

FORUM

for the discussion of new trends in education

Summer 1984

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This issue

**The Curriculum
Content and Process**

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The Next Forum

The focus of this number is **The Democratic Control Of Education**. Brian Simon asks 'To Whom Do Schools Belong?' Richard Pring writes on parental involvement through school governorships (based on a survey in Devon). Ned Newett contributes from his experience on the whole issue of staff involvement and participation in the control of schools, while John Bull, Ray Pinder and David Herd all write on student involvement. Articles on community involvement will be contributed by John Watts (on Solihull), John Rennie (on Coventry) and Henry Miller and Phil Carspecken on the Croxteth school in Liverpool. In addition we will carry Andrew Fairbairn's moving tribute to Stewart Mason given at a Memorial Meeting in London earlier this year — particularly his contribution to comprehensive education.

A Major Challenge

Since our last issue, comprehensive education has faced a major challenge, and has come through greatly strengthened in its assurance of mass public support. This episode (not yet over) has left blood on the nose of many people who should have known better.

Late last autumn a public opinion poll seemed to indicate popular scepticism about comprehensives and to support the grammar/modern set-up. A considerable number of Tory MP's then jumped on the bandwagon with a Parliamentary motion proposing reversion to selection. All this seems to have motivated Mr Robert Dunn (and his acolytes) at the DES to make a series of weekend speeches advocating the return to selection, and, more important, certain local councils actually to put up plans to implement this supposedly 'popular' proposition. The best known of these was, of course, Solihull, but others followed suit, or, in various ways, attempted to extend the selective element in local systems.

Whatever the respondents may have said in reply to the specific wording of the public opinion poll, when the matter came down to earth in an overt attempt to transform existing comprehensives to grammar schools, as at Solihull, the outcry was enormous. Teachers, parents, the local communities — all concerned in the school system — sprang to their defence. This was the case at Solihull, Redbridge and elsewhere. Support for existing comprehensives was almost total, so that Tory Councillors, representing these areas, were quickly forced to realise that they had backed the wrong horse and rapidly backtracked. In Solihull even the second, modified scheme, was totally defeated. Much the same happened at Richmond earlier, in Wiltshire, in Berkshire, and at Redbridge where there has been a massive response to campaigns to reject enhanced selection in favour of comprehensive education.

The *Times Educational Supplement* has advised the egregious Bob Dunn (who appears to have succeeded the equally egregious Rhodes Boyson) to come off it, and to try to play a more constructive role in the nation's educational affairs, for which he has some responsibility, after all. However that may be, the concerted attack on comprehensive education has been beaten back, and this must surely be encouraging to comprehensive supporters in these gloom-laden times.

But it would be naive to think the matter will be ended there. Not at all. 'If it be so, as it is, that selection as between schools is largely out', Keith Joseph told Brian

Walden on TV recently, '**then I emphasise that there must be differentiation within schools**' (*TES*, 17.2.84; our emphasis added to Sir Joseph's to ensure his point is taken, Eds.). As a correspondent from the Solihull area wrote in January, 'I believe that parental action has successfully blocked the Education Committee's machinations and that the battle will now shift towards protection of non-streaming and banding, both of which may come under direct edict from the Committee if it has its way'.

That differentiation within schools is a prime objective of Ministerial policy is abundantly clear from recent actions. Not only is there pressure to increase streaming and banding, as our correspondent says, but the broad outlines of a new tripartitism is now clearly emerging. Refusal to modify external examinations in the form of A and O levels GCE (or at least continued procrastination); the introduction and recent massive expansion of TVEI; Joseph's 'discovery' of the 'bottom 40 per cent' and his plans for these (Sheffield speech) make it clear that the objective is to enforce the old tripartite division within *all* comprehensive schools, with an academic track to A levels for a minority, a technical/vocational track, and a criterion-referenced tested track for the 'bottom 40 per cent' — given agreement that even the helots must be literate in this day and age.

Falling rolls and parental choice are already posing a threat to comprehensive systems, in that the opportunity is given for enhancing differentiation between comprehensive schools in a given area without actually introducing selection. Differentiation *within* schools compounds the direction — a school system that once more operates as a selective device conveying each group or individual to his or her pre-ordained position on the labour market (or, for many today, off it). This is not an *educational* system at all; rather the opposite. We should take heart from the recent, and massive, defeats of the anti-comprehensivists, and realise that we are stronger than we think. Differentiation within schools can also be defeated, as **Forum** readers will know well. It must be our object to ensure that it is; and here the contribution made by the Hargreaves report to the ILEA needs serious attention. Its objective of a common curriculum (or educational experiences) for all to 16 is one that **Forum** has consistently supported. This represents an opposite objective to current Ministerial policy, so far as it can be understood.

Curriculum Control

Denis Lawton

Now Director of the University of London Institute of Education and, for many years, head of its Curriculum Studies Department, Denis Lawton here assesses the significant moves towards more centralised control of the curriculum, but points to some divisions of view.

As recently as ten years' ago, the two features of the English educational system likely to surprise overseas educationists were the lack of centralisation and the high level of teacher autonomy. This is no longer the case. At precisely the time when many other countries have been moving away from central control, the DES have been moving — quite sharply — in the opposite direction. It would be easy to blame the Conservative administration for this trend, but whilst interesting developments have taken place since 1979, the story is much more complicated — starting at least as far back as 1975 with the lead-up to the notorious Ruskin College speech by the Labour Party Prime Minister, James Callaghan in 1976.

Even before 1976, and the deliberate leaking of the Yellow Book, there were signs that DES civil servants were anxious to move away from the non-directed 'partnership' model of administration. The origins of the Assessment of Performance Unit provide some interesting evidence of stirrings in the DES during the early 1970s, but 1976 was very important for a number of events (as well as the Ruskin speech). In 1976, the DES were publicly criticised by the House of Commons Selection Committee and the OECD in reports which complained of the lack of planning in the DES.

The events which followed may not be completely unconnected with these two criticisms. As everyone will remember, the Callaghan speech was followed by the so-called Great Debate, which gave rise to the 1977 Green Paper on Education which itself contained a heightening of centralism. What may be less well known is Circular 14/77, which came out shortly afterwards and required Local Education Authorities to give an account of their curriculum planning to the DES; when all these reports were received from Local Education Authorities the DES published a report which was highly critical of the lack of knowledge by LEAs of curriculum in their Authority, and of the apparent lack of planning. The blame had not only been shifted from the centre to the periphery but an excuse was provided for much greater control.

The other development at this time was the DES document *Framework for the School Curriculum* (1980) directly inspired by the Great Debate and the 1977 Green Paper. The scene was set not only for much greater centralisation of the curriculum, but centralisation based on national guidelines laid down by the DES. The obvious body to lay down guidelines for curriculum was the Schools Council — but that was already dying.

By now there had been a change of government, and the new Thatcher Conservative administration had been in office since May, 1979. From now on the story is not simply one of the DES centralism, but a mixture of centralism and the new Tory ideology. Thus in 1981, we had not only another DES document *The School Curriculum* (which was essentially a more respectable version of the 1980 *Framework*), but also a few hints that there would be increasing central influence on the curriculum of a party political nature. From 1979 there was much talk about improving standards, selection, back to the basics — all of which had clear curriculum implications, but there were also some interventions by politicians which would have been unthinkable earlier. In March, 1982, for example, Sir Keith Joseph, addressing the Institute of Directors, stated that 'schools should preach the moral virtue of free enterprise and the pursuit of profit . . .'. Had this been a backbencher's remark no one would have commented, but coming from the Secretary of State for Education, who was known to believe in the need for all young people to understand economics, this became a disturbing interference.

Another example was that there were signs in the early 1980s of the Conservative administration being worried by the growing popularity of CND and the growth of Peace Studies in schools. On June 22, 1982, in the House of Commons, Dr Rhodes Boyson, stated in reply to a question from his friend, Mr H Greenway: 'I share my Honourable Friend's concern about the growth of peace — or, rather, appeasement — studies because that is basically what they are'. Schools were encouraged to make use of the Central Office of Information pamphlet *A Balanced View* which outlined the case for retaining nuclear weapons.

In March, 1983, Sir Keith Joseph announced his disapproval of any physics courses which included the political and social implications of science. Again, this would have been less worrying if it were not for the fact that Sir Keith Joseph was then negotiating with examination boards the question of national criteria for the 16+ examinations, making it clear that he would withhold approval unless examining boards came into line. And it was not only the science syllabuses which met with Sir Keith's disapproval: he felt that history ought to be more patriotic, and that English should be standard English rather than concerned with the dialects of linguistic minority groups. What concerned many educationists was not only the blatant political interference in the curriculum, but the mixture of

political ideology with growing central control.

Many of these tendencies, including the combination of DES centralism and Conservative ideology, can be seen very clearly in Sir Keith Joseph's Sheffield speech on 6 January, 1984, at the North of England Educational Conference. It was a very 'clever' speech in the sense that there were certain aspects of it that no sane person could disagree with — such as the general desire to raise standards. One of the reforms suggested was that examinations should be more concerned with criterion referencing and less with norm referencing. This clearly presents a difficulty: we would wish to join in the criticism of norm referenced examinations because they have been such a bad influence in the past; but to think that a simple solution is found by converting examinations to criterion referencing is naive. The problem is much more deep-rooted than that. And what sort of criteria are we talking about? It is one thing to set up criteria for graded tests in arithmetic, but much more difficult in subjects such as history. And what about economics? Will only monetarist answers to test questions be marked correct?

That brings us to another very serious ambiguity in the speech — the use of the word 'objectives' in the context of curriculum and examinations. Sir Keith wants teachers to have clearer purposes and has sought to achieve both clarity and uniformity by encouraging the development of national criteria at 16+ examinations. Is this what he means by 'clearly defined objectives'? Or does he mean reducing all subjects to a checklist of skills? Or worse still, does he mean precise behavioural objectives? In 1980, I published a book called *The Politics of the School Curriculum* in which I warned of the danger of the kind of accountability which even then DES officials seemed to be attracted to. The APU was one aspect of this movement, but graded tests and a curriculum based on clearly defined objectives might be another. The disastrous results of many American ventures in that direction seem to have been ignored!

Another aspect of centralisation has been the increasing interference of the Manpower Services Commission in education. One very clear example of the overlap of DES managerial style and Tory ideology is linking schooling with work. DES and Tory politicians appear to agree that the prime function of education is to 'service the labour market'; acceptance of this view diminishes the gap between education and training and, therefore, leaves the way open for a training organisation such as MSC to take over many of the functions of the education service. The current edition of the DES pamphlet *The Educational System of England and Wales* (August, 1983) still makes much of the decentralisation of the educational system and the importance of Local Authorities. But the great disadvantage of a decentralised system from the point of view of a government interested in changing the curriculum, is that there is no guarantee that money given by the Treasury to the DES and on to the LEAS will actually produce the kind of changes required. The answer to this awkward problem of 'partnership' is clear: divert more and more money away from the DES to the Department of Employment Manpower Services Commission and concentrate on training rather than education. There are many serious points to be made about MSC, but I will concentrate on just two in this article. First, the TVEI programme which has injected

MSC money into schools for a new technical and vocationally oriented curriculum for the 14 to 18 age group: the recent White Paper 'Training for Jobs' makes it quite clear that the intention is to change the curriculum (see paragraphs 16 and 17 for an explicit statement along these lines). Many teachers and others have accepted this additional money with open arms thinking that it is 'extra money'. Of course, no extra money is in the system — it has been diverted with the clear intention of changing the curriculum in a work oriented direction. Meanwhile, fringe subjects like music have suffered badly.

The other example of diversion of resources was even more clear. The White Paper 'Training for Jobs' announced that the Manpower Services Commission was to take over some of the money previously allocated to Local Education Authorities for non-advanced further education courses because the world of work should be made more closely related to training courses. The needs of the employers, apparently, were paramount. Although this example may seem remote from the lives of many teachers in schools, the danger is a very real one. The lack of distinction being made between education and training could spread into further interferences in the school curriculum. The paradox is that all this emphasis on schools needing to prepare the young for the world of work is taking place at a time when fewer and fewer school leavers are getting jobs. At just the time when it might be appropriate to intensify non-vocational aspects of education, schools are harassed into looking more closely at the needs of employment.

So far my paper has been written in a very gloomy vein. But there may be some hopes for the future. One is that the completely localised curriculum was never satisfactory. In many schools curriculum had degenerated to a cafeteria 'choose anything you like' pattern. There was a case for a common curriculum, even if it was very different from the kind of common curriculum the DES seem to have in mind. The second hope is that there is not a consensus of policy within the central authority. So far I have only referred to recent DES documents on curriculum, but a number of much better HMI publications have also begun to appear which could provide a more satisfactory basis for curriculum rethinking — for example, the HMI document *Curriculum 11-16* and the two follow-up papers. I should perhaps have stated at the beginning of this article that I firmly support a common curriculum with some kind of central planning, provided that it is not controlled by bureaucrats or politicians. What we need is a non-political non-bureaucratic central agency for curriculum planning of a professional kind. But the Schools Council has been abolished, and the two new committees are nominated by the Secretary of State: it remains to be seen how subservient to the DES they will be.

Another hope for the future is also related to the lack of consensus within the central authority. To talk simply of 'centralism' is an over-simplification — we should always specify which factions are at the centre and which ideology we are really talking about. Although it is still too simple a model, I have recently found it useful to make a distinction between three groups within the central authority struggling for power: the politicians (Conservative ministers and

political advisers etc.); the DES bureaucrats, and the HMI professionals. These three groups sometimes appear to be marching in step (as on the occasion of Sir Keith Joseph's Sheffield speech), but it is more usual for the different ideologies to show through.

It might be useful to see the three ideologies mapped out in the following way:

FIGURE 1

	<i>Beliefs</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Tastes</i>
Politicos	Market	Freedom of choice	independent schools fees
Bureaucrats (DES)	Good administration	efficiency	central control exams standard tests
Professionals (HMI)	professionalism	quality	impressionistic evaluation

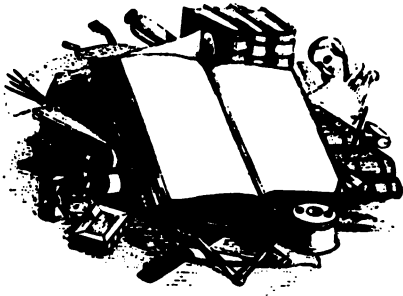
We might then go on to examine the three ideologies in terms of particular curriculum issues. For example, the politicos inevitably talk or write about 'standards'; the DES is increasingly concerned with specifying objectives, whilst HMI appear to have a genuine desire for a common curriculum as argued in *Curriculum 11-16*. In other words, I am suggesting the central authority should be treated as a 'tension system' rather than a consensus organisation. As I mentioned earlier, the Sheffield speech of Sir Keith Joseph was an example of hard won consensus: much of it was written by DES civil servants in a bureaucratic style representing the current bureaucratic ideology; a few paragraphs show clear signs of political ideology and political language; but there are also encouraging signs that HMI had won a few battles. It was the evidence of those few sentences, no doubt, which gave rise to the rumours that some of Sir Keith's colleagues feel that he has 'gone native' and should be replaced. But the general tone of the Sheffield speech was still highly bureaucratic and showed far too much influence from American accountability models as well as far too great a concern with the work selection aspect of education.

Perhaps the greatest reason for optimism is, however, a rather ironic one. One of the outcomes of centralism has been a series of circulars from DES to LEAs requiring action on curriculum. The latest of these was Circular 8/83 requiring even more detailed planning. The result of all this must be that Local Education Authorities will

not only undertake curriculum planning exercises themselves, but will also encourage more school based curriculum rethinking. The result may well be that there will be increased struggles between the periphery and the centre on curriculum issues, and the professionals — in the end — might win.

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Margaret Gracie A Teacher for our Time

Maggie Gracie, who died aged 41 eighteen months ago, was a member of the FORUM Editorial Board. Of her, Gwyn Dow (teacher-educator, Melbourne) wrote: 'She is imprinted on my mind as one of the most brilliantly witty and warm teachers I've ever had anything to do with. Her wit, of course, was linked with her true originality in approach to teaching'.

A booklet celebrating Maggie's work as a teacher will shortly be published. Contributors include: John Bull, Diane Dalglish, Pat D'Arcy, Lee Enright, Doug Holly, Frank Jacobs, Lesley King, Brian Simon, Janie Stanfield and Jean Rudduck, all of whom knew her well and worked with her in one way or another. They seek to recreate her personality and her approach to teaching and education.

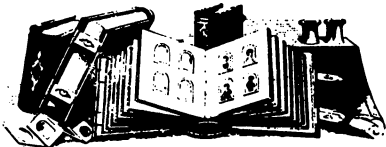
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Education and Social Class

Maurice Plaskow

Until its recent disbandment, Maurice Plaskow was a curriculum officer with the Schools Council (from 1970). He helped to organise the recent PRISE conference on Education and Social Class, and reports on it here. He is also a member of the Committee of RICE (Right to Comprehensive Education).

“There is no objective way of weighing one type of misery against another. No one can construct an unchallengeable index of total deprivation that would enable us to rank locations in the lower reaches of hell.”
(Harrison, 1983)

During the 1950s and 60s the effects of social class on educational performance provided a great deal of the motivation for educational reform which emerged in the steady movement towards secondary reorganisation on a non-selective basis. It was a time for optimistic slogans: equal value; comprehensive means everyone.

The rhetoric of hope was somewhat dented by the apparent ineffectiveness of compensatory programmes, EPA and headstart projects, even bold experiments in non-streaming. The campaigners of the 1970s turned to new windmills: race, then gender.

The mid-80s is recognising that, at a time of ruthless political pressure and relentless financial constraint, multiple disadvantage has to be frontally faced. Social class in a new disreputable complexity is back in the news, acknowledged even by the DES: differentials rule.

The Programme for Reform in Secondary Education (PRISE) organised a weekend working conference a few weeks before Christmas to consider aspects of social deprivation, through class, race, and gender, compounded within a system which institutionalises the differences in the curriculum, the examination system, patterns of work, and the very language of educational discourse.

Peter Mortimore of ILEA, in his opening paper, quoted Harrison's description of conditions in Hackney. His address was full of depressing evidence of the ways in which (well-meaning) efforts to minimise disadvantage had resulted merely in jacking up the whole system. The gap remained obstinately unclosed. Indeed, as with most differentials, increments serve to widen them. So, for example, if one looks at participation in higher education, while in the twenty years from 1962 middle class entry increased by 7.5 per cent, that of the working class (much larger, of course, in numerical terms) expanded by only 1.8 per cent. Indeed, Williams and Blackstone (1983) have calculated that if the participation of working class students increased to the level of their middle class peers, we should need twenty new universities, instead of contemplating closures!

The most recent DES figures admit that class explained more than 70 per cent of the variation

between education authorities in the proportion of 16-19 year-olds taking full time GCE or CSE courses in schools or colleges.

As Stephen Ball pointed out in his paper on 'the Sociology of the School', 'given the pressures of "market forces" regression rather than progress would seem to typify the climate in many secondary schools. The impact of falling rolls and reduced resources have produced a state of low morale which is not the best atmosphere in which to attempt innovation and bold experiment.' It's not the mould which is likely to be broken. The defining characteristics of the system remain *selection* and competition: 'in our schools rejection and failure continue to be strongly associated with social class' concludes Ball.

Alan Little in his paper on 'Race and Class', referred to the worrying implications of inequality for economic advance, social efficiency and peace. He quoted Lord Scarman (1981) on the Brixton unrest: 'The disorders cannot be fully understood unless they are seen in the context of complex political, social and economic factors which together create predisposition towards violent unrest'.

There is frustration sharpened by rejection; a blocking of access to those goods which are paraded as the desirable ends of success and achievement. So looting will take the waiting out of wanting. The cycle is made more vicious as those who fail within the present system are further bruised by the demoralisation of unemployment.

In their analysis of the 'new vocationalism' Sue Holmes and Ian Jamieson of the Schools Council Industry Project, remark that it is not sufficient for there to be 'radical changes in socio-economic structure for schools to change . . . there needs to be a mechanism that in some ways ensures a degree of congruence between the education system and the socio-economic structure.'

It is not surprising that there are those who stridently demand an end to curriculum tinkering, since nothing short of fundamental social upheaval will achieve anything other than cosmetic change.

Meanwhile, there are students in schools, with hard-pressed well-meaning teachers, anxious to do what they can for the life chances of all their students. It may be that schools could take stronger initiatives to improve self-esteem, to create opportunities for success, to give all students a confident belief that they have a constructive contribution to make.

The conference study groups all grappled with this

central issue, and there were several themes which emerged as refrains for positive action. The strongest recommendation was that schools must be aware of their place within the community and make great efforts to involve the community — not just parents — in their endeavours.

At the centre is the problem of communication and the need for dialogue. Not only must the school negotiate its curriculum with its community — which of course includes the students — but teachers must patiently explain and discuss the value issues which underpin decisions, govern choices, create criteria of worthwhileness.

Parents have inevitable preconceptions about the nature of school knowledge, derived from their own selective memories, reinforced by media slogans. It is inconceivable that any industry would continue to rely on the technology of an earlier generation. Why should this be peculiarly appropriate to education?

As Alan Little suggested, the educational system needs to find ways of working directly on the forces external to the school that influence a pupil's educational functioning; and 'direct more of its resources and efforts within the school to influence the pupil's capacity to learn'.

But learn what exactly, and how? These central questions nagged at the curriculum working group as its members struggled to design a new and more relevant model.

In the first place several rigidities were identified which mindlessly stand in the way of change: habits of thought which have rusted in through time like chronology, lock-step instruction; the tyranny of the fragmented timetable; the primacy of syllabus content; the concern with product more than process; and overshadowing all the flail of norm-referenced assessment — the guillotine of the examination process.

These barriers are so formidable that it would not be possible to begin to breach them without massive community support at the barricades. And the signs are hopeful. What does a CSE grade 3 mean to anyone? Isn't the best teaching an aid to a well-motivated student? And isn't that more likely to be achieved through a negotiated process which allows the participants to understand the nature, purpose and value of the joint enterprise?

We have first, then, to question the assumptions on which existing value judgements are based. Why is the label 'less able' applied only to those who do not take readily to traditional academic activities? Why is cognitive/intellectual achievement prized above sensitivity, creativity, imagination, technical skill? If we are to set about reducing differentials within the system, then we must alter the framework which determines those differences. We must replace a failure model with an *achievement* model.

This must be bedded on a firmly negotiated platform which feeds into the school curriculum and back again to its participants. It is concerned to achieve competence and understanding through a variety of learning processes. We know about the world in many ways: the 'disciplines' have been a particular way of categorising knowledge. But there is the world of feeling, of capability in approaching practical, technical as well as abstract problems. Students need to be satisfied that they have access to society's highway code, and can read

the map with reasonable accuracy.

Schools need so to organise themselves that *all* students experience a sense of personal achievement, satisfaction and enjoyment; that they are partners in a collaborative, not a fiercely competitive venture. And that they emerge with some form of currency which will be a passport in the market-place, providing evidence of what can be done, not a graded credential.

In an article, 'Growing Up Unequal', Professor Halsey commented on the reluctance of people to consider the relationship between class and education. 'I would insist that too little is made of the continuing class determination of the fate of British children of the 1960s and 1970s — a determination which the policies of the 1980s are designed to reinforce rather than to mitigate.'

In discounting the Orwellian view of 1984 the Prime Minister in her new year message referred to a year of hope and liberty. One is bound to ask, for whom?



Right to Comprehensive Education (RiCE)

RiCE is organising a conference in London on

21 June 1984

at the

London University Institute of Education

Bedford Way, London WC1

The organiser, Maurice Plaskow writes: The intention is that the day should review the first year of YTS and TVEI, with contributions from people who have been involved in both schemes. We do not start out to knock either initiative; rather to inform and discuss. We hope to have speakers from schools, colleges and industry, and indeed some students.

Fee for the day: £16.00 (including lunch).

Further details from: Charlotte Gibbons, 4 Hammersmith Terrace, London W6 9TS.

Comprehensive Primary Education

A.V. Kelly

Vic Kelly, who writes here on the primary curriculum, is Dean of the School of Education at Goldsmith's College. Earlier he worked as a Housemaster at one of London's first comprehensive schools. His publications include *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice* and two books on the primary curriculum produced jointly with a colleague, Geva Blenkin, *The Primary Curriculum* and *The Primary Curriculum in Action*.

It is a depressing thought, although one worth pondering on, that forty years after the creation of the first comprehensive secondary schools in this country, and almost twenty years after the formal establishment of comprehensive secondary education, we are still as far as ever from developing a clear concept of what might constitute a comprehensive curriculum. The curricula to be found in most comprehensive schools are little different from those which would be found in the tripartite or bipartite elements of a selective system, and they continue to reflect in very large measure the very divisiveness that comprehensivisation was designed to overcome. The introduction of mixed-ability grouping, seen by many as a corollary of (and perhaps even a logical entailment from) the idea of the common school has also failed to lead to the kind of fundamental rethinking of curricular issues many of us suggested this necessitated, so that again that form of grouping has given way to broad banding and even to much tighter forms of streaming, especially in the upper school, with the resultant divisive implications for and repercussions on the curriculum. Even those deliberate attempts to extend and modify curricular provision in this sector, such as the introduction of courses in Social Education and in Integrated Studies, following the publication of the Newsom Report and ROSLA, experiments with such things as 'Black Studies' and, more recently, the advent of courses in areas like 'Life Skills' have had the opposite effect to that intended, since both in their content and in the range of their availability they have increased and aggravated rather than relieved or mollified that very divisiveness they were designed to overcome.

Clearly, there are many reasons for this and it would be easy to oversimplify what is a vastly complex scene. However, it is possible to identify two general and interrelated features of the curriculum of the secondary school which may be seen as of central relevance here. The first of these is those external constraints to which it might be claimed secondary schools are particularly exposed. The second is the consequent emphasis which continues to be placed on curriculum as subject-content or curriculum as product. For there are two major aspects of the external constraints on schools. First the demands and expectations of schools and teachers which they generate are predicated on a highly simplistic concept of education, a concept which is essentially that of those viewing education from the outside and which is thus concerned far more with what education is seen to be *for* than with what it *is*. Secondly, and

consequently, these demands and expectations are expressed in terms of subjects and products, bodies of knowledge or 'basic skills' and learning outcomes, the instrumental aspects of schooling rather than the intrinsic, the vocational rather than the educational.

The important points to note, then, are, first, that there is a conflict here, between those educational ideals which might lead to the emergence of a truly comprehensive curriculum and extend pressures of a political and economic kind, and, secondly, that it is, therefore, this conflict which constitutes a major reason for the continued divisiveness of the secondary curriculum. For, so long as we view the curriculum in terms of subjects or in terms of extrinsic objectives, we will find ourselves having to make allowances for the fact that pupils' abilities in relation to those subjects or those objectives will vary, and that the only adequate curricular provision we can make in this context is one which is not merely differentiated but is also divisive. It is only when we begin the task of defining curriculum in terms of those processes and forms of development which appear to constitute what it means to be educated that we find that the fundamental principles of our curriculum planning can be the same for all pupils. The subjects they study may be different, but the reasons for studying them will be essentially (and the word is intended with its full force) the same.

This conflict is, of course, most obvious at those points where vocational pressures are most clearly felt, whether it be through the increasing influence of the Department of Industry on curriculum construction, through MSC and TVEI courses, and the consequent 'back-lash' effects on the curriculum generally, or through the more traditional pressures of the public examination system. These, however, are merely the most obvious manifestations of something which is far more pervasive and far-reaching in its effects than is often appreciated.

Nowhere has this conflict been better illustrated, nor its likely outcome more clearly foreshadowed, than in the results of the recent experimental attempt to establish an 'entitlement curriculum' in five willing and co-operative local authority areas — Cheshire, Hampshire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and Wigan (DES 1983). For this was an attempt to establish a curriculum based on the notion of equality of entitlement to what may be regarded as worthwhile educational experiences and was thus fundamentally a process-based curriculum, designed to offer all pupils in the 11-16 age-range experience in all the areas regarded

as constituting every pupil's minimum right to a balanced education — the eight 'areas of experience' covered by the 'eight adjectives' of *Curriculum 11-16* (DES 1977). It was thus an example of process-based curriculum planning. However, in spite of the support of HMI and of the local education authorities concerned, this curriculum was slowly ousted in favour of a curricular provision more clearly tailored to the demands of external examinations, of parents and of employers. The results of this experiment, then, give strong support to the claim that it is the presence of powerful external constraints which have hindered the development of the kind of process-based curriculum I am suggesting is the only route to the emergence of a truly comprehensive curriculum.

It has been claimed that the notion of a process-based curriculum is far more advanced than this in the primary sector (Blenkin & Kelly 1981) and colleagues from that sector might be inclined to look with some scorn on this lack of development in the secondary school. After all, did not many of them ask in the early days of comprehensive secondary schools what all the fuss was about. 'Primary schools have been comprehensive from the beginning.' And might they not have expected their secondary colleagues long before this to have been looking to their curricular planning and provision in order to seek for some clues as to what a comprehensive curriculum might look like.

Recent evidence, however, has called into question the claim that primary education has developed along distinctive lines, (DES 1978; Galton, Simon & Croll 1980; Galton & Simon 1980). It has suggested that there is a major gap between the rhetoric and the reality. It has revealed that the 'elementary' and even the 'preparatory' traditions (Blyth 1965) have influenced the development of the primary curriculum to a much greater extent than one might have believed or expected and far more obviously than the 'developmental' or 'progressive' philosophy hallowed by the Plowden Report (CACE 1967) and even by the earlier report of the Hadow Committee (Board of Education 1931).

What this suggests, therefore, is that there is an important and serious tension within the primary curriculum too, not merely between rhetoric and reality — that is too simplistic a view — but between different views of curriculum. Those different views certainly manifest themselves in the approaches adopted by different schools and even by different teachers, but perhaps their most serious manifestation is again in the conflict often to be found between what some teachers feel they ought to be doing and what they see as possible, or even permissible, within the constraints of the context in which they are working. As I have just suggested, it is oversimplistic to see this as a tension between rhetoric and reality, since that implies the conflict is only imaginary, concerned with what teachers *say* they believe in (or have been trained to say by and to the tutors who have trained them). More often in fact the tension is between what teachers genuinely *believe* they ought to be doing and what they feel they can do. 'It's not that we don't accept these ideals. We do. It's just that parents, governors, advisers, inspectors, colleagues in the secondary schools have other expectations of us.'

For it is quite clear that primary teachers on the whole have a substantial commitment to a view of education

that goes some way beyond a listing of subjects or subject syllabuses; that the prevalence of the 'class-teacher' system forces on them a view of the curriculum as a unity and of the importance of 'whole' or 'total' curriculum planning; that in turn this leads to an awareness of the importance of processes and forms of development in such planning; and that also this encourages the kind of curricular provision which attempts to avoid all forms of divisiveness. It is equally clear, however, that the external pressures are of a contrary kind — pressures (such as those implicit in recent developments in teacher education) for increased subject specialisation or at least an increased concentration on subject content; pressures for the inclusion of certain socially and economically useful subjects such as science and technology; pressures for increased concentration on the teaching of 'basic skills' (whatever the are); pressures to evaluate their work in terms of outcomes, products, aims and objectives attained, as expressed in checklists in mathematics, language and so on. What is more, it is worth noting that many of these pressures originate within the profession rather than outside, from HMI, local authority advisers, researchers and even teacher colleagues in the secondary schools (Kelly 1981).

This suggests, then, that it is not only in secondary schools that the force of external pressures is felt and resultant tensions created. It means that those of us who have claimed that the disappearance of the constraints of the 11+ provided the primary schools with freedom and scope to develop the curriculum according to carefully thought-out educational principles, and envied them for this opportunity, were wrong. The 11+ was merely an overt manifestation of a form of external control which has continued in a rather more insidious form since its abolition. A decade ago primary teachers regarded internal factors as the major constraints on their work (Taylor *et al.*, 1974). The build-up of overt pressure for increased external control of schools since that time cannot but have the same effect of shifting that emphasis.

Thus at all levels of compulsory schooling it seems we can see the same conflict between educational ideals — whatever form they take — and external pressures of a political and/or economic kind. Nor is it difficult to identify the main features and characteristics of this tension (though the terminology we use to describe it might bear a good deal of closer analysis) — tensions between liberal and vocational demands, the Humanities and technology, intrinsic and instrumental approaches, processes and products, the entitlement and rights of the individual and the needs of society, human values and technological demands. One could go on coining contrasting pairs of terms to point up various aspects of this conflict but they all describe what is fundamentally the same kind of tension.

However, it is worth returning for a moment to that experiment with the 'entitlement' curriculum. For what is perhaps even more interesting about this experiment is that there are other important factors which help to explain its failure. These include the unwillingness of the secondary teachers involved to adapt their work to the changed demands, their failure to marry up the HMI's 'areas of experience' with traditional school subjects and their inability to find time to tackle the crucial questions this development faced them with. The

moral I draw from this is that it is too easy an answer to blame outside pressures for the inadequacies of much of our curricular offerings. External initiatives are easy to go along with because someone else makes the fundamental decisions. It is this rather than the outside pressures themselves which results in teachers too often working in ways they truly regard as unsatisfactory. How often has one heard secondary teachers blaming the external examination system for their inability to do what they feel would be educationally desirable? And how often has one felt this to be merely an excuse for professional inactivity.

The problem, however, is that if the education profession does not face these issues, they will be resolved in only one way and that is a way which will see the end of many of the educational ideals which I believe most teachers share and even many of those human values of which education must be a prime custodian. The tension I have tried to describe, like most forms of tension, is not to be resolved in one way or the other. That kind of solution — as with your humble elastic band — often has disastrous consequences. Resolution implies some kind of accommodation between the two, a recognition of the importance of both and a determination to work at a solution that does violence to neither.

The trouble is that while the utilitarian end of this spectrum or side of this polarity is relatively well defined, the other end, the 'educational', is inevitably less clearly so. At least in part the problem at primary level has been the failure to articulate the fundamental principles advocated or, where those principles have been articulated clearly, as in the Plowden Report (CACE 1967), the failure to produce a substantial theoretical justification for them. It is also the case that it is easier to provide statements of what one is doing — especially for the benefit of outsiders — in the terminology and the conceptual framework of the 'other side'. Thus, for example, no matter how committed one might be to the idea of curricular unity, it is very difficult not to employ the notion of 'subjects', or at least of 'areas of experience', when describing, or even when planning and evaluating one's curriculum. Yet, if a resolution is to be achieved, some attempt must be made to clarify what is entailed here.

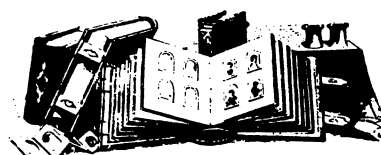
And this is where I return to the primary curriculum. For there is an approach to education to be seen there which places the prime emphasis not on the economic needs of society nor on the academic demands of subjects or bodies of knowledge, but on the development of the individual human beings who are to be educated. Indeed, there is a flexibility of attitude to subject-content of a kind which would not present to most primary teachers the difficulties experienced by the secondary teachers concerned in planning a curriculum along the lines proposed by the 'eight areas of experience' of *Curriculum 11-16* (DES 1977), a form of curriculum most primary schools would claim in any case to have been offering for some time. There is thus a sound basis from which a clear model of curriculum might be framed to reflect those educational principles I have made constant reference to. There is further a good deal of experience — albeit only in some schools and among some teachers — of how to translate this approach into practice of how to implement such a model of curriculum (Blenkin & Kelly 1983). There is

also, I believe, a wide commitment amongst primary teachers to that approach, even though they may lack the opportunity — and even sometimes the skills — to implement it. It must be added too that this is an approach which, unlike most, is not ambivalent in relation to the dichotomies posed above, and is thus a likely source of that resolution of those dichotomies I am suggesting we urgently need. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, this is not an approach which has ever been prepared to accept that divisive solution which resolves these dichotomies by placing pupils, whether according to ability, social class, race or sex, on one side or the other of the 'divide'.

There are, then, the seeds of a comprehensive curriculum to be found in certain aspects of the development of the primary curriculum. It is perhaps time we looked at them very carefully. Properly tended, they may produce the beanstalk we need to take us to the heights of a proper education for all.

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The Dream and the Reality

Maurice Holt

Maurice Holt replies to the critique, published in the last issue of *FORUM*, of his article 'Vocationalism: the new threat to universal education', published in our Summer 1983 issue (Vol 25 No 3).

It's good news that my attack on the new vocationalists has goaded Mr Lea, the director of the Birmingham TVEI unit, into a defence of his position. We can now see on what a slender base of rhetoric and assertion the costly and divisive TVEI structure rests. For in general, the MSC prefers either to ignore critics or confuse them by turning the TVEI into a moving target. Officially and properly, it remains every bit as technical and vocational as its title indicates: but when it suits them, the TVEI defenders are adept at a kind of soft shoe shuffle, ready to assure us that it's all really just another name for curriculum development, that TVEI schools are free to do more or less what they like with their new-found bounty, and that the last thing the MSC would dream of doing is dividing the curriculum or threatening good old general education. This 'now you see it, now you don't' act will doubtless fool some of the people, some of the time. We are in Mr Lea's debt for his honest attempt to bring the whole sorry scheme of things into sharper focus, and so expose to public view the model of education which lies behind it.

It turns out to be mere chimera. On the one hand, the TVEI will provide 'a strong bridge between school and work'. If this means anything, it confirms that the scheme is all about employability: about training youngsters for non-existent jobs. For the MSC has abandoned its original concern with job creation, and now concentrates on the easier, yet wholly myopic, task of preparing our children for tomorrow's world by giving them the watered-down skills of yesterday.

Which brings us to Mr Lea's other justification: 'we are recognising the widespread application and transferability of skills'. Ah, how potent, how very wonderful is the rhetoric of 'skills'! And, most especially, of 'transferable skills'. 'Standards' has now given way to 'skills' in the politician's vocabulary of weasel words. Even curriculum developers have succumbed: a few references to 'personal skills' and all is assumed to be luminously clear.

The trouble is that as soon as one stops to think what is meant by 'transferable skills', one realises they only exist at a low level. Reading, lifting, moving are certainly transferable skills: but high level skills like those of observation, communication and problem solving are all dependent on context. Being able to spell, for example, depends on the skill of observation. So also does the ability to write novels about people and their world. Yet many novelists — Evelyn Waugh for one — can't spell. Even within the same field of literary competence, the skill of observation is not transferable.

The risks of basing a curriculum on this particular non-starter are considerable. As Michael Golby¹ has put it: 'If we isolate skills and teach them as detached performances however successfully, we shall leave the student with no means of employing them in appropriate situations'.

These, then, are the implicit models of education on which TVEI thinking is based: and thoroughly inadequate they are. But two other strands in Mr Lea's argument also give cause for concern. First, there is his admission that 'if we are to regard motivation as crucial to achievement . . . then we are recognising the need for a vocational focus'. Are we? Is a vocational focus the only way to motivate pupils? Evidently the TVEI folk think so, which gives the lie to the suggestion that fine-sounding activities like 'experimental learning' are their stock in trade. Happily, there are plenty of teachers who believe that education, as Dewey put it, has no end but itself. And it's worth remembering that Dewey — who is sometimes, quite wrongly, invoked as a supporter of vocational education — believed rather in 'emancipation from local and temporary incidents of experience, and the opening of intellectual vistas unobscured by the accidents of personal habits and predilections'.²

Second, Mr Lea asks, 'What is so sacred and significant about the age of 16?', and thus hopes to justify vocational education from 14. But we could turn his argument round, and suggest that instead of beginning a vocational programme at 16, it should be delayed until 18. This, after all, is what happens in Norway, where 70 per cent of the 17-plus curriculum offered in its tertiary colleges is common to all students, and not based (as is the FEU's core in 'A Basis for Choice') on a list of behaviourist objectives. Mr Lea's question, however, has sinister implications when coupled with Sir Keith Joseph's insistence that 'what is taught needs to be more obviously applicable to the real world . . . One very direct example of this approach has been the TVEI but the approach needs also to colour the primary curriculum'.³ Why not start the TVEI at age 8, Mr Lea, and make a good vocational job of it?

The divisive nature of all this is clear from the news that the City and Guilds Institute and the Business and Technical Education Council are planning, with government support, a new series of vocational examinations defining 'a national curriculum which is complementary to the academic route'.⁴ The truth about the TVEI is that it will secure the rebirth of the secondary modern school. But Mr Lea fails to see this,

mesmerised as he is by the need to moderate 'the harsh distinction between education and training'. He should read the speeches of his mentor, the chairman of the MSC, more carefully, for Mr David Young nurtures no such illusions: 'Training should not be confused with education. Training is about work-related skills and is intimately connected with employment'.⁵ Quite so.

The splendid irony of Mr Lea's article is that, while picturing me as someone peddling an 'idealistic design' from 'the ivory tower', he assures us that his TVEI curriculum will give pupils 'confidence and perspective . . . the eight areas of learning experience . . . integration of education . . . and employment', to say nothing of his transferable skills. All this is a dream. My proposals are, in fact, based upon the reality of a common curriculum in a growing number of comprehensive schools.⁶ Moreover, such a curriculum can be achieved within the depressed levels of funding most schools have to accept. For the majority of teachers, eking out a stressful existence with too few textbooks and diminishing resources, the spectacle of the TVEI experimenters (to use Sir Keith Joseph's word) busily reinstating tripartism on four times the funding in classes of fifteen or less is not a pretty sight. Far from benefiting state education, the TVEI will succeed only in undermining it.

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We deeply regret that rising costs have forced us to increase our subscription. From the September number this year (Volume 27, Number 1) the annual subscription will be £4.00 (post free); individual copies will be £1.35.

Brian Jackson: an appreciation

Brian Simon

Brian Jackson died suddenly at the age of 50 last summer, taking part in a 'fun run' to raise money for the National Children's Centre in Huddersfield. This appreciation recalls the impact of his early work, now 20 years ago.

In any assessment of the movement to comprehensive education the contribution of Brian Jackson must be rated high. **Education and the Working Class**, published in 1962 and immediately reprinted, was a brilliant and pioneering book co-authored with Dennis Marsden. Though overtly a study of grammar schools and of the real meaning of the process of social mobility, this book was immensely popular and very widely read, perhaps (as I remember) especially among students and young teachers, helping to set the agenda for discussions in the 60s. Two years later (1964) there followed another pioneering study which arose directly from the first: **Streaming: an education system in miniature**, of which Brian was the sole author. The copy Brian sent me on publication, inscribed 'a contribution to a common cause', referred to **FORUM's** parallel campaign for the abolition of streaming involving the submission of both written and oral evidence to the Plowden Committee.¹

Education and the Working Class was divided into two parts. The first, informed by anthropological techniques, reported the survey. This brought vividly to life the confusions progressively suffered by the parents of the grammar school sample — of 88 working class boys and girls — in 'Marburton', using a great deal of the most telling direct speech from oral interviews and so re-creating the dilemmas and human issues arising as the parents of the 'chosen few' attempted to guide their children through an alien, and actively alienating, world. The children's own experiences are also brought vividly to life using the same technique, as they made their way through the 'A' streams of the primary schools, across the 11 plus divide, into the grammar school, and so on, in most cases, to Training Colleges (mostly girls) and universities. The final chapter describes them as they were, now aged between 25 and 32, over half of them teachers (mostly in grammar schools). One third of the sample had been scarred, more or less severely, by the process, but most had developed into 'stable, often rigidly orthodox citizens, who wish to preserve a hierarchical society and all its institutions as they now stand' (p.192).

Part 2, entitled 'Some Notes on Education and the Working Class', is an extended essay based on the experience of the survey. Both this and Part 1 are,

however, really about the clash of cultures embodied in the confrontation between the working class of 'Marburton' (a north country town) and the values, attitudes and ethos embodied in the 'closed' system of grammar schools. It is this that is made abundantly clear — the human waste and stunting engendered by the existing system. This is the chief message of the book.

'The educational system we need', the authors write in conclusion, 'is one which accepts and develops the best qualities of working-class living, and brings these to meet our central culture. Such a system must partly be *grown* out of common living, not merely imposed on it. But before this can begin, we must put completely aside any early attempts to select and reject and rear an elite'. The first practical step 'is to abandon selection at 11, and accept the comprehensive principle'.

The book was published just as the swing to comprehensive education was beginning to accelerate — with a Tory government (but Boyle as Secretary of State), most of the urban authorities were now under Labour leadership and moving in this direction. **Education and the Working Class**, while containing no blueprint and little discussion of the comprehensive school (that was not its function) helped to create the atmosphere that a change was needed — that to go on in the old way was insupportable. The reality of the grammar school as an agent of social mobility was revealed in a new way. This warm and in many ways generous book was, in fact, an indictment of a system, and seen as such.

It is now difficult to realise that, just as today it is almost impossible to find a classically streamed primary (or junior) school, so, 20 years ago, the exact opposite was the case. In his study of streaming, Brian found that 96 per cent of his random sample of all schools in the country large enough to stream in fact streamed their pupils by the age of ten (most did so earlier). The atmosphere of the time (as I well remember) is encapsulated in a remark by the head of a school in Lincoln. 'Not to stream in a large junior school would be the height of professional irresponsibility' (p.45). Here again there is no preaching — nothing dogmatic or doctrinaire. The facts are allowed to speak for themselves — for instance, those concerning social class and date of birth on which Brian produced clear and precise evidence covering both the whole country (the sample schools) and the individual schools specifically studied. The views of teachers and parents are reflected and analysed; a 'good' streamed school precisely and sympathetically described (Honey Bell); a group of ten streamed and ten unstreamed schools studied, including comparisons of educational progress in each. Once again the research design is not only appropriate but original; the writing easy, sensible, thoroughly involved, sympathetic to both teachers and children.

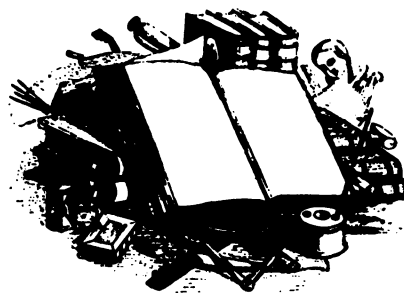
Only in the epilogue, 'Children of Gold', Brian shows his hand. 'Before 1939', he writes, 'early selection made some sense . . . Today it is absurd. It limits us, occupying our attention with the tiny details that divide and label us — drawing energies away from the colossal opportunities for human development that our wealth and knowledge promise'. (p.141). Our next step 'is to end all early selection'. Brian warns, however, that even if streaming disappears, 'the problems touched on here will not vanish' since 'streaming goes deep' and is

embedded in many practices and attitudes. The struggle will not be over.

Brian's genius, his originality and warmth, the sharpness of his intellect, his human sympathy, will be greatly missed. That he influenced many people in his too short life is clear for all to see. The swing to comprehensive education, and against streaming in the primary school owes a great deal to his pioneering work of 20 years ago.

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Independence of Mind, Academic Sixth Form Study and the Library

Jean Rudduck and David Hopkins

This article is based on the Library Access and Sixth Form Studies project, which was funded by the British Library Research and Development Department.¹ The project was directed by Lawrence Stenhouse and after his death, in September 1982, Jean Rudduck and David Hopkins took major responsibility for writing the project report² which is to be published by the British Library. Jean Rudduck has recently been appointed Professor of Education at Sheffield University.

The project was designed as a multi-site case study programme: it involved teachers, students and librarians in 24 institutions covering a range of sixth form settings (14 comprehensive schools, 2 sixth form colleges, 3 public boarding schools, 3 independent day schools, 1 further education college and 1 tertiary college). The selection took account of the need to have access to different environmental and social settings and different levels of library provision. The main method of data gathering was interview and interviews were conducted with 200 sixth form students; 200 sixth form teachers; 60 heads, principals or teachers with special sixth form responsibility; and 50 librarians.³

One of the main concerns of the project was what the library represents to the academic student who pursues A level (and sometimes S level) courses in a context where 'independence' is part of the traditional rhetoric of advanced study. Lawrence Stenhouse described the project in this way:

It seems to me to be about the transition of pupils to studentship . . . moves from dependence on instruction to a capacity for independent study — that kind of move depends on a change in the epistemology of the learner . . . there must be a point, as it were a sort of renaissance, when the person discovers something of the problematic nature of knowledge. Most people don't do that lower down in the school . . . in that transition I feel that the posture of librarians and teachers towards knowledge is important. (Discussion with project team, 1979)

Independence of mind implies confronting the difficulties of epistemology, for there is no case for independence unless the ideal of freedom of thought can be accepted, and this in turn implies a conviction that knowledge is constructed by thought rather than revealed by authority: knowledge is more than what lies in the mind of the teacher or between the covers of the given textbook. In the context of the sixth form it is the library that allows students to see that knowledge is socially constructed, is problematic and is provisional.

The project data suggest that independence of mind is not an ideal that is consistently pursued by either A level teachers or by A level students in the majority of schools which took part in the project. To some extent the

image of what contributes to a safe pass at A level is responsible for the student's continuing dependence on the teacher and the textbook, and teachers, for their part, sometimes consciously perpetuate a pattern of only slightly modified dependence in the interests of their students' success in the examination. Indeed, some A level teachers state the problem starkly: they do not see A level courses as necessarily embodying opportunities for real intellectual exploration:

I think the problem is you have to balance whether you want results and feed them information, or whether you want them to develop their own ideas, through which they tend to fail the exam because they don't do the work. (b.B)⁴

Indeed, many teachers acknowledge that they are trapped by a responsibility to meet the needs of their customers, the students:

I feel that our pupils expect . . . that tradition of being spoonfed. We will give them notes. We will give them essay plans. We will tell them exactly which pages to read, and they don't seem to have the initiative themselves. Many of them moan away. They complain if they are told to go and find out about something: they expect to be told where and how. It's very difficult to abandon that system when you know it works and pupils will get through their A levels. And they know that that's the system that got the last lot through their A levels, so they are very loath to lose that system. (4.B)

Of course not all students are prepared to accept the monotony of instructional teaching for another two years but those who express their restlessness are in a minority:

The teacher tends to give us printed sheets and then I go mad. I think it is awful. It's just boring going through the printed sheets all the time. I really get bored, and so he said he was going to print some more. I said: "Oh no, let's do notes, dictation if nothing else, you know" — but he still gave us some printed sheets. It drags on the lesson when you do that . . . you tend to switch off, don't you, when you've just got a printed sheet? (15.A)

So, for many, being in the sixth form is no more than being let loose on a slightly longer lead!

The S level students seem to fare better: the

examination is itself seen as encouraging greater independence of mind and students who undertake preparation for both A level and S level simultaneously are aware of a qualitative difference. One student, for example, suggests that in S level he is able to study *history* while at A level he is studying how to pass an exam (26.A). Another interviewee claims that the S level students 'are more the scholars' and one of her classmates adds that at S level 'the emphasis is on interpretation and intelligence, rather than rote learning, whereas with the A level you have to present the answer *they* want. There is only one correct answer and nothing else will do.' (19.A). Some teachers confirm this distinction between A level and S level quite openly. For example:

Let's take independence of thought first. I don't expect a great deal of that in the lower sixth. I don't expect it in the average candidate in the upper sixth. I expect it from the people who will go on to read history at university and those who are my scholarship candidates — and some of them develop this to a surprising degree. I have two or three scholarship people at present who are excellent and I would say are working now at undergraduate level, but that doesn't happen to the majority of candidates. So that's independent thought! (3.B)

What is interesting here is that the teacher seems to see independence of thought as an innate capacity rather than an opportunity which the system provides and which many more students than those encouraged to move into S level work could take advantage of.

What does all this mean for the use of the library at A level? Some librarians who were interviewed deplored the fact that at A level students can get through by 'concentrating' — that is, by not reading outside the material that they receive from, or are directed to, by the teacher (2.C). The pedagogy adopted by many A level teachers does not, in their view, lend itself to genuinely exploratory work:

I think generally . . . sixth formers, their background reading and their sort of essential reading is more or less laid out for them. (10.C)

I think the majority are coming in and looking it up and using material which they have been *told* to look up. . . . They haven't been given a big question and told 'use the library to find out the answer.' They have been told perhaps: 'go to such and such a shelf, take such and such a book, read pages 100 to 150 and answer the questions'. (3.C)

On the whole, students confirm this view of pedagogy at A level — and their comments are evidence of the fact that they rarely encounter the diversity of knowledge that a library represents:

I don't use the library as much as I should because basically the books we're given for our set courses . . . are good enough. (7.A)

You are more or less given set books to work from. If you wanted to you could go to the library but it is not really worth it. (1.A)

If we are told to look at something in the library, we do. (4.A)

Where students do read outside the set texts, the motives are often narrowly instrumental: reading round is about getting better grades, not about the nature of knowledge. There is little evidence of what Lawrence Stenhouse called 'a change in the epistemology of learning'. Students go beyond what is given because

they know that the examiner is likely to respond well to references outside the text and to the injection of a few touches of authenticity and individuality in the common data provided by the lesson notes:

There are little snippets of things that they are not going to know that you can add on to a question. (10.A.)

You know — plump the essay out a bit and put a few extra facts in — and sort of impress them. (11.A)

I plan my essay from my own notes first and then embroider it with facts from books, different quotations, that kind of thing. (1.A)

Students see the advantage of going to books, but what do they take from them? As we can see, this aspiration is often modest — just a 'few' more facts or points! The purpose of reading round, for many students, is limited to the adornment of a basic argument not to its advancement.

One deterrent to using the diversity of the library resources is students' lack of confidence in handling divergence of viewpoint. O level work has not prepared them for this step and many founder in the face of conflicting evidence, whether the opinions are expressed in classroom discussion or in books:

I mean, there is two people there who have supposedly been paid an awful lot of money for writing books on it, and they have two entirely different opinions — I mean, what am I supposed to think? (7.A)

Intellectual sanity is more sustainable if students avoid divergence and put their trust in the teacher's view (if the teacher, as many do, expresses a personal opinion):

For the most part I write down what Mr (name) thinks. He is the teacher. He knows what he is talking about. (7.A)

If you find something in a book which doesn't say what the teacher tells you, then on the whole you tend to think . . . that the teacher is right and that the book's wrong — which is bad in a way, but you do it. (19.A)

Of course, there are practical constraints as well as attitudinal constraints on the development of a proper use of the intellectual resources of the library, whether for borrowing books from or consulting books in: often there are insufficient copies of books: often there is too long a borrowing period and consequently a slow circulation of important books; often the library is overcrowded and in a few schools access is restricted to lower sixth pupils because of the shortage of space. Moreover, many students complain that the pressure from the unrelenting series of set essays leaves little time for reading more than the bare minimum.

So, what place has the library in the working lives of A level students? For some it is 'just a sort of refuge' (11.A) or 'haven' (12.A), 'a base camp' or 'second home' (7.A), 'a bit of a punishment' (7.A). Few students talk about the library as a collection of books and as a representation of knowledge. Indeed, for most of those interviewed it was 'a place to work' — a place where the usual thing was to sit down and take one's books *out* rather than a place where you sat down and thought and then got books *down*.

In a recent project located in primary schools, we were impressed by the enthusiasm with which 10-year old pupils talked about books and the library in relation to their personal projects and we wrote this in our report:⁵

The appeal of the topics lay in the fact that being idiosyncratic, and therefore not resourced through the provision of a few common texts provided by the teacher, they afforded the opportunity for what one of the girls called 'deep research' — going to the libraries and 'finding books I didn't know about'. This notion of independent enquiry seemed to appeal to nearly all the children. As one boy remarked, echoing the girl's interest in 'deep research': 'I'd like all the topics to be personal topics 'cos I'd rather work by myself'.

How different is the attitude of the younger pupils from that of the exam-oriented A level students — an observation that led us to call one section of the library project report 'Whatever happened on the way to the sixth form?'

But librarians do not — and should not — give up hope of a change of attitude:

I think the library has a role to play. I think it is not utilised enough — it doesn't fulfil that role but it could. It could be very instrumental in making that transition from being taught to learning on one's own. . . I see it theoretically as probably one of the best . . . means by which they can be persuaded into independent learning. (12.C)

While it is clearly important for sixth formers to know what is on the library shelves and how to locate and retrieve material that would be useful to them, the problem of library use, as Lawrence Stenhouse warned, 'goes deeper than learning skills at sixth form level and begins to involve a student's consciousness of his relationship to knowledge' (letter April, 1979). Study skills are important but they will not necessarily move students towards a sense of the problematic nature of knowledge.

Lawrence Stenhouse wrote in the project proposal:

Library access and use is a main defence against insularity. Through the library we can apprehend something of the nature of the world of knowledge . . . access to this knowledge on terms that can confer the power to use it is a central aim of the academic sixth form.

We were surprised to find out how far removed the rhetoric of independent study is from the realities of sixth form teaching and learning. The potential of the library for helping students to make the transition from being taught to learning is under-exploited. Two things are urgently needed: a reassessment of present pedagogies, and a reassessment of the educational significance of the library. Together they could lay the foundations for a reconceptualisation of the nature of knowledge.

Notes and References

1. The project was designed by Lawrence Stenhouse, Director of the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) at the University of East Anglia and Colin Harris, Director of the Centre for Research in User Studies (CRUS) at the University of Sheffield. The project was based at CARE and coordinated by Beverley Labbett. Field workers from the following institutions took part: CARE; CRUS; Keswick Hall College; Crewe and Alsager College. There were also some free-lance field workers. The project ran from 1979 to 1982.
2. The report, **The Sixth Form and Libraries: Problems of Access to Knowledge**, by Jean Rudduck and David

Hopkins, is to be published by the British Library.

3. The librarians varied in their background and training: some were professional chartered librarians in charge of the school or college library while others, although referred to as 'librarians', were teachers without professional training in librarianship who had been asked to take some responsibility for the library — in most cases while continuing with some teaching. There were also some teacher librarians who had some training in librarianship but who were officially employed as teachers within the school.
4. 6.B: '6' indicates that the quotation is from institution six (a key is given in the project report and identifies types of institution, number of pupils, size of library etc.). 'B' indicates that the speaker is teacher; 'A', see later, indicates that the speaker is a student, and 'C' indicates that the speaker is a librarian.
5. Nick May and Jean Rudduck, **Sex-Stereotyping and the Early Years of Schooling**, School of Education Publications, University of East Anglia, 1983.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the British Library.

Some new journals

Several new journals have been launched recently, which is surely an encouraging sign and seems to indicate that there is life in the system in spite of (or perhaps because of) the current gloom. FORUM readers may well be interested in the journal **Childright** which was launched last year. This describes itself as 'A bulletin of law and policy affecting children and young people in England and Wales'. It is published monthly by the Children's Legal Centre. Send a subscription of £15.00 to:

Children's Legal Centre
20 Compton Terrace
London N1 2UN

The new **Arts Express** is launched as a new national monthly magazine for all the arts and art education. It is edited by Ken Robinson and Jonathan Croall. A subscription for the first 12 issues costs only £7.80. Send crossed cheque payable to:

Arts Express (Publishing) Ltd,
66 St John's Road
London SW11

Contemporary Issues in Geography and Education, the journal of the Association for Curriculum Development in Geography, takes a radical stance. Vol.1 No.1 appeared in autumn, 1983. Co-editors: Ian Cook and Dawn Gill. Subscription £5.00 a year (three issues) from:

Frances Slater
Geography Department, Institute of Education, 20
Bedford Way, London WC1.

Improving the Quality of Teaching Through Action-Research

John Elliott

Tutor in Curriculum studies at the Cambridge Institute of Education, John Elliott writes here on the Schools Council 'Teacher-pupil Interaction and the Quality of Learning' Project (TIQL)

The HMI survey of secondary schools (1979) appeared to me, some four years ago, to be a very much neglected document. It stimulated little in-depth discussion in the media or in schools within my area. Yet the report contained a penetrating critique of teaching and learning processes in secondary school classrooms. It cited massive evidence that teaching methods were almost exclusively orientated towards the acquisition of vast quantities of inert information by pupils for the purpose of being able to recall it when sitting examinations. HMI found little evidence of classroom processes which fostered an understanding of major ideas, claiming teachers had allowed themselves to be pressurised by parents into maximising examination success at the expense of understanding. Moreover, they argued that teaching for understanding could be reconciled with the demands of public examinations. The problem was that teachers had acquiesced in parental expectations about the best ways of preparing pupils for them.

In 1980 I put a proposal to the Schools Council Programme No. 2 outlining a two year action-research project which would involve groups of teachers in schools identifying, diagnosing, and trying to resolve the major problems they faced in teaching for understanding. In particular, teachers would explore the extent to which public examinations at 16+ imposed constraints on such teaching. The sample of schools selected would be skewed in favour of the secondary stage, but include some primary/infant schools in order to compare teaching situations and strategies across the full spectrum of schooling. The proposal was accepted and the project launched in the Spring of 1982.

Teaching as action-research

The term 'action-research' was first coined by Kurt Lewin (1946) to describe a mode of inquiry which has the following characteristics:

- i. It is an activity engaged in by groups or communities with the aim of changing their circumstances in ways which are consistent with a shared conception of human values. As a means of realising 'the common good' — rather than a merely individual good — it strengthens and sustains a sense of community. It is not to be confused with a solitary process of 'self-evaluation' in the light of some individualistic conception of the good.
- ii. It is a reflexive social practice in which there is no

distinction to be drawn between the practice being researched and the process of researching it. Social practices are viewed as 'research acts'; as 'theories-in-action' or 'hypothetical probes' to be reflectively assessed in terms of their potential for realising worthwhile change. For example, from this perspective teaching is not one activity and research into teaching another. Teaching strategies embody practical theories about ways of realising educational values in particular situations, and when they are reflectively implemented constitute a form of action-research. If one views a social practice like teaching as a reflexive activity the division of labour between practitioners and researchers vanishes. Lewin's idea of action-research has its roots in the Aristotelian tradition of a moral or practical science concerned with the realisation of shared human values and ideals.

From a moral science perspective on teaching the educational aim of 'understanding' refers not to a product of learning but to a quality which unfolds in any educationally worthwhile learning process. What is to count as a correct understanding cannot be standardised and operationally defined in measurable terms. Teachers' concepts of understanding shift as they reflect about the concrete strategies they employ to influence the learning process. Through reflexive teaching, teachers not only develop their practical theories of how to realise their educational values, but deepen their understanding of the nature of those values. Reflection about means cannot be separated from reflection about ends within the moral science paradigm.

Lewin mapped out a disciplined process of action-research which has parallels with scientific method in other disciplines. His model specifies a spiral of activities in the following sequence:

1. Clarifying and diagnosing a problem situation for practice.
2. Formulating action-strategies for resolving the problem.
3. Implementing and evaluating the action-strategies.
4. Further clarification and diagnosis of the problem situation (and so into the next spiral of reflection and action).

Whereas the natural and behavioural scientist will begin with a theoretical problem defined by his or her

discipline, the action-researcher begins with a practical one. But there is a sense in which the latter's problem is also a theoretical one. It emerges in the experience of a mismatch between his or her practical theories and the situation confronted. The only difference between the practitioner and the natural or behavioural scientist is that the former's theory is often implicit in his or her practice and not consciously articulated. An important part of the action-research process is therefore the clarification of the problem by making the practitioner's 'theory-in-action' explicit, and showing how the situation in which it operates cannot accommodate it.

The next stage is equivalent to the formulation of scientific hypotheses. A new practical theory is required to change the situation, as it is now understood, in a way which is more consistent with the practitioner's values. Such a theory will specify action-hypotheses ie strategies the practitioner believes are worth testing to see if they work. The third stage of the action-research spiral, the implementation and evaluation of action-strategies, is a form of hypotheses testing. The outcome may suggest the need for further problem clarification and subsequent modification and development of action-hypotheses. And so through spirals of action-research practitioners develop their practical theories by a similar method to that employed by natural and behavioural scientists.

Aims

The project was established with three closely-linked aims in mind:

1. to enable individual teachers to improve the quality of their teaching through co-operative action-research into an area of common concern.
2. to contribute to the institutional development of the schools in which the groups were located.
3. to contribute to the development of a common professional culture ie a common stock of professional insights about teaching and learning processes.

It was one of my main tasks as project director to ensure that the organisation of the project as a whole enabled all of these aims to be realised, and protected their unity by maintaining some kind of balance between them.

Aims 1. and 3. are inextricably linked. Teachers have tended to be isolationist about their classroom practices. The outcome has been the absence of a common stock of professional insights which individuals could draw on as a resource for their own professional development. The lack of a rich stock of self-generated professional knowledge is a constraint on the professional development of individual practitioners.

Aims 1. and 2. are also inextricably linked. If the primary task of schools as social institutions is teaching, then the criterion of institutional development is a general improvement in the quality of teaching provided. Such quality cannot be legislated for; it must stem from the judgements exercised by individual teachers. But the quality of these judgements can be enhanced by institutional structures which facilitate the sharing of experience and ideas in action-research

groups. This is way the institutionalisation of action-research in schools was regarded as an important indicator of the potential of our project for realising the second aim.

In the next section I shall describe and assess the organisational strategies through which we attempted to realise these aims.

Organisational Strategies

In the spring of 1981 groups of teachers in ten schools (7 secondary, 1 middle, 1 primary and 1 infant) embarked on a programme of action-research into problems in teaching for understanding. The groups ranged from pairs to as many as seven teachers in some secondary schools. Each was led by a senior member of staff who was given the dual roles of a) mediating between the group and the rest of the staff, including the management team, and b) co-ordinating the facilitating action-research within the group.

It was the original intention that the co-ordinator should have had previous training and experience in the area of school-based research and evaluation through one of the Cambridge Institute's research-based award bearing INSET courses. Initial approaches to schools were therefore largely determined by the extent to which they had a senior member of staff with the desired training and experience. Another criterion was a shared concern amongst at least some staff, including the headteacher, with the problem area the project had been funded to focus on.

In addition to in-school support provided by the team co-ordinator a team of tutors and visiting scholars at the Cambridge Institute of Education were constituted as research consultants to the school groups. They also had dual roles. The first was to engage in dialogue with teachers about the substantive problems being investigated. In this sense the action-research involved collaborative investigations between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'; although the latter were concerned that any ideas and insights they contributed should be subordinate to their second role as action-research facilitators. Ultimate responsibility for the analysis of practical problems and the development of strategies to overcome them, belonged to the teachers. The facilitating role of 'outsiders' also involved assisting teachers with the selection of techniques for data collection and analysis, in terms of their relevance to the problems being investigated.

Twice termly the teacher groups came together for project meetings, where research reports, written by teachers and previously circulated, were discussed and forward planning decisions about the direction of the project as a whole were settled. David Ebbutt was responsible for the day to day co-ordination of collaborative activities between groups, including convening and chairing the project meetings. He was supported by the project secretary. Over-all responsibility for facilitating the action-research enterprise in schools, in a way which satisfied the purpose for which it had been funded, was mine as Project Director.

- Regular meetings of the team of external consultants were held for the purposes of providing mutual support and giving opportunities for the discussion of any

problems and difficulties consultants experienced in exercising their role as facilitators. The consultants meeting constituted a context for shared reflection about our facilitation practices, and was therefore crucial in sustaining what I have called second-order action-research ie action-research into problems of facilitating action-research by others.

Although, as I have suggested, the consultants collaborated with teachers in the first-order action-research in classrooms, their major action-research task lay in the area of second-order facilitation problems. They were joined in this enterprise by the in-school co-ordinators who also had two roles: namely, as teachers investigating practical classroom problems and as facilitators of colleagues' action-research. In fact one secondary school co-ordinator saw himself entirely in terms of the latter role, and carried out virtually no first-order investigation himself.

Finally, the relevant LEA's were asked to appoint an adviser/inspector to act as a liaison between the project and LEA generally. LEA inspectors were expected to monitor the project on behalf of their authority and to provide the teachers involved with opportunities to talk about their work with colleagues in other schools eg through speaking at, or leading, in-service conferences and courses. The inspectors/advisers were invited to all project and consultants meetings, and some visited teacher groups in their school regularly.

Having described organisation and roles a few observations are worth making at this point. First, in three schools the co-ordinator did not emerge as such. In two schools the co-ordinator departed soon after the project began to a Deputy Headship in another LEA. One of these schools eventually dropped out of the project. The other staggered on with the help of a visiting scholar acting as an external consultant. In the third school the head was the intended co-ordinator but handed the job over to another member of staff and did not take part himself. The project began in the school with a pair of teachers, one of whom left the school early on, leaving the 'co-ordinator' to operate alone. By the end of the project it was quite clear that the most successful groups were those led by co-ordinators who had developed their understanding of action-research approaches prior to the project starting.

Secondly, the success of these co-ordinators was largely due to the fact that their previous experience of action-research enabled them to provide emotional support to less experienced colleagues on a day to day basis which is clearly not possible for external consultants to give. This previous experience generated a certain creative tension in them as senior staff members. On the one hand they were expected in their 'managerial' role within the school to exert an initiating and controlling influence over their subordinates. On the other hand, their experience of action-research enabled them to sympathise with the fears and anxieties teachers have when embarking on the study of their own practices, and with the initial lowering of professional self-esteem which frequently accompanies such study. Since the co-ordinators had been 'through it all before' they were extremely sensitive to the feelings experienced. They saw it as a major part of their role to provide the emotional support necessary for teachers to cope with their feelings in ways which sustained rather than curtailed the action-research enterprise. The co-

ordinators then brought the external consultants in to give help with techniques and methods of data-collection, but freeing them from emotional demands it would be difficult for them to meet. Indeed one 'unlucky' external consultant worked in two schools without an experienced co-ordinator and repeatedly spoke of her feelings of inadequacy in attempting to exercise a counselling role from the position of an outsider.

Thirdly, our original intention was that school groups should meet regularly to co-ordinate their individual plans and develop, through discussion of each other's data, commonly shared insights into problems of teaching for understanding. This did not always happen. Lack of time was frequently cited as the reason. However, in one secondary school the group did meet regularly, and fairly early individual members developed a sense of commitment to the work of the group as a whole. In fact this sense of commitment was so strong that when the co-ordinator (a deputy head) left the school half-way through, the group had little difficulty in sustaining its work under the leadership of a more junior member of staff. The sense of group identity in no way fostered an isolationist stance. This particular team also initiated a link with two other groups from a neighbouring primary and infant school. Their regular joint meetings enabled each team to explore similarities and differences in teaching experience at different stages of education. One of the interesting outcomes of those and the twice-termly project meetings, was the extent to which teachers operating at different age-levels identified similar pedagogical problems and were able to learn from each other.

In some of the other schools the dearth of group meetings, at least in the initial stages, might be susceptible to an alternative explanation from that of the 'time factor'. Some external consultants detected a reluctance on the part of individuals to share their data with each other in an in-school setting. Their immediate colleagues were perceived as more threatening than the external consultant, to whom they were generally willing to provide direct and indirect access to classroom data. Each consultant worked according to an ethical code which gave teachers control over the release of information about their classrooms to other teachers, both within and outside their school. The 'threat' from colleagues was based on a fear concerning the kinds of judgements they would make about the individual's teaching when given access to evidence. The fear was not simply about eliciting negative judgements, but about the longer term influences of those judgements on the attitudes displayed towards them in ongoing working relationships within their school.

The sharing of information about classroom practice appears to be inconsistent with an institutional climate in which the name of the game is to appear to have no problems in the teaching situation, and to treat those who confess to them as 'problem teachers'. The sharing of data requires an alternative climate in which individuals can openly identify with each other's classroom concerns and thus provide the foundations of mutual trust and support.

The twice termly project meetings proved initially to provide a better context for the development of this climate. These were perceived by some individuals as a

less threatening context in which to share accounts of classroom situations. Teachers from different schools have less 'reason' to hide their experiences from each other, and can therefore be more open about admitting they shared similar concerns. Given this more sympathetic context individuals were more prepared to risk sharing data, even when their school colleagues were present. The sympathetic attitude of the wider group was often sufficient to elicit greater openness and sympathy from an individual's school colleagues than would have been apparent at an in-school meeting.

The general project meetings appeared to have a considerable influence on the dynamics of relationships within the school teams. There was some evidence of the development of a group identity as a result of these meetings. This did not always express itself in terms of a greater frequency of formal team meetings. But individuals began to claim they were having more informal discussion with others in their groups about the concerns they were researching into. The development of a stronger group identity through the general project meetings also expressed itself towards the end of the 2 year period in the desire to communicate the insights gained to school staff as a whole. Some teams made presentations at specially convened staff meetings. In one school a half-day staff conference was convened. In the secondary school, where the group identity emerged at an early stage, an evening conference was arranged for staff, parents, and governors jointly. Towards the end of the research period in this school a series of after-school meetings were arranged on different topics that had been researched, with an open invitation for all staff to attend.

By September 1982 the majority of the teachers involved had produced individual case studies of some aspect of their teaching over the last 18 months. During that month we convened a weekend conference in Newmarket as a mechanism for systematising the shared insights that had emerged over the previous 18 months. Prior to the conference the school teams were asked to report what they considered to be the most important issues/concerns which had emerged during the life of the project. Their replies constituted clear evidence that the original multiplicity of individual concerns expressed had by now crystallised into a smaller number of common themes, linking the original surface problems together at deeper levels of understanding.

At the conference teachers were asked to reference their own and others' case studies against eight major themes. They then grouped themselves according to a chosen theme and set aside time for reading the relevant case studies. The rest of the weekend involved each group generating hypotheses around their chosen theme from comparisons of the case studies. By the end of the conference a list of hypotheses about teaching and learning processes, categorised under themes, had been produced. (See Elliott and Ebbutt 1983a).

After the conference individual teachers selected a theme, or some aspect of it, and explored a cluster of case studies in the light of the relevant hypotheses. The outcome was a set of over-view reports which were put together in book form (see Ebbutt and Elliott (eds.) 1983 forthcoming).

The book and its related hypotheses represent the project teachers' contribution to the development of a

common stock of professional knowledge about the practice of teaching. It is hoped that it will function as a source of insights and strategies for other teachers to explore when reflecting about their classroom practices. The individual case studies on which the book is based are to be published separately (see Elliott and Ebbutt (eds.) 1983b forthcoming). A further companion volume on strategies for facilitating action-research in schools has been written by the external research consultants and in-school co-ordinators (see Elliott and Ebbutt (eds.) 1983c forthcoming).

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Keith Joseph and the Science Criteria

Angela Dixon

Having trained as a science teacher, Angela Dixon taught in secondary schools, a primary school and a college of education before coming to her present post as Lecturer in Education in the University of Bristol. She is a deputy chief examiner for the International Baccalaureate and also examines for the European Baccalaureate. She is currently a Vice-Chairman of the Association for Science Education, and previously chaired the Association's Education (Co-ordinating) Committee.

In the past year or two the Association for Science Education, the Department of Education and Science (through Her Majesty's Inspectorate) and the Royal Society have all made statements calling for a balanced programme of science education for all pupils to 16+, including those pupils with mental and/or physical handicaps. The Secondary Science Curriculum Review, sponsored jointly by the ASE and the Schools' Council, also has this as one of its aims and at the same time working parties attached to the examination boards have been finalising criteria for assessment of the sciences at 16+. Almost everyone, it seems, is working towards this high ideal — time, money and expertise are all being spent in establishing not only what should be taught, but also how pupils' understanding and attainment in science may be monitored. Science educators, however, may be forgiven for being bewildered by the diversity of messages, both explicit and implicit, they are receiving from these various bodies.

One major area of disagreement seems to be what is meant by science education. For the Royal Society, science seems to mean the three separate science disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics and a balanced programme of science education would appear to consist of all three disciplines, taught separately, to everyone. The ASE and the SSCR point to a much more integrated approach for the majority of pupils, whilst allowing that a small minority of the most able pupils could, if staffing permitted, study each of the three separate sciences so long as their total time commitment to science in the curriculum does not exceed 20 per cent of the total time available. All bodies agree, however, that any balanced programme of science education that includes components of at least all three of the traditional disciplines, however organised, must result in a reduction of the traditional content of 16+ syllabuses by a significant amount. The appear to be supported in this view by Sir Keith Joseph, who in his Sheffield speech said that large numbers of school pupils were bored by the clutter of meaningless content required by many current syllabuses.

In an ideal world, the assessment process would follow any curriculum change. In other words, what should be taught, would be agreed before setting out to establish the role of assessment and what needs to be examined before devising means of examining it. In our educational system, however, examinations have very largely determined the teaching syllabus. In this context

it seemed not unreasonable that the examination boards should be asked to establish national criteria against which existing and new syllabi could both be measured. So long as any examination syllabus could be demonstrated to match the necessary criteria, the content by which these criteria were exemplified could be left to individual teachers, allowing them to teach from their strengths to a syllabus designed to suit their particular pupils.

The Schools Council — now succeeded in its examinations role by the Secondary Examinations Council — set to work to commission national criteria in science from various sources. Initially, three separate working parties were established dealing with the three traditional science disciplines. Later, a science working party was set up with two quite distinct roles a) to recommend criteria for an integrated syllabus in science b) to co-ordinate criteria in all the sciences. It was quickly pointed out by many, including the ASE, that it would have been preferable to have agreed joint national criteria for all the sciences before asking working parties to start establishing criteria in the separate sciences. In the event, this second part of the science working party's brief was withdrawn and the working party was left with the task of drawing up criteria for combined/integrated science courses to 16+ with all the disadvantages attached to being late starters. Thus a 'hidden curriculum' message of separate discipline status was conveyed to science teachers. The task of co-ordinating all the science criteria was then assumed by sub-committee A of the Joint National Committee and its influence has been to reduce further the status of any integrated/combined/unified science course.

At a meeting of the Joint National Committee at the end of 1982, sub-committee A submitted a paper entitled, 'General Criteria for all Science Syllabuses'. This contained three recommendations of particular interest to the ASE: 1) experimental work should be internally assessed by *either* a practical test *or* a *written paper of practical questions* 2) *differentiated* assessment schemes must be used whenever the syllabus is designed to cover the full grade range 3) each syllabus should contain aims relating to the *social, economic and technical* applications of science, with an assessment weighting of 15 per cent. In voicing its concern at the manner in which the co-ordination of the science criteria had been carried out, the ASE stated that practical work should be an essential ingredient of any science based

course and its assessment should be obligatory. The Association went on to say that a written paper seeming to test practical skills would not be acceptable.

The provision of specialist laboratories and equipment for the practical teaching of science is expensive, and expenditure on such plant and materials is likely to increase if the recommendations for a balanced science curriculum for all pupils to 16+ are implemented, despite falling rolls. There is a fear that if science were not examined practically, it could be difficult to resist any pressure to reduce the amount of practical teaching in science. The alternative of a written paper purporting to test practical skills would seem to be based on the premise that devising practical examinations is difficult, if not impossible, yet all the reports from the Assessment of Performance Unit indicate that the graded assessment of science concepts by practical means is both desirable and feasible. Furthermore, various initiatives throughout the country to devise graded tests to assess the acquisition by pupils of science skills seem to support this view. It appears unrealistic and reactionary to ignore both the evidence of the value of school-administered practical tests and the large amount of test material now accumulated. The Association also feels that the imposition of differentiated papers on all science subjects, especially in areas where they have been shown to be unnecessary, will perpetuate the divide that the common system of examining sought to remove. It is in the area of the physical sciences, especially Physics, that the issue of differentiated papers is most hotly debated. Those supporting differentiation argue that Physics is a discipline for which it is impossible to set a single examination seeking to assess the whole ability range, whilst those who are in favour of one examination claim that those who support differentiation have an outmoded, elitist understanding of the subject matter of Physics which is linked to and limited by an equally old-fashioned view of academic scientific research. Sir Keith Joseph intervened in this debate by speaking out against the inclusion of socio-economic issues in the criteria for the assessment of Physics.

This area of the socio-economic implications of science is fraught with claim and counter claim illustrative of a great deal of the confusion inherent in the whole criteria exercise. Those who wish to see socio-economic implications included in the criteria argue that they must be examined or else they won't be taught (though this appears at odds with other views from similar sources regretting the influence of examinations on the curriculum and the way it is taught). Sir Keith Joseph seems to think that while these issues may be discussed in class they cannot be examined scientifically and rationally and therefore cannot be examined. Yet only recently he is on record as saying that all pupils should study and be examined in history in order to acquire an understanding of their country's culture. Many science teachers and not a few research scientists would consider the way the nation uses its scientific talent to be part of its culture, both past and present. It seems inconceivable that a history of the second world war should omit the development and use of radar and atom bombs and equally impossible that tomorrow's history will not include the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and guided missile technology. The current emphasis on science education is said to have its

origins in the panic that developed when the USSR launched Sputnik in the late 1950's.

Sir Keith Joseph's view of the proper criteria for Physics highlights a further area of concern — that of the science education of girls. All the evidence indicates that girls in particular are adversely affected by science teaching that does not appear relevant and applicable to the human condition. By making a discussion of the socio-economic implications of science, whether taught as the separate disciplines or in an integrated manner, one of the necessary criteria of a course to 16+, science teachers are seeking to make the subject more attractive and its concepts more accessible, especially to girls. By denying the claim of this aspect of science education to be included in the Physics criteria, Sir Keith Joseph appears to reinforce the view of the study of Physics as impersonal and elitist, restricted to a minority, which is a view that many other government bodies are seeking to refute.

For many years, various educational bodies, including the ASE, have spoken against the current norm-reference examination system at 16+, arguing its replacement by criterion-referenced tests and wider pupil profile reporting. This seems now to be more acceptable, especially to Sir Keith Joseph, if only because, under a norm-referenced system, about 45 per cent of the 16+ school population must be below average. Using criterion-referenced tests, it would be possible for 100 per cent of the cohort to achieve success in any one year! The major difficulty is, however, that criterion-referenced assessment requires criteria, and these seem to be difficult to produce and once stated become subject to the whims and fancies of politicians. A great deal of time, expertise and money has gone into the efforts to produce acceptable national criteria for both separate science and integrated science curricula at 16+. Pupils in various parts of the country have been studying such syllabi and taking joint 16+ examinations in both separate and integrated sciences for several years now, and there are indications that the examination boards amongst others are losing patience with the Department of Education and Science and its Secretary of State, who seem alternately to drive flat out and then to stamp hard on the brakes of the assessment omnibus.

First Lady of NATFHE

The Editorial Board congratulates Nanette Whitbread, for many years co-editor of FORUM, on her election as the first female Vice-President of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. She takes over the Presidency next year.

Nanette's energetic pursuit of progressive educational objectives will now find wider scope. She will, of course, continue her co-editorship of FORUM.

Soft Focus

Lee Enright

Lee Enright examines here the long-awaited HMI survey of 9-13 middle schools. The writer is at present a year co-ordinator in a 9-13 middle school in Dorset, and a member of the FORUM Editorial Board.

In January this year, I received a press notice from the DES, urging me to obey Sir Keith Joseph's instructions and read the 9-13 Middle Schools' Survey without delay. Easier said than done. I had ordered a copy from HMSO within days of its publication; weeks later I was still waiting. As I write this article in early March I am using a borrowed copy. But perhaps I am being over particular. What is a wait of two months when it has taken three and a half years to bring the survey from inspection to publication?

The survey began in the autumn of 1979 and was, we are told, almost complete in July 1980. Thus, much of the information is likely to be history, not least for the schools involved in the survey. Teams of HMIs inspected 48 9-13 middle schools out of a total of 360 such schools which had been operating with a full age range for four years or more at that time. The survey tells us that by January 1983 there were 610 9-13 middle schools, but no updating information is given which might help us see what development or progression, if any, had been made.

For instance, we are told that just one of the schools surveyed had a computer, and that it was used by pupils at a lunchtime club. Thus, a whole section of the curriculum, as well as a developing approach to learning, are passed over. A strange state of affairs in a report published by a government which claims to be committed to information technology in schools.

The survey claims to provide a 'snapshot' of the life and work of the 48 schools for a part of the 1979-80 academic year. One could be forgiven for wondering if something happened to the film at the processors. Certainly, the best the HMIs could do when it came to a consideration of individual children's work was a hazy six-point scale from 'Very Good' to 'Very Poor'. On this unknown scale was the work of the schools to be judged — how a head/teacher might use the survey as a helpful yardstick of practice remains unresolved. This snapshot includes just four pieces of what might be termed raw data. Two are pieces of writing done by children in science lessons, one is a piece of poetry written by a child, and the fourth is an outline of a mathematics topic on angles for the four years of middle school. Where is the rest of the detail we are promised? Snippets of ideas are buried in vague paragraphs, with information from several schools mixed together, rendering it all so anonymous as to be rather less than helpful.

It is hard to understand why HMIs are so reluctant to reveal hard evidence of what they consider good

practice. How did the good practice come to be? How many members of staff were involved in the teaching of the curriculum area? How many were deemed subject specialists? What were the posts of responsibility? Who was involved in the planning stages of the curriculum? How much of it was subject to revision from year to year? How well resourced was it? How were the children grouped in these schools at their different ages and stages? What precisely did the curriculum document (if one existed) prescribe? The arguments of the HMIs are hard to test if teachers have nothing to compare with their own practice and circumstances. Good teachers may worry that they are personally failing in some way, while less energetic colleagues are able to fall back on the old 'Yes, but we haven't got . . .' argument. Similarly, the survey tells us that there were schools which performed at a level which was 'generally satisfactory' or better in almost all parts of the curriculum. It is, however, difficult to gauge exactly *how* many — we need to find the value of that well-known statistical device a 'few' before we can add it to a third. (Interested mathematicians may wish to investigate the rest of this equation: A Few + A Further Third + Two Fifths + A Small Number = 48, see para 2.31).

Once again, the question of detail is fudged. Is information withheld in the name of confidentiality? Can such a reason be acceptable when HMI reports on individual schools are now published? It is reasonable to speculate that a holistic account of these model schools would have done much more to fuel the present curriculum debate. As it stands, the survey is more likely to postpone or close it.

One area where the survey has caught some attention is the use and value of specialist teachers in middle schools. There is, however, little in the survey to support a definite swing towards subject teaching by specialists across the whole age range — there is rather more of a hedging of bets. We are told that those schools who made greater use of subject specialists in the third and fourth years achieved 'overall higher standards of work'. We are also told that seven schools had introduced 'substantial' use of subject teachers to second year pupils, and that five of these seven were in the group of schools said to be producing the higher standards of work. Unspoken is the fact that two of the schools, a third of the sample, were not. Again, without details, these arguments are unanswerable. Most middle schools already move towards subject specialisation in the third and fourth years, so where does that leave us?

As to the use of subject teaching to second year pupils, the survey comes to a balanced (ie, 'safe') view, in a sentence that has as many exclusion clauses as a doubtful insurance policy: 'These findings *suggest* that the learning needs of *most, though not necessarily all*, second year children *might* best be met by *more* use of subject teachers in *a number* of areas of the curriculum *without at the same time* destroying the close association children enjoy with their class teachers for *a substantial part* of their work.'

There is, of course, a very good reason why the survey does not come down wholeheartedly on the side of more specialism across the board. In order to carry such a policy through, 9-13 schools would have to be staffed at a ratio closer to that enjoyed by secondary schools — an idea unlikely to be met with favour while education is an area of cuts rather than investment.

A more useful suggestion might have been to look at ways of 'sharing out' subject specialists (particularly those with posts of responsibility) across all four years so that the children in each year might have access to a wide range of expertise from, as far as possible, within their own team of teachers, as an attempt to balance specialism with stability.

For these inspectors were favourably impressed with the ethos of these schools, the behaviour of the children, the spirit of co-operation and involvement, the children's attitude of responsibility, and the quality of pastoral care. I suggest that such qualities do not appear by magic, but are developed by staff who are aware of the whole child rather than the sum of his curriculum parts. Three-quarters of the schools involved parents in day-to-day work; over three-quarters of the schools engaged in activities involving the whole community. This section of the survey is not mentioned on the publicity material, but I believe that it contains lessons for teachers at all levels.

How did these schools achieve their advantageous atmospheres? Does the answer have anything to do with the stability they achieve in a relatively small community? In spite of the fact that six of the surveyed schools were designated as Social Priority Area schools and a few others were in areas with marked social difficulties, there is no mention in this survey of vandalism or truancy. The word 'discipline' is not waved about, but rather we are told that in most schools pastoral care policy was an integral part of staff behaviour — heads and other senior staff gave a lead by example, and the heads provided positive and consistent support for children and staff alike. It is a truth universally acknowledged that good news is no news, and it is certainly true here that the successful contribution made by 9-13 middle schools to children's personal and social development and its effects on their attitude to school and learning, have been widely under-publicised.

The report ends on a warning note concerning viable sizes of schools. That small middle schools may have a doubtful future is nothing new to those involved. We are aware that children in small middle schools need to have the same opportunities as their fellows in junior, middle or secondary schools elsewhere in the system. But this, of course, is not an argument that is restricted to middle schools, and the survey admits it.

It remains to be seen what contribution to the present debate on 9-13 middle schools this survey will make.

While we have been waiting for the DES to finish arguing with itself about what would or would not be published, middle schools have forged ahead with little in the way of lead or support from outside agencies beyond their own local education authorities. Policies have been debated, drafted, debated again, documented and revised. In 1981, this survey might have provided useful points of reference, but now it seems only to confirm the feeling that wherever it is we're going, we'll have to find our own way there.



H. Raymond King

**Secondary Education for
All in the 1980s:
the Challenge to the
Comprehensive School**

Brian Simon

The English New Education Fellowship
Raymond King Memorial Lecture

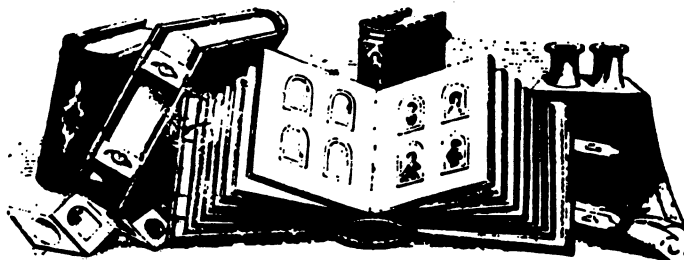
3 November 1983

Covered offprints of the Memorial Lecture for our late Chairman, Raymond King, are available from John Stephenson, Hon. Sec. of the World Education Fellowship, at the following address:

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Reviews



Misuse of Testing

Teaching Children: standardised testing in local authorities and schools, by Caroline Gipps, Stephen Steadman, Tessa Blackstone and Barry Stierer, Heinemann Educational Books, 1983, pp.186, £14.50.

This is an odd book. Reporting research funded by the Social Science Research Council it reflects concern about the explosion of testing that followed Jim Callaghan's Ruskin speech in November 1976 — both local authority blanket testing and the APU's so-called 'light-sampling' (*two-thirds* of all secondary schools have been involved). This massive increase, well documented here, marked the high point of the 'accountability' movement now, according to the authors, on its way out. The companion volume, *Monitoring Children*, an evaluation of the APU, was reviewed in our last number.

It's an odd book partly because the authors find almost total confusion among local authorities about the purpose and use of all this testing. Blanket local authority testing, often brought in by Tory-dominated authorities, was part of the politics of education in the late 1970s. One scheme, which satisfied political pressures 'without treading on professional toes' is described as 'a political masterstroke'; another, where the CEO pre-empted Callaghan and his education committee's calls to monitor standards appeared as 'a politically adroit move'. But what were local authorities to do with the mass of data (of very doubtful value) thrown up? No one seems to have known. The major 'use' of the scores so derived, the find, is to inscribe them on school (pupil) records. The scores, the authors say, 'are little used'. They conclude that this mass of testing, which teachers apparently do not object to, has a *symbolic* rather than a practical role.

The authors themselves tend to take a technocratic stance. If testing is to be done, and they think it should be, it should be done properly. 'Given the extent of testing that we have found', they write, 'the lack of impact of LEA testing on school testing, the use of out-dated tests at school level, the lack of thought about purpose, the haphazard and often minimal use of test results, it is time LEA's and schools did some serious thinking about testing'. There *are* useful purposes testing can serve. Teachers must be trained to use tests properly ('critically' and 'with discrimination'), the local authority should take the lead. 'Testing is not on the way out', the book concludes. 'It is a flourishing activity' and should be 'done as well as possible'.

There are dangers in this stance, which is basically pragmatic as well as technocratic. Is this not yet another example of research legitimising current practice, just as the mass

of psychometric research legitimised 11 plus selection? The great mass of 'standardised' testing imposed by local authorities was and is norm-referenced testing. The object of these tests is to **differentiate** children on the well-known 'normal' or Gauss curve, just as was the case with Intelligence Tests. Has the mass imposition of such tests nothing to do with the inner processes of differentiation within many primary schools in particular but also at transfer (even within comprehensive systems), and within secondary schools? The authors themselves indicate that it has, and that tests *are* used in this way.

The abolition of the 11 plus and growth of comprehensive education has in no sense reduced the external (and internal) pressures on the schools towards differentiation and the winnowing out of an elite, as we well know. Mass, norm-referenced testing assists in this process and it is this which needs stressing. The authors make a bow to the need to develop diagnostic and criterion referenced tests, but have missed an opportunity to educate teachers and administrators (their readers, presumably) in the real significance of the situation. In essence this is a bland book, insufficiently critical and failing to look deeply enough below the surface.

BRIAN SIMON

Critique from the Left

Is There Anyone Here From Education?

Edited by Ann Marie Wolpe and James Donald. Pluto Press (1983), pp.165, £2.95 paperback.

The title of this book comes from a careless off-the-record remark by the prime minister, reported in the *Guardian* on 23 February 1983. She was asked to describe the consequences of educational policy during her first term in office, and she replied bluntly: 'It's a disaster.' Then she added: 'Is there anyone here from education?' There wasn't, but the question makes an excellent title for this interesting and, at times, disturbing collection of eighteen specially-commissioned articles.

The book was conceived and written in the run-up to the June election which confirmed Margaret Thatcher in Downing Street. It was an election in which, sadly, education played a comparatively minor role. The most notable contribution to the debate on the part of the Thatcher government was Norman Tebbit's proud boast that 'we've taken the

money away from the people who write about ancient Egyptian scripts and the prenuptial habits of the Upper Volta Valley.' This book also castigates the Labour Party for the lack of an effective polemical response from the left.

Indeed, it would be wrong to see this book as simply a sustained attack on New Right Thatcherite policies. The overall tone of the collection owes much to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham; and the contribution from its Director, Richard Johnson, challenges many of the policies and preconceptions of the Old Left. He disassociates himself from the main left-of-centre educational tradition of Liberal or Fabian reform of the public educational system, so obvious in the 1960s. In its place, he wishes to see developed a socialist philosophy which is 'non-statist and strongly informed by feminism and anti-racism'. The Labour Party is criticised for mistaking provision for activity, for being obsessed with institutional arrangements. 'The preferred solution has been to replace separated institutions with universal provision in unified ones: comprehensives, tertiary colleges and so on. The trouble is that inequalities have continued to reproduce themselves — now universally and by less formal means'. There is a nostalgic account of the educational tradition of Really Useful Knowledge, those moments of counter-education in our history which have often coincided with periods of great social disruption or extreme political reaction. What is not terribly clear is how it is possible to recreate early-nineteenth-century or even 1940s campaigning knowledge in the 1980s.

I must admit there is much in this book that I find negative, depressing and defeatist. There is a tendency to overlook the educational achievements of the past three decades and to construct new education strategies which would find little favour with the vast majority of parents. It is easy to forget that right-wing attacks on state education in the 1970s were successful largely because they did tap some genuine popular perceptions and grievances.

More successful in this book than the theorising of disgruntled New Left academics is the last section which deals with local initiatives in anti-sexist and anti-racist teaching or in defending a school threatened with closure. Annie Cornbleet and Sue Libovitch write about a mixed comprehensive school in Hackney where a certain amount of sex segregation has proved necessary in the fight against sexism in the classroom. Jai Singh, an advisory teacher in the Multi-Ethnic Inspectorate of ILEA, argues that the crucial issue facing education today is its attitude towards racism. 'A multi-cultural curriculum with anti-racist teaching as its priority is a positive step on the road to a

socially democratic society.' And Phil Carspecken and Henry Miller tell the story of Croxteth in Liverpool where the local community refused to accept the council's decision to close the local comprehensive school and have struggled for nearly three years to keep it open. It would appear that the story has a happy ending: in the local elections on 5 May 1983, Labour won control of Liverpool Council and immediately made clear its resolve not only to reopen Croxteth as a state comprehensive, but also to staff it on the basis of curriculum need rather than the size of the pupil roll.

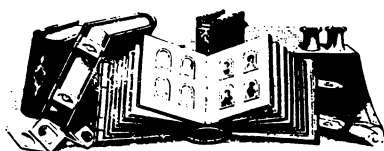
Perhaps the most stimulating contribution in this book comes from Anthony Arblaster of the Department of Politics at Sheffield University. In a chapter entitled 'Turning back the clock', he quotes from an eighteenth-century attack on charity schools for the poor as a dangerous, as well as misconceived, form of benevolence:

'The Welfare and Felicity therefore of every State and Kingdom require that the Knowledge of the Working Poor should be confin'd within the Verge of their Occupations, and never extended (as to things visible) beyond what relates to their Calling.'

Anthony Arblaster sees the need to move 'radically and decisively in the direction of an education system which serves first of all the needs of people, not as fodder for industry or employers, but as whole human beings and potentially active and responsible citizens. This means an education which includes the arts, creative activity, and the study of politics and society, not a mere 'training' for particular tasks or occupations. An increasingly authoritarian capitalism, based on an ever more conscious and planned manipulation of the population, or a participatory socialist democracy: 'thanks to Thatcherism, that is the choice we are being faced with — in education as in every other sphere of life.'

For my part, I have never accepted the popular left-wing conception of the 1960s that education was all about engineering significant social and economic change, or, at the very least, creating a more cohesive and harmonious society. Nor does it seem to me that readers of *Forum* would ever be prepared to see education converted into a mere servicing process for capitalism. I am instead reminded of the philosophy of the first Labour MP, Thomas Burt: 'We say educate a man, not simply because he has got political power, and simply to make him a good workman; but educate him because he is a man.' A truly humanist view of education and its objectives would add a welcome dimension to the current debate.

CLYDE CHITTY
Earl Shilton Community College



A Workshop Atmosphere

Curriculum Workshop. An Introduction to whole curriculum planning by Maurice Holt. RKP. (1983) pp.192, paperback £6.95.

Maurice Holt has produced a practical book with case studies, simulations, and exercises that put the reader to work. The intention is to stand alongside teachers signposting an approach to curriculum planning. By drawing on 'good' practice in a number of schools and on his own experience, he has created a workshop atmosphere where a multitude of questions are put to the reader, sharp critical comment abounds and a variety of possible solutions are offered to practical problems.

The theme is now familiar, with a passionate concern for whole curriculum planning and the adoption of a common curriculum. We are taken briskly and with authority through some of the more recent documents on the curriculum. First 'the red book' — *Curriculum 11-16 (1977)* — which was critical of massive option programmes and suggested a wide core approach. Also *Aspects of Secondary Education (1979)* is considered in reasonable detail, and this substantial HMI contribution also argues for fewer options and a broader common curriculum. In all, nine documents from DES and HMI, including the Scottish Munn Report, are considered and, despite obvious variations in emphasis, balance and value, there is much common ground over the need for a planned and coherent curriculum-planning strategy incorporating a broad common curriculum approach.

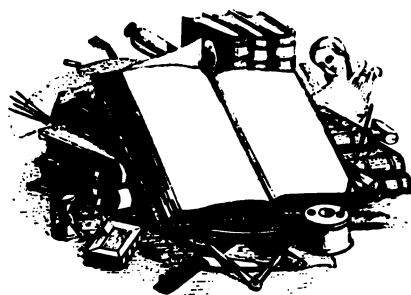
If the common curriculum movement has gained such respectability and LEA's have been charged with 'the responsibility of "securing a planned and coherent curriculum within the schools"' so, argues Maurice Holt, schools will need help to 'assist the process of regenerating the curriculum'. In his second section he addresses himself to some of the practical tasks involved in curriculum change. Starting, where else, with *aims* one revels in his thoroughly practical approach. That is not to dismiss the exercise but to point up that it is outcomes that matter. Maurice Holt's precise sentences cannot be bettered . . . 'What matters are not aims, but actions' . . . 'What is important in curriculum development — in my experience — is tools, not rules' . . . 'If one must have written aims, there may be much to be said for making them as brief as possible'. He then moves on to content and process in core curriculum.

I once heard Michael Marland in a lecture identify five problems facing comprehensive schools. The first was the first modern language and the second was the second modern language! My own experience with broad common curriculum policies goes back over nearly two decades. Throughout that period the position of modern languages in the core has always been difficult to resolve, particularly post-14, and I would have welcomed more attention to this issue. Possibly it is wrong to look for a ready-made answer but on many other issues Maurice Holt is helpfully incisive. Related to common curriculum is the question of the adoption of MAT. 'In moral terms, the evidence that

ability is hard to measure, has no obvious relationship with attainment, and changes in different learning situations, is so overwhelming that to adopt a common curriculum without adopting MAT is a contradiction in terms.' However, Maurice Holt prefers 'to talk of a "mixed ability format" since it makes clear that no doctrinaire view of MAT is prescribed, and least of all that it should mean that pupils of different ability should sit side by side doing the same thing'. He advocates a flexible approach to grouping. He is similarly positive on the 'academic' and 'pastoral' divide in curriculum planning and on integrated studies.

Perhaps because I work in a 14-19 upper school and community college and have a concern for post-16 curriculum I am uneasy about his too dismissive attitude to attempts to examine the continuum of a 14-18 curriculum. Certainly a major theme of the third and final section of several case studies is the construction of block timetables. Sympathetic blocking across the 16 divide is a crucial need today. Reference is made in the Berkeley Vale School study to the sixth form 'using as basis the same block timetable' but I hope Maurice Holt will be drawn into a more detailed examination of this aspect of blocking in his next 'workshop'. Also I would want longer debate on post-16 initiatives. As Bob Moon writing in *FORUM* (Challenging the Deference Curriculum Spring 1984 Vol. 26 No. 2) says 'Despite the dangers of MSC policies, who can deny the imbalance of the school curriculum?' We need to be looking beyond just the 11-16 curriculum debate. None-the-less this remains an excellent book full of sound practical advice, comment and questioning that deals very thoroughly with a critical phase of curriculum planning. It will be quite invaluable to those who come new to these issues, or to those who wish to re-examine them.

ROGER SECKINGTON
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