
Geography	History	Art	Chemistry	Biology	Biology
Social Studies	Social Studies	Computer St.	Geography	Chemistry	
Music	T.D.	Control Tech.	German	Gen. Science	Home Econ.
Catering	Home Econ.	Needlework	Off. Practice	E.W.T.P.	Metalwork
	German		Art		
Woodwork	Movement Studies	Family Care Gen. Science	European Studies	Typing Environmental Studies	Motor Mechanics

Grammar School *circa* 1958

Newsom *circa* 1965
Rosla *circa* 1972

and Mathematics, PE and RE. Some schools had five options, others six. A few anticipating the culture/curriculum debate grouped subject offerings under faculty style offerings such as Design or Humanities.

The diagram shows one model representing the dominant pattern of schools up and down the country. It is directly descended from the grammar school model and the dotted line indicates the subjects on offer in one grammar school in 1958. Note that high status subjects are most often found at the top of the columns. Below, the continuous line, is the Newsom and ROSLA inheritance. A damp squib of a programme, unloved by teachers and students alike, unrecognised by parents. My feeling for the school experience of so many youngsters would carry me towards the polemical assertion that this represents something akin to a national scandal.

In schools, despite increasing doubts and with the weighty criticism of HMI, especially Sheila Browne, in recent years to further knock confidence, attempts are made to defend this system by reference to notions of choice and opportunity. The reality in most schools is very different. Choice is restricted through teacher intervention. Motivation becomes a questionable issue twelve months into a subject chosen, for administrative reasons, six months or more before the course begins. Students drop out in enormous numbers. CSE was stretched to cover everyone and the resultant tears (and tears!) manifest themselves in school after school. The average attainment student in mathematics has to fail 70 per cent of their exam paper! All the worst evils of class, sex and race differentiation are manifest in the hidden curriculum of subject choices. Ann Hurman's **A Charter for Choice**,[3] a detailed examination of the workings of the option scheme, is probably one of the most important but least read books and she only touches the surface of the problem.

Having created these choices we then restrict access by reference to a dubiously grounded concept of abiity, the Burt inheritance. At thirteen into four out of five comprehensives (perhaps more and certainly not less) is introduced a sorting, sieve mechanism that develops a sense of failure and inferiority that characterised the final year of primary education in the selective age. Phrases such as 'the more able' or 'the less able' are heard daily in schools up and down the country.

Both beg the question more or less able at what? Much of what anyone would accept in legitimate curriculum experience is just not amenable to such categorisation. The whole area of expressive and aesthetic activity, the practical and manipulative, the world of imagination and community action, in none of these can the blanket phrases more or less able apply. In the traditions of the literary deferential curriculum, and given an obligation to use the school as a sorting mechanism, then more or less able may be applicable terms. The wholesale application of this concept right across school experience, and from the earliest of years is a major source of institutionalised social injustice at odds with our aspirations for the Common School. It manifests itself not only in the terminology of the day but also in the grading systems found in so many schools, A-E for attainment 1-5 for effort. How does it feel to be C3 for life?!

Report after report confirms this problem. The following from the Scottish Study, **Reconstructions of Secondary Education** is a direct challenge to teachers in every English and Welsh school.

> 'The examinable curriculum has developed incrementally over the years, 'from the top downwards', and it has thereby distributed to the majority of secondary school children the experience of failure in an attenuated academic curriculum. This generalisation of failure has provided a basis for securing the participation of many pupils, but only at a high cost: it has reflected an indifference to the consequent demoralisation of pupils, both in school and also at the point at which some might otherwise volunteer for non-academic forms of post-compulsory education; it has ignored the consequent fragmentation of the curriculum during the compulsory years; it has led to over-examination and it has restricted the scope available for the development of curricula based on alternative values and alternative methods.'[4]

Normative assessment, a hugely important influence on secondary school students, creates patterns of differentiation that are neither logical nor just in terms of a large proportion of present curriculum activity, let alone what we might be suggesting for the future. Let me attempt an analogy to illustrate this.

A few weeks back I decided to repair my oak wood front gate that had fallen apart after nearly 90 years of use. My practical craft experience is limited and the task represented a considerable challenge. Beginning one Friday evening, continuing through Saturday and with frequent visits to a friendly ironmonger and woodcutter I finally completed the job late on Sunday morning. The first coat of paint was on and furtively from across the

road I proudly admired my handiwork. I went into Sunday lunch with a feeling of personal pride and satisfaction that had left a glow (one we all feel too rarely) that was sustained through to Monday morning. Three months later glances at the gate still create the same sensation! Thinking of this I ask myself what would have happened if my neighbour had been repairing his gate at the same time and someone had come along to assess our work. Imagine he received a credit and I'm given a pass. Clearly I wouldn't have felt the same. Liking my neighbour I might sheepishly have admired his handiwork and noted the areas where I had been out-performed. But it did not have to happen because in that context quantitative comparative assessment would have been inappropriate. Why, in our schools can we not give many opportunities for success and the feeling of pride that comes from it? Why the need to categorise so many children as failures against the criteria of a narrowly restricted and outdated tradition of the scholastic curriculum? (Grade 5 Chemistry!) All around us is evidence of adults in jobs and at leisure performing tasks at a conceptual level way beyond what many schools had deemed fixed limits. How is this related to the ingenious justifications for maintaining the present pattern of curriculum organisation?

Perspectives for change

There are opportunities for significant change. As a first step some consensus around the analysis of the problem will have to be accepted. That will not be easy. The mission to place 'success' rather than 'failure' as a centre of the school's concern is in the best traditions of progressive schooling and is a hard fought ideological battle. It is, however, central to our concerns because we are talking about social justice and public rights. How much longer can we maintain schools to 'put down' the achievement of our children? Given the contradictions of current central policy establishing a consensus will not be easy. Sir Keith Joseph, for example, advocates technical and vocational modernisation of the curriculum whilst at the same time committing millions of pounds to the Assisted Places Scheme. With a few notable exceptions the majority of schools within the private system marked the deferential curriculum and would be out of business if they did not.

That aside the present structure of the comprehensive school curriculum is highly inflexible. Teachers are locked into small units of time with selected groups of children for most often two years at a time. Co-operation between teachers is limited and the period bell is a dominant concern. Ideas of community programmes, intensive study or short courses with limited objectives are constrained by the conventions of the timetable. Students are most often taught in single age groups. To create the conditions for new styles of curriculum activity we need to give a great deal more attention to creating new forms of school teacher, student and time organisation. Three possible ways forward, two already operating in some schools and one a not too distant possibility are worth examining.

The first extends the practice of the primary school into secondary schooling. Children work towards one tutor within a team and time is organised around individual or group needs. Negotiating between teacher and student would be an organising tutor and the team would be small enough to permit this. Bob Evans describes how this model has developed in Countesthorpe College in a book published this summer.[5] It is an attractive proposition although I believe liable to significant problems of innovation given the tight hold of subject status on teachers' identity.

A second approach would be to throw out the notion of timetable altogether and think in terms of school as a community resource that operates from 8am to 10pm and at weekends and from which children, up to and beyond 16, have both the right and obligation to claim education. The word obligation is used with a purpose. In suggesting alternatives to the prevailing orthodoxy and in using the word progressive I do not want to be seen as advocating *laissez faire* structures in which the patterns of social differentiation and injustice would be recreated. There is a place for prescription and authority to give the child opportunities that would otherwise be denied. I am critical of the way in which the seven or eight 'O' level curriculum determines the whole structure of the secondary school. I am equally aware of a responsibility to provide the means for more children to achieve that significant objective. The two beliefs are not contradictory. In the more open community school negotiations between teacher, child and parent would create patterns of obligation supported within the authority structure of the school. 'O' level certification becomes possible in terms acceptable to parents but within a framework that does not determine the organisation and status of the rest of the curriculum.

A third way forward and the one that seems to me to be the most practical is to create teams of teachers within broad area groupings that reflect the traditions and training of subject categories. In a comprehensive school this might involve four or five teams and their constitution would take account of local conditions and circumstances. The team would have responsibility for blocks of time within the curriculum and they would provide a series of courses, sometimes modular in form, across a range of experiences. The 'literary' curriculum would still be there but greater emphasis would be placed on the expressive arts (see David Hargreaves' comments on performance work) and the practical and manipulative . . . the applied rather than the theoretical. Despite the dangers of MSC policies, who can deny the imbalance of the school curriculum? Drive around any housing estate on a summer weekend and see what people are doing. Provision for 'O' level within the team structures would be made. Teachers with parents would however have questioned assumptions made about the amount of time needed to prepare for examinations of this type. Students would contract out for morning and afternoon sessions into job based or community activity on a frequent basis. A personal tutor and advisors in each of the teams would closely monitor and support progress. CSE[6] would be a minimal influence on the curriculum perhaps providing validation in very broadly based programmes such as Science and Technology.

In each of these three approaches ongoing assessment and evaluation of a qualitative and individual nature would become more important. Teachers would need to rethink their methodological ideas and the sort of

Divided We Rule

Annabelle Dixon
A psychologist with an M Sc in Educational Research, Annabelle Dixon is also a practising infant teacher. She has taught both infants and juniors for over twenty years and has recently written three books on scientific topics for younger juniors. Here she considers non-differential processes in the infant school.

A few years ago a colleague remarked to me, in words fashionable at the time, that there was both a surface and a deep structure to the Infant school that went largely unacknowledged. Those who visit infant schools occasionally, as opposed to working in them, will probably recall the experience as a sunny impression of groups of self-motivated children involved in a variety of activities: how fortunate child and teacher were to be as yet removed from the pressures of the wider world.

So who decided that those three children should paint and who decided what it was they were painting? Why is *that* group of children reading and why are they reading *those* books in particular? What prompted five children to sit around *that* table using *that* maths apparatus? Did they decide to? If they decided to for themselves, are they allowed to make other similar decisions? If it was decided for them, what was the basis of that decision?

It is self-evident that given a group of very active young children and four walls within which to contain them, certain decisions have to be made fairly rapidly; what happens, where it happens and when it happens would seem the most obviously pressing. The processes of differentiation, however, would only appear to come into action when decisions about grouping the children have to be made. Or do they? My contention is that such processes can and do happen at every level in the context of the infant classroom. They range from the permanent, explicitly and consciously undertaken, eg 'My better readers sit at that table' (some infant teachers being as adept at dissembling about streaming as are their counterparts elsewhere in the education system) to others that are entirely temporary, eg 'Those who want to help with planting bulbs, put your coats on' etc. In between lies an enormous number of decisions about when, what and how the children learn, which, while not necessarily being unconscious decisions as such, may very well reflect unconscious values and most certainly reveal basic assumptions about the very nature of learning.

'The Robins have measured their handspans' ran a message across a blackboard in an infant school recently. In other schools it is just as likely that 'Squirrels', 'Daisies' and 'Lollipops' also managed this feat. In a mixed aged class, such groupings may well reflect age, but for the present, I shall assume that the groupings are based on ability and/or stage in reading. It is by no means an uncommon practice, and probably the only person who is fairly certain that it is harder for parents and children to tell that a 'Rabbit' is deemed superior to a 'Hamster' is the teacher herself; the children and parents have no such illusions. So why should the teacher need to go to such lengths? Partly, I would suggest, a residual conscience about grouping children by ability and partly giving room for manoeuvre. While it is difficult to deny that Group 1, by definition, is different from Group 5, the relative seniority of a 'Daisy' to a 'Tulip' is difficult to establish without being the one who established it in the first place. (All the examples in this article are taken from real instances).

While parents may anxiously watch for the metamorphosis of their 'Badger' into a 'Hare' it will be as unlikely as it is in nature. However the power of the teacher is clearly perceived: it is seldom the children who elect themselves into various groupings. Where they do, and it is usually on a friendship basis, it often groups those of like intelligence together, a fact not unknown

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insights developed by research such as the ORACLE project would inform secondary practice. Profiles of student success might characterise the end of the formal compulsory stage of secondary schooling. The Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement being developed in Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Coventry and funded by the Oxford Delegacy, is one example of this. In each the old patterns of differentiation could reappear. The impact of societal pressures on schools will ensure that they will. The demolition, however, of the 14-16 curriculum structure which dominates our comprehensive is a requisite of progressive reform, just as comprehensive re-organisation was twenty years ago, if we are to provide any sort of answer to the increasingly damning criticisms from the educationally disenfranchised of all ages.

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2. In our critique of the early development of comprehensives we have, perhaps, failed to give sufficient credit to the teachers and headteachers who bore the brunt of that onslaught.
3. Hurman, Ann **A Charter for Choice** (1978) NFER Publishing Company.
4. **Reconstructions of Secondary Education**, J. Gray *et al.* (1983) Routledge & Kegan Paul.
5. **Comprehensive Schools, Challenge and Change**, Bob Moon NFER/Nelson 1983.
6. O and CSE are terms used in this article. The arrival or otherwise of '16+' would not appear to be relevant to the ideas put forward here.

to teachers. Letting children group themselves can often disguise subtle social groupings that teachers often dare not do (but are grateful to the children for doing it for them): those of like race and neighbourhood often band together, to say nothing of like sex. Grouping by alphabetical order or age is not unusual and at least carries the merit of selection on grounds that are not socially divisive. All seven year olds were once five themselves, and five year olds can look forward to being seven.

But the question still remains. Why group them at all? Most answers appear to be based on logistics, ie that learning experiences can be better organised, that one can timetable more effectively and that the children stand a better chance of having equal access to resource materials. In practice, from my observation, these claims are rarely met. For example, although 'Hamsters' may get more of the teacher's time, human resource material if one likes, it is the unusual teacher who groups in this way, who would keep back a share for them of, for instance, beautiful collage material like velvet and lace, when she knows from experience 'Hamsters' will '. . . just smear glue over them and call it a house . . .' Whatever the basis of the grouping, the fact remains that the teacher exerts great control, both socially and intellectually, over the children's lives in the classroom to an extent that can prove basically inimical to the way in which young children learn; fundamentally, I believe it reflects how the teacher perceives learning, the child as learner, and the child learning how to become a learner.

Looked at in this way, the many differentiation processes that can be observed in the infant classroom, from the self-evident to the subtle, are highly informative: many would see in them evidence of the need for the teacher's social control and of bias towards features like intelligence and towards certain races or social classes etc. While this is unfortunately probably true, I believe it is not the whole picture: to eliminate the worst of the differentiations it would be necessary for the teacher to see the children's learning in an entirely different light.

Teachers on the whole *are* interested in teaching and they are concerned about their children's progress in the acquisition of various skills and information, but the strong impression is that the process of children's learning is virtually irrelevant to a large majority. Nonetheless, without such an interest in and knowledge of a coherent theoretical base, teachers will not feel confident in the children's own ability to become learners and the result will be a seemingly highly organised day and room in terms of grouping time, resources and children. In other words the surface structure will look pretty and systematic. In a managerial sense this will indeed be so, but at the same time it is very likely militating against the children's real pace and depth of intellectual and social development to name but two important areas. The organisation in terms of their real learning is in fact alarmingly superficial and hides or positively conceals a deep incoherence about the true nature and development of children's learning.

To take an example: which child is most likely to be learning about time? Paula is in a group that is 'doing' maths, probably from a work card or a book and she will be so occupied from 9.30 to 10.10. Her subsequent record sheet will state that she has covered 'Time' because she has filled in the o'clocks and, if she's a 'Rabbit', probably the half-pasts and the quarter-tos. Useful and necessary information but which could probably be covered fairly quickly with the whole class in a couple of sessions. Cliff, in another classroom setting, has become interested, at about the same time of day, in a second timer: prompted in the first instance by the teacher who, contrary to popular misconception, has a definite role to play in this kind of classroom organisation, he tries to find out how long he can walk around the room balancing various articles on his head. This in turn required him to think of a way to record his achievement. With breaks for sundry occasions like school dinner, assembly, etc he works at it for the rest of the day, totally involved.

Not hard to see which child would fit the parents' image of 'work' and if the class teacher doesn't really understand how children learn, she will certainly not be able to defend the practice of letting a child apparently wander round a classroom with a cushion on his head for a good part of the day, even though later tests may very well find out who has the better concept of time.

This might go some way to explaining why numbers of infant teachers prefer not to know, or to forget what they know, about the nature of young children's learning; better an apparent and approved 'orderliness' than face the implications of really structuring the children's environment to match their development. Added to which, it has to be said, that establishing and running a non-differentiated classroom takes a great deal more organisation, however unappreciated this might seem at first glance. To borrow or extend a quotation; organising time, resources and children into various groups is child's play to organising one's time and resources for real opportunties for 'child's play' — for which read opportunities for scientific and mathematical observation and discovery, opportunities to extend themselves imaginatively in sand, puppets, dressing up etc. And all without the constraints of the various imposed differentiation processes.

Differentiation in terms of time then, not only confines certain learning experiences to specific times of day — one of the most obvious being 'work' in the morning and 'play' in the afternoon — but by the very division itself — defines those learning experiences that are supposed to happen within it. Thus work and play become strongly differentiated as does English, Maths and Topics — whatever the latter may mean in the context of an infant child's ideas about the world. On record is the child who recently told a visitor that they did 'Fletchering' on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and Maths on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Teachers themselves get caught up in their own parcelling of time when they would like to extend a particular activity on occasion; they feel constrained by their schedule and young children themselves can become quite anxious if their timetable is not adhered to. As a result, both get trapped inside the system; the teacher becomes less able to be flexible, or subtle in her response to the children even when she would like to be. The needs of the system start to come first.

The effect of differentiation processes within the classroom upon resources has already been touched on; it is inevitable that if children are grouped and time is divided that children's access to resources is going to be

affected. It's nice to think that all the groups will have a turn at using the Lego each week, for example; but knowing that your carefully constructed Supertanker will be destroyed in minutes so that the 'Limpets' can have a go tomorrow, somehow takes the edge off building it in the first place. The result is, understandably, children who don't put their inventiveness and imagination into such activities and teachers complain about mediocrity. Certainly, the resources are 'shared' — but who decides on the sharing? If children are to learn about sharing, taking turns and the proper use of scarce resources it is they who have to make the decisions for themselves and stand by their decsions. It should be said that opportunities for these kinds of decisions should be appropriate to their level of social and moral development; who isn't still haunted by **Lord of the Flies**? Non-differentiation is sometimes mistakenly thought to mean non-interference and non-structuring when actually it contains a high percentage of both. It's just that it isn't done in the traditional, recognisable manner.

So what does a non-differentiated classroom look like? Much like the original visitor's impression of busy children involved in a variety of activities for most of the time; there are probably quieter times and class times during the day and times when some of the children are recording what they've done or are inventing new worlds to write about. Would children who were only used to writing about TV topics or copying from cards come up with the wonderfully unexpected story title 'The Bear Who Was Allergic to Fairies'? The children do not work in anything except self-chosen groups which dissolve and take new forms according to a different activity. Physical constraints dictate the number of children at each activity, eg two clamps on the woodwork table mean a limit of two children. Although the children might have a certain minimum number of tasks to undertake during the week, mostly in terms of 3R skills, the content and duration is largely decided by the child unless the teacher decides it is the moment to introduce a new process which might need some directed practice.

In this kind of classroom though, a teacher really knows the children as individuals and such children are quickly noticed; as it is a sign of emotional immaturity anyway, such children are then given more initial support. Ruth may well use up all the Lego (and all of Wednesday) making an enormous airport and it will stay up until Friday. The non-differentiated classroom is essentially a well furnished classroom and alternative activities are to be found. Meanwhile Ruth's skill and achievement are recognised. And who knows? It might be their turn to think big next week. 'Taking turns' involves real compromise not necessarily exact minutes.

So what is the theoretical base? Why is learning construed to be more effective in such an environment? To teachers who undertake to organise their classes on such a basis, the most coherent and persuasive explanation of children's development belongs to Piaget. Leaving aside quibbles about exact ages, Piaget makes one look at children's learning in a radically different manner. To quote Milton Schwebel from **Piaget in the Classroom** — 'principles of teaching deduced from the knowledge of the child's intellectual development can significantly and qualitatively alter the behaviour of the teacher and the nature of the experiences she arranges for the children.'

Certain low level skills may well be learnt by association, by imitation and by conditioning, but if children are to know themselves and to know themselves as effective learners, to understand what learning is truly about — then only by providing the kind of experiences that can logically be derived from Piaget's theories will this be achieved. Differentiation in such a classroom would immediately reduce the range and quality of these experiences and, even by the commonest processes of grouping children, hopes of them arriving at their own social values are vastly reduced.

To quote once again from **Piaget in the Classroomn,** Constance Kamii has it that 'The role of the teacher in a Piagetian school is an extremely difficult one because she has constantly to engage in diagnosing each child's emotional state, cognitive level, and interests by carrying a theoretical framework in her head. She also has to strike a delicate balance between exercising her authority and encouraging children to develop their own standards of moral behaviour. She can much more easily follow a curriculum guide, put the children through prescribed activities, and use old techniques of discipline.

'The teacher in a Piagetian school has to be a highly conscientious and resourceful professional who does not have to have standards that are enforced from the outside. The kind of teacher Piaget would like to have is the kind of adult that a Piagetian school aspires to produce — one who with strong personal standards continues to be a learner throughout his life.'

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Standards of Research

Harvey Goldstein
Professor of statistics at the Institute of Education, University of London, Harvey Goldstein was a member of the DES advisory group overseeing the National Children's Bureau report comparing children's progress in selective and non-selective schools. Here he looks at another study comparing such schools, **Standards in English Schools** by Marks, Cox and Pomian-Srzednicki, published by the National Council for Educational Standards, and finds it seriously flawed.

Ever since the early Black Paper days of the 1960s, opponents of comprehensive school reorganisation have been assembling statistics to show that children in grammar schools perform better at examinations than those in comprehensives.

Their early attempts were strongly criticised for ignoring the fact that the selective intake of the grammar schools virtually guaranteed better exam results, and that a fair comparison could be carried out only if proper allowance was made for school 'intake' characteristics. These criticisms seem to have been accepted and by the 1977 Black Paper, Baldwin was attempting to incorporate such allowances. Like others, however, his analysis was flawed from a lack of appropriate 'intake' measurements on the individual children in the study.

In 1980, the National Children's Bureau (NCB) entered the debate with its own study (**Progress in Secondary Schools**, by Jane Steedman), which for the first time was able to make appropriate allowances for intake differences using longitudinal information from a large cohort study, and showed few important differences between selective and non-selective schools.

Following this, it was the turn of Caroline Cox and John Marks, in the Black Paper tradition but writing from the Centre for Policy Studies, to attack the NCB study (see **Forum** Vol.23, No.3, 1981, for an account). This attack, interestingly enough, was not aimed at the innovatory approach of using intake score adjustments, but rather at the researchers themselves, who were accused of political 'bias' and 'secretiveness'. In addition Cox and Marks attacked the use of test scores (rather than exam results) claiming that these were inadequate in several ways. The strident tone and intellectual weakness of these criticisms was such as to induce the British Educational Research Association to issue a public rebuke to these critics (**BERA Newsletter**, April 1981). More recently, the NCB has supplemented its original findings by substituting exam results for test scores (**Exam Results in Selective and Non-selective Schools**, by Jane Steedman), and concluded once more that there were few important differences between selective and non-selective schools.

Hard on the heels of this NCB report now arrives the report by Marks, Cox and Pomian-Srzednicki (MCP), this time under the imprint of the National Council for Educational Standards (NCES). While both studies are concerned with exam results, the NCB study was able to make allowances for the intake characteristics of the children in the study, because it was longitudinal. The NCES study on the other hand had to content itself with allowances at LEA level only, ignoring any variation within LEAs. Potentially, therefore the NCB study was able to carry out much more satisfactory analyses than the NCES one. Both of the NCB studies provide far and away the best available evidence for comparing selective and non-selective schools. Despite the imperfections of these two studies, which are discussed in the NCB report, it is extremely unlikely that anyone could obtain data approaching their quality. This was the view held by the advisory committee set up by the Secretary of State when it reported to him on the first NCB study and it was also their hope that the existence of the NCB study would discourage, inevitably inferior, collection and analysis of other data. From such a perspective, therefore, the NCES study hardly required a detailed critique since its basic design was bound to yield inferior conclusions to those of the NCB. Indeed, it is somewhat curious, after the fuss made by Cox and Marks over the availability of data from the first NCB study, that they did not spend their energies re-analysing the NCB data. Nevertheless, since the NCES study does exist and since an analysis of their methods is instructive, I shall discuss their methods and conclusions.

The NCES Report

The NCES study took advantage of the 1980 Education Act which requires schools to make their public examination results available. MCP wrote to LEAs and individual schools requesting 1981 exam result details for all fifth formers. They had responses from 55 per cent of LEAs and 49 per cent of secondary schools and also used published data about LEA social class composition, ethnic mix, expenditure per pupil and pupil/teacher ratio. In addition they classified each school as comprehensive, grammar or secondary modern.

The principal analyses compared types of school, allowing for social class differences, and studies variation between local authorities with particular reference to the relationship between expenditure patterns and exam resuslts.

The reason for allowing, or adjusting, for social class, is that it is associated with educational attainments and separately, as MCP themselves find, with the degree of comprehensiveness of an LEA, the more working class LEAs tending to have greater proportions of comprehensive schools. Thus, in order to attempt any kind of cause-effect inference, at the very least a

researcher should take this into account. The NCES study classified LEAs into three groups according to their social class composition.

Two difficulties arise immediately. First, the classification is very coarse, being only the proportion of children in social classes four and five, and almost certainly does not account for the full social class effect (see later). Secondly, social class is measured at LEA level, whereas there is known to be considerable variation within any LEA in terms of school catchment area social class. Thus, even if the report were to take this analysis as far as is theoretically possible, by comparing school types within each LEA, it is obvious that any remaining association between school type and exam results could well be due to social class variations within LEAs — in addition of course to variations in intake characteristics about which the NCES study has no information whatsoever.

Nor is this mere speculation. One authority, the ILEA, for several years now has carried out analyses in which it compares school exam results after adjusting for average school verbal reasoning score at intake and a number of social factors, (**School Examination results in the ILEA, 1976-1982,** research reports, ILEA Research and Statistics Group). In the 1978 report it was shown that a correlation of 0.98 could be achieved between a suitable combination of intake and social factors, and examination results. Gray and Jones (**TES,** 15 July 1983) state that in their own study correlations of 0.8 are readily obtainable. In other words it clearly is possible to characterise schools so that differences in average exam performance become highly predictable, leaving the possibility for only a negligible remaining differentiation in terms of school type.

Hence, comparisons of school types at the level of the school, if carried out as accurately as possible, seem destined to be extremely uninformative about school type differences. This implies that it is only analyses at the pupil level which are able to provide useful comparisons. Indeed, it hardly needs saying that the effects on different types of pupils are of more interest than the average effect for a school and of course it is precisely in this respect that the NCB study is strong. This is not to deny that school level studies have other merits. For example, it would be useful to replicate the ILEA analyses, in other LEAs, and the publication of exam results by schools requires research to explore ways in which knowledge of the results might be useful to parents and others.

As far as the between-LEA comparisons are concerned, the NCES report claims that the average LEA exam results show wide variation even after adjusting for social class, and that increased spending per pupil does not necessarily lead to better exam results.

In the first case, as Gray and Jones pointed out, the coarseness of the social class grouping is a problem and when a finer classification is used by them the variability between LEAs accounted for by social class goes up from the 30 per cent of the NCES to 70 per cent. Just as with schools there should be little difficulty in predicting LEA average exam results with great accuracy given suitable measurements.

On the question of spending, the NCES report finds that the higher the expenditure per pupil the poorer the average LEA exam result. One obvious explanaton for this would be that the LEAs who spend more tend to be those with a greater proportion of educational problems such as social disadvantage which are linked to poorer exam results and also which require higher spending, a point long recognised by the DES in its educational spending allocations. The NCES report finds that this negative relationship exists after making allowance for social class and other factors, but the same problem about coarseness of measurements applies. In fact, the report itself urges caution, saying that these results are 'not as clear cut and consistent' and that 'it may be that unambiguous answers to the intriguing questions raised by the preliminary analyses cannot be given unless more data are collected'. Unfortunately, by the time the reader reaches the summary at the back of the report this has been transmuted into 'some of our analyses suggest that providing more teachers and spending more money per pupil does not necessarily lead to better exam results'!

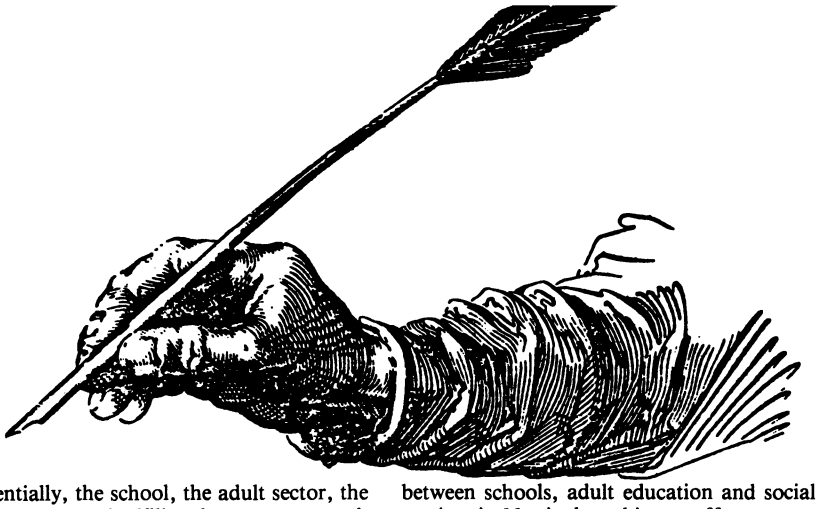
The NCES study has had considerable publicity; more so than the technically superior NCB study. In part this may be due to the NCB study appearing in the middle of the 1983 general election campaign and largely being over-looked. In part it may be due to more efficient publicity by the NCES and in part it may be that the NCES conclusions are more acceptable to the majority of the media than those of the NCB. Whatever the reason, the NCES intend to produce further reports, including it seems, studies of individual LEAs. In the present climate, unhappily, their statements are likely to be given favourable publicity, whatever their intellectual content. However, the recent disclosure that the DES statisticians, in a report to the Secretary of State, have been severely critical of the NCES study, may reduce credibility of the NCES (**Guardian,** 1 October 1983).

Given their existing record it would be safe to maintain a scepticism about any future reports from the NCES, although one must always allow that the quality may improve. This might occur if the NCES were actively to encourage other researchers to analyse their data and, more importantly, if they were to invite active workers in this area to comment on their analyses before final publication. If the NCES wishes to be regarded as a competent research body, then it should submit its research to the same discipline as do other researchers, with recognised standards of analysis and presentation and well tried methods of debate.

Public arguments over controversial research findings, I suspect, leave most lay persons confused and inclined to declare a curse on both houses. Consequently, standards of educaton debate suffer and both educational research and education itself become the poorer. Needless to say, detailed scrutiny by other researchers is no guarantee of quality, but it should help to produce more balanced and less error-prone resuslts, especially if the area of controversy can be presented in terms intelligible to non-specialists. If research funding bodies were to insist upon peer review in appropriate cases before publication this would be one major step.

Educational research need not become devalued and manipulated for political or quasi-political ends, but the remedy lies ultimately within the research community. If that community fails to discipline itself, then the people who gain will be those with the best public relations, not those with the best research.

Discussion



Meeting Community Needs

The term 'community education' is so favourably received at present that to voice any reservations about certain applications of the term is to invite accusations of being reactionary and of challenging attempts to broaden educational provision to meet the wider needs of the community. Against such a background it was interesting to read Peter Thomson's review of Cyril Poster's book **Community Education, its Development and Management, (Forum,** Vol.25 No.3) where he rightly points out some weaknesses of school-based community education ignored by Poster. Such a willingness to recognise failings in community education is a pre-requisite of any rational attempt to improve or modify provision to meet the needs of the community and perhaps even to acknowledge some limitations to what a Community College can provide.

How widely community education should cast its net is a fundamental issue in trying to decide what a writer means in referring to community education, particularly if it is tied in with the assumption that community education is what Community Schools or Colleges provide. At the two extremes are those advocates of community education who see it as cradle-to-grave provision with the personal social services in attendance centred on secondary school sites that incorporate extra amenities for social and cultural activities. At the other end of the spectrum is that group of educators who have focused on tackling problems experienced by groups within local communities where school, usually primary, plays a central role in liaising between different agencies.

Fludes & Parrot in **Education and the Challenge of Change** (1979) specifically refer to this distinction:

'As with so many terms used in educational discussion, the phrase 'community education' can cause confusion. Many people connect it with experimental developments in the educational priority area (EPA) schemes in London, Liverpool, and elsewhere . . .'

'In our view it would be unfortunate if the mass potential of community education, as a continuing first chance for everyone, was lost sight of because of its close associations with areas of most severe challenge and obvious need.'

Instead of identifying problems in the community and using the educational institutions as one agency in tackling these, Flude & Parrott prefer what is in effect a master plan of education for communities which is put into effect by Community Schools because . . . 'they represent the nearest approach in the whole education system to a genuinely flexible institution'.

'Potentially, the school, the adult sector, the youth sector and affiliated groups can each call on the others to ensure that educational, recreational and leisure provision in the neighbourhood is as full and as appropriate as possible.'

Poster is equally anxious that Community Schools should occupy the central position in providing community education with the headmaster as the central authority figure. But Poster is more romantic than Flude & Parrott:

'Community, the abstract quality, is a derivative of the activities of those who associate in communities.'

and a little further on:

'Community education is concerned with education for *communities,* that is with the meeting of what communities themselves determine to be their needs; and with education for *community,* that is the development, through association in learning situations, formal and informal, and through common action of that abstract quality to which I have already referred.'

Community education is here evaluated in a way that makes dissenting argument seem not only churlish but possibly heretical. Yet it must be asked if the promise if being all things to all men, educationally at least, has been realised in those authorities which have had community colleges for twenty years or more. Hutchinson's survey of provision in Leicestershire presented in 1974 was enthusiastic about the potential of the colleges, but in a follow-up survey five years later the potential seemed no nearer to being fulfilled. Mee and Wiltshire in a survey that has limited reference to community education found that the provision for adult education was narrower both in content and in clientele than in independent or FE-based adult education programmes. The evidence in support of the claims of Flude & Parrott and Cyril Poster seems thin, yet it is this aproach to community education which is currently enjoying such a tremendous vogue.

It makes a useful contrast to look at the alternative strand of community education which is mainly concerned with ameliorating the circumstances of various deprived groups. Lovett and Midwinter have written about the Liverpool EPA project at length; work in Southampton has been written up by Fordham and his colleagues in **Learning Networks in Adult Education** (1979) and numerous short accounts of specific projects have appeared in educational journals. In **Adult Education** (Vol.46, No.2, 1973) Dennis Drysdale gave an account of a joint initiative between schools, adult education and social services in Nottinghamshire to offer support to a group of disadvantaged mothers who had been by-passed by mainstream educational provision. This kind of joint approach has become a characteristic feature of community education in Nottinghamshire which is largely based on a primary school/adult education partnership. In intent, though differently organised, it has much in common with the provision in ILEA where the emphasis is on the community, using outreach workers to identify needs that the Adult Education providers can then respond to.

It is from an adult education base that major developments have been achieved in adult literacy, English as a second language, provision for ethnic minorities, the unemployed and for the physically and mentally handicapped. The work in recent years in promoting women's studies has come from the WEA University departments and the LEA Adult Education Organisers.

Against the achievements of Adult Education providers in seeking out and meeting needs within the community not only of the mainstream, middle-class clientele but also of disadvantaged and hitherto neglected groups, the claims of community schools and their advocates are desperately thin.

This is not to deny that schools can and should be community schools with the curriculum reflecting an awareness of the wider community and the facilities being used for the benefit of the local community. But it is perhaps time to consider the limitations of the school as an institution with a distinctive ethos, authority structure and sense of its own priorities, which are not necessarily capable of meeting the demands of a wider constituency as readily as, for example, Further Education based outreach workers.

The readiness of the advocates of community schools to make a takeover bid for those areas dealt with by other institutions seems unwise, not simply because community schools lack the experience and resources to handle such an extended role, but primarily because they deflect attention away from the communities they want to serve and focus instead on administrative problems of how to organise themselves. It would be wiser gradually to extend into 'community' provision that a school can adequately handle and accept a co-operative basis of working with other providers to provide as diverse a service as possible for the community.

GORDON DRYDEN
Roundhill College, Leicester

In the Inner City

Peter Worrall

Fortified by the innovations of the sixties and seventies Peter Worrall felt confident he knew what to do next. He started and ran the Kirk Hallam School and Community Centre in Derbyshire for seven years. Now, as Principal of the Moat Community College in Leicester, he believes the next era of schooling will emerge through a new partnership — if we let it.

The Moat Community College is a replacement for two singe-sex Victorian schools. The chance availablity of five hectares of city real estate and a touch of inspiration led to the building of an 11-16 school within earshot of the platform announcements on the mainline railway station. Though there are urban precedents in Coventry, Manchester and elsewhere, the Moat is very much a development of the Leicestershire community college. High office blocks of the central business district dominate the backdoor skyline. On the front doorstep is a high density neighbourhood of some 24,000 people. The more I get to know Highfields, the more remarkable it seems. Unlike similar districts in Manchester or Leeds the houses are durable. There is not a single grass football pitch (nor is there in the new college). Incomes are low and unemployment relative to the rest of Leicester is shameful. There are now five mosques, three Hindu temples, many churches with new and thriving congregations, a synagogue and many self-help community groups. If communities can be regarded as evolving from youth, through maturity to old age, Highfields is a youthful, even frontier, community. The City Council are making determined efforts to improve the housing stock and street environment. After some twenty years as a staging post for new arrivals the population is beginning to stabilise.

During the last three years the college has operated on three sites with three-quarters of a mile of streets between them. The older age groups have completed their time in existing schools while the second phase of building was completed. This logistical nightmare coincided with the LEA cuts, the 1981 riots (across the road), Rampton and Scarman, 1981 Nationality Act, 1981 Education Act and a decision by the LEA not only to formalise the non-compulsory nature of school uniform but to ban corporal punishment (already in non-publicised disuse). All this on top of the changes facing schools nationally as a result of the parabolic curve of youth employment. In 1981 we were given Phase 3 community college status. This entitles all teachers to negotiate an annual contract committing one tenth of their time to the community programme. So overloaded were we that this opportunity has been implemented very cautiously.

Many of the changes we wished to see in the new college could only be semi-realised. Inevitably, different styles governed the three sites. After two years of re-organisation a colleague noted that it 'takes time to see that we are building a new school not simply taking old schools into a new building'. Perhaps the biggest change was the involvement of staff in all major policy making.

New building and new systems lead to accumulated expectations — 'we ought to change this', we must do that'. In the multi-cultural school agenda accumulate rapidly — different syllabuses, watch the non-verbal messages, negotiate with the Imams, adapt the catering arrangements, appoint more black governors — a host of highly desirable changes. Incidentally changes which in many cases had already been considered in the existing schools. On the one hand one wants change, on the other too much change becomes impossible to handle.

The internal architecture and the nature of the wall-less community college site dictated a change in relationships from the high walled Victorian schools. Pupils in the college were given more 'psychological' space at a time when there was less teacher presence. This was heady stuff, coincidental upon the implied criticisms of school authority over uniforms and caning. Face to face conflict between teacher and pupil was frequently 'fossilised' because the teachers were moving sites or simply too busy to sort things out for a couple of days. In retrospect it is possible to see how influentially negative groups were able to dominate their peers. Also highlighted was the different culturally based control systems used by parents, religious groups and the school. So just one aspect of change, more relaxed relationships between teacher and taught, starting from a simple assumption, opens up a profound issue. The Moslem elders disagree fundamentally with co-education, never mnd more natural behaviour by young people; Caribbean children yearn for more real engagement, while the parental power in their lives respects a more mechanistic form of learning and of course many kids simply known that if you're not hard, you're soft. Hence, from the teacher 'Good morning', from the child 'I didn't do it'. Two entirely different perceptions. It is so easy to misjudge. I was on reception duty one evening when a young Moslem man asked about the typing class. 'Were there any men in the class?' I immediately jumped to the conclusion that he was asking on behalf of his wife, as is frequently the case. 'Sorry', I said checking the list, 'there are two men in the class.' 'That's good!' said he, 'When can I start?'

Now we are all on one site it is possible to see that those three years exposed all the raw ends, whether they touched upon personal, educational, managerial or community agendas. They also proved how strong we were as a teaching group and what strength there was in

trusting the kids. Undoubtedly, assisted by a persistent caretaking force: there is little lasting vandalism or graffiti. At the heart of that strength is a liking for kids and a commitment to looking at things anew.

I can best describe our current position by making analogy with a jigsaw puzzle. (Others will see it differently). The finished picture comes in and out of focus as times change. Firmly present are young people of many origins, who in their body language indicate that they are engaged in learning tasks which interest them. Alongside their peers, people of other age groups appear, as they appear in adult groups in the evening. When asked, they are able to articulate what they are doing and why. Implicit in their actions is an appreciation that learning, whether it brings pain or pleasure, is an essential and continuing part of life. Equally firmly present are small numbers who challenge, despite many changes, what is being offered as failing to meet their needs. The outcomes can be observed in terms of independent thinking, co-operative action, a versatile range of skills and whatever educational rites of passage have currency.

Many pieces are already on the board. The LEA is a supportive 'education' authority with a client-based view of schooling. There is open access with about 15 per cent movement in and out of the catchment area by parental choice. The premises, designed for flexible use, help rather than hinder. Community policies enable flexibility in use of staff and plant. School attendance hovers between 90-93 per cent. All departmental time is blocked to enable staff co-operation. Years one to three have a common timetable with the exception of a mother-tongue option in Gujarati (from Music/ Drama/Dance) and choices in Design. In years four and five there is a core of English, Maths, Science, Design, Humanities and PE. Three option columns provide satisfaction for a majority, leaving a vocal minority which is increasingly difficult to accommodate.

Several pieces change shape to such an extent that it is not possible to fit them in. One such piece is labelled 'the education of pupils of Caribbean origin'. They occupy a much larger part of the action, both positive and negative, than their 10 per cent proportion of the school population would lead one to expect. Much of the anguish and much of the joy comes from this group. However, despite endless analysis we find ourselves no nearer any means of increasing achievement for them which would not be as relevant to others. The achievement of quiet conforming Moslem girls will probably, were the statistics available, merit equal concern.

For convenience I am going to group the pieces held in the hand into the four categories already mentioned.

Community

A young man found on the premises illegally soon after the first phase of the college opened in 1981 said, 'Well it's our college isn't it?' That is precisely what had been said to the neighbourhood. It's your college. One of the developing issues is what such ownership means in practice. As with many city centre institutions the Moat is mainly run by white and some black professionals who live elsewhere. It only needs a heavy fall of snow to illustrate this: all the children arrive to be met by few teachers. Most of those professionals are dedicated to the institution. Within the catchment area there is not only a different socio-economic culture, there are major ethnic-religious cultures. Pulsing through like an electric current is the experience of discrimination and outright racism. It comes from outside into the neighbourhood but it is difficult for those who live outside to see this because most of their daily contacts are not conducted on that level. This insight is however very important. It explains the apparently unearned antagonism of some groups, sharp pupil reactions on a Monday morning, the initial antagonism of many parents and teacher reactions to situations in ignorance of what is common knowledge on the street. Thankfully, life is normally ordinary. It is however a community college's responsibility at the very least to share power, otherwise it is wrongly labelled.

The principles upon which the community programme was started were given nodding approval by the community college council a year later. They were:

1 that the college should be neutral and safe territory for all but racist groups;
2 we would concentrate on raising skill levels within the neighbourhood;
3 we would integrate age groups wherever possible.

Groups negotiating the use of the sports hall were obliged to provide coaches for a young peoples' session prior to their booked time. A 'red rover' card for 50p gave access to all the community programme classes for those in Year 4 and above. About 400 of these cards are now purchased annually. The programme itself was first constructed to reflect local interests. This year we have Swahili and Caribbean hairdressing, a growing series of classes in sitar, tabla and harmonium and various dance groups as well as 'O' levels. The take-up is 85 per cent local and predominantly young. This is only possible because of an enlightened fee remission scheme for protected categories of learners.

The most instructive feature to us has been the groups who have recognised their own educational needs and asked us to design a course for them. It is clear after three years that we need to develop different approaches to the packaged community programme to involve other than a minority in continuing education.

The osmotic effect of seeing learners of other ages sharing an institution is as cogent to pupils now as it was when first practised in Cambridgeshire. Of even greater impact has been the influence of community tutors using different contact styles in community development work. A play day for Handicapped Young People provides a good example. The logistics of finding the clients, arranging transport and chaperones illustrated one kind of organisation. A training day for adults and 20 young volunteers to structure the day itself and prepare the activities provided an insight into a complex of skills. The warmth of reaction on the day was made more rewarding by the knowledge that it had been planned for. All classwork cannot have that degree of focus but it does need to have a comparable structure, relevance and accepting relationship. When we opened there was a danger that different styles would cause conflict between colleagues and confusion amonst pupils. In fact the processes of good classroom learning and successful community development work can be seen to be compatible.

It is easy to say that institutions should be more open: we are halfway there with out democratic councils, access to the premises by pressure groups,

neighbourhood contacts and meetings designed to seek reaction. It is handling what you hear which is difficult.

We have many friends in the Islamic community. Agreed responses have been made concerning halal food, dress, changing and showering, assemblies and religious education. But, we are a new co-educational school with a 50 per cent Moslem intake whose elders are committed to single sex education. What do we do?

While the college is open, more often than not there is a small group of children who, if left in, inevitably cause a disturbance. If kept out they cause an even greater disturbance. They are also adept at pressurising other places such as the local library and the chip shop. We have at least the partial skill to deal with them but it would be at the expense of something else. What do we do?

An impressive list of what we should do was made at a special meeting of the community college council. The implementation of some of these suggestions would entail a radical reappraisal of the way we spend our time. We think what we're already doing is important. How should be respond? (in practice, piecemeal on as many fronts as possible).

Very strong messages have been received about mother-tongue and the inclusion of South Asian, Islamic and Afro-Caribbean history on our curriculum. We have four Indian languages in the community programme and Gujarati has just been introduced into the school curriculum on a five-year basis. We are redesigning the Year 2 and 3 Humanities syllabus in such a way that parents and other interested parties can play a part in what we are doing!

The college has no perimeter walls. Literally (there's a lot of glass) and metaphorically it can only survive if there is a protective trust. Such trust, as the Rampton Report indicated, has to be worked for. In my view it can only be established if we create the means for a dialogue in which both sides as prepared to shift ground. As professionals we have to shift first.

Educational

The educational pieces are the most difficult to place, not because they are 'inner city', they are mostly universal. Do you know how to educate pupils to be unemployed?

I see few panaceas in terms of curriculum shape. Indeed I would argue the need to reduce the number of different learning situations so that we can do fewer things more thoroughly. The language deficit and the longer time needed to develop real learning relationships being the prime reasons.

Don't all secondary schools share the need to make a variety of curriculum experiences coherent in the mind of the learner? To make learning 'ert'. A N Whitehead's exposé of our tendency to teach inert knowledge is still a formative text (*The Aims of Education,* 1932). I am still naïvely optimistic that a whole staff's willingness to become knowledgeable about pupil's experiences outside their own direct contacts may, through planned mediation in tutorial periods or *en passant* in their own lessons, help pupils to achieve more useful insights from their school experience.

Even more fundamental is the realisation that nearly everything we do is so culturally specific that, unless we are sensitive to that fact, what we say can undermine other people's identity. It can permeate the whole structured and hidden curriculum. This is manifest in many ways, from different expectation of courtesies to the difference between an English and a Caribbean historian's view of colonial history. The cure is easily prescribed. Change from a Eurocentric to a world knowledgeable view of all subjects. Easily said but not easily done. It requires not just an attitudinal reprogramming but a series of knowledge capsules. And, more important, an ability to look at our own 'culture' objectively. This is one of those areas where I think practice is easier than theory. In theory true multi-culturalism requires enormous intellectual energy to overcome the catalogue of deficits. In practice, as many English teachers already exemplify, a change to the literature of many countries has an immediate effect.

Scrutiny of our library for racist and culturally disparaging texts has removed one third of the stock.

I am conscious of building up a classroom agenda which may be unachievable. Already I have suggested we need to be aware of what's happening in other subjects. To this I have added a world knowledgeable as opposed to Eurocentric view of knowledge. An appreciation of the balance between content and process is also essential. A further unavoidable dimension concerns the use of language. This is a pressing need in mono-ethnic schools. In multi-ethnic schools the daily struggle to communicate precisely through the cultural meanings implicit in English and the reflections of mother tongue are unavoidable. We do enjoy our daily struggle. What we don't enjoy is the obvious setback to our pupils in public examinations which are so culturally specific that intelligent children with a good working knowledge of English do not even get access to the questions, eg 'O' level comprehension about choral singing.

Each of the issues showing themselves in the multi-ethnic school can, with time, be coped with. It is the accumulation of issues which is so overpowering.

There is a danger nothing is dealt with well.

Managerial

In the multi-cultural community college dependence upon the whole staff is no managerial truism. Our Head Caretaker has a seat on the Community College Council by right. Without the understanding of him and the caretaking staff it would be impossible to respond properly to the needs of the community.

The cook's willingness to respect a whole range of dietary needs is crucial to the process of change. In fact the sausages were not being cooked in the chip fat but the cheese fritters, containing animal rennet had briefly been so cooked. The secretary in the Community Office is coming to terms with being a Social Centre.

Employment practices have been reviewed to ensure that members of the ethnic community have a fairer chance of gaining employment.

By far the biggest managerial factor is concerned with the use of time. The juxtaposition of short-term and long-term needs is in a constant state of imbalance. Establishing priorities in such a way that the whole teaching staff has time to give their professional attention to issues is not easy when there are so many profound matters to attend to.

Whether the jigsaw puzzle will be complete in three or four years will depend upon the pacing of these

Vocational Focus

C J Lea
The Project Director of TVEI at the Education and Industry Centre of the City of Birmingham's Education Department responds to Maurice Holt's article on Vocationalism in **Forum** Vol.25 No.3. His personal view does not necessarily reflect the standpoint of his LEA.

As he peers over the battlements of the ivory tower enshrining his universal 11-16 Curriculum, Maurice Holt may be excused for his sensitivity to the rumbling ground under his feet, and even for firing a few panicky arrows at the fast developing structure of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.

His recent article in **Forum** provokes a considered response and I take the opportunity to step aside from the building site of the Birmingham Initiative to present a line of reasoning without relating very closely to his emotive calls to 'mount the barricades' and 'reject dire toxins'. Nor should we trade in the polarities of 'Education for Freedom' as against 'Schooling for Training'. Let us get down to brass tacks and start from the position of the young person who is the target of Mr Holt's universal formula.

As Mr Holt would have it, our roundly educated sixteen year old is to be launched into life beyond school personally and morally autonomous, with refined powers of critical judgement, with a balanced social perspective and other worthy qualities, all developed within the classroom to a standard curriculum pattern and in the face of common examination goals. I suggest that there is an ever increasing gap between this idealistic design and the reality of today's world and tomorrow's opportunities as perceived by many young people and their teachers.

Firstly, what is so sacred and significant about the age of sixteen? Is there a definite time of selection of future course and career appropriate to all young people, regardless of their relative maturity, sense of vocation or individual circumstances? Is what happens to young people before the age of sixteen or indeed any other age to be rigidly distinguished from what happens afterwards? I suggest that, while there is a highly variable rate of development of a sense of vocational awareness amongst them in their early teens, there is an instinctive call from very many young people for a sense of direction and relevance in their daily studies to the world beyond school as they perceive it. Furthermore, if we are to regard motivation as crucial to achievement and confidence and we accept that only a small minority of young people are adequately motivated by a general target of so many subject passes at 'O' and CSE level, then we are recognising the need for a vocational focus to study at school for many pupils which will give confidence and perspective to the various areas of learning experience for them.

What we are striving to develop within TVEI is a loosening of the subject-bound curricular strait-jacket; a moderation of the harsh distinction between education and training and an approach to the presentation of the curriculum that more readily generates the motivation and builds the confidence of many young people from the age of fourteen to eighteen. By removing the quite artificial division separating pre- and post-sixteen education and training we see ourselves as the liberators, because we are providing a strong bridge between school and work, and between learning from theory and learning by practice, which is far more substantial than the structures provided by a career education programme on its own.

The eight areas of learning experience outlined in the HMI **Curriculum 11-16** (1977), and which Mr Holt

priorities. Whether we retain sufficient energy to handle them and of course whether there is still enough goodwill around is another question.

The Personal — Me/Us

The personal, me the teacher, pieces of the jigsaw depend more on what we bring to pupils than what they bring us. Many pupils have a hard time, though they would mostly not perceive it that way. They move in at least three influential and disparate cultures. Many homes belong to other cultures. The street culture is robust and immediate. Neither make much use of books as an integral part of everyday life. School differs linguistically and culturally. Racism is an unavoidable part of community consciousness, though groups respond with different intensity to it.

To the normal tribulations of adolescence is often added 'what is in store for me as a black person'. Teachers are in the front line when their task and these tensions meet. The response can sometimes be destructive to both sides. Frequently it is not so because, as teachers, we have become accustomed to under-reacting, staying cool and even smiling. Most disturbing are a small handful of regular attenders who have the power to draw off our mental energy but over whom we have scant influence.

Exposure to face to face hassle in conjunction with the pressure to examine and change the content and manner of what we are teaching could be too much. That it isn't hinges entirely on the optimism and tenancity of many colleagues, professional and lay.

relates to his quest for a Universal Curriculum, can readily be presented in such a way that the individual travelling through them has some freedom to determine his/her own path and pace of movement towards further training beyond, which can be graduated to individual needs over four years rather than two years and not confined to the school as a setting for such experience. In the Birmingham Initiative we are offering a chance of three broad vocational programmes: craft, design and technology; business studies; and personal and caring services; which will take up twelve periods of a forty-period week in school. We are providing a closely integrated support programme which includes Information Technology, Science, English, Mathematics and Social Studies, covered within a further twenty periods. A personal education programme will include moral and religious, health and leisure education, as well as an expanding amount of work experience guided by a tutor from beyond school who will also help in the integration of education, training and employment. We are providing appropriate examination targets for students of a wide range of ability who have chosen this programme and there is an intensive programme of curriculum development within and across the eight schools involved in the Project.

All of our young people will have travelled through the eight broad areas of learning experience in their time with us whether in school or in further education but we are defining these areas in terms of skills to be acquired as well as subjects to be experienced and we are recognising the widespread application and transferability of skills of communication, analysis, design, calculation and problem solving amongst others. I venture to suggest that such an approach encourages teachers and learners to think more freely across the range of their daily work and that our introduction of profiling techniques is not to be dismissed as voguish but is a genuine encouragement for co-ordination between subject specialisms in the curriculum as well as providing steady attention and incentive for the individual learner. By adapting this common approach to pupil assessment we will be building a natural bridge between education and training; between schools and further education institutes and still further into the Careers Service.

Maurice Holt suggests that the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative has been propelled into action by the fuel of political expediency. I suggest that he is out of touch with the strength of feeling so widely expressed from within the profession since the Ruskin College speech acted as a trigger to our thinking. Now, the Manpower Services Commission has provided us with the impulse as well as the resources to escape from the vacuum generated by strong vested interests preserving the abstract curriculum model in face of the limited executive powers available to the Department of Education and Science, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the Schools Council.

I draw attention to the underlying emphasis in the School Council's document **The Practical Curriculum** which takes us a long way towards greater freedom to achieve a vocational slant within the school curriculum. The **Manifesto for Change** published in January 1981 and signed by a wide range of distinguished people declares:

> 'Secondary education as organised at present, apart from the work of exceptional schools, gives insufficient time and attention to preparation for life as persons, workers, parents and citizens. The range of necessary competence in the modern world includes not only the familiar basic skills, but also practical ability, the ability to get on with others, skill in solving real life problems, and such necessary attributes for a full and effective life as judgement, responsiblity and reliablity. It is in such areas that secondary education, seen as a whole, is falling short of what young people and the nation need . . . . . .
>
> 'Secondary schooling, today, has to be conceived as a springboard for life-long education, not as a completed package . . . . . .
>
> 'People need confidence, and society needs confident people. The curriculum, therefore, has to be confidence-building and not, as is often the case at present, confidence-breaking. This involves a greater individualisation of the curriculum, so that the motivation and confidence of all students may be aroused and sustained by the development of their potentialities.'

Since this Manifesto was published, the CBI and TUC have spoken strongly in its support and the recent Education 2000 Conference has presented a case for a radical revision of the curriculum and for new methods of assessing the progress, capability and achievement of all young people. Perhaps we are beginning to respond to the words of Herbert Spencer in 1869, quoted by Correlli Barnett, the historian, in a Royal Society of Arts lecture on Education for Capability:

> 'What's left out of Britain's school courses almost entirely is what most nearly concerns the business of life. Our industries would cease were it not for the information which men acquire as best they may after their education is said to have finished. The vital knowledge . . . which now underlies our whole existence . . . is knowledge that has got itself taught in nooks and corners, whilst the ordained agencies teaching have been mumbling little else but dead formulae.'

The theory underlying our Initiative has been expressed by educationalists and trainers in very many quarters, including an increasing number of universities. The theory characterises an approach to learning in which experience comes first and theory then follows. Learning by doing is the spirit behind Nuffield Science and much Project based learning activity, but it remains in sharp contrast to what so often happens; namely lessons being directed by the teachers, relying on text books and data with experiences engineered to illustrate those theoretical models. The emphasis within the experience based learning of our fourteen to eighteen curriculum is finely placed on making sense of what the student is already experiencing in their inter-personal relationships and their lives; it is about doing and making; about solving problems and making decisions that are real for the students and not the abstractions of the curriculum dream world of those who seek universality and immortality at the expense of reality.

Maurice Holt has been invited to respond in the next **Forum** — *Ed.*

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Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education

Don Ramsden
Formerly a teacher in grammar school and further education, Don Ramsden was previously Secretary to the Standing Conference of CSE Boards and its CEE Working Party. He is now Joint Secretary of the Joint Council of GCE and CSE Boards, a member of the Secondary Examinations Council and Secretary of the East Midland Regional Examinations Board. He wrote on the CPVE in **Forum** Vol.25 No.2.

In June 1983, the Secretary of State announced the composition of the Joint Board for Pre-Vocational Education. The speed at which this new examination was estabished and the even greater speed at which it is to be implemented must come as something of a surprise to students of the history of previous attempts at examination reform.

The GCE and CSE Boards were eventualy offered one place each on the fourteen member Joint Board despite earlier statements from the DES that they would have no part to play in the proposed new examination. The CSE Boards, nevertheless, debated at length whether the offer should be accepted, because it seemed to some that the price of joining may be too high. In the end, membership was taken up and the worst fears seem to have been realised. The Government's interpretation of the acceptance is that the CSE Boards support the CPVE whole-heartedly and have accepted that the CEE will be abandoned after 1985. No indication has been given that the CSE or GCE Boards will be able to conduct the new examination or even influence, in any significant way, its development.

It is probable that the GCE Boards will continue to offer the CEE after 1985 but the CSE Boards are in a more difficult position on account of their 'conditions of recognition' which are approved by the Secretary of State.

Recent developments tend to confirm that the decision to grant membership of the Joint Board to the GCE and CSE Boards was little more than an empty gesture. Two major sub-committees have been established — one to deal with curriculum and the other to deal with implementation — from nominations made by a variety of bodies. None of the GCE or CSE Boards' nominees was appointed to either committee.

There are already young people on 'CPVE' courses and the first certificates will be awarded in 1984. Within a year, therefore, of the Joint Board being established it will be awarding certificates. Can it really have carried out the curriculum reform required by the Government's **Examinations at 17+** pamphlet? Can it have solved the problems of standards and certification? The answer to both questions is clearly negative. The CPVE for 1984 consists of existing low-level BEC, CGLI and RSA courses and so far as one can tell no decisions are yet forthcoming about how success will be recorded. It is, in the circumstances, not surprising that the total number of candidates is unlikely to exceed 2,000 in the first syear. The much-maligned and doomed to be forever 'pilot' CEE will, on the other hand, attract well over 50,000 young people.

In the latter half of 1982 it seemed that the Government believed that, for political reasons, it was necessary to show that they were prepared to react quickly to the rapidly deteriorating employment prospects of the school-leavers. That supposition may well have been wrong, because it's just possible that the speed of introduction of the CPVE was the DES's riposte to the Manpower Services Commission's incursions into 'Education' territory.

It is impossible at this stage, to say what the future holds for the CPVE. Much will depend on whether effective bridges can be built between the schools and the colleges of further education. Teachers in schools, accustomed to CSE and to a lesser extent GCE approaches to curriculum development and assessment, will not readily accept syllabuses imposed by a remote, national and predominantly further education based Joint Board. This situation will be exacerbated unless the CPVE in its final form makes much better provision for the target group than the 1984-85 pilot studies. It is, according to a recently issued paper, intended for those who have chosen and will benefit from full-time education in a school or college for at least a year after the end of compulsory education but who do not wish, at the stage, to proceed to 'A' level study.

There is no hope of its being successful in catering adequately for such a wide range of ability without the fullest co-operation of all the interested parties. In consultation with the teachers, the CSE Boards have prepared a package of courses, based on the aims and objectives outlined in the Government's pamphlet, containing a core and options. In this work the considerable experience gained over ten years of conducting the CEE has been used. The final reaction of the Joint Board to these proposals is not yet known, but the initial response was not encouraging.

In the minds of some there is more at stake than the success of the CPVE. The whole question of the central control of the curriculum, an issue which is also being debated in relation to the 16+ examination system, is much to the fore in these considerations.

Ironically, the future of the CPVE may yet rest in the hands of the Manpower Services Commission, because the nature of the relationship between its offerings and the CPVE have yet to be resolved.

Teacher-controlled Assessment and Integrated Humanities

John Turner
Head of Humanities at Hind Leys College, Shepshed, Leicestershire, John Turner is currently a member of a working party developing a 16+ syllabus in Integrated Humanities for the Midlands Examining Group. His investigation offers a case study of an attempt at teacher-controlled assessment.

It is a frequently expressed view in secondary schools that the examination system strangles initiative and stifles progress in the curriculum. It is asserted that the curriculum could be more open, more flexible and more relevant to the needs of students and of society if only teachers were not constrained by the baleful examination syllabus. This view has been very strongly articulated within the progressive movement whose practitioners have sought refuge either in school-based assessments such as the Mode 3, or by attempting to opt out of the examination system altogether.

Examination boards, on the other hand, have tended to argue that they *are* receptive to the demands of teachers. The CSE Boards are, by statute, teacher controlled, and cannot refuse any properly submitted syllabus from an individual teacher or group of teachers. The GCE Boards, though more independent of teacher control, have begun to offer a greater choice of syllabus and have attempted to reflect curriculum changes and minority interests. And, for a time, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they seemed to welcome Mode 3 submissions from individual schools. The Boards have pointed out that, by and large, teachers prefer to leave examining in the hands of the experts who are best able to define the parameters of subject disciplines and measure attainment reliably in a competitive environment. There is some evidence for this. Gillham[1] has argued that teachers generally show little enthusiasm for examining and tend to leave such onerous tasks to higher status colleagues. CSE boards have found difficulty in recruiting adequate numbers of teacher assessors.

Whether the reasons lie predominantly with the obstructiveness and unwillingness of examination boards, or in the reluctance of teachers to engage in examining, the situation remains that the teachers have very little control over curriculum and assessment for students whose courses terminate in public examination because the syllabus and examinations are determined by others. In 1979 25.7 per cent of all CSE entries were in Mode 3, which implies that in the examination area specifically designed for teacher control, nearly three out of four candidates were entered for centrally designed and marked examinations. Figures for GCE reveal that for the JMB, for example, Mode 3 candidate entries amounted to only 0.25 per cent of the total in 1981. This was typical of the GCE boards as a whole.

Two interesting questions arise out of this situation. Firstly, do teachers really want greater control of assessment and greater flexibility than that afforded by Mode 1 examinations? Secondly, if they get such freedom, what use will they make of it? The author's research[2] into one area of the secondary curriculum — integrated humanities, has attempted to throw some light on these questions. Overall the study of integrated humanities found that teachers in this field appeared to be very keen to take control and utilise the maximum flexibility afforded by a unique humanities syllabus, offered by the JMB which possessed most of the characteristics of Mode 3 syllabuses. But in practice, few teachers utilised this potential. The vast majority taught the syllabus within traditional boundaries and employed a very limited range of 'safe' assessment techniques.

In an earlier article[3] the author outlined the development of integrated humanities in the upper secondary curriculum of English schools. Broadly speaking, integrated humanities may be understood to refer to integrated thematic courses usually concerned with complex contemporary human issues. Strongly informed by the progressive tradition, integrated humanities courses have tended to emphasise student autonomy in choice of content and use of resosurces. The dominant style of learning — at least in theory — has been one of enquiry in which teachers acted as enablers and mediators of resosurces. The emphasis in general was upon the process of learning, and the skills of research and analysis rather than with the content of what was being learned. The struggle for the recognition of this kind of approach in secondary education consequently entailed a search for styles of assessment that were compatible with these aims. The need for legitimacy and status required that integrated humanities be publicly examined. But the existing system proved hopelessly inadequate for the needs of teachers of integrated humanities. This led them to develop their own Mode 3 schemes in an effort to circumvent the traditional examination system. The end result was inevitably a compromise. Integrated humanities became a legitimate part of the curriculum for 15-16 year olds as well as for young students: and in a number of comprehensives which opened in the 1970s even became part of the compulsory core. But the requirements of public examinations (mainly for reliability in assessment of different candidates) circumscribed the freedom of teachers. Most Mode 3 syullabuses had written examination papers, almost all of which were heavily content bound. The need to submit coursework tended to yield huge quantities of paper as evidence of learning. The GCE boards

presented even tighter controls over acceptable assessment methods than CSE boards particularly concerning the form of the examination papers. And in any case, the 1980s have witnessed a co-ordinated retreat by GCE boards from their commitment to the spirit of Mode 3 examining.

It is interesting therefore to analyse the way in which the JMB's GCE 'O' level syllabus in Integrated Humanities is being used in the 140 centres across the country who have adopted it. Available since 1979, this syllabus has rapidly grown in popularity. In 1983 4,568 candidates took the examination, indicating a serious and growing interest in Integrated Humanities. There is *no* set written examination paper. The syllabus specifies ten broad themes (with an option for a substitute theme of the school's choice) from which any five must be chosen. The entire assessment is of candidate's coursework. It is not specified what form the coursework must take, and the actual forms of assessment are left to the discretion of teachers. The only significant constraint is that, within the broad mark ranges, four skills must be assessed by the chosen assessments: knowledge of concepts, terminology and sources of information involved in the chosen topics; the ability to locate and select appropriate evidence for the study of a topic; the interpretation of evidence and evaluation of argument; and the presentation of explanations, ideas and arguments. Each centre following the syllabus has to send a sample of its assessments to the Board and has to undergo a moderation of its marks against a general standard agreed by the Board. In terms of the general run of GCE syllabuses, the JMB Integrated Humanities seems to offer a remarkable flexibility and freedom of choice to teacher and student. In theory, no two students need submit similar work nor undergo similar assessments in a centre, and no two centres need follow the same scheme of work. Content is clearly intended for general guidance, not as a presciption. The range of possible assessments is deliberately broad:

> 'The teacher is free to adopt whatever method of assessment he or she feels appropriate in relation to the teaching course and education strategy being followed in the centre. For assessment purposes teachers may wish to make use of project work, work done as classroom or homework exercises, discussions situations, "examinations" designed and conducted by the centre . . . or a combination of any of these techniques.'[4]

The author's research involved sending detailed questionnaires about philosophy and practice to all the centres who entered candidates for the 1981 examination. In all, there were 87 centres with 2,508 candidates in 1981. Of these 82 per cent responded in full to the questionnaires and provided a reliable sample on which to base an analysis of the operation of the syllabus. The following summarises the main findings relevant to the point raised in this paper.

The syllabus was overwhelmingly popular with the schools that were following it. There was virtually unanimous support for the opportunties offered for teachers to take control of the assessment and for the wide range of assessments available. The wide content choice and flexibility was welcomed. It was also very strongly believed that the syllabus raised the attainment of average students and improved the general motivation of those following the course. Over three-quarters of the schools welcomed the syllabus as an opportunity to develop resource-based teaching in mixed ability groups. Thus it would appear that the vast bulk of teachers of integreated humanities (drawn predominently from the ranks of sociologists, historians and geographers) welcomes the JMB syllabus as an opportunity to put into practice a number of the progressive features of integrated humanimties. However, the questionnaire responses reveal that the reality of the classroom fell considerably short of these ideals. It is true that, by national standards, there were several features of the integrated humanities courses that seem highly progressive: the predominance of mixed ability teaching (55 per cent) and the use of projects as assessment techniques (95 per cent) for example. But on the other hand, none of the more radical assessment techniques suggested by the syllabus proved very popular. The ubiquitous essay, objective testing and comprehension exercises appeared alongside the project in about eight out of ten schools. Oral assessment, discussion work, reviews, surveys and the like were rarely mentioned. The flexibility of the content list was little used. It would seem that student freedom to choose ways of working through themes or of pursuing research were severely restricted in most schools. Only 9 per cent of schools permitted students a free choice of content. Thirty per cent allowed some choice within the five teacher-chosen topics, while 58 per cent permitted no choice whatsoever. The most popular content areas selected by teachers were the common themes of social studies syllabuses. 'Law and Order', 'The Family' and 'Poverty' came top of the list, while topics such as 'Prejudice' and 'War' came bottom. Only 8 per cent of centres substituted their own theme for one from the JMB list.

Thus the disparity between ideals and reality in the operation of the JMB syllabus was most striking. The disparity remained significant even with those schools most committed to progressive ideas in humanities teaching. What are the reasons for such disparities? There could be many. Among the most obvious may be the inability of teachers to control the curriculum organisation. Thus the ability grouping of classes, the physical availability of resources, even the choice of syllabus cannot be influenced by most teachers: such matters are decided by others. Furthermore, the teaching and assessment of large numbers of students frequently with a parallel CSE course (as occurred in 72 per cent of schools) with limited resources may have necessitated a severe trimming of the potential flexibility and choice within the syllabus to the logistical realities of school organisation. However, one important constraint clearly emerged from the research which seemed much more prominent in the minds of teachers than the organisational problems just outlined. There was a strong feeling of unease about the assessment. It was not that teachers did not value the opportunity to evolve their own assessments of their own topics, it was rather that they lacked the confidence to do so. The questionnaire responses indicated that the majority of teachers found the assessment of the syllabus difficult, time-consuming and ambiguous. Many felt that the Board gave inadequate guidance. It would appear that they therefore took the safe course: familiar content and forms of assessment that had been tried and tested before. But in so doing the courses lost much of their distinctiveness and fell short of their radical potential.

In two schools studied in depth after analysis of the questionnaire it emerged that many teachers blamed the examination for distorting the aims of the course. Both schools were ideologically committed to radical and innovating concepts of integrated humanities, but each in different ways had failed to fulfil its expectations. In one school a community-based course which initially had not been examined had, over time, developed into an 'O' level and CSE course in order to compete for status on the curriculum with other subjects. As one teacher said, of the effect this had:

> 'In (the early) days we felt we were doing something different. We were what it was all about: equipping kids with skills for the future. We may have been naïve and wrong, but now it is just another subject on the timetable. Now it is just teaching kids for an examination.'

In the other school the efforts of the humanities staff to get a radical World Studies course accepted into the core curriculum had resulted in their adopting a very rigorous interpretation of the JMB assessment procedures. For many this meant that the radical elements of the course were distorted and smothered by, for example, 'too many written assignments' and 'a formal system of testing'. One teacher summed it up in this way:

> 'The influence of the assessment upon the teaching staff is covert but it passes on the message about what is really important: formal knowledge backed up by the examination. Overtly, it creates an unresolved tension between doing what we want, and the last minute flurry of paper before each test. It is tempting to decide what the test wants and do just that'.

The questionnaire responses and the two follow-up case studies seem to point up some important problems facing teachers who want to develop or extend innovative approaches to teaching and learning in an environmental or formal assessment. It has always been known that, when syllabuses were devised and examinations set and marked by the boards themselves, then the teaching tended to follow the demands of the examinations. The move to Mode 3s, although limited, represented an attempt by teachers to gain control of the curriculum by controlling the assessment and thereby hopefully reducing the domination of the teaching by the assessment requirements. But it appears that Mode 3 types of assessment may not have produced this outcome at all! Rather teachers have tended to devise assessments which have the same effect upon the teaching as the Mode 1s did earlier. This is clearly demonstrated in the interpretation of the JMB syllabus by most schools.

In practice Mode 3 schemes have often been as conservative and arduous as the examinations they replaced. The written examination papers were usually retained, but on top was piled a mountain of continuous assessment, and perhaps periodic tests as well. In a very real sense the terminal examination was replaced by a perennial examination. Whereas teachers could by judicious question spotting, 'play the system in Mode 1' and deviate from the syllabus from time to time, continuous assessment schemes made this impossible.

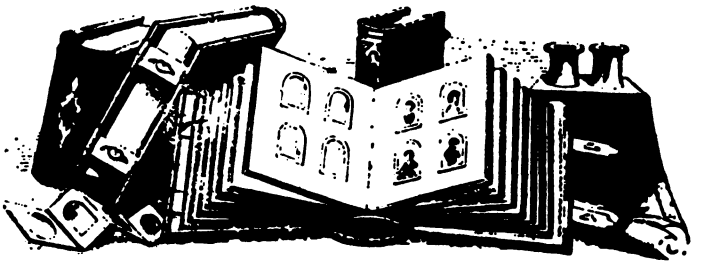
There are two possible ways out of this problem: initiatives sponsored by examination boards, or developments by teachers who understand the requirements of assessment. There is a constant if slow change in most Mode 1 syllabuses which reflects developments in subject teaching, but these are nearly always changes of emphasis rather than radically new ways of approaching a subject. The exceptions are when a curriculum project — such as Nuffield Science or Geography for the Young School Leaver, or Schools Council History — which *does* follow a new approach, demands and gets a different style of assessment. For the majority of syllabuses in most subjects the predominantly middle-aged and conservative interests which determine examination syllabuses hold sway and keep the pace of change frustratingly slow. The better approach is surely one where the curriculum development process proceeds in step with the creation of appropriate assessment techniques.

The conservatism of the users of the JMB syllabus highlights another issue: the weakness of teachers in the field of assessment. This seems to be an area which is largely ignored in in-service training. Yet it is a crucial element of any curriculum development in secondary education today. Unless teachers can become more skilled and knowledgeable in assessment theory and techniques they will fail to perceive how radically different their teaching could be, and how differently their students' work could be assessed. Only then could the constraints of the examination be swept aside as the overbearing influence upon classroom practice and as a reason for not changing it. The challenges of the next decade make it imperative that our secondary curriculum is changed, for it is presently woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the younger generation in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society. But if teachers will not take control of the management of this change — through careful curriculum development allied to new forms of assessment, then they will find these changes imposed upon them from outside — probably in ways they would not chose. Efforts to change the curriculum significantly can be completely sabotaged by inappropriate assessment especially if teachers lack confidence in operating the assessments. This problem is accentuated by the unwillingness of the examination boards to de-mystify assessment and make it more accessible to ordinary teachers.

In Leicestershire there has been some success resulting from teacher initiatives. Groups of teachers have devised and submitted an Integrated Design syllabus for 16+ in support of their curriculum strategies in design, while teachers from large numbers of schools which run courses in integrated humanities have drawn up a syllabus for 16+ to support their curriculum developments. This is one very direct way in which teachers may keep control and bend the examination system to their needs in a political climate which is rapidly becoming most unfriendly to any such ideas. The alternative may be to leave the ultimate control of classroom teaching in the hands of the syllabus committees of examination boards or even the Secretary of State for Education with his handy blue pencil. One may hope, however, that some day perhaps someone will be in power with sufficient foresight and ability to recognise that the whole edifice of 16+ examinations as presently constituted, is a waste of energy with only a distorting and destructive influence upon the curriculum. Then we may be free to devise the right kinds of methods of evaluating and assessing what teachers want to teach.

(References: page 48)

Reviews



Cases of Innovation

Comprehensive Schools: Challenge and Change, edited by Bob Moon. NFER-Nelson (1983) pp.159, paperback. £4.95.

Bob Moon has provided an educational Grand Tour of six educational establishments which have, over the last decade, become well known for their major innovations in comprehensive schooling. All six have had their 'progressive' features reported and misreported by critical educationalists, casual visitors and self-appointed preservers of educational standards with a taste for mythology. It is the great virtue of this collection of guides to Countesthorpe, Carisbrook, Sydney Stringer and Sutton Centre, to Stantonbury Campus and to Abraham Moss, that all the authors are insiders who can convey the philosophy and the attendant enthusiasm and idealism which shaped the observable features of each institution. Most of us, at some stage, think critically about the purpose and functioning of our small bit of the educational world. The authors of the six sections collectively provide an eloquent reminder of our own half-perceived doubts; additionally, they question a whole range of assumptions which the hesitant amongst us still take for granted. The challenge is both comprehensive and penetrating. The critical thinking which informed the innovations will both stimulate and disturb those of us who have taught in more 'conventional' surroundings and structures. We can profit from both responses.

The six sections are very much more than an account of a guiding philosophy and an organisational outcome. There are many indications of the painful processes of decision-making once change from time-honoured practice is considered essential. In its advance towards the adoption of the 'mini school', Countesthorpe appears to have been driven by an intense idealism to wage war on all fronts at once; to challenge almost every accepted practice in the belief that any change must be an improvement, to discard specialist rooms and to transcend specialist teaching skills may well be courageously progressive but it threatened the staff with exhaustion in the process. The innovating school serves a limited purpose if it remains uniquely different; innovation implies a possibility of more general application which depends on adoption by the more sceptical generality of teachers in a community which may be more suspicious. The patently honest account of the Countesthorpe experience has much to teach us.

Each section of the book has its particular theme. The Abraham Moss account concentrates on the experience of continuing education; the Stantonbury study considers the response of teachers to innovation. The Sydney Stringer focus is the developing relationship of a multi-cultural population and the community college. Assessment philosophy is central to the Sutton Centre theme, and Carisbrooke deals with the implementation of a common core. There is a frankness about the accounts which adds immensely to the value of the collection. A touch of religious fervour often makes the declarations of a challenging philosophy into exciting reading but it requires a special brand of intellectual honesty to catalogue the frustrations and even the failures. The practical difficulties facing the innovators in schools are compounded when they reach out into the no man's land between school and community. Five of the schools in this collection are operating in a new and expanding territory. It is sad to note that both the gains and the growth of positive and critical experience have been set at naught by the recent restrictions following on government cuts in several instances.

Bob Moon provides a final overview and analysis which distils many of the lessons drawn from his six innovating schools. Countesthorpe and Carisbrook are very different places; there is certainly rich variety in progressive comprehensive schools. The valuable final section ends with a plea from Bob Moon for support for continuing innovation; new ideas should be constantly under review. The challenge becomes imperative when new official initiatives foster the potentially divisive identification of a lower attaining 40 per cent of pupils, and there is the specially financed threat to so many of the comprehensive ideals implicit in the '14-18 TVEI'. This is an important book which makes an impressive contribution to a continuing debate.

DEREK ROBERTS,
Campion School, Bingbrooke, Northamptonshire

Academic Hegemony

School Subjects and Curriculum Change by Ivor F Goodson, Croom Helm (1983) pp.212, £14.95.

The differential status of school subjects and subject 'traditions' can be said to derive from the separate educational sectors which preceded the introduction of comprehensive education. This fascinating book provides a number of historical case-studies of different subjects seeking a place in the school curriculum and examines underlying patterns of change and conflict both within and between these subjects.

Ivor Goodson makes the point that there are several leading traditions in the historical background of the English curriculum. Often these traditions can be related to the social class origins and occupational destinations of their pupil clienteles. As a broad generalisation, one can say that the curricula of public and grammar schools, aimed at middle- and upper-class children preparing for professional life, were primarily 'academic'; whilst the elementary schools educating the majority stressed 'utilitarian' training. After 1944, a predominantly 'utilitarian' curriculum was to be offered in the new secondary modern schools-intended for those pupils who 'deal more easily with concrete things than with ideas'.

It is Dr Goodson's contention that nothing much has changed with the advent of comprehensive education. He draws heavily on Ball's recent study of Beechside Comprehensive (published in 1981) to substantiate his case that a status hierarchy still exists for school subjects and that comprehensive schools do place overwhelming emphasis on academic examinations. Ball provides a range of qualitative and statistical indicators to confirm his view that academic excellence is quickly established as a central tenet of the value system of the comprehensive school. He concludes that 'while the division is less clear-cut and stark than in the grammar school', nonetheless it is evident that 'teacher-resources within the comprehensive school are allocated differently according to the pupil's ability. Thus the most experienced teachers spend most of their time teaching the most able pupils. This is a reflection of the fact that the social and psychological rewards offered by the school to its pupils accrue to those who are academicaly successful and that academic achievement tends to be the single criterion of success in the school.'

It seems clear that the pattern of curriculum differentiation for fourth- and fifth-year pupils is not unlike that laid down in the Norwood Report of 1943. At the top of the hierarchy of subjects are the traditional 'O' level subjects like maths, English, the Languages, sciences, history and geography. These high-status subjects have an academic orientation in common; they are concerned with theoretical knowledge. They are subjects for the brighter, the academic, the band one pupil. Below these in status come 'O' levels in practical subjects like technical studies and metalwork. For band two and three pupiles, there are traditional CSEs and, lowest of all in status, new Mode 3 CSEs.

Accepting this structure of academic subject examinations, interest groups promoting new subjects have focused since 1917 on the pursuit of high-status examinations and qualifications. Subjects like art, woodwork and metalwork, technical studies, book-keeping, typewriting and needlework, domestic science and physical education, have consistently pursued status improvement by arguing for exhanced academic examinations and qualifications. But new subjects have seldom made the necessary breathrough by successfully challenging the hegemony of the academic subjects incorporated in the 1904 Regulations and 1917 School Certificate. 'This academic tradition has successfully withstood the recent waves of comprehensive reorganisation and associated curriculum reform.

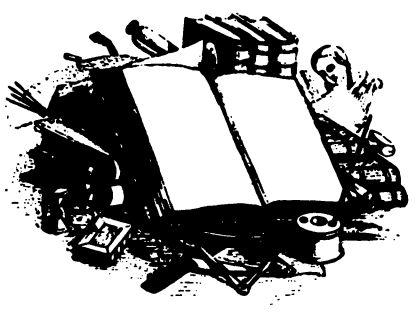
Goodson's book claims to present evidence for *three* hypotheses: firstly (following the model developed by Bucher and Strauss), that subjects are not monolithic entities but 'shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions'. Secondly, that in the process of establishing a school subject (and associated university discipline), base subject groups tend to move from promoting the 'pedagogic' and 'utilitarian' traditions towards the 'academic'. thirdly, that much of the curriculum debate can be interpreted in terms of conflict between subjects over status, resources and territory.

Dr Goodson focuses, in particular, on the evolution of environmental studies; and this leads him into a study of the changing character of rural studies, from which he suggests it was derived, and biology and geography, with which it had to compete. He looks, in detail, at the very well documented instance of an attempt to establish environmental studies in Hertfordshire, and, especially, of the move on the part of Hertfordshire teachers and advisors to introduce a new 'A' level syllabus and examination. It is Dr Goodson's contention that the secondary school curriculum changes in response to teachers acting as lobbyists for their own discipline. In the case of environmental education in Hertfordshire, curriculum conflict between subjects takes place over the issue of external examination, for if the new contender can gain high-status 'O' and 'A' level examinations which are broadly accepted, then it claims the material and financial rewards which accompany academic respectability.

Goodson's book claims to enbody a socio-historical approach to curriculum studies. Clearly, however, it comes more within the field of the 'sociology of knowledge'; and points to the way in which some of the controversial and not-so-controversial theoretical constructs developed by Michael F D Young and others remain to be examined and tested through empirical studies.

If I have a reservation about this book, it is over the use, or rather abuse, of the word 'relevance'. It is, after all, possible to teach much that is 'relevant' *within* existing subject areas; and not all integrated subjects are either well-conceived or intrinsically interesting. It is surely something of an exaggeration to suggest, as Dr Goodson does in his final paragraph , that our present curriculum 'produces industrial illiteracy for its successful minority, pervasive disenchantment for the majority'. Nor will the 'economic crisis' and 'social conflict' he refers to be necessarily averted by the attempts of central government to inject massive resources in new, more 'utilitarian' directions.

C CHITTY
Earl Shilton Community College



Charismatic enigma

Neill of Summerhill: the Permanent Rebel by Jonathan Croall, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1893), pp.436, £12.95.

In this splendid biography of a man whose greatness was mysteriously unlike any other kind of greatness one can think of, many attempts at defining the mystery are quoted. I like best, one provided by a visitor to Neill's school in Hellerau in the 1920s. 'His tolerance', said Gustav Mattson, 'seemed almost unbelievable, but without any weakness . . . It is strange perhaps to use the word authority about someone who, if anything, was completely anti-authoritarian, yet that is also a word that comes into my mind.' He was, I'd think afresh every time I met him, the most affirmatively negative, or negatively affirmative, man I'd ever encountered. He had the extraordinary gift of being powerful without being oppressive. Jonathan Croall doesn't in the end account for this, and it's probably a piece of inexplicable chemistry; but he looks at it from every possible angle, sympathetically and always shrewdly.

The long life (Neill was a week or so away from being ninety when he died in 1973) had roots you'd never dream of inventing for such a man. He was the not well-favoured son of a schoolmaster in a desperately narrow Scottish village. A funeral, he remembered, provided a light interlude, eagerly welcomed. He started his working life as a mixture of characters from H G Wells (always a strong touch of Kipps) and J M Barrie. He might have become a literary hack in the style of the time. Horrified by the conventional demands made of a dominie in a Scottish school, he behaved as headmaster at Gretna like a dominie turned inside out: which is what, I believe, he remained. Even his rejection of school teaching as it is usually practised was deeply professional. In Gretna he shed his dignity in a setting where dignity was everything, and old pupils remember him with gratitutde to this day. Jonathan Croall guesses that Neill might have been looking for 'the carefree childhood that he had never been allowed', and clearly some search of this sort lay behind his whole career. From Homer Lane and the other philosophical and psychological sources from which he drew the muscle of his ideas, he derived a methodology in which marvellous commonsense was always cheek by jowl with marvellous absurdity. He said things about teaching that have never been better or more influentially said, and other things that were plain daft: largely because they arose from impatiences of his own. He played up handicrafts and played down books because he was happiest himself with chisel and screwdriver and wrench. He was tremendously right about the harm done by parents, and tremendously wrong in supposing that this always meant they should be separated from their children: as he found (and ruefully confessed) when, late in life, he was a parent separated from a beloved daughter. He was, simply, perfectly at home with children, and they with him. There's a delightful account here of a visit he paid to the Montessori Department of a school, when the orderliness and silence of the place broke down as the children happily scrambled all over him. Neill hadn't said a word. 'I cannot explain why I affect kiddies in this way,' he commented. I wish I'd been a child listening to him telling stories.

He worried about the question of whether the whole system could have become a Summerhill. Plainly it couldn't; but the impact of Neill's example has, in places, loosened the system wonderfully. This properly big book reminds us that he was, himself, always bigger than one remembers; until near the end, in that infinitely revivable way that made him a permanent rebel, he remained alert and nosey. 'If you come this way,' says the last letter I had from him, 'the old horse will try to hobble from its grass to have a stable talk with you.' He *hobbled* in his eighties more impressively than most of us *gallop* in our twenties.

EDWARD BLISHEN

The whom and what of standards

Monitoring Children: An evaluation of the Assessment of Performance Unit by Caroline Gipps and Harvey Goldstein, Heinemann Educational Books.

Forum Vol.22 No.1 (1979) was a special issue devoted to the APU. **Monitoring Children** is the evaluation report of the group led by Professor Harvey Goldstein at London University Institute of Education, on the APU and is part of the outcome of a three-year project, funded by the SSRC.

In writing the report, the team had access to the APU Committee papers and minutes as well as to the APU personnel themselves. In addition, a draft version of the report was discussed at a seminar in April 1982 where over twenty people associated with the APU were present.

The report is largely an historical account which enables readers to understand the evolution of the APU. It begins with a descriptive account of how the APU was set up, what it is and what it does. This in my view is most useful and will prove to be even more valuable in the future, when the mists of time have descended on its early days. The prevailing educational climate is described and a context is given by the inclusion of such issues as the publication of the Bullock report, the William Tyndale affair, and the Black Papers, all of which give impetus to the idea of regular monitoring of basic skills and accountability.

A political context is given, which helps to remind readers of the 'three-day week', the increased public awareness of the need to

save energy and to increase productivity. James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech, which indicated that education should be more accountable, the general feeling that education had let the country down and that the professionals had some explaining to do, serve to remind us of the background.

The APU can be seen as a response to the general concern over standards, but the notion of identifying the incidence of under-achievement particularly as far as ethnic minority groups are concerned seems to have been quietly forgotten. As the report indicates, the APU was becoming a full-scale national assessment programme concerned with standards and the chapter highlights some of the anxieties over the APU and its way of working.

The chapter ends with a consideration of the problems confronting the APU in deciding how and what to monitor, and poses some interesting questions concerning its true purposes.

In the following chapters, under-achievement, the work of the consultative committee and co-ordinating group, the statistics advisory group its origins and role, the work of the steering groups and of the monitoring teams in science, maths and language are considered. The consideration is both broad and deep, as befits a research study. The successes and the weaknesses of the APU's work are discussed. The unfolding stories in each of these chapters will be of undoubted use to those wanting to find out the detail and I am sure that M Ed course tutors will want to add this book to their general reading list.

The report continues with a chapter on an examination of some reactions of other educational bodies and the press to the APU and concentrates particularly on the relationship between the NFER and the APU.

The final chapter extracts what the research team see as 'salient themes in the work of the APU' and they say that they trust that readers will recognise that, while the team has major criticisms and reservations about the APU, it nevertheless believes it has an important role to play and that it could be the start of potentially useful research. The chapter considers the management style of the APU, what the APU is about to do now, how far, in the team's view it has achieved its aims and what the team thinks the APU should give attention to in the future.

The move to a 'once every five years' monitoring cycle is welcomed by the team and they are generous with their praises for the APU test materials. It is true that the APU has, as its brief demanded, created new instruments and techniques for assessment and co-operated with local education authorities and teachers in the conducting of these assessments.

However, what has not yet happened is the dissemination of the APU findings and methods, among teachers. The majority of teachers are, in my view, unaware of the APU reports in maths, science and language and have been untouched by any APU activities.

Although **Monitoring Children** deserves to be widely read by people in education I doubt if it will be, for far too few of them know of the APU and its work to be interested in reading an evaluation of it.

DAVID TOMLEY
University of Leicester

Faulted Research Exposed

A Question of Standards: an evaluation of 'Standards of English Schools' by the Research Unit of the National Union of Teachers (1983), pp.19.

The Research Unit of the National Union of Teachers has performed a public service which Sir Keith Joseph refused to provide. Having asked DES statisticians to analyse the work of Marks, Cox and Pomian-Srzednicki, sponsored and published by the National Council for Educational Standards under the title **Standards in English Schools**, as that body had applied for DES funding for a further stage in the study of differential school examination results, the Secretary of State then refused to publish his Department's analysis which reportedly found the research 'seriously flawed' (**Guardian** 14/10/83). He told Frank Dobson, MP, that departmental officials' advice to ministers is confidential.

The published analysis by the Research Unit of the NUT first points out that the conclusions of the purported research in the NCES study contradicts both those of the long-term research conducted by the National Children's Bureau, published last July under the title **Examination Results in Selective and Non-Selective Schools**, and those of John Gray and his two colleagues for Scotland published last January in **Reconstruction of Secondary Education**. In seeking an explanation of the contrast this critique considers the methodology, the sample of schools and children, and finally the validity of the NCES study's conclusions.

The critique finds the researchers' claim that 'considerable care was taken to ensure that our sample of LEAs constituted a representative quota sample' to be unsubstantiated, impossible to check because the NCES has refused to publish the raw data and, moreover, readily refutable. The sample is shown to be unrepresentative in that the tables reveal 75 per cent of its schools as comprehensive whereas nationally 85 per cent were, hence 'the sample includes a disproportionally large number of "selective" LEAs'; further, it contained 'an undue proportion of grammar schools'. Comparison of numbers in the NCES sample of 54 English LEAs with DES totals suggests that the sample included 81 per cent of all grammar, 62 per cent of secondary modern and 36 per cent of comprehensive schools in England.

The claim that the sample's examination results 'are consistent with those presented by the DES in their national survey' is similarly refuted in that 17 per cent of the NCES sample of secondary modern pupils passed Maths 'O' Level in contrast with the DES 10 per cent. Here the explanation is that the DES figure was for school leavers including sixth formers while the NCES referred only to fifth formers.

Disturbing variations in the size of the sample used for different purposes have been discovered, with 24 per cent of the original schools apparently 'lost' by the stage when results were analysed according to school type.

Several examples are given to demonstrate the unsound statistical basis of the NCES research. Not having obtained data on individual children — nor even the 1981 Census ward data to relate to school catchment areas — the team used some social class data available for LEAs and assumed this was equally applicable for all schools across an LEA, thereby discounting differentials between socially favoured and deprived schools within an LEA. Then the LEA sample was classified into three categories by means of one indicator for educational need or problems associated with educational disadvantage instead of the six indicators and six categories used by the DES, without explaining why. The critique suggests that this introduced unnecessarily coarse social groupings which seriously contaminated attempts to make allowances for the separate effects of selectivity, social class, 'creaming' and ability levels on examination attainment.

Space here prevents further exemplification of this devastating critique's exposures, which are painstakingly argued and referenced to the NCES text. The clear impression conveyed is that **Standards in English Schools** was a disgracefully sloppy piece of so-called research, riddled with inherent distortions, so that the findings are invalid in every respect.

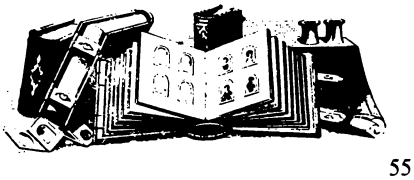
Interestingly, very similar criticisms seem to have been made in the leaked but unpublished DES analysis.

Yet the NCES study argues from these faulty findings that a fully selective school system would produce much better examination results, in both grammar and secondary modern schools, than a fully comprehensive one.

It is doubtless significant that two of the NCES research team were prominent contributors to the **Black Papers**, and that their study has been hailed by the anti-comprehensive lobby.

As the NUT's Research Unit notes, 'Comparison of the results of selective and comprehensive systems is fraught with perils' and demands rigorous use of the best techniques available by people qualified and experienced in educational research. It seems that none of these conditions was met by the NCES team.

NANETTE WHITBREAD
Leicester Polytechnic



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