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This issue

The Centralist Tendency
In Defence of TVEI
The Curriculum: 5 to 16

Editorial Board

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The Next Forum

Focusing on gender and race, Judith Whyte follows up Alison Kelly's article in this number with a contribution on issues arising at a recent conference on Girl Friendly Schooling, while Paddy Hall, from Moat Community College, Leicester, writes on multiculturalism and anti-racism at her school. Dr Murphy follows up Harry Macintosh's article with a contribution evaluating new methods of assessment. Annabelle Dixon writes on the current scandal of provision for the rising-fives; Roger Titcombe on CPVE and its place in 16-19 provision; and Benjamin Collins on the current debate on science teaching. Marion Dadds (Cambridge Institute of Education) contributes an article on her Action-Research Study Group at Cambridge.

Better Schools?

How are we to get Better Schools? Hardly by the mixture of headmasterly admonishment and adventurist propositions which emanate week after week from government Ministers. While Keith Joseph holds forth to the Council of Local Education Authorities on the failures of our primary schools, his side-kick, Bob Dunn, is reported (*Guardian*, 29.7.85) as saying that within the next fifteen years Britain should move to a system of 'separate and independent schools, responsive to market mechanisms'. The ultimate aim being to reduce the role of state intervention to 'helping those children who, for whatever reason, are not being properly catered for by the free market system', of whom, he adds, 'there will always be someone'.

So, while one Minister attempts to give the impression that all he cares about is the quality of the maintained system, another gives notice of his clear intention actually to destroy it altogether (or nearly so). What are teachers — indeed all concerned with education — to make of this sort of nonsense?

How can we have 'Better Schools' when, as Jackson Hall, this year's President of the Society of Education Officers, so trenchantly puts it in his article in this number, the whole idea of 'partnership' in the education service lies in tatters? 'The emphatic assertion of the power of the Secretary of State' over the last few years, as he puts it, 'has eroded the partnership which, not so very long ago, was prized and championed'. This is evident, he adds, 'in the disruption and acrimony which have disfigured the service this year'.

This powerful centralist thrust, which Jackson Hall documents effectively, and of which **Forum** has been critical in a series of issues, is resulting in low morale among teachers and local authorities and a sense of helplessness. Any scope for initiative is being steadily removed from the grass roots; yet historically it is from local and teacher initiatives that most of the important innovations have been made. Above all, the clear undervaluing of teachers by those in authority — epitomised by the refusal to make any concessions on salaries, is building up a back-log of bad feeling which looks likely to explode in the autumn of this year. People have had just about enough.

In this situation it is understandable that some strong proponents of comprehensive education are looking for the positive features in the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in spite of the threats it appears to pose to the full realisation of the concept of comprehensive education. **Forum** has taken a very critical line in its approach to this government-inspired initiative, funded from outside the education service, seeing it as profoundly divisive in its implications. We are, however, glad to include in this number two articles supportive of TVEI, one by Roger Seckington, Chairman of the **Forum** Editorial Board, and Principal of a large Leicestershire upper school, who acted as TVEI Co-ordinator for Leicestershire last year; the other by Professor Richard Pring, also well-known for his strong support of comprehensive education. The latter, a philosopher of education, advances a philosophically based rationale for TVEI, though the argument is also based on practice in the Devonshire area.

This is a serious issue, and our intention is to open up debate on the whole question. Clearly supporters of comprehensive education can be found in both camps, and both feel strongly on the question. Supporters of TVEI recognise the dangers inherent in the initiative, as Richard Pring specifically does towards the close of his article. They believe, however, that the advantages, in terms of a transformation of the curriculum in directions that comprehensive supporters have always wished, may outweigh the evident disadvantages, particularly of the institutionalisation of divisive practices within the school. To bring about this transformation while avoiding the dangers clearly requires a conscious and deliberate effort by teachers, advisers, local authorities and others who will need to impose their own solutions in such a way as to render the dangers nugatory. **Forum** will continue to monitor developments in this area with the aim of evaluating progress towards effective systems of comprehensive education.

The Centralist Tendency*

Jackson Hall

FORUM has expressed deep concern about the implications of the increasingly energetic thrust towards centralisation of control of the education service. We are, therefore, glad to give pride of place to this important article by Jackson Hall, this year's President of the Society of Education Officers. Mr. Hall is Director of Education for the Borough of Sunderland; earlier he was Deputy-Director at Manchester.

Along with many others, I am concerned about the trend towards central control of the education service. This centralist tendency, whatever its origins, was decisively launched in October 1976 by the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in a speech at Ruskin College. He called for 'a great debate' but, in fact, as a *Times* leader writer pointed out (27 June 1977), this speech gave the DES the initiative to develop a policy of change from the centre. This initiative has been exploited, especially in recent years, not only by the DES but also very notably by the MSC. Since 1976 the service has been on the defensive and losing ground; resistance to the centralist tendency has been eroded by the emasculation of LEA independence by government restrictions on local government expenditure and by the diversion of the teachers' associations into Burnham battles which take longer and longer to settle more and more unsatisfactorily.

For thirty years after 1944, the development of the service was managed by a partnership. The terms of the partnership were that the Secretary of State determined broad national policy and the allocation of resources, the LEA implemented national policy with substantial local discretion, and the individual establishment was responsible for the curriculum and how it was taught. This distribution of responsibility was justified by two main arguments. The political argument was that the education service is a 'major instrument of social control' and should not therefore be a creature of the state. The educational argument was that 'progress in education comes not from the centre but from the periphery' and that each LEA and school should therefore have maximum freedom to develop its contribution.

This is admittedly a simplification of the post-war partnership but its reality and the shared convictions which gave it strength were vividly demonstrated in the decisive opposition of the LEAs and the teachers' associations to Sir David Eccles — the Minister of Education at the time — when he announced in 1962 the appointment of the Curriculum Study Group, a bid to give the Minister a curricular role, an influential presence in what he had described as 'the secret garden of the curriculum'. The teachers and the LEAs saw this initiative as not only centralist and undemocratic but also as a threat to the quality of the service. The upshot of the clash was the creation of the Schools Council which confirmed the principles of the partnership. The unquiet spirit of Robert Lowe was again laid to rest.

The achievements of the partnership years are given little attention and even less credit these days. They were very substantial, not only in the school sector but also in further and higher education. The education service entered the 70s with a more coherent, capacious and comprehensive structure, a transformation compared with the position in 1944. Quality and productivity had improved too. As Sir Keith Joseph said at Sheffield (January 1984), 'by comparison with 20 years ago our schools are offering a broader education and a larger proportion of pupils are successful in examinations at 16+. In all this, I think it safe to say that the level of attainment associated with an 'O' level pass has been maintained'. The achievement in further and higher education during the partnership years was at least as substantial.

Whatever the achievements of a given period, there are always certain issues which are central to the health of the service and therefore require continuous attention. These issues are the curriculum, the quality of its delivery, and the quality of the teachers. The improvement of all three is a common concern but in the last few years a policy has taken shape based upon an emphatic assertion of the power of the Secretary of State and the application of an authoritative managerial model to the service.The extent to which it has eroded the partnership which, not so very long ago, was prized and championed is only too evident in the disruption and acrimony which have disfigured the service this year.

Since 1976 a stream of documents on the curriculum has flowed from Elizabeth House, a stream that is currently in spate with the publication of the School Curriculum 5-16, English 5-16, Maths 5-16, and a further twenty papers forecast, including another on the Curriculum 5-16. In addition, there may well be papers to come from Lord Young's unit in the Cabinet Office whose remit includes 'the co-ordination of policies to promote the education, training and employment of 14-18 year olds'. The curriculum documents are 'discussion' or advisory documents and they contain much that is unexceptional or even welcome but the danger of centralism is illustrated in 'English 5-16' which lists 33 objectives for 7 year olds, 56 for 11 year olds, and 58 for 16 year olds — an excursion into detail which approaches prescription. The destiny of centralism is of course the prescriptive detail that is the enemy of promise. Furthermore, these papers betray an

* This article is a shortened version of Jackson Hall's presidential address to the Society of Education Officers in January 1985.

increasingly utilitarian attitude to education - an emphasis on means rather than ends, on the needs of the economy, on the work that pupils will (may?) do rather than the lives they will lead.

It is of course the public examinations at 16+ that shape the secondary school curriculum and the changeover to the GCSE has given the Secretary of State the opportunity to strengthen his grip on the examination system. He now has the power to prescribe the national criteria for every GCSE subject and he can therefore personally determine examination and consequently teaching objectives. He also prescribes the grade-related criteria which specify 'the knowledge, understanding and skills expected for the award of particular grades' which is just what Robert Lowe did in his day. It is only a few years ago that the Waddell report on a common system of examining at 16+ stated categorically that control of the new examination 'should not rest finally with central government', a judgement confirmed in the subsequent White Paper. At the time, we regarded this principle as self-evident and unassailable; in the event, it was as fragile as the walls of Jericho.

As far as the schools are concerned, Sir Keith Joseph's legacy to his successors — whoever they may be — will certainly be very much greater powers than he inherited. Fred Mulley's pathetic complaint that the Secretary of State could do nothing except authorise the removal of air-raid shelters no doubt reflected his own limitations but Sir Keith Joseph has transformed the role and status of his office for his successors. Nobody can tell how they may exploit it, and this is an unknown prospect which even those who support Sir Keith should consider.

The second objective of the centralist tendency is control of the profession exercised through control of the initial training of teachers, their in-service training, and the performance of teachers in the schools. The centralist tendency has made great strides on this front too. The Secretary of State has specified criteria for initial training courses and the courses are being vetted by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, the members of which he appoints. In-service training will be funded by specific grant from the DES after 1987, and until then it will be funded by the MSC. The LEAs have been invited to submit their in-service training programmes to the DES; only what is approved by the DES will be financed by specific grant. Money is a good soldier; the device of a specific grant for in-service training will be used as a control and the implication of a grant refusal will be that the LEA has 'failed' — conformity with DES requirements is 'success'. It is only two years ago that Sir Keith annexed RSG funds for education support grants, and justified it as a modest measure to enable him to influence educational development. These modest and not-so-modest increments add up already to a substantial shift of power.

Given substantial control over the curriculum, and the initial and in-service training of teachers, the delivery of the curriculum depends on the efficiency of the establishment. The centralist tendency seeks to secure this in various ways, mostly imposed by legislation — the exercise of parental preference, publication of examination results, new-style governing bodies, publication of HMI reports on schools and on the LEAs, and the as yet embryonic monitoring of each LEAs curricular policy. The objection is not that these initiatives are mistaken *per se*, it is the belief that the service will be improved by central prescription and that its co-operation is unnecessary, that the school environment can be changed by legislation and regulation so radically that the school itself will have to change. And the attitude behind this stems from a primitive view that marketing mechanisms are healthy and enlightening — which explains the attractions of a voucher system. This crudity lies behind the objective of teacher appraisal linked with pay which the Secretary of State regards as essential to the efficiency of the service, a gross simplification to which the managerial mentality is especially prone. Does Sir Keith Joseph really believe that teacher appraisal by fiat will be anything more than a bland formality punctuated by acrimony?

When all these manifestations of the centralist tendency are added up there emerges a management model of the education service — the DES in command of the strategic levers of quality and product, the LEA as the area agent to guide, supervise and (if necessary) direct, and the Head as the local manager of the process. A line management model of this sort would be bad for the service. It stems from an over-simple view of the educational process itself which would end up by simplifying the product. It is not as crude as payment by results but it is the same heresy.

If to all this is added the 'certificate of achievement' with its potential in terms of behavioural objectives and conditioning, a prospect of the school system of the future is unveiled which seems unbelievable, even in 1985; it should be remembered, however, that only a few years ago it would have been unthinkable.

This scenario may seem far fetched but the evidence of the centralist tendency is hard fact, not speculation. At the very least, the question to answer is not the probability of this scenario, but whether it can be dismissed — and in considering this, bear in mind that it is not Sir Keith Joseph but his succesors as yet unknown who will inherit the power and potential that have been accumulated at the DES in recent years. The Green Paper of July 1977 emphasised that the objective was 'a broad agreement . . . on a framework for the curriculum'; in 1979, in 'Local Authority Arrangements for the School Curriculum', the DES registered the more ambitious claim that 'they (the Secretaries of State) should give a lead'. Just as everybody wants a little more money, so do most organisations want a little more power, and often seek it with the best of intentions. The DES is no exception.

As a matter of fact, I cannot believe that the DES has a grand design to centralise the service. What it demonstrably does have, however, is a predisposition towards a managerial and market model and, increasingly, a chilling philistinism which it reveals in public comment and criticism — sometimes a certain unfeelingness and insensitivity, a narrow emphasis on the needs of the economy, frequently a scarcely veiled arrogance exemplified in, for example, the threat in 'Better Schools' that standards in schools are seriously low and better funding will not be forthcoming until there is an improvement. It is not surprising that the centralist tendency has forfeited the co-operation and good-will of the service on which everything depends. It is to be hoped that this is temporary and that the good-

will of the partnership years has not been wholly exhausted — otherwise, the next few years will see a recession in quality comparable with the failure of British industry.

I have outlined the evidence of the centralist tendency and indicated its dangers. It is a development which is stultifying in the short term, will be arbitrary and coercive in the long-term, and will breed disenchantment and hostility. Its costs are insidious; they lie beyond the ken of accountancy but they are real enough nevertheless.

In a speech at Canterbury in July 1983, Sir Keith Joseph offered an 'agenda for partnership' and he said:—

> 'I now ask others in the education service — in particular teachers, governors, local authority elected members and officers — to consider what I have said in the same spirit so that together we may achieve constructive reform'.

The *Times Educational Supplement* (13 January 1984) commenting on this said it was 'his first recognition that he needs, and depends on, the teachers and the local authorities, not only to carry out this programme, but also to shape it and influence the many critical decisions which still have to be taken if broad policy is to be translated into good working practices and high standards'.

Events since then suggest that Sheffield was no Damascus, that the Secretary of State's recognition was fleeting. A few months ago he published 'Better Schools'. Even if the policies it contains are given the benefit of every doubt, the fact remains that their success depends on the co-operation of the teachers. On this test, 'Better Schools' is a declaration of bankruptcy. And I believe it would be very mistaken to believe that a satisfactory Burnham settlement would transform the situation.

The fact is that there is uncertainty throughout the service. Low morale has more sources than low pay. A decade of criticism and, in recent years, unilateral policy-making under a DES agenda revealed item by item has left the service uncertain about the future except the liklihood of further clobbering. Questions are being asked about fundamental issues on which there is widespread suspicion and doubt about the government's intentions. Has the objective of a common curriculum for the secondary school been jettisoned because it is regarded as a wasteful failure? Is the curriculum to be re-located in the world of work to the extent that the humanities are no more than offerings? Is the tacit objective to introduce division at 14+ with the GCSE for some, CPVE for others, and a record of achievement, if it gets off the ground, the only common certification — is this what 'differentiation' really means? Is the management of the curriculum and the 16+ examinations leading to a centrally controlled curriculum? Is the DES imposing a line management model under its control with the LEA no more than a managing agency and the LEAs and the teachers no longer partners in policy-making? What is the meaning of the Secretary of State's warning that 'there is no margin in our plans for inefficiency' — does he mean that, by regulation or legislation, the service will be dragooned into compliance?

There are two issues that the Secretary of State should attend to. The first is to restore the morale of the service. The sustained public criticism over the last decade, the inadequate funding of the service (and not only salaries), the erosion of its status, and the general uncertainty about the future, have reduced morale to a disabling level and the relationships of the historic partners — DES, LEAs and teachers — are at an all-time low. Disillusion and pessimism are rampant throughout the service. If this threat is not tackled urgently and successfully, the prognosis for the service must be profoundly and frighteningly pessimistic. The annual disruption of the service, which is becoming continuous, is producing a bitter pauperisation that we shall all live to regret. Secondly, we must reconstruct a contemporary version of the post-war partnership — a structure in which there is scope for the real debate, real learning and real negotiation which will produce the cooperation and collective leadership that the service must have to be healthy.

These two issues are of course interrelated. To tackle the second, Sir Keith Joseph must shed the managing director role created and fostered by the centralist tendency. He is the Secretary of State and he is of course accountable to Parliament for the condition of the service. He should therefore be as deeply concerned as any of us to be at odds with the teachers and the LEAs because their contribution is a *sine qua non*. He can cripple the LEAs and the teachers financially and purchase some sort of compliance by direct funding for specified purposes but what value will this sort of compliance produce?

One of the dangers of the centralist tendency is that centralism itself becomes an issue; assertion provokes counter-assertion and the argument becomes sterile. I would not therefore argue that we should look for centralism and, when we detect it, automatically oppose it. This is a small country where the pressures of social justice tend towards conformity, and not least in the education service where equality of resource, access and opportunity command public support. Important features of the service are and should be uniform; nobody supports localism to the extent of leaving the wheel to be invented in every school and classroom. It would be ludicrous to argue for 25,000 autonomous schools or 400,000 autonomous teachers.

The centralist tendency is both dangerous and inefficient but there are always at least three cases to be made about a policy, the case for, the case against, and the case that lies between. It is the 'case that lies between' that must be explored and developed. It has always been agreed that education is a national service, locally administered. What is needed is a framework within which the teachers and the LEAs can make a proper contribution and, along with the Secretary of State, forge policies which evoke the cooperation of the service and command its best efforts by releasing its dedication and creative energies. We all know that there are weaknesses in the service and there is general agreement that firmer leadership is required at each level — the Secretary of State, LEA and school levels. But it is only collective leadership grounded in partnership that will yield the dividend we all look for. This third case, as I have called it, calls for the skills of construction and the arts of creative synthesis. The Secretary of State should seek to have 500,000 allies, not 500,000 agents. That would be a grand design. A repertoire of initiatives is no substitute for a policy to which the service has contributed and to which it is

The GCSE and the Future

H. G. Macintosh

The divisive nature of the plans for the new General Certificate of Secondary Education has already been highlighted in FORUM. This has serious implications for the development of comprehensive education. In this article, Harry Macintosh, Secretary to the Southern Regional Examinations Board (CSE) develops his own critique and makes proposals for the future.

One day about a year ago I was on my way by train to Waterloo to attend one of the endless meetings on 16+, as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was then called, when I noticed on the seat opposite a discarded leaflet. To my amazement the front page read as follows: 'If you are size 16+, this is the catalogue for you. Better selection, better styling, and plenty of choice, all combining long lasting quality and value with elegance at sensible prices'. Had the Department of Education and Science (DES) gone mad and started a popular advertising campaign for the new examination well in advance of its introduction? Alas no, it was only an advetisement offer for a fashion catalogue, and publicity for the new GCSE is likely to be as inadequate as it was for CSE in the early 1960s. It is, moreover, unlikely that the GCSE will live up to the kind of promises made in the leaflet. Indeed, I see no reason to change the view I expressed in the *Times Educational Supplement* as long ago as 6 October 1981 — that the new examination would turn out to be expensive to run, potentially divisive and largely irrevelant to the needs of the majority of those for whom it was intended. These are harsh criticisms and need to be justified.

The GCSE which, on the present timetable, will replace GCE O-level and CSE in 1988, is not of course the only major scheduled change to existing public examinations. The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) run jointly by CGLI and BTEC will be available from 1985. It is also Sir Keith Joseph's clear intention to introduce the new Advanced/ Supplementary or half A-level as soon as possible and in consequence to leave A-level itself unchanged. The government has in addition promoted two major initiatives both of which have great potential significance for assessment and hence for the future of the public examinations. These are the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) funded by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in nearly every local authority in England and Wales, and Records of Achievement.The DES has funded eight pilot schemes in relation to the latter and it is currently the intention to introduce such records for all students in secondary schools between the ages of 11 and 16 by the end of this decade.

All these proposals reflect growing central control in the process, practice and content of education and a realization by government that public examinations provide the most effective tool available to it for the exercise of such control. Unforunately the new examinations are being introduced piecemeal without any coherent view of the nature of comprehensive secondary education and without any regard therefore to their impact upon one another and to the potentially divisive implications of this upon schools and upon learning. This divisiveness is reflected within government itself where increasingly the DES in concerned with the 'academic' curriculum and the examinations which reflect and implement this, whilst other government departments, such as Trade and Industry, and Employment, or agencies such as the MSC established by them, have become involved with a more vocational curriculum and its associated examinations. The result is starkly illustrated in the current contrast between the GCSE and the CPVE; these could hardly be more different in terms of the curriculum models they reinforce, their organisational structures and their control mechanisms.

Such potential for division could hardly be more unfortunate at the present time when a possible agenda for a 14-19 curriculum for all is slowly beginning to emerge in response to a belated but wide-ranging debate about the nature of comprehensive education and the relationship of schools to their local communities. Amongst the most significant of the items upon this agenda are the following (they are not set down in any particular order of priority):

1. The rejection of the view that the present period of compulsory education should be extended by law.
2. A restructuring of the curriculum into more manageable units, often referred to as modules.
3. Emphasis upon breadth and balance not only in what is formally taught but also in relation to the nature and range of inputs to the curriculum.
4. Less emphasis upon traditional subjects.
5. Greater emphasis upon the development of skills and concepts which are capable of application in a wide variety of contexts and which more consciously link the school with the adult world.
6. Stress upon performance criteria as the basis for student assessment.
7. Greater emphasis upon a more co-operative

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committed. Nor is managerialism a substitute for an administrative regime that respects and promotes professional practice.

approach to learning and upon greater student involvement in the determination of their own learning.

8. Stress upon the development of more comprehensive systems of recording positive achievement which will permit credit accumulation over time and facilitate credit transfer.

The GCSE as currently proposed can at best only make a limited contribution to the achievement of such an agenda and at worst is likely to seriously hinder its realization. The curriculum thinking behind its single subject structure appears largely to reflect the requirements and ideas of the 1970s and not these of the present day, leave alone the future. It continues to remain obsessed with narrow notions of reliability and comparability and it clearly regards differentiation as one of its major virtues. This stress upon differentiation shows itself in two major ways: firstly, in an administrative structure which encourages the existing GCE and CSE Boards to maintain maximum autonomy, and secondly in assessment patterns which seek to achieve differentiation largely in terms of the questions or problems which students are asked and not in terms of the answers or solutions which they provide. The emphasis is thus placed upon asking students of supposedly differing abilities different questions and not in evaluating the range of answers that can result from asking everyone the same question. Sir Keith Joseph has recently made his own personal contribution to differentiation by proposing Distinction and Merit Certificates for the GCSE on the erroneous grounds that they will encourage greater breadth of study. It is clear, moreover, that he intends to press ahead with the introduction of at least the Distinction Certificate despite almost universal opposition.

The existing GCE and CSE Boards, having been given administrative control of the new system, see merit in maintaining their existing procedures wherever possible with the result that approaches based upon validation and accreditation are unlikely to make much headway and flexibility will be at a premium. Finally the principal means used to achieve central control, namely national criteria (both subject specific and general) and a powerful Secondary Examinations Council with its membership nominated by the Secretary of State, have an inbuilt tendency towards ossification and a maintenance of the status quo. In such a situation it is absolutely essential that the criteria are regularly reviewed and updated and that administrative and bureaucratic considerations do not make life difficult for those who wish to innovate. The attitude of the SEC and the new Examining Groups to both Mode 3 and to new regional and national curriculum initiatives (whatever form these may take in the future) will be particularly significant in this context. It is, incidentally, a mistake to assume that improved quality will automatically result from the use of external examinations based upon national criteria, and there may well be a conflict between the assessment requirements necessary to secure and improve quality and the assessment techniques needed to meet the demands of particular subject specific criteria.

So far in this article the view taken of GCSE has been negative, indeed hostile, and this would be unfair if it suggested that the proposals fail to make any contribution to the realization of the agenda suggested earlier. The subject specific criteria, for example, substantially emphasise skills and concepts at the expense of what Sir Keith has referred to as the factual clutter of many current GCE and CSE syllabuses. This can only exercise a beneficial effect upon the teaching of many subjects. In History, for example, the criteria require the use of sources and stress the need for students to distinguish between information and evidence and to develop empathy. In English they require the development of oral skills and in the Sciences they place a major emphasis upon investigational and practical skills. By requiring compulsory coursework the criteria will, moreover, ensure that the wider range of techniques necessary to assess these skills are utilized. The move towards using performance criteria as the basis upon which to make comparisons is also reflected in the government's clear intention to develop and use subject specific grade-related criteria although it must remain an open question whether these can ever be successfully integrated with the present GCSE structure. All this, however, serves to underline that the GCSE will turn out to be a very different examination from O-level or CSE, and that for many teachers it will significantly effect how they teach in the future. This is, however, but to scratch the surface and one has only to look at the proposals for the CPVE to see how much the GCSE remains within the current mainstream of public examining.

This article has so far tried to make two points. First, that the current government sponsored proposals for changes in public examinations make it virtually impossible for secondary comprehensive schools to develop coherent curricula for all their students and a possible agenda was suggested as a basis for this curriculum. Secondly, that the GCSE as a key component in these changes is not able to make a significant contribution towards the achievement of this agenda. If this line or argument is acceptable and the agenda commands support at least in general terms, as I believe it does, then two questions need to be addressed. First, what conditions are necessary in order to achieve such an agenda and secondly, what would be the effect, if these conditions were not met, upon public examinations in general and upon GCSE in particular?

In order to achieve coherence in the 14-19 curriculum there are I believe three basic conditions:

1. The establishment of a consensus about the nature of that curriculum.
2. A reappraisal of the role of the teaching profession in relation to the assessment of their own students and hence to professional development in general.
3. The development of a model for public examining based not upon syllabus and assessment prescription but upon the principles of validation and accreditation.

Of these the first is the most crucial for without consensus there is no possibility of realizing this or any other agenda. Consensus must, I think, be reached, as it has in other countries, upon two interrelated principles. First, that it is essential to extend general education for all for as long as possible and to postpone specific job preparation. Second to recognize that general education does not equal academic education and is in consequence only open to a select minority. What is required therefore is a reconceptualization of general

education on a much broader basis which will consciously link the school with the outside world. If we cannot establish such a consensus, and there must be a question mark over the present government's willingness to do this, then the development of public examinations will continue to encourage an increasingly divisive curriculum.

One thing which all the current proposals for public examinations require is a greater direct involvement by teachers (and to some degree students) in the assessment process. Such involvement must not, however, take place in piecemeal fashion and in the context of undertaking a bit of inadequately paid work here and another bit there, as is currently the case. It must instead be viewed as a crucial part of every teacher's professional activities. As such it can only be considered nationally as part of a general agreement upon salaries and conditions of service which fairly reflects the value that teaching and the teacher has for the community as a whole. It will nevertheless also require the teaching profession to reappraise its current ambivalent attitudes to assessment and the status it is willing to accord to competence in assessment as a facet of professional development.

Validation and accreditation are technically two different functions although they are frequently used as if they were synonymous. Validation is the process whereby approval is given to arrangements for the development of courses of study and their related assessment in accordance with an agreed set of rules and regulations. These may be flexible or prescriptive and may take a whole variety of different forms from content stipulation, through criteria of varying kinds, to an overall curriculum framework of the kind suggested for the CPVE core. Accreditation on the other hand is the process whereby a body, possibly established specifically for the purpose, grants its imprimatur to other agencies to undertake activities on its behalf. This imprimatur tends to take one of two major forms: a licence to operate (franchising in commercial terms) or the granting of a certificate or some similar award upon successful completion.The granting of a licence or certificate can be subject to extremely rigorous conditions and involve inspection, and over the whole process hangs the power to revoke.

Central to the two processes is a concern with underwriting the principles upon which the assessment is based and the structures through which it will be undertaken. They are not concerned therefore primarily with the detailed day to day operation of assessment, with techniques of assessment, and with the end products of assessment, all of which remain the obsessive concern of examining agencies such as the CSE and GCE Boards. Of the current examining initiatives, CPVE and Records of Achievement lend themselves most readily to these processes; GCSE does not. Moreover, many of the agencies currently running public examinations lack both experience of and sympathy with the less prescriptive and advisory role which is required — although there are signs of change, notably in projects such as the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement (OCEA). The multiplicity of current examining agencies also inevitably creates difficulties for the development of progression and credit transfer which ought to constitute a major benefit of assessment systems based upon validation and accreditation.

The implications of the points made in the last few paragraphs for current public examinations in general and GCSE in particular are very significant.They call in question both the need to continue with formal examinations at the end of compulsory schooling and the capacity of the existing GCE and CSE Boards in particular to be able to meet the changed requirement. We are indeed currently at a watershed in relation to the maintenance of public examinations in their present form, in large measure because the erosion of the meal ticket value of examination results has caused young people to question the value of traditional certification. Whether or not this disenchantment can be translated into real change over the next few years is far from clear and must depend, as already indicated, upon the securing of some national agreement about the nature of comprehensive secondary education. So long as deep differences continue to exist here they will continue to be reflected within the examination system as is currently the case. Work undertaken over the next few years by local authorities upon Records of Achievement are likely to be very important here in encouraging cohesion, particularly if they concentrate on two things; first, the use of such records for curriculum implementation and not for the provision of supplementary information about extra-mural activities and second, where they involve locally based systems of validation which are capable of delivering national standards where this is required. Both these aspects are addressed, for example, in the Dorset scheme which is one of the eight pilot projects on records of achievement being supported by the DES.

Success with such schemes, and a clear definition of what constituted success, could lead to a drastic reduction in entries for the GCSE. This could be replicated nationally if the government were to take on board the experience from this work when it introduces Records of Achievement nationally. It would also enable local authorities and schools to deal much more flexibly with the post compulsory examination jungle. This could, I believe, be the first step on the road to developing a less burdensome, less expensive, more equitable and more cohesive system of public examinations which would not require subject based academic achievement tests such as the GCSE at the end of compulsory education. We cannot indeed afford to continue with either the present system or with examinations like the GCSE because we cannot afford to continue to close doors and to force divisive and inappropriate decisions upon young people at far too early an age. Sadly the present government does not yet appear to have appreciated this and it may in consequence reap a whirlwind of disenchantment.

SUGGESTED READING

1. Dorset/SREB Assessment and Profiling Project. Discussion Document No. 1 January 1985, Dorset LEA.
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Working with Teachers

Some Reflections on the Girls Into Science and Technology Project

Alison Kelly

This well-known action-research project was based on the Manchester area. Here Alison Kelly, of the Department of Sociology, University of Manchester, discusses some aspects of the team's experiences. A full length book, **Getting the GIST**, by Judith Whyte, is in preparation. FORUM is glad to publish an article on this important issue.

Girls now leave school with slightly better qualifications (on average) than boys. But this does not mean that the problem of sexism in school is solved. On the contrary the move towards quantitative equality may serve to obscure a differentiation in subject choice and preparation for the future which remains as strong as ever. Approximately three times as many boys as girls take O level physics and approximately four times as many take CSE physics. Over 95 per cent of exam entries in all technical subjects are from boys.This means that girls are disadvantaged in a technological society not only in the search for jobs but also as citizens who need to understand and control their environment.

Girls Into Science and Technology (GIST) was an action-research project which attempted to remedy this situation. The project team collaborated with teachers in eight co-educational comprehensive schools in the Manchester area to devise and implement intervention strategies aimed at improving girls attitudes to the physical sciences and technical crafts and encouraging them to continue with these subjects when they became optional. Interventions included visits to schools by women scientists and technologists who talked about their work and provided role models for the girls; posters and worksheets about women's contributions to science; curriculum innovation to develop teaching materials more orientated towards girls' interests and a humanistic view of science; discussions about the limiting effects of sex role stereotypes; and careers advice linked to option choices at schools. All of these interventions were implemented in collaboration with the teachers in the schools who had control over whether or not to try out a particular strategy.

Project evaluation showed that children exposed to the action programme became markedly less willing to endorse sex stereotypes and showed slightly more favourable attitudes towards science than other children. Their subject choices became somewhat less sex stereotyped than in previous years and they were more likely to say that there were no subjects at which one sex was better than the other. The girls were more likely to mention a job with some scientific or technical content as their expected or desired occupation, less likely to say that they wanted their future husband to be cleverer than themselves and more likely to want to be employed while they had young children.

The project team were reasonably satisfied with the changes in children's attitudes and option choices. We never anticipated that a small project (the total funding would barely have provided one extra teacher for six months in each school) could produce massive changes in traditional beliefs and practices. We were happy to have shown that work in schools could produce some alteration in pupils' views of the world.

However GIST was also concerened with changing teachers, and here the results were less encouraging. Teachers can be seen as a filter through which innovations in school have to pass before they become institutionalised. On GIST we believed that if teachers were not convinced of the value of an innovation they could — intentionally or unintentionally — sabotage it. If teachers take the usual assumptions of a patriarchal society (that males are 'normal' and females are different; that what boys do is more interesting and and more important than what girls do; that women and men have naturally different roles in life) then this will inevitably show in the hidden curriculum of their classroom interactions. For this reason we put a lot of effort into working with teachers. At the beginning of the project we ran a series of workshops to increase their awareness of the scope of the problem and the research that had been done on it, and to sensitise them to their role in perpetuating sex stereotypes. Throughout the three years that we were working in the schools we took every opportunity to reinforce this message in casual conversations with teachers; we tried to involve them in the design and implementation of the various interventions with the children; and we undertook observation in classrooms so that teachers (who knew what we were looking for) could practice gender-fair interactions and gain some insight into their own behaviour.

Despite these efforts an independent evaluation of GIST found that the teachers we had been working with generally denied that their behaviour had altered as a result of the project. Only four teachers out of the 34 interviewed gave changing teachers' attitudes or behaviours as an aim of the project and only one mentioned changing womens' position in society. There was some evidence of shifts in teachers' classroom practices, but these were rather limited. As a result I am sceptical about the extent to which the innovations developed during the life of the GIST project will survive in its absence. It is this question of the teachers' response to GIST and the possible limitations it imposes on work in schools that I want to explore in this article.

All innovation in schools involves, at least implicitly, a critique of teachers' previous practice, and is thus potentially threatening. However most projects are concerned with pedagogy, the central purpose of the

classroom, and are therefore seen as legitimate areas of concern. Gender roles are different because they extend beyond the school gates, and intervention in this area may be particularly fraught. Many teachers on the GIST project made the link between what we were saying about girls in school and the position of women in their own families — as evidenced by the number of anecdotes we were told about wives and daughters who were either completely happy in their traditional role or had broken into non-traditional fields with no trouble at all. We were thus perceived as criticising teachers' personal lives as well as their professional practices. This may have made them particularly reluctant to admit that there was a problem at all.

In an attempt to minimise this threatening aspect of the project we deliberately played down the personal ramifications of sex stereotyping and concentrated on professional concerns of equality of opportunity within schools for all pupils. We didn't talk much about women's inferior position in society and how this is perpetuated through the schools. We hoped that this approach would allow the teachers (most of whom were men) to co-operate with the project without having to re-examine their personal lives and ask themselves questions such as whether it was fair for their wives to have the main responsibility for child care.

In the short run this worked. We encountered no overt hostility, and most teachers were willing to try out the ideas that we proposed. However in the long run this purely professional approach may have back-fired. Most teachers did not make the links between their own assumptions and girls' under-achievement. They readily agreed that equality was important, but thought that it already existed, and that any residual differences between girls and boys were genetic. Since they did not accept that there was any sex stereotyping in their classrooms, many teachers did not see the problem as theirs, and did not feel motivated to search for solutions. However we tried to disguise it, the message to teachers was that they had been disadvantaging half their pupils all their professional lives. This is clearly an uncomfortable message to hear. It may account for the distancing techniques employed by so many who, while admitting that it existed elsewhere, insisted that there was no problem in their school. By and large the teachers were unwilling to examine their own prejudices and motivations and generally remained accepting of the project rather than committed to it.

The literature on change in education constantly stresses the importance of involving teachers in an active process of problem solving. However involving teachers is not necessarily an advantage to a radical project which is trying to change social relations beyond the school gates. The report of the Teacher Corp project in the United States (which aimed to improve education for under-privileged children by a special training system for new teachers who would then act as change agents in ghetto schools) concluded that

> Contrary to a widely held opinion, broad-based participation did not assure that the program would be successful. Where power was equalised, less technological change occurred, apparently because teachers were in a better position to co-opt the program and to use it for their own purposes. Power equalisation facilitates change only if all parties involved agree that change is necessary or desirable.

On the other hand where existing teachers were not fully involved in developing the programme the new teachers tended to be stigmatised as impractical radicals whose ideas were rejected out of hand.

This stigmatisation also seemed to happen on the GIST project. To an extent that surprised us when we read it, the independent evaluation revealed that the project teachers saw the three female members of the project team as **extremely** feminist. Despite our efforts to play down the political content of the project, and a constant feeling that we were biting our tongues off to avoid antagonising teachers, we were perceived as aggressive and pushy. Interestingly the one male member of the team was seen as much more reasonable, although we felt that his approach was similar to ours. There is thus a real dilemma. If teachers are involved in planning the project but do not truly share its aims, it may become co-opted and lose all impact; if teachers are not involved in planning they may reject the project as being too radical and impractical.

One way out of this diemma could be to approach teachers more directly on a personal as well as a professional level. Since even a muted approach is seen as unacceptably radical, and yet the softly-softly approach produces little change, it may be better to challenge stereotyped behaviour directly. At the risk of alienating some teachers completely, this approach may also enable others to examine the real issues involved in counter-sexist education. This argument is supported by the fact that those teachers who were most effective on the project were mainly either feminists or living with feminists. These were people who had already examined their own lives and made a personal commitment to changing women's position. They were sometimes unsure what form this commitment should take in the classroom, and GIST could be useful in providing suggestions and support.

In retrospect it seems that we may have given ourselves an impossible task in working with teachers who were not initially convinced of the aims of the project. We wanted to show what could be done with ordinary teachers in ordinary schools. Perhaps the answer is: very little, directly.

But this is not a council of despair. Paradoxically it seems that GIST may have been more effective in other schools than we were in the project schools. The project received considerable publicity, and many teachers in other schools wrote to us requesting copies of our publications or help with particular problems. If teachers are sufficiently interested to take the time to write to us, the chances are that they have already made some of the crucial personal-professional links. GIST could then assist by suggesting what action to take. Moreover the existence of a funded project could help to legitimise the concern of teachers elsewhere. Girls' under-representation in science is now considered a serious educational issue, to an extent that seemed inconceivable five years ago, and GIST has contributed to creating the current awareness.

This suggests that another way out of the dilemma of working with sceptical teachers may be to concentrate on creating a social climate which demands change in current practices. Publicity about an action-research project may bring the problem into the public eye, and lead other teachers to define it as their problem. This reflects back into the original school, where staff now

feel that they are receiving recognition for something that was previously considered an imposition. Schools which are not involved begin to think that they are behind the times, and decide to set up committees to consider the problem.

In conclusion, I want to suggest that we should be neither too optimistic nor too pessimistic about the possibilites for social change through the schools. Our experience on GIST suggests that it is relatively easy to change pupils' attitudes on issues such as sex stereotyping. This is a first, and necessary step. Convincing them to actually take the plunge and change their behaviour (in this case their option choices) is a second and more difficult stage, which lags behind theoretical permissiveness. Most difficult of all is to alter the customs and ethos of institutions, as manifested through teachers' assumptions and behaviours. But schools are not isolated institutions and they do respond to changes in societal values — values which in turn can be affected by changes in schools.

Acknowledgements
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'Parental Involvement' — some thoughts on recent trends

Kath Green

What are the pros and cons of parental involvement? Here Kath Green, now lecturer in primary education at Sheffield University, argues for a searching look at present practice.

Regular readers of the educational press could be forgiven for believing that we are currently witnessing something of a revolution in the field of parental involvement in primary education. While my own passionate interest in this area might lead me to raise a hearty cheer, I think a little reflection is called for.

My views on parental involvement began to take shape when, as a probationary teacher in an inner city primary school, I became worried about the number of parents who *appeared* to show a lack of interest in their children's education — at least when measured by the then standard criterion of attendance at the schools' 'open evening'. My subsequent experience of home visiting shamed me into rejecting the method I had so naively used as a means of assessing parental interest. Indeed, in all the homes I visited I was chastened to find interest in education in abundance together with friendship freely offered in no small measure.

In this article I would like to spend a little time reflecting on what we mean by the term 'parental involvement' and whether 'more' necessarily means 'better'. One of my recent concerns has been to note the ease with which some schools build up quite a reputation for having a 'good' parental involvement programme based on what could be regarded as rather thin evidence. Certainly there seems to be a growing assumption that any school in which groups of parents are regularly to be found is automatically deemed to have a 'good' parental involvement programme.

Consider, for a moment, some of the many ways in which schools involve parents. At perhaps the most basic level many schools invite parents in as 'supporters' to attend a host of traditional school functions during the course of each school year — harvest festivals, sports days, Christmas concerts, etc. Sadly, many of these occasions are still used as a school P-R event with the best readers, most talented musicians, etc. to the fore and the 'special needs' children joining in the occasional chorus from the back row of the choir.Having attended many school sports days as a parent, I have often wondered what it feels like to be the parent of the overweight child who struggles to finish the race.

Nowadays many schools actively encourage parental

support at a variety of fund-raising events which range from jumble sales and autumn fayres to family discos and social evenings. Perhaps the most worrying aspect about increased parental activity in this area is that it can all too easily result in an ever widening gap between the rich and the poor. While schools in plush suburbs may have no difficulty in raising large amounts of money for extra computers, disc drives, playground equipment and even books, those schools in inner city areas, where many parents may be finding it hard to make ends meet, may struggle to raise the cash to keep the rabbit fed!

There are, of course, many other ways in which schools seek to involve parents including parents evenings, home visiting, introductory school visits, PTAs, socials, etc., etc. It would be beyond the scope of this article to attempt a detailed consideration of each one of these in turn.

However, there is one particular form of parental involvement which seems to have gained increasing popularity in recent years — namely'parents in school'. It is now not unusual to find parents (mostly mums) in school during the school day involving themselves in a variety of different activities. They may be mending books, painting furniture, mixing paint, teaching children to sew, listening to children read, making costumes for the school play or escorting children on trips to the swimming bath. The possibilities are seemingly endless. With a school full of busy parents it might be tempting to sit back and congratulate ourselves on having achieved an effective programme of parental involvement.

But, can it be right to believe that the mere presence of groups of busy parents in school is synonymous with having a good parental involvement programme? This would certainly appear to be a belief held by a good number of people. While I would certainly subscribe to the view that bringing parents into school can be very beneficial in a variety of ways, it is not without its problems.

In the first instance, if this form of parental involvement is to form a major part of the school's parental involvement programme then we need to examine very carefully just *who* is involved in these activities. What proportion of our parents actually help in school? I suspect that in most cases the actual percentage of parents involved in this way may be quite small. If this is the case, then it can hardly form the lynch pin of our parental involvement programme. That is not to deny the fact that much can be gained by both school and parents when parents are involved in the day to day life of the school. Parents in school have a unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how a school works and I have certainly witnessed situations in which individual parents have experienced a marked growth in self esteem as a result of the valuable contribution they have made to the life of the school.

A second danger arises when teachers begin to equate helping in school with parental *interest* in education. I have heard it said more than once recently that "of course many of our parents won't come into help because they're not really interested." This assumption is surely just as dangerous as the now hopefully discredited notion that parental interest in education could be assessed by attendance at parents' evenings!

Parents really ought not to be placed in a position whereby they are made to feel guilty if they don't want to give up their time to help in school. Indeed, many parents are far too busy looking for *paid* work to be able to even consider giving up time to provide schools with free labour. As paid professionals, we can hardly assume that all parents should be willing to do this voluntary work. After all, those of us who are parents ourselves are not in a position to offer *our* services to our child's school free of charge. It is as well to remember, too, that for some parents the school day provides them with their only respite from the pressures of bringing up young children. In their case, going into school might be the worst thing they could possibly do.

One other issue seems worthy of mention. Just what are the processes of selection involved? In some schools the selection process is an overt one, with individual teachers inviting 'suitable' parents into school for specific activities. In some cases this selection process results in many parents believing that you have to be an ex-teacher in order to be invited! Any parental involvement programme that seeks to involve only one section of parents may well have the undesirable and unintended effect of alienating other groups still further. We must remember that when we choose one group we are also, whether we like it or not, rejecting others.

Whilst some schools invite only 'suitable' parents in to help, others have a declared policy that all are welcome. Policy and practice, however, are not always tightly meshed and it may be that a self-selection process develops whereby those parents lacking in self-esteem would not feel 'good enough' to take up the offer. A policy that 'all are welcome' does not automatically result in practice where all *feel* welcome.

The notion that some parents are 'suitable' and others not is one that worries me agreat deal and one that has even found its way into 'official' publications. For example, **Primary Practice**, which devoted a mere 6 of its 224 pages to the whole issue of parents and the community, felt the need to assert:

> . . . not all the parents who offer enthusiastic help will be equally competent. Some offers may even have to be refused, with possible embarrassment and anger.
>
> **(Primary Practice**, (1) p.153)

Surely, if we believe that *all* children should be made welcome in our schools, whatever their difficulties or background, then it must follow that *all* parents should be made equally welcome, too. The very nature of the parents' special relationship with the child makes all parents, in my opinion, 'suitable'.

In conclusion, while I would certainly see a place for involving parents in classroom life, I think it is important for us to realise that this sort of involvement is not without its problems. If parental involvement is to become a reality for all parents then we must examine every aspect of our parental involvement programmes for its 'hidden curriculum'. Only then will we be in a position to develop practices that benefit all parents and all children.

Reference

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In Defence of TVEI

Richard Pring

The FORUM stance has generally been highly critical of TVEI, and especially of its implications for comprehensive secondary education. While recognising some of these dangers Richard Pring here presents an elaborate defence of this project (or series of projects). We are glad to publish this defence, by one well known for his strong support for the principles of comprehensive education, since a full and informed debate on this issue is clearly essential. Richard Pring is Professor of Education at the University of Exeter.

1. Context

Educational aims must reflect wider social values. And these values will in turn reflect particular social conditions and problems. They must do. To educate children is to help them grow up as persons. And as persons they have to learn how to live independently and constructively within a particular society. Dewey's own educational philosophy, and the central place he gave to his own version of democracy and of vocational education, reflected important aspects of "the new world" — the need, for example, to create from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds a sense of community and a society that would work to everyone' s advantage.

Similarly today: we have experienced social and economic changes that require deeper reflection upon our educational aims, and upon the values that underlie them. This should not lead to an abandonment of "liberal principles". But those principles, as they are embedded in our educational practice, need constantly to be questioned and to be reformulated. At any one time they reflect a particular view of society, of what it means to grow up as a person within that society, and of the nature of knowledge as it is then understood.

Let me, fairly arbitrarily, divide the current social influences upon educational practice into two kinds: those that impinge upon personal growth and those that affect the utility of education.

With respect to personal growth, first, despite the much earlier age at which young people mature physically and emotionally, the day on which they can leave the education or training schemes and, through earning their keep, become fully-fledged adults, is being postponed. This clearly creates personal tension which the curriculum is then required to alleviate. We must now think of formal education up to 18 for everyone, irrespective of ability or social class.

Secondly, the world in which young people live has fewer moral certainties than there were a generation ago, and young people themselves therefore need help in establishing a defensible set of values to live by. To educate will involve introducing students into moral traditions — into a world of values; but the boundaries of those traditions and their precise content is now much more open to debate.

Thirdly, the future is less predictable in what it has in store for young people and they need the skills and personal qualities to deal with these uncertainties and changes.

Finally it is the experience of many schools and colleges that the qualities that employers require of young people have less to do with academic success than with personal skills and qualities.

With reference to the utility of education, first, there is the need to develop those general capacities of the mind through which young people are enabled, when they are subsequently employed, to acquire the more specific vocationally related skills and qualities that their job requires. And no doubt that would be the aim of a broadly conceived general education. Too often, however, such a general education, by concentrating upon the subject-matter of different forms of knowledge, pays little heed to the mode of learning which, in terms of personal growth and social utility, may be more important.

Secondly, there is the need to develop appropriate attitudes towards the industrial base of the very system through which we are trying to educate young people. That certainly requires a critical stance, but one that is properly informed or "educated" and that is not imbued with what so often in the past has been a contempt for the practical and for the productive part of our economy.

Thirdly there is a need to adapt to the technological base of industry, of information exchange, and of communication. Similar reasons to those, given in 1861 by Herbert Spencer for the place of science in the school curriculum, could be advanced for technological knowledge — it is essential for an understanding of those forces, social and material, that affect our well-being.

To sum up: there are significant social and economic changes that affect both the personal well-being of individuals and the social and economic demands upon the educational system. Postponed entry into employment, prospects of unemployment, shifting unemployment patterns, the increasing technological base of industry and of information exchange and communication, the undermining of traditional values and ways of life, the unpredictability of what the future holds in store — all these should enter into that continuing educational debate about aims and values. Many teachers have for a long time thought so, and have questioned the validity of an educational experience that does not seem to relate to these matters.

In defence of TVEI, therefore, I see it as a catalyst that, within a system which for too long has been captivated by a narrowing and inadequate notion of "liberal education", has stimulated a vigorous and (in

my local experience) imaginative reappraisal of the curriculum and of the educational purposes which it should serve. As one senior teacher, for whom I have a very profound respect, explained, it had legitimated that which for many years she and her colleagues had been trying to do, but which they felt went against the normal expectations of the school. For her and for many, there are contradictions between curriculum reality, educational theory, and learning aspirations (so admirably identified by Mr. Lea in **Forum**, (Vol.25, No.3) which went unacknowledged at the official level but which teachers are only too aware of. TVEI would serve a useful purpose if it did nothing else than make these contradictions explicit and stimulate us to rethink our educational aims along the lines that are already demonstrated in some of the best TVEI practice.

2. TVEI

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) was announced in November 1982 — first by the Prime Minister, secondly by the Secretary of State for Employment, and thirdly by the Secretary of State for Education. £25 million was to be injected, by the Manpower Services Commission, into the educational system to develop pilot schemes for a more technically and vocationally oriented curriculum from 14 to 18. If the educational system did not comply, then the MSC would proceed independently of that system. For the first time, therefore, a major government initiative for pupils within the compulsory period of schooling bypassed the normal channels of educational finance and of curriculum responsibility. Understandably and rightly there was consternation amongst LEAs and questions about the legality of these developments.

Nonetheless, 14 pilot schemes were started in September 1983. A further 46 were started in September 1984. More indeed will be commenced in September 1985. And much more money is being provided for TVEI related inservice training for teachers (TRIST) from September 1985 onwards. TVEI in one form or another is here to stay, and it is imperative that we come to terms with it, direct it along educationally defensible routes, and ensure that earlier fears of educational impoverishment in the face of vocational training are not realised.

We can look at TVEI, as indeed any major curriculum innovation, at three different levels, and much of the criticism of TVEI is faulty because it fails to make these distinctions.

i) TVEI as a proposal

TVEI can be seen as a curriculum blueprint — as a set of criteria that spells out what the TVEI curriculum should look like. These criteria were given by the MSC as follows:

a) the provision of equal opportunities for both sexes;
b) a four year curriculum designed as a preparation for adult life in a society liable to rapid changes:
c) an emphasis upon personal development, particularly such personal qualities as initiative and the ability and propensity to face and to solve problems;
d) vocational and technical, as well as general, elements;
e) a relation to potential employment opportunities;
f) planned work experience;
g) links with subsequent training and educational opportunities;
h) regular assessment, related to guidance and counselling;
i) preparation for one or more nationally recognised qualification.

These criteria are broad indeed, though by no means empty. But they allow for a range of interpretations, and in no way can they be construed as narrowly vocational or indeed as illiberal. In most schools the TVEI element has run alongside traditional curriculum patterns, and only at the post 16 level is the specifically TVEI aspect of education expected to broaden to embrace most of the curriculum.

Put simply, TVEI is not a course, or indeed a curriculum. It is a series of pilot schemes, differently interpreted but meeting certain broad criteria. As far as any one scheme is concerned, it is a lump of money to enable schools and colleges to develop a coherently planned and progressively developed curriculum from 14 to 18 that puts more explicit weight upon personal development, technical knowledge, and vocational orientation than hitherto in order to meet the problems outlined earlier. It requires some sacrifice of institutional autonomy in meeting these criteria, since few schools have the resources and expertise to act independently, and it poses a challenge to the kind of educational experience (above all the teaching styles) that most pupils have traditionally received.

ii) TVEI as curriculum practice

Secondly, TVEI can be seen as a particular set of practices — as a curriculum that has been established in specific schools. TVEI, as it is spelt out in the MSC criteria, is indeed a vague idea — though less so than "common core curriculum" or "liberal education" which many would want to defend in the face of TVEI. But ideas become less vague as they are interpreted through practice. Those earlier pilot schemes responded to the opportunity to engage in curriculum development by making concrete what originally was but a vague aspiration. In that sense, the original idea has been shaped and given substance within particular educational traditions and by groups of teachers. To criticise TVEI therefore requires detailed examination of individual schemes, for it is there that the development of educational thinking (not the implementation of someone else's thinking) is being enacted.

What then are the distinctive ways in which teachers are locally making sense of the original proposal?

First, there is a fairly fundamental challenge to didactic and authoritarian modes of teaching. Emphasis is placed upon the gradual transfer of responsibility for learning to the student. This is reflected in, and developed through, such strategies as assignment-led learning, often across different modules. Clearly this calls for a graduated shift of responsibility and considerable skills on the part of the teacher to write assignments that both encourage student involvement and yet at the same time ensure conceptual development and the acquisition of appropriate skills. Teachers in one scheme have not found this easy, and yet see such assignment-led curriculum to be a key element in TVEI.

Secondly, a central place is given to personal development through counselling and guidance, usually assisted by a system of profiling. Stress is given to the enhancement of personal qualities and attitudes, such as are required to work co-operatively in groups and independently by oneself. Of course here, as always in the curriculum, difficulties abound in translating aspiration into practice. But characteristic of TVEI practice is the exploration and development of profiling, counselling, group work, and tutorial guidance.

Thirdly, there is an increased technological component, particularly in the area of information retrieval, through the use of the resources and tools of enquiry made available by modern technology.

iii) **TVEI as an aspect of social policy**

Whatever the merits of TVEI as a curriculum proposal, or indeed as curriculum practice, it could nonetheless serve simply to reinforce social powers and structures that rebound on the curriculum. In other words, a curriculum (whatever its intrinsic merits) serves a particular function within a wider network of influences, and thus indirectly affects what, and how, children learn. We need to examine TVEI critically from that point of view.

This paradox might be explained by reference to the inception and development of the Certificate of Secondary Education. This was conceived in the early 1960s and first taken in 1965. At one level, the CSE reflected a disenchantment with the myriad examinations, usually educationally defective, that were filling a gap identified by parents, schools and employers. Whatever the reservations felt by the Beloe Committee in establishing yet another examination system, that Committee had a vision of a form of assessment that would be teacher controlled and that would release the curriculum from the straightjacket of GCE. It would enable the curriculum to develop along educationally valid routes as perceived by the professionals. There would be room for practical knowledge, for creative work, for enquiry based learning, and for co-operative study, all of which seemed ruled out by traditional modes of assessment.

That vision now, in the light of experience, seems heady indeed. There was an underestimation of those social forces (academic, parental, employer, and indeed educational) which assigned to the CSE (despite the many exciting curriculum developments pioneered under its label) a lowly place in the system. "O" level remained the gold standard. CSE, therefore both reflected and reinforced curriculum divisions and teachers' expectations that inhibited the progress towards a genuinely comprehensive education for all.

Similarly with TVEI: it was born of a desire for more vocational and technical education for the middle range of ability, at a time when there was scepticism about the achievements of the majority of young people. Whatever the determination of individual schemes not to limit TVEI to a particular band of ability, there is evidence that this is how it was seen and how it has been promoted. The failure of some schemes to obtain "O" level certification for the first two years of the programme has discouraged more able young people to opt for TVEI programmes. And the current emphasis upon a 14 to 18 curriculum, with a vocational orientation for some and with an unreformed emphasis upon traditional subjects for others, both shapes TVEI in a particular way and, through TVEI, provides a potential framework for a divided curriculum. TVEI does not, either as a curriculum blue print or as curriculum practice, *entail* a divided or a divisive curriculum. Far from it. It does, at its best, embrace educational principles that, rightly in my view, challenge the fossilised remnants of a "liberal education" that has itself been divisive. But in the wider social context of the educational system it could so easily function as the vehicle through which the educational experience of young people is differentiated into the academic for the aspiring professional classes and into the practical and technical for the rest. An injustice indeed. But one which is a distinctive possibility unless one is careful.

To conclude the section, therefore, I defend TVEI as that which, more than any other recent curriculum innovation, has articulated those valid and important reactions to courses which, whether in terms of liberal education or in terms of practical relevance, have seemed inadequate for meeting the needs of individuals or of society. Both as curriculum blueprint and as curriculum practice, it has provided scope for developing teaching styles, modes of assessment, technological resources, techniques of enquiry, systematic and progressive planning, and links between education and future prospects. But the wider social function that it serves might betray the quite radical challenge that it offers to curriculum practice. To that extent my defence of TVEI is necessarily reserved.

3. Critical Concepts

The main challenge that "TVEI in practice" poses to existing ways of understanding the curriculum lies in the critical examination of what the philosopher John Dewey referred to as "false dualism".

a) "Liberal" versus "vocational"

It is often assumed that a liberal education, to be truly liberating, remains aloof from those basic and practical concerns which, whether rightly or wrongly, preoccupy many young people. For example, many young people look for schools to be relevant to what they will eventually do, and the anxiety about a job, or about the kind of qualification and training necessary for getting the right kind of job, understandably colours any one person's appreciation of schooling. But this concern often is unacceptable to the "liberal educator", who sees his or her role to be initiating pupils into those different forms of knowledge which constitute the mature and developed mind and which are reflected in the subjects of the traditional curriculum, even though they may have no immediate relevance to such practical concerns.

This in my view is a false dichotomy, and one which is implicitly challenge by TVEI. The preoccupation of young people with future employment, or indeed with the personal consequences of possible employment, is one aspect of their exploration of the quality of life, and it is a central educational task to help young people to examine realistically and critically the quality of life as they live it and as they aspire to it. To quote Dewey in that excellent chapter on Vocational Education

(Democracy and Education, Chapter 23). **'A vocation means nothing but such a direction of life activities as renders them perceptibly significant to a person, because of the consequences they accomplish . . . The opposite of a career is neither leisure nor culture, but aimlessness, capriciousness, the absence of cumulative achievement in experience, on the personal side, and idle display . . . on the social side.'**

b) "Education" versus "Training"

This is another false dichotomy that has permeated our education system at every level. Certainly, the concepts "education" and "training" do not mean the same — education indicates a relatively broad and critical understanding of things, whereas "training" suggests the preparation for a relatively specific task or job. But, despite the different meanings, one and the same activity could be both educational and a training. Thus one can be trained as a teacher, as a plumber, as a train driver, or as a doctor, but that training can be such that the experience is educational. For example, a student teacher can be trained to plan the lessons, to manage the class, and to display the children's work. But the training can be so conducted that the student is educated through it — in becoming critical of what he or she is doing, in achieving an understanding of the activity, and in coming to see it in a wider educational perspective.

There is considerable emphasis in TVEI schemes upon training in specific skills, and that, to some, indicates a narrowing focus and an impoverishment of the curriculum, That *could* be the case, but need not be. The choice of skills to be trained in might itself arise from wider educational goals. Thus a critical understanding of technology might presuppose practical competence in its use. And certainly the acquisition of certain skills makes accessible modes of enquiry that lead to deeper understanding of key issues. For that reason TVEI has quite rightly emphasised skills training — the good art teacher has always done this. What needs more thorough discussion is the choice of skills that one should train young people in if their subsequent progress is to be made.

c) "Practical" versus "theoretical"

A distinction is frequently made between knowing and doing — between the cognitive and theoretical on the one hand and the affective and the practical on the other. And the curiculum has often been criticised for being too academic — for emphasising the theoretical and ignoring the more feeling and practical side of our nature. The response to such criticism is indeed a divided and divisive curriculum — the more theoretical for the more able and emphasis upon "learning through doing" for the others (working in the community, the practical application of mathematics, craft and design, drama, etc.).

This distinction has tended not only to give low status to the practical but to distort the role of intelligence in practical activities. We need to develop "know how" as well as "knowledge that" and we need to learn how to *behave* intelligently just as we need to learn how to think intelligently. Indeed since "knowledge that" or propositional knowledge arises so often from an attempt to reflect upon and to learn from practical interests (religious practice precedes theology), the way into understanding theory is preferably through engagement with the practical problems that theory is intended to illuminate.

TVEI has, in many schemes, stimulated teachers to think through the place of activity, of experience, and of practice in the development of understanding.

d) "Process' versus "product"

Many of the TVEI schemes stress the process of learning or the process of enquiry, rather than the product. Too often, it is argued, examinations focus upon right answers, not the mental processes through which one arrives at the right answers, and therefore students simply re-iterate what they have learnt from teachers' notes or from text books. By contrast, so it is argued, what should be encouraged are the attitudes and the general mental abilities to engage in learning — learning how to learn.

There is no doubting the deleterious effect on the curriculum of forms of assessment that examine only the end product of enquiry, especially of others' (not the students') enquiries. It is no doubt better educationally to develop appropriate abilities and skills. But once again the distinction made has become too clear-cut, and this has led in some cases to rather unstructured activities that do not lead to the progressively developing learning experience that "TVEI as blue print" is advocating. The reason for this is that the processes of learning themselves require various stages of understanding and thus the acquisition of those concepts through which one can proceed with one's enquiry. And those concepts often need to be taught, not simply discovered. TVEI has rightly challenged the importance attached to *producing,* by hook or by crook, what the teachers or the examination boards judge to be "the right answer". But sometimes, in reacting against this, they have been in danger of neglecting those key ideas or concepts in the absence of which the students' enquiry will make little progress.

4. Conclusion

The kind of radical challenge embodied in TVEI might be summarised as follows: schools need, in the light of wider personal and social developments, to re-examine the educational aims embodied in their curriculum organisation, teaching styles, and subject content. This re-examination must necessarily look at the very way in which we conceptualise "education" and the transactions that are conducted under its title. Such concepts incorporate distinctions (and thus divisions between people) that are less and less defensible — such concepts and distinctions, for example, as "vocational/liberal", "training/education", "practical/theoretical", and "process/product". TVEI, whatever the social function it might eventually serve, has forced us to reconceptualise processes through which we educate young people. In doing that it has in many schemes affected teaching styles, found a place for the practical and experiential, reassessed the role of assessment, made us more conscious of equal opportunities, questioned the autonomy of (and lack of co-ordination between) schools and colleges, and given prominence to technology especially as a tool of communication and of enquiry.

Curriculum Debate across the Whole School

John Hull
Assistant Head at Waltheof Campus, Sheffield, John Hull focusses here on the process of discussion within a comprehensive school on curriculum change. This discussion involved all members of staff, did not depend for its successful implementation on the input of additional resources, and, as John Hull writes, could be copied (and improved) readily by others. For these reasons this article may be of particular value to others engaged on a similar exercise.

Debate about the secondary curriculum has focused increasingly on the central dilemma confronting proponents of the comprehensive ideal. That ideal inspires us to strive towards two goals. We aim to provide a broadly common experience for all children. At the same time we recognise the need to diagnose and meet the different needs of children with very different aptitudes and abilities.

For two decades the acuteness of the dilemma was dulled by the expedient device of increasing the range of optional courses. The curriculum appeared to be in responsive change. Yet crucial issues remained unresolved.

If an irrefutable case was made for the inclusion of new material in the curriculum, it crept into the core in certain innovating schools (eg personal education). If a merely strong case was made, it became an option (eg computer studies). The ultimate arbitration of what constituted an appropriate curriculum was left to the vagaries of pupil choice. That choice too often reflected the pressures of staff and parents on pupils. The failure of option procedures to combat sex stereotyping is proof enough of this.

We failed to debate and define what is essential to all children. We took refuge in the assumption that the inclusion of a humanities, a practical and a science block in options ensured 'balance'. In a still content-laden curriculum we assumed that History or Geography, Physics or Biology, Metalwork or Needlecraft would in any combination suffice. No attempt to define essential content and skills in the Humanities or Sciences was made.

Indeed we boasted that after year three each child had a personal timetable as if at the age of thirteen we had categorised his or her every need. Thus we missed a huge educational opportunity to be gained by maximising the common experience.

In Defence of TVEI *(continued from page 17)*

If however we are not careful both in analysing those achievements (how we conceptualise and describe what we are doing does affect what counts as achievements and we must not be hung up on indefensible notions of "liberal education", or of "vocational training") and in detecting those social and political forces that might distort those achivements, then TVEI could, despite its promise and practice, be assigned a narrow and narrowing function within an impoverished vision of education.

For example, a mathematics specialist facing a fifth year class could never confidently allude to scientific applications of a skill he was teaching. Those in front of him studying Physics might see the point, those taking Chemistry would miss it.

Cross curricular links could not be made because no common experience could be assumed. Wasteful overlap was inevitable. Few enough children might study both Economics and Geography so occasional similarity in content was tolerated. However, had the bulk of experience been common overlap and repetition could have been deliberate, planned and exploited.

Staff at Waltheof Campus began a major curricular review in Autumn 1983. The school is a twelve to eighteen comprehensive serving a deprived inner city area. In the preceeding three years the lower school (second and third) curriculum had been revised. We had integrated Science, Humanities and Creative/Practical work. We had produced a common curriculum for all lower school children.

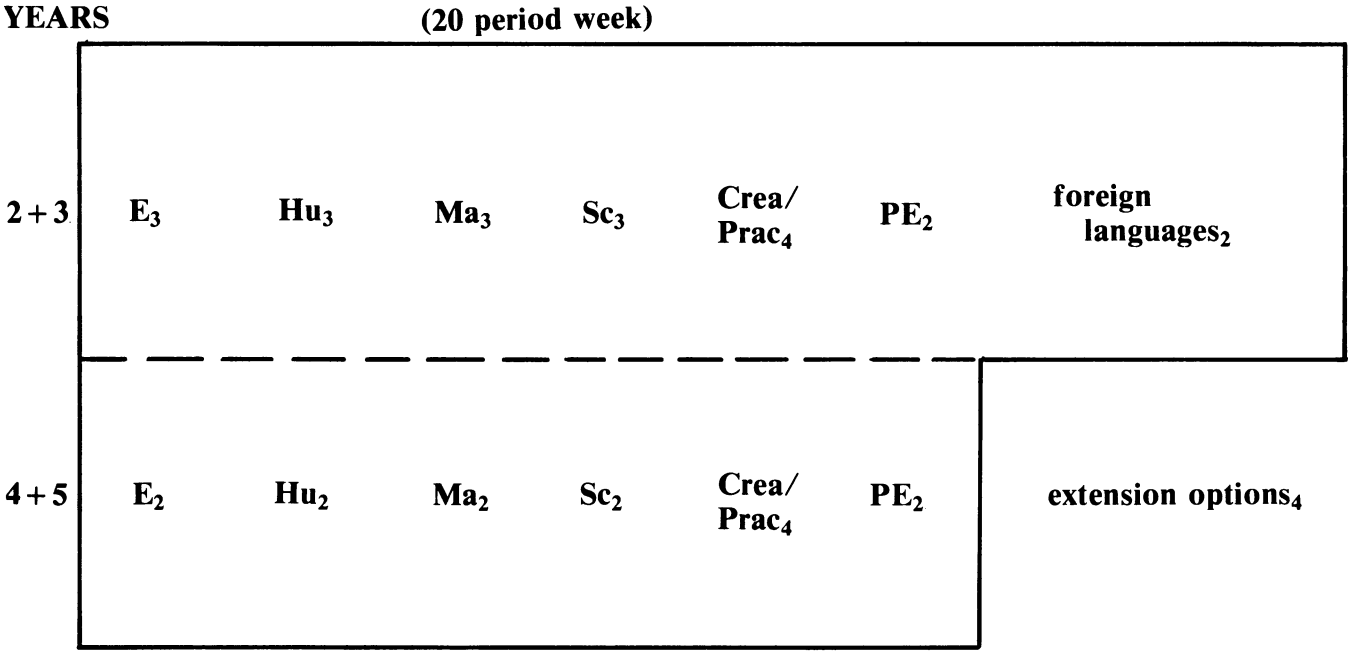
In November 1983 we set ourselves three major long term aims:

a) To strengthen the existing lower school common curriculum.
b) To consider twelve to sixteen provision as a whole.
c) To construct an upper school curriculum encompassing a greater core.

We agreed a new curriculum pattern to be introduced in September 1985.

We listed a series of pressing questions to be resolved in the eighteen months before the new package was to be introduced. These included:

a) Would the core/extension pattern provide answers to the central dilemma? In a school with disproportionatley few able children the options system had spread that minority even more thinly. Could not a blocking pattern in core time make setting, the use of differentiated materials and the provision of viable nonexamination groups more practicable?
b) How should Essential Studies (a course in social, personal, political, moral and careers education which ran in years four and five) be disseminated? This course designed three years ago to 'fill in the gaps' in the core curriculum had fulfilled that purpose well. The task was now to disseminate its content and the active teaching styles which had distinguished it.
c) Could courses in essential English, Humanities, Science and Creative Studies be prepared? Could we



(The continuous line surrounds the "common curriculum")

define the essential skills and contents to which EVERY pupil should have access?

d) Could the extension options be so arranged as to benefit children of all abilities? Could motivated and able children opt into additional lessons to enhance examination prospects? What possibilities existed to experiment with the alternative curriculum? Would not most children find the five or six examination opportunities within the core sufficient? Could they for at least part of the extension time pursue nonexamination courses? Could traditionally extra-curricular activities enter the curriculum? We were sure that the social benefits in pupil/teacher relations of formerly extra-curricular pursuits could be introduced here into the curriculum itself. After-school activities are always more difficult in city schools. There was a chance to invigorate the curriculum by exploiting the many hobbies and interests of staff which we rarely tapped.

e) How did we understand the links between core and extension time? Could extension courses in specialist disciplines such as Physics and History be 'built out' from the integrated core courses?

f) How should we provide for language study? Modern languages were the only curricular area present in lower, but not upper, school core. Modern language teaching in Sheffield had pioneered the graded, modular approach which we found exciting.

g) Did the proposed changes meet the needs of the least able?

h) What was the place of community and work experience in the scheme?

In January 1984 we decided to structure the whole school debate into seven stages. We already had the benefit of timetabled meetings in teaching time of each of our major curricular areas. In these meetings much of the groundwork of the debate would take place. We set deadlines to each stage of discussion and agreed to report back to heads of department meetings and staff curriculum meetings.

The first stage involved each area examining its current practice in order to define what its contribution to the core should be. Discussion of what we were doing now and measuring it against the criterion of what was essential to every child proved a good start. Each area then proceeded to outline its possible contributions to extension studies. At this stage we decided that the title 'extension options' had been ill chosen. We now preferred the name 'chosen activities'. This name broke more effectively with the notion of options and removed the implication that all activities would be extensions. That would be true of most examination target courses. It would not be true of modular courses/units which were expressly intended to represent a radical break from the style and content of the core. We only now became aware of the great freedom provided in the chosen activities area. If we had encompassed the essential in the core, we had made a real space for innovation outside it. We have gone on to consider a wide range of possible modules. Many will have a motivating end result in view — for example conservation projects in the locality, building scenery for a school play, building a garage for the minibus.

In the second stage we asked each curricular area team to measure its proposed core contribution against HMI's eight areas of experience. To each area of experience a score on a 1-10 scale was given. Together we reviewed the results. Feedback from area meetings suggested lively debate. The quality of the debate was its own justification. We did not really expect an exact score sheet. Interestingly the spiritual area proved the most difficult to score. We felt in Humanities able to recognise a religious area but the word 'spiritual' seemed inaccurate and the experience impossible to reach. We took 'physical' to include motor skills and noted across the board the duty of all our teachers to help children with learning difficulties who were deficient in this area.

In the third stage we undertook a parallel exercise setting core against a checklist of school aims. In planning this stage we wondered whether it would yield anything of value. Our agreed school aims tended to stress development of social attitudes. They were concerned with ethos not curriculum. That all areas found this stage near impossible was itself revealing. We felt justified that a curriculum review should involve a rescrutiny of school aims. All areas said that they contributed to realising our aims more through style of approach than content. We must at a later date review school aims in this light. Into this stage we also fed the need to measure core against our developing multicultural awareness. We recognise the need to review the curriculum repeatedly to draw on the wealth of our children's immediate experience but also to focus on world issues.

In the fourth stage we studied our own local education authority advisers' draft responses to Circular 6/81. We were encouraged in all cases that our lines of approach were largely confirmed.

In stage five we turned to the need to disseminate the good practice, content and style of our established and now-to-be-disseminated Essential Studies course. We also considered the contribution of active tutorial work to personal education. We were clear that dissemination must produce a more coherent experience for pupils, that essential studies had developed active styles of learning which must be allowed to flourish, and that certain topics would be better placed in the lower school and disseminated to several recipient areas. For instance sex education could be approached within Humanities, Science and English. Given the sweep of core provision its handling by these three areas could be planned and complementary. We recognised also that the many staff with experience of essential studies teaching could play a vital inservice role preparing their colleagues for the challenge of new content and in appropriate teaching styles.

Stage six was to involve the drafting of syllabuses. Stage seven required us to discuss teaching style anew and to stress the central role of good classroom practice. However, as early as the end of stage four we had set ourselves new tasks and guidelines in the production of syllabuses and schemes of work.

It was clear that the major benefit of our new curriculum package would be an unprecedented ability to assume a common experience by pupils. It was therefore necessary to present our syllabuses in a way that allowed every teacher to glimpse readily the outline of every constituent part of the core. We wanted to be able to allow a teacher to see the experience of pupils in a 'horizontal' and 'vertical' plane. Could the teacher 'horizontally' look across the experiences of that week or term and see connections to be exploited? Could the teacher 'vertically' look up and down the progression of the pupil through 12-16 courses to note and exploit overlap and repetition of skills.

We decided to draw up syllabus statements (one from each core area) on each level. Level one would be short. It would start with a rationale of the course and give a simple statement of content and skills covered in each year. Such statements placed together would give each teacher a rapid 'horizontal' and 'vertical' overview. In the cases of English and Mathematics, we decided to produce not statements of content but profiles of the likely range of skills mastered in the course of each year by pupils in three broad categories of ability.

Level two statements were intended for use by area specialist teachers. They would break level one themes into manageable units of about seven weeks duration. For each unit educational objectives would be itemised.

Level three statements would break the units still further into detailed schemes of work. Essentially these would be lesson plans constantly amended in light of experience. These detailed statements would become records of work.

The debate is now near its conclusion. We are convinced that we have produced a pattern which exploits the increased common experience of every pupil to the full. At the same time it offers in chosen activities scope for differentiation. The able will pursue some further examination targets while for all there is opportunity to explore alternative activities which offer a refreshing contrast involving many modules with motivating, realisable outcomes.

The process by which we have reached these conclusions has been as beneficial as we hope the result will be. Every teacher has been involved in a searching debate. Every teacher has been asked to justify the essential content of his or her subject and to assess it within the pupil's whole experience. We are all more aware than ever before of what is taught in other areas. We should all be able to exploit this more accessible and detailed knowledge of our pupil's experience.

Our debate has had the merits of a school-based exercise. The conclusions we have reached are in line with advisory and HMI thinking, yet they are very much our own. We are the more committed to them because we began with our *own* experience of our children's need and *then* saw how closely our prescriptions matched the general direction of local and national guidelines.

The debate operated through the normal channels of school dialogue. It did not depend on the input of additional resources or staff. It was a low-budget, whole-school debate.

We sought our own solution to the central dilemma of the comprehensive curriculum. Our next step must be to seek the opinions of interested groups outside the school. Indeed governors and advisors have already expressed interest and support. We would welcome comment upon our debate and its conclusion.

English from 5 to 16: A Regional Response

Len Masterman and **Eric Ashworth**

The DES (and HMIs) are producing a rash of curriculum discussion documents and guidelines, and Keith Joseph promises many more. This is a key tactic in the present centralising thrust. Such documents need a critical response. This article, by two members of the University of Nottingham School of Education, puts the recent English document under a microscope.

1. Introduction

We think it right to begin by expressing our concern about the ways in which *English from 5 to 16* is likely to be *used*, and indeed already *has* been used by many of its readers. There is already considerable evidence that the press, governing bodies, parents, employers, and some educationalists have seized upon the Objectives section in order to reinforce a mechanical, unimaginative and ultimately sterile approach to English teaching which represents a considerable retreat from the position of the Bullock Report and that of the HMI surveys on Primary and Secondary Education.

To be sure, *English from 5 to 16* insists that its "list of objectives must be seen in relation to the defined aims and to what is said about the principles of English teaching and assessment". But the authors must, in our view, bear some responsibility for the fact that the document has frequently not been interpreted in this way (see, for example, *The Times Educational Supplement's* headline to its report on the document: "Bring back grammar, say Inspectors"). Certainly they have scarcely fulfilled one of their objectives for the writing of 16 year olds: the need to "adjust . . . form, content and style . . . to the nature of the task and the needs and expectations of the reader". For in spite of the considerable qualifications to, and modifications of, the Objectives section elsewhere in the document, that section, both in its content and tone does align itself with a dangerously simplistic paradigm of English teaching which has made the dominant public and journalistic response to the document not a surprising, but a predictable one.

Accordingly we feel most strongly that in any future document arising from the responses stimulated by *English from 5 to 16* the following statements from the document should be given equal, and perhaps greater prominence, than any check-list of objectives:

> "The objectives . . . are not offered as sets of discrete sub-skills to be taught and tested in isolation through excercises." (p.3)
>
> "The promotion of that interaction (betwen writing, talk, reading and experience) should be a basic principle of the teaching of English." (p.2)
>
> "The most effective way of developing language competence is by applying it to an increasing range and variety of real needs and real purposes, in which something of genuine interest is communicated. The teacher's responsibility is to devise programmes of work . . . in which such needs and purposes arise." (p.13)
>
> "It has long been recognised that formal exercises in the analysis and classification of language contribute little or nothing to the ability to use it." (p.14)
>
> "The least able at using language are the least likely to understand the terminology . . . " (p.14)
>
> "Good teaching of English, at any level, is far more than the inculcation of skills." (p.13)
>
> "Language exercises from text-books or work cards are not effective means of *initiating* the learning of language skills." (p.14)
>
> "Drama . . . is an essential part of language teaching in primary and secondary schools." (p.15)
>
> "Few aspects of English work . . . can be mechanically marked." (p.17)
>
> "Assessment is not merely of a pupil's success in operating the 'skills' of language; it is inevitably and properly concerned with the quality of what is said . . . We must therefore assess (pupils') progress as people using language for the purposes necessary to people, not as mere language operators." (p.17)

Unfortunately the force of these statements is considerably diluted by their being scattered throughout *English from 5 to 16*. A check list of these principles and their associated practices would, in our view, do more to improve the quality of English teaching than the attempt to define objectives in the initial draft of the document.

2. Omissions

English from 5 to 16 is curiously silent on many of the most important challenges facing English teachers concerned to prepare pupils for active and participatory democratic citizenship in the 21st century. It does little to map out areas of future development in the subject. In particular we would have liked to see much more detailed and explicit references to:

a) the urgency of encouraging creative and imaginative approaches to work in English, and, an emphasis upon the particular place of English in the aesthetic development of all pupils

b) the place of literature in English teaching at all ages and levels (The document only stresses this as an objective for 16 year old pupils)

c) the importance of developing language competence across the curriculum

d) the increasing significance of media education within English teaching

e) the impact of structural unemployment upon English teaching

f) the implications of computers, word-processors, and other aspects of micro-technology for English teaching

g) the necessity of multicultural approaches, not only in those schools whose pupils are drawn from many ethnic groups, but in all schools.

3. Objectives

The authors' *general* objections to this section may be summarised thus:

a) The objectives, whilst framed in loosely behavioural terms, lack the rigour and specificity of true behavioural objectives. The note of 'certainty' which they produce within the document, therefore, is a spurious one for the most part, as we shall illustrate with several examples (see Section 4 below).

b) The objectives were not felt to be well-tuned to particular ages. On the one hand the listening objectives which were enumerated for 7 year olds were felt to be attainable by 4 year olds. On the other, the objectives listed for 16 year olds were felt to be beyond the level of many students of that age.

c) The objectives emphasise the *content* of English rather than the *processes* by which language may be used to achieve growth. This section by implication, therefore, leans towards a transmission model of teaching rather than an interpretation or negotiation model.

d) It would be most unfortunate if teachers, governors or parents were to assume that a coherent English curriculum would be constructed from the list of objectives. These represent, in the authors' view, a somewhat arbitrarily chosen set of objectives rather than a coherent list of outcomes which could be progressively attained.

4. Specifics

We select a number of points for specific comment:

a) *Parts of Speech:* In urging that 'parts of speech' should be taught (p.9) the document raises a highly problematic issue with little recognition that it is doing so. There is for example, no general agreement amongst grammarians on how many parts of speech there are. Arguments have been put forward for a number of different categorisations ranging from four to eight. The document, seemingly unaware of the contentious and complex nature of the issues it is raising, over-simplifies them to the point of distortion.

Similarly, the use of terminology like subject, verb, object (p.9) is much more problematic than the authors acknowledge. It is based on the highly contentious notion that the sentence is the 'natural' unit of grammar. Concentration on the sentence and its parts leads to an ignoring of other linguistic structures, such as conversations, in which 'traditional' sentences may play little or no part.

b) *Spelling:* "They (11 year olds) should know the rules of spelling." (p.8) What 'rules' do the authors have in mind here? In English the rules of spelling are actually elusive, difficult and manifold. Recent linguistic analysis has revealed that there are over 1,000 of them.

The document offers no guidance on which of these it wishes pupils to know. It is quite clear that knowing which rules to apply, and when, is itself a difficult and quite advanced process. The authors felt that, once again, *English from 5 to 16* had oversimplified, and therefore distorted, an important issue, and in doing so had, in this case, diverted attention from other ways of building up spelling competence.

c) *Vowels and consonants:* "They (11 year olds) should know the difference between vowels and consonants" (p.9). The distinction between vowels and consonants has more to do with spoken than written language. Vowel and consonantal phonemes are usually characterised by the way they are articulated. On this view there are nineteen vowels (including dipthongs). Is that what HMI wish children to learn? If not, what precisely do they have in mind?

d) *Pupil Differentiation and the Inter-relatedness of Language Skills* Para 2.2 was felt to contain two crucial recognitions:
i) a recognition of the existence of individual differences betwen pupils

and

ii) a recognition that language development is a 'seamless web' of inter-related skills.

The first provided for the authors a powerful reason for doubting the appropriateness of general lists of objectives. The second entails some obligation, not undertaken elsewhere within the document, to explain how, in principle, language skills affect one another, and how this should influence language teaching.

e) *Teaching about Language* (p.3)
The document anticipates that many will find what it says on the desirability of teaching *about* language to be controversial. It fails to engage with any of the

issues arising from the position it takes up however. For example, it is argued that pupils need to be taught *about* language "so that they achieve a working knowledge of its structure". Now it is clear that achieving "a working knowledge" in the sense of being able to speak and listen with understanding is precisely what all children learn to do without being taught about language. What needs to be argued and demonstrated here are the ways in which being taught about language will further the ability to use it.

f) *"Converse confidently and pleasantly in social situations"* (Objective for 7 year olds, p.7)

We have chosen this as one example from many of a besetting imprecision and woolliness in the statement of objectives. What is meant here by 'social situations'? The possibilities are infinite. In some social situations, children and adults alike may feel insecure and threatened. In others the same individuals may be fluent and completely at their ease. The abstraction, "social situations", needs considerable elaboration if the objective is to make any sense, since it is clear that most children and adults will find some social contexts more conducive to conversation than others. And what is to be conversed about? And with whom? What do 'confidently and pleasantly' mean? Is confidence always to be preferred to tentativeness in conversation? Why should pleasantness be a more important attribute than any other untheorised abstraction such as 'sincerity', 'persuasiveness', or 'forcefulness'? On detailed examination the impression that 'setting objectives such as this will bring a rigour and discipline to the work of English teachers' is entirely without foundation. The certainty and concreteness they seem to possess dissolves, upon reflection, into abstraction and imprecision.

Conclusion: We believe it to be a matter of the most urgent necessity that the DES/HMI produce a document that will set a positive agenda for the future of English teaching. To be of value, however, such a document will need to meet two criteria:

a) it must be based upon an accurate analysis of the current situation of English teaching in schools, and

b) it must take cognisance of the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities which will face our children as citizens in a rapidly changing democratic society.

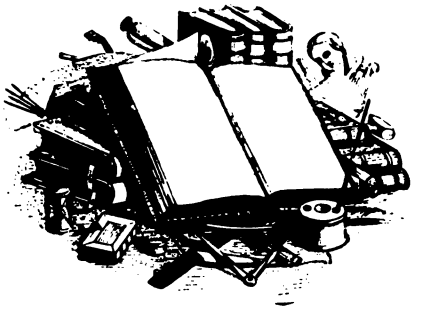
English from 5 to 16 we believe, falls badly short of meeting these criteria:

a) It does little to confront the most significant problems arising from the teaching of Engslish as they were revealed by the major surveys of Primary and Secondary Schools carried out by HMI in the late 1970's. The Inspectorate discovered a debilitating lack of creativity and imagination in pedagogic approaches, and a dominant use of didactic and expository methods. (Even in Primary schools, only in one class in twenty did teachers rely mainly on exploratory methods.) The depressing uniformity of demand by teachers, and an undue reliance at secondary level on note-taking, drills, exercises and tests was frequently associated with a corresponding sterility and conformity of response by pupils which did not make it easy for them "to feel that their individual reactions were valued or that their variations of information or opinion were welcome".[1] Any future drafts of *English from 5 to 16* will need to face these problems head-on, giving them the kind of emphasis which the present document assigns to 'Objectives'. For in spite of its occasionally 'progressive' rhetoric we believe that the effect of the document as it now stands will be to exacerbate the problems identified in the HMI surveys.

b) Finally, we found *English from 5 to 16* to be, in both content and tone, a limited and somewhat *negative* document, more inclined to look back (in its emphasis upon the mechanistic aspects of language teaching for example) to the imagined standards of the past than forward to the challenges of the future. The society in which our children will develop as adults will be a world, amongst other things, of micro-technology, of media saturation, of structural unemployment, and of frequent changes in employment. It will be a world in which each individual will need to develop flexible and positive commitments to life-long learnings, and must face conditions of unprecedented fluidity and change. Some of the most positive and interesting English teaching in schools is attempting to address these issues. We regret that *English from 5 to 16* neither reflects nor gives direct encouragement to the development of these practices.

Reference

1. **Aspects of Secondary Education in England**. DES. HMSO. 1979, pp.83.



Introducing a Course in Personal and Social Development

Michael Small
Deputy Headmaster of St Gregory's R.C. High School in Warrington, Michael Small writes here on the introduction of a new course for all pupils in the last two compulsory years on personal and social development. Mr. Small was formerly head of modern languages in two schools and is now first deputy in charge of curriculum at his present school.

For some years now there has existed a growing feeling that a comprehensive education should enable young people to leave school with a framework of skills which will equip them for life as adults, and that the total curriculum which a school provides should offer more than a series of academic subjects leading to external examinations.

A whole series of 'official' documentation has given further substance to this, calling upon schools to broaden the curriculum, especially for the 14-16 age-group and to develop work which will prepare young people socially and emotionally to take their place as citizens in a rapidly-developing and often complex society.

A view of the curriculum, for example, states:

> There are some sorts of knowledge about themselves, about other people, about the nature of the world in which they are growing up — which all pupils need . . . It is also certain that schools need to secure for all pupils opportunities for learning particularly likely to contribute to personal and social development.

The Munn Report declares, in similar vein:

> Pupils must acquire knowledge and skills which relate to the world of work, to leisure, to personal relationships and to family life and to effective membership of the community.

The response of schools to all of this has, in the main, been an encouraging one. Most comprehensive schools are very aware of the need to offer broad and balanced courses for young people in their last two years of compulsory schooling and to provide them with experiences which will be worthwhile as a preparation for adult life. These experiences are sometimes part of the formal curriculum, timetabled under the name of life skills, careers, preparation for living or whatever; they are sometimes covered in active tutorial work; or they can be part of a series of activities which might take the form of work experience, residential periods away from home and so on. However, in some schools courses of this nature are offered only for the lower part of the ability range.

The following is an account of the way in which one new Catholic comprehensive school introduced a course in personal and social development for all pupils in the last two years of school as part of a wider review and re-organisation of its upper school curriculum. There may be little remarkable or new about the actual course in personal and social development which the school offers — indeed it was happy to draw upon other schools' experiences in this area, though the final programme is an individual one. What may contribute to debate and be worthy of consideration are the following aspects: one, the actual reorganisation of time allocation and the total curriculum now offered and the questions this poses about the value of different types of knowledge and skills; two, the way in which this re-organisation of time and programmes enables all 8 of the HMI areas of experience, as outlined in **Curriculum 11-16**, to be offered as a core for all pupils in years 4 and 5; and three, the fact that teachers, pupils, parents and governors were happy to accept fairly radical changes, despite some initial opposition, when convinced that those changes are worthwhile and in pupils' best interests.

When the school opened 4 years ago, the upper school curriculum was for all pupils a deliberately conventional one in terms of what most comprehensive schools were offering at the time. Parental expectation was high and a good number of pupils, if comprehensive re-organisation had not taken place, would have received a grammar school education. From a 40 period week, pupils followed a core curriculum of 5 periods of English, 5 of Mathematics, 3 of RE (to either 'O' or CSE level), 2 periods of PE and 1 of Careers, plus 6 option subjects of 4 periods each chosen from mixed blocks. All pupils were obliged to study a minimum of 1 science, 1 humanities subject, 1 modern language and 1 creative subject. All courses led to external examinations at 'O' or CSE, except for careers, the bottom mathematics set, the bottom French set and a small group following a general crafts option as part of a link course with a local college. This meant, of course, that the large majority of our first 5th form pupils took external examinations, including English language and English literature, in 10 subjects at 'O' level, CSE or a mixture of both.

Several areas of concern were apparent. We considered 10 examinations inappropriate for all our pupils and felt that the time spent on 2 of these (1/5th of the week) could be better spent on other things. Three 35 minute periods of RE per week (despite the fact that they produced very good examination results) were not really sufficient to cover syllabuses and, more important, left no time for those wider issues in personal relations, sex education and Christian responsibility which we felt a good RE course should be concerned with. Though all pupils followed some humanities course, they were not guaranteed to encounter those problems and issues in contemporary society which we considered important for young people. Courses in art and design in the school were

vibrant — why should all pupils not continue to have access to these stimulating and thought-provoking areas as part of their core? One period a week of careers (taught in its widest sense and embracing self-development) seemed very fragmented and insufficient to allow treatment at any length or depth in this vital area. Five periods per week for English to follow courses in language and literature was considered insufficient.

These concerns led to a re-organised upper school curriculum being put into operation in September, 1984. All pupils now follow a core programme of 6 periods of English, 5 of Mathematics, 4 of non-examination RE (with the subject available to 'O' and CSE options), 4 of French (Spanish is available as an option), 3 of personal and social development (blocked together) and 2 of PE. In addition, they choose from 4 option blocks which must include one science.

At the heart of this re-organisation lies the course in personal and social development. It is taught on a modular basis to mixed-ability groups with 5 units of 12 weeks duration. After a good deal of thought about pupils' present and future needs and resources and facilities available, the following modules were agreed upon: art in the environment; careers; communications and the mass-media; design for the contemporary world; and social and community studies.

The art in the environment module aims at expanding and developing education in awareness and discrimination. The course deals with aesthetic and design aspects of environmental study, particularly with developing the ability to make informed value judgements about environmental quality and it stresses sensory experience, emotional response and discriminatory skills in an attempt to help young people cultivate a sense of values, the capacity to make judgements and exercise self-fulfilment.

The starting point for the course is pupils' direct experience of their own local environment which leads to their observations and active learning. The local area is explored and observed through slides and photographs initially and then through the pupils' own annotated sketches and, in some cases, photography. Pupils pilot their own journey to school using words and pictures; they identify different kinds of townscape qualities; appraise examples of local buildings; record a collection of building entrances with different social meanings and atmospheres; they consider serial vision; measure the quality of individual streets in various terms; and take part in sensory walks. All the time, critical vocabulary is built up and, ideally, pupils will question themselves on the kind of environment and quality of life they want. There is a very strong social dimension.

The careers programme, as with most schools, has moved on from the traditional 'employment agency' perspective and is most concerned with personal assessment and opportunity awareness. It aims at encouraging the development of problem-solving and decision-making; at fostering the growth of self-confidence and self-awareness; at developing communication skills and personal relations; and at preparing pupils for the transition from compulsory schooling.

Course content is concerned with sources of income, personal banking, borrowing and personal services under the umbrella title of money and self-profiling, job applications, interview skills and further and higher education under the umbrella of opportunity.

The careers module is complemented by a 2-day personal development course at the end of the first half-term in year 5. This takes the form of a 1-day work experience simulation to give a flavour of possible problems to be encountered and a 1-day closer consideration of interviews, job applications and self-appreciation. This 2-day course, in fact, forms part of a personal development week which includes a 2½ day retreat.

The communications and mass-media module stems from a concern that young people should be educated in discrimination and should be made aware of the often powerful pressures that modern means of communication can apply in a consumer society. It looks at TV, newspapers and advertising from a critical standpoint in an attempt to let pupils explore how each functions and the role each plays in contemporary society.

The unit's main aim is to develop a critical awareness in pupils about the ways in which the mass-media can influence their lives and to seek the responsible, Christian response to this. Current examples from the different media are considered and their psychological, social, economic and moral effects explored.

The design module has its justification in the fact that design is omnipresent in a civilised society and is a major facet of everyday living. It, too, is concerned with developing discrimination, decision-making and awareness skills. In an attempt to give pupils an appreciation of the role and responsibilities of the designer, it hopes to make them aware of issues within the field of design which will affect their future lives. All of this, again, is viewed from a Christian standpoint.

The unit begins with a consideration of the types of thought and creative powers that designers possess and then considers advertising graphics and a brief history of housing. It goes on to look at interior design, the outdoor environment and technological advancement. The final part of the course is concerned with social and moral implications of design — it considers automation, pollution, and the atomic bomb.

The course in social and political studies was, as is often the case in this area, the one potentially most delicate and controversial. The unit's aim is to guide young people to a specifically Christian response to some of the complex issues and problems in the modern world and to help them to understand their role in a social and political context. Through consideration of the individual and the family, the community, law and order, social services, local and national government, social change, the education system, work, some current affairs and the Third World, the module attempts to enable pupils to develop opinions and to exercise responsible choice as informed, interested individuals in preparation for Christian citizenship.

Several crucial questions are raised by all of this. Does this fairly considerable revision of the upper-school curriculum offer a wider and better-balanced programme for all 14-16 year olds at the school? Will more-able pupils suffer from being restricted to a maximum of 8 'O' levels or would they be better employed by adding 2 further academic subjects to their timetable? Is the personal and social development

TVEI — defending the indefendable

Roger Seckington
Chairman of our Editorial Board, Roger Seckington was for one year Coordinator for TVEI for Leicestershire. He (with Richard Pring) stresses the positive features of TVEI, as he sees them and has experienced them. As a contribution to the debate on this important issue, we are glad to present Roger's views. Roger Seckington is now Principal of The Bosworth College, Leicestershire; until recently he was also Chairman of RICE (Right to Comprehensive Education).

TVEI did indeed burst upon an unsuspecting educational world in November 1982. Without the benefit of leaks to soften the impact there it was stark and uncompromising. Coming from the MSC guaranteed the Initiative a hostile, or at least mixed, reception. Also not to be forgotten was the staggeringly abbreviated time allowed in which to respond: nor the fact that many institutions and LEAs met the target dates with their submissions.

Here was an initiative seen as part of the growing thrust of centralism, coming from an organisation concerned with training, and using uncomfortable terms like *technical* and *vocational*. From day one two strands emerged in the TVEI debate with those who saw the chickens coming home to roost and others who did not want a vocational element in the curriculum and were nervous of the potentially divisive nature of the developments in the technical elements. Was this putting the clock back to the immediate post-war years of the tripartite system and the re-introduction of technical schools? In the TES this debate was opened by Maurice Holt who in a splendid key article continued his long-standing cogent and influential argument for 11-16 common curriculum strategies. He was deeply concerned about the potentially divisive nature of the outline proposals in pre-16 education.

At the same time we were hearing some initial reaction within Leicestershire and I was concerned that it was schools with a divided curriculum that were the first to vocationalise. Was the response to be along Newsom or ROSLA lines with separate rather than integrated strategies which would have been unacceptably divisive? I shared my concern with Maurice Holt by letter suggesting that there may be a strong argument for schools within the comprehensive movement to get actively involved with TVEI the better to influence its development and was encouraged by his reply which suggested that we must learn to live with the MSC post-16. Also he suggested that we are all likely to find MSC's deficiency model unacceptable and wish to look towards one based on potentiality. Further he suggested that if you mention education and not training the MSC men show you the door PDQ. Ann Jones responded to Maurice Holt's article and, in effect, suggested that we must not dismiss aspects of pre-vocational work nor turn away from a search for relevance in the curriculum.

For me the crux of the early debate was the part that concerned itself with curriculum strategies — what is happening to the students? Large concerns like the initiative helping to open the door to increasing government influence or the fear of premature vocational choice and specialisation are, of course, hugely important but represent a challenge within the exploration of what is essentially a 14-19 curriculum project. The in-school debates were the most demanding. Equality of opportunity is a cherished principal that underpins comprehensive education. As RiCE (The Right to Comprehensive Education) states as one of its principles, "In each school all pupils should have the right to experience a broadly based curriculum and have equal access to all the opportunities offered". Some colleagues present the view that we have already achieved a balanced curriculum and that given good teaching students are extended, interested and fulfilled. Gerald Haigh in a splendid short article ('Never Mind

Personal and Social Development *(continued from page 25)*

course a valid attempt at helping young people, in the words of **A Framework for the School Curriculum**, "to understand the world in which they live and the interdependence of individuals and groups?"

Does the course reconcile the instrumental and sometimes hard-nosed demands made by the parents with the more expressive demands often made by teachers in terms of enabling and encouraging young people to grow into whole human beings?

Are the various skills, attitudes and types of knowledge which the course teaches those which young people today genuinely need?

Having considered these questions and other objections at some length before implementing the curriculum re-organisation and again, half a term on, we firmly believe that the curriculum now offered (60 per cent core, 40 per cent optional), with the personal and social development and RE courses at its centre, does provide a worthwhile and stimulating set of experiences acceptable to pupils, parents, staff and governors. We are not complacent but do feel that the re-organised programme offers a better opportunity to young people to develop as responsible Christians, aware of some of the problems and pressures in contemporary society and their function in it.

the System', TES, 30.12.85) graphically takes up that issue. "The point is that education is not essentially about systems at all. It is concerned with imagination and creativity. The prime purpose of the teacher is to liberate the imagination so that pupils may grow and mature as creative and autonomous people. Good teachers have always been able to do this, and will continue to do so regardless of where they find themselves. What is important about the teacher is not what system he works in, or uses, or believes in, but whether he can, at that narrow glinting point where all the systems and methods converge, strike sparks from the pupils around." Despite much splendid teaching, imaginative, well developed courses and improved exams some students are bored and fail to see the relevance of school to their near adult lives. Some challenges to the curriculum (content and method) remain and TVEI is just one element in that challenge.

Leicestershire's response to TVEI was positive. Over the Christmas period 1982 and in the early weeks of 1983 teachers and lecturers in many schools and colleges were working on their submissions. The task of collecting together and shaping these individual submissions was completed during the Spring term, and the LEA submission was ready by Easter. In fact a verbal agreement was reached between the LEA and MSC over the Easter period, and the thrust of activity once again focussed on the 17 schools and colleges involved as submissions were revised and amended and the task of detailed planning for courses was undertaken. Whatever else or may or may not be said about TVEI, it must be recorded that between the announcement (November '82) and students' starting courses (August '83) teachers and lecturers worked very hard on their foward planning. On several occasions people worked through the night to 'get it right' and it is a tribute to those most actively involved that well constructed courses started on time. It cannot be insignificant that Leicestershire, the first authority to go completely comprehensive and which includes comprehensive schools that are household names, elected to participate in this 14-19 pilot project. It was a local response and early negotiation with the TVEI Unit was very reassuring. Localism does live!

It is worth reflecting on the starting point by using the TVEI summary:

— a pilot scheme. (More commonly, and I think appropriately, this is now referred to as an *exploration*.) The idea of the project is to explore ways of introducing or enhancing elements of the curriculum particularly related to 'new' technology *within the context of whole curriculum policies* (my italics)
— within the education system
— four year courses 14-18
— for students across the ability range
— and to avoid sex stereotyping
— a broad framework of general education
— technical and vocational elements
— encourage initiative, problem-solving ability and personal development
— regularly assess each student
— provide good educational and careers counselling.

Surely there is little here that is likely to seriously jar with the committed comprehensive teacher. Leicestershire's comprehensive system was able to embrace TVEI. The 14-18 upper tier secondary schools naturally fit the target group. Also in '83 the LEA had recently introduced a county structure, known as clusters, to enable groups of upper schools to work more closely with their local colleges of FE. A number of factors can be identified.

1. Leicestershire's submission made it clear that TVEI would operate within the normal comprehensive framework of existing schools/colleges.
2. In early discussions with the TVEI Unit it was made plain that it was not envisaged that seperate TVEI courses would necessarily emerge creating a technical and vocational track, band or stream seperate from the normal curriculum strategy in a school/college or group of schools/colleges. Students of all abilities and of both sexes would have access to the new or enriched elements within the curriculum.
3. Leicestershire went firmly for a grass roots approach. Each school/college made its own submission and no alteration to its spirit and purpose was made except some inevitable logistical constraints.
4. The curriculum strategy most frequently adopted has been to retain a common curriculum of 70 per cent and introduce the TVEI elements into the 30 per cent options area. All schools/colleges have gone to great lengths to avoid any form of overt identification of TVEI students. In practice TVEI groupings are no more discrete than being in, for example, an A level Physics group.
5. There is a real opportunity to plan courses in both schools and colleges across a four year period.
6. Despite warnings of 'supping with the Devil' I believe we can best influence events by close involvement. It is crucial to shake off the managed project model of MSC/YOP/YTS and accept TVEI as an LEA managed project. Each LEA (and school/college within it) has made its own statement of intent. An elaborate process of monitoring and evaluation is under way including, of course, MSC, but also HMI, LEAs and other independent bodies.
7. A key concept of the scheme is the ability to replicate both within and across institutions.

TVEI has to be seen as a curriculum project. It is not just a question of a few specific elements that might be labelled *new* or *enriched* but a broadly based curriculum strategy. When viewed as a catalyst to change, an initiative encouraging a serious look at methodology with an emphasis on learning by doing (experimental learning and distance learning), an investigation of methods of assessment and of a variety of routes through the exam system, the breadth of potential influence on the whole curriculum can be seen. Some very enthusiastic pioneers are working hard to take things on a bit faster and further. As with every curriculum project there are those who see nothing new or don't see the need to change anything anyway. Reaction does vary from the amazingly hostile (often, it seems, stemming from the all too easily exaggerated resource base) through to a vital professional interest of seeking to see what lessons, if any, can be learned that may be applied elsewhere. The project has:

— given *time* for teachers to look at new ideas and to speed up existing developments
— encouraged liaison between schools/colleges and between education and the outside world
— provided resources to underwrite courses (materials,

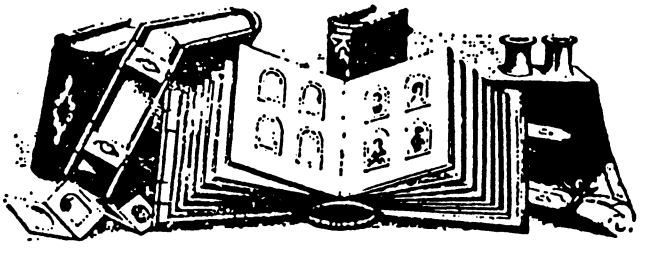
building adaptions where necessary, and staffing)
— introduced a detailed procedure for evaluation and monitoring
— insisted on a co-ordination of activity and purpose within and between schools/colleges
— shown a proper concern for forward planning
— encouraged an investigation into 'new' exams and forms of assessment.

It is I believe, usually easier to attack than defend. I bow to the more sophisticated knowledge of macro-politics possessed by my colleagues, including members of **FORUM** Board. We do seem to live in lunatic times and to operate maintained schools at all is getting increasingly difficult. Exasperated by falling rolls, declining resources and an increasingly hostile reaction to teachers most progressive developments are being, at best, hampered. Like everybody else I am alarmed by creeping centralism — centre creep — and the almost daily outpouring of comment from Sir Keith. Morale is painfully low and we are in the middle of a completely justified but none-the-less long-lasting and damaging dispute with our employers. Hardly the right climate to carry the comprehensive movement forward. But in the end it is people who are at the sharp end who will have to carry the Movement forward. That is not to deny the huge importance of a sensitive appraisal of national and international politics and the development of proper political and educational theory. Where would the comprehensive movement be without the giants of the 40s and 50s who challenged the process of selection?

In 1964, along with many, I hailed the Wilson government. Now the future of the comprehensive movement would be assured. Firstly, we would see the phasing out of independent schools, surely the most offensive division in the educational world. True, the number of comprehensive schools increased quite rapidly until we now have a virtually completed re-organisation in the maintained sector. In the 60s and early 70s a rapidly increasing school population, ROSLA and at least the apparent matching of resource provision seemed to keep everything rushing forward. After re-organisation, with falling rolls and a government bent on harsh financial controls things are much gloomier. Now the fine buildings of that earlier period are more difficult to maintain and in some cases crumble for want of proper care. In 1970 while working in a rather forlorn building I arranged a visit to one of the show pieces. Later in the staff room I was marvelling at some of what I had seen. A friend and colleague barked at me "But has it got heart, Roger, has it got heart?". It is, therefore, "heart" which most influences me. My present 14-19 school is enriched by colleagues with a passionate commitment to comprehensive principles. Dented they may be but deflected they are not. They have accommodated TVEI and CPVE albeit with appropriate caution and wariness. Local control of the curriculum is of paramount importance. Where is the evidence that we shall see the re-introduction of selection and the emergence of secondary moderns within comprehensive schools? Tragically even in the more glorious days of comprehensive expansion too many bi-lateral or multi-lateral schools existed. It is not as if we have achieved genuine open access as yet. Are we really seeing the replacement of education by training? I doubt it, and even if this were a hidden thrust, schools haven't got the 'trainers' anyway. Schools are filled in the main by educators who are anxious to work out their own curriculum. Did we think about the quality of work for our young people in the days of good job opportunities for school leavers? Can we really claim a universal acceptance of a relevant and meaningful curriculum? Some of the problems currently experienced in schools would tend to suggest not.

My colleagues are making plans for the development of the curriculum that are far more radical than TVEI and CPVE. They are concerned about coherence, the pressure of unrealistic exam demands and the introduction of modular structures that will release new and varied forms of learning. Their ideas, developed and sharpened over a few years of debate, represent forward-looking comprehensive proposals. Many will use the particular and localised opportunities created by TVEI and CPVE in this general strategem. The test will be when the troops not the generals have absorbed it into a policy for the whole curriculum. Of course the wicked will continue to use every device to divide and I accept that real danger.

There are some immediate worries. Every development seems to be accompanied by a tendency to drain resources from the 'coal face' to a growing multi-layered bureaucracy or to nebulous 'support' structures. TVEI has done much to give maximum benefit to students, but I detect some drift towards expensive and questionable over-arching structures. TVEI and non-TVEI schools are already recognised categories when measuring resource provision. Will LEAs be able to replicate across all schools? Most importantly can teachers and schools deliver and adequately demonstrate that there are **NEW** initiatives?



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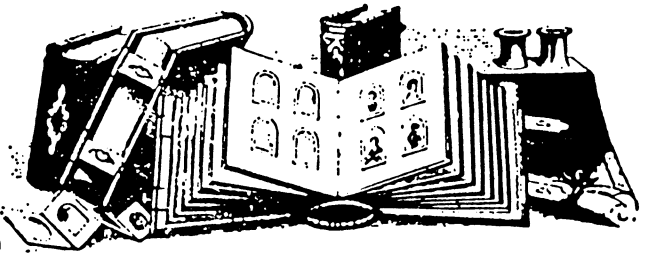

Review Article

DES, The curriculum from 5 to 16

Clyde Chitty

This HMI document was issued earlier this year. It concern the whole curriculum, and is another of the avalanche of curriculum documents emanating from Elizabeth House. Here Clyde Chitty subjects it to a critical analysis.

This paper, published in March of this year, is no. 2 in a series of discussion documents issued by HM Inspectorate under the general title **Curriculum Matters**. The need for such a series arose from the announcement by Sir Keith Joseph in his speech in Sheffield in January 1984, that he intended to seek broad agreement about the objectives of the 5 to 16 curriculum.

The paper is intended to promote a curriculum which is coherent, broad, balanced and relevant for *all* pupils, irrespective of the size, type and location of the schools they attend. Of course these tend to be the 'in' characteristics at present and make for a certain degree of predictability. One wouldn't, after all, expect HM Inspectorate to argue for a curriculum which is fragmentary, narrow, unbalanced and irrelevant. Yet, to be fair, the paper does devote a lot of space to defining these terms in the context of primary and secondary education. And the document as a whole is to be welcomed as a genuine and sophisticated attempt to help schools with the task of planning the whole curriculum.

For one thing, the paper is a vast improvement on the DES document on the 5-16 curriculum, published in September last year, which was based largely on *subject* divisions. The Inspectors warn that 'there are limitations in a curriculum which is no more than a list of subjects.' They go on to argue that 'it is easy to define the content of each subject with no reference whatever to the learning processes to be used or to what is happening in the rest of the curriculum, especially in the later years of secondary education where the real and perceived needs of examinations are very influential.' This is well-said and worth underlining.

Designing a curriculum is concerned with establishing those kinds of knowledge and areas of experience to which it could be argued *all* youngsters should have access up to the age of 16 — in other words, with the construction of a cultural analysis model which can, it is hoped, command widespread adherence. And this is precisely the focus of this HMI paper. The overall curricular framework is viewed from *two* essential and complementary perspectives: first *areas of learning and experience;* and second, *elements of learning*, that is, the knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes to be developed.

Indeed, the whole document is strongly reminiscent of an earlier HMI publication, **Curriculum 11-16**, the so-called 'Red Book' published in 1977, which argued for a common curriculum conceived of in terms of 'areas of experience' rather than traditional subjects. There is, admittedly, less talk of a common curriculum in the present contribution. The Inspectors content themselves with observing that breadth and balance are particularly vulnerable in years four and five of the secondary school 'if option systems permit whole areas of learning and experience to be neglected by individual pupils'. They go on to argue, somewhat imprecisely, that 'it is important that pupils should *maintain contact* up to the age of 16 with all the areas and elements of the curriculum, *while still exercising some choice of subjects*' (my italics). The 1977 Red Book was less mealy-mouthed in its rejection of the 'cafeteria' curriculum.

In the present paper, NINE 'areas of experience' are singled out by the Inspectors: the aesthetic and creative, human and social, linguistic and literary, mathematical, moral, physical, scientific, spiritual, and technological. Twenty-one pages are devoted to a discussion of these areas and where they might fit into the curriculum. Skills are grouped into EIGHT categories: communication, observation, study, problem-solving, physical and practical, creative and imaginative, numerical, and personal and social.

There are also, it is argued, some essential issues which are not easily contained *within* subjects, but which need to be dealt with in the curriculum. These include: environmental studies, health education, information technology, political education, economic understanding, preparation for the world of work, and careers education.

Schools have a responsibility to promote equal opportunities for girls and boys, and to ensure that this policy is supported in the way in which these opportunities are presented, in staff attitudes, and in the organisation and day-to-day running of the school. It is also essential that the curriculum in all schools should help pupils to appreciate the culture and traditions of ethnic minority groups. Schools which actually have pupils from racial minorities should, it is argued, offer them stimulus and opportunity for success.

Yet having absorbed so much sound reasoning and good sense, one can't help reflecting that this document is already, in a sense, irrevelant and out of date. It belongs to that period *before* the publication of **Training for Jobs, Better Schools** and **Education and Training for Young People** when it was still possible to envisage a curriculum that was not vocationalised and differentiated in the interests of social control. The balance and coherence of the curriculum, at least at the secondary stage, are *already* being undermined by special programmes such as the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme (LAPP) and the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). The Inspectors observe that 'pupils should retain a balanced curriculum which is enriched, *and not impoverished*, by these developments' (my italics). But they go on to claim, somewhat optimistically, that 'at their best, programmes of this kind can rectify an imbalance by making the curriculum more practical and relevant to adult life for pupils and by causing schools to expand their range of approaches to teaching and learning.' They do not examine the threat such programmes pose to the concept of a unified curriculum. 'Revelant to adult life' is part of the jargon of the New Vocationalism. At the same time, current initiatives are clearly divisive in that they involve only small sections of the school population. TVEI, for example, includes only three per cent of all 14 year olds spread over eight per cent of secondary schools.

The concept of a 5 to 16 curriculum for *all* pupils may itself be out of date. It has become respectable to talk in terms of lowering the school-leaving age to 14 or, at least, of the desirability of putting 'vocational' and 'examination-related' education into seperate categories from 14+. As Mike Golby observed in the last issue of **Forum**: 'it may now be too late to preserve the ideal of an eleven-year common school programme.' To that extent, this HMI document is a contribution to a debate that has already been lost.

Racism in Schools

Challenging Racism, ALTARF Collective. 1984. 218 pages illus. £2.00 paperback.

ALTARF (All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism) was formed in 1978 to combat the growing tide of racism in schools. **Challenging Racism** is a collection of essays aimed at stimulating thought beyond the normal boundaries of anti-racist teaching and thus providing an ideology and a number of strategies to make that teaching effective.

The first part of the book provides various perspectives on racism and their implications for classroom teaching. The historical background to racism through evolutionary theories, the tribal needs theory and government policies during the last 30-40 years is discussed in a written version of a talk by Jane Shallice in 1983. Betty Hunter looks at the traditional values and structures of schools and how they need to be completely reviewed to implement an effective anti-racist policy. Lynette Hubah defines Blacks as a term to cover all settlers from Third World Countries: that is, all oppressed groups, and stressed the need for unity to combat the humiliating position of black teachers in schools. Arguments are given to counter racist opinion together with a brief outline of Britain's Nationality with the new legislation and its consequences. A section on the police in schools discusses the new Police Bill, 1984 and provides a critique of community policing with evidence that police participation in schools is not always what it might seem. Cass Breen and Mary Hickman of the two-year old Irish in Britain Representation Group discuss the misrepresentation of the Irish in school history books and the absence of Irish studies in the curricula.

The second part of the book concentrates more on concrete proposals for anti-racist teaching with a number of examples from the writers' own experience,

Martin Francis stresses the need to concentrate first on education rather than fighting to achieve recognition for Blacks, women and the working-class in the educational hierarchy. He cites the categories developed by the Birmingham Education Group for Unpopular Education, of the importance of context, control-through links with the community, content and teaching method, as useful guidelines for the teacher.

The following essays emphasise the importance of tackling racial issues in the school which may arise from individual incidents, from the children themselves, or from teachers introducing a programme of anti-racist teaching. Teaching should be child-centred. Children need to develop analytical and critical skills and programmes should be developed to promote this. An example is given of such a programme by ALTARF and used by the Social Studies departments of schools in Newham with varying support from school staff and varying but positive results, and a further programme on policing and the new nationality law introduced in the social education programme at Quintin Kynaston school. Quintin Kynaston is cited as an example of a school which provides a structure for the students to voice their own opinions and where the students have been involved in drawing up an anti-racist policy for the school. They have also made videos of their discussions which have been used to inform teachers and have been included in the BBC TV programme 'Open Door'.

The writers constantly stress that schools need to make stronger links with the community. In the section on language, racism and anti-racist teaching, Marion Pencavel describes how the school can and should reflect the multicultural community.

Finally, Laurie Lax outlines the pitfalls and problems with fears that the anti-racist policies required of the schools by the ILEA anti-racist proposals could become yet another 'sheet of paper in the head teacher's desk' and describes his own problems in trying to raise anti-racist issues in a particulalry reluctant school.

I found this book very stimulating and informative. Through examples given of Black children's own feelings and Black teachers' experiences I feel I gained a greater insight into Black oppression, and a greater commitment to encouraging open discussion on racism amongst pupils in schools. The fact that racism cannot be discussed in isolation and that it has wider political implications is constantly stressed; that political institutions and present ideologies need to be examined.

Some of theessays read as though they were hurriedly written without any preparation or references. Those who bother to include references have no regard for the reader. For example, an entry (p.140, and there are many like this) reads Dale Spencer **Man-made Language**; this conveys little meaning; and the general impression is given that this paperback was intended for London teachers only. Pity, because it should be read by a wider audience. That said, the book is a statement of the struggle against racism so far. It is a tribute to the members of ALTARF and to the degree of achievement they have attained in so short a space of time, and should encourage other teachers to come out into the open and follow their example.

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Summary Execution

The Life and Death of the Schools Council, Maurice Plaskow (ed) Falmer Press (1985), pp. 197, £6.95

This is a collection of fifteen papers by writers, all of whom played a part in the Schools Council, and some of them a significant central role. As someone who always considered herself one of the Council's 'critical friends' the book fills me with much the same sense of exasperation as the Council did at times. It has the same lack of overall direction, the same avoidance of centrally difficult issues, the same hope that simply by providing some variety, there will be something to satisfy everybody. It has to be said that the editing is inadequate. There is too much overlap of information — one loses count of the number of times we are told that the Council's constitution guaranteed the autonomy of the schools over their curriculum — and one has to wonder what specification the contributors were given. Certainly, it has resulted in some cases in laudatory over-commitment, a lack of critical self-analysis, and a considerable degree of polemic. In particular the paper by Raff is largely unsupported assertion accompanied by comfortable self-delusion, and not even internally consistent. There is confusion between her denigration of all but teachers and her approval of the Council committees on which she sat, where she met 'leading and influential people, key decision-makers from the education world' (p156) and which 'made most people feel good about education in England and Wales' (p157).

A number of the papers are highly descriptive narrative, and in these inevitably the sections on the closure of the Council are the most interesting because they deal with events least well known. There is considerable agreement amongst contributors that the work of the Council fell into three phases: an early period of large-scale project development partly focussed on such priorities as the raising of the school leaving age, a middle period of relatively small-scale development, and a third period following the revised Consitiution of 1978. But there is some disagreement about the interpretation of these phases. Clearly the early period was one of high energy and optimism (Wrigley describes this as the period of 'careless rapture') but, apart from the ROSLA programme, largely responsive in nature; Plaskow writes of a 'frail pattern to be detected in retrospect' (p6). In a very useful paper Sparrow documents how the Council lost its way in the middle period, with a 'rash of small projects' which made the possibility of evaluation very difficult, and with the Council trapped between the need for coverage and the need for consolidation. Whilst the evaluators and project staff were becoming increasingly sceptical of the efficacy of curriculum materials as a channel for change, they were unable to affect the Council's publishing policy which was decided by constituent members on Committees. Cockerill largely agrees with this criticism of a policy of scattering seed and hoping it would take root in this period.

The main area of disagreement is over the final phase, when the reconstituted Council moved from projects to programmes. Whilst Cooper is openly laudatory, referring to 'real partnership in action' and 'genuine partnership', Plaskow is more ambivalent. He claims there was no coherent curriculum policy until the publication of "Principles and Programmes" in 1979, but he later acknowledges that this paper involved the 'whole of educational life', from which some focus was 'emerging in practice' when the Council was closed. This appears to admit that the Council continued until its demise the pragmatic opportunism which had been one focus of earlier criticism. Sparrow is more forthright:

> 'In order to become democratic, the Council actually became more bureaucratic, more expensive to administer, and even more diffuse in its new policies. The change from projects to

programmes was entirely laudable in its intent, but the total ground which the Council attempted to cover was so wide as to make detailed work in each segment virtually impossible, and so varied in its nature as to limit severely the effectiveness of any evaluation of it' (p63).

These criticisms are echoed by Mann and by Rudduck who, in another very interesting paper, claims that in Programme 2 the need for legitimation led to a search for security in 'the trophies of productivity'. This resulted, she writes, '. . . in long lists of teacher groups that had received support and long lists of publications; these celebrated the ranging energy of the Programme, but did not contribute to its intellectual coherence' (p152). Both Sparrow and Rudduck suggest ways in which the apparent conflict between central and local initiatives might have been reconciled, but it is difficult to credit that Rudduck and Cooper are writing about the same Programme.

Tomlinson, however, claims that the Council was 'killed off by a change in the environment rather than through inherent weakness' (p130). Recognising that there is no educational equivalent to acid rain he points the finger unequivocally to the DES in the long term and Sir Keith Joseph as delivering the coup de grace. On the evidence of a number of writers here there would appear to be no doubt that the DES treatment of the Council was shabby and underhand and that of the Secretary of State arbitrary and autocratic. Nevertheless, whilst it may be quite reasonable to portray him as the 'mad axeman' on the book's cover, I do not think that within its pages there is an adequate analysis of the Council's structural and conceptual weaknesses which contributed to a marked absence of powerful voices crying 'Woodman, spare that tree.'

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Innovatory Schools

Schools on Trial, The Trials of Democratic Comprehensives, by Colin Fletcher, Maxine Caron and Wyn Williams. Open University Press. £5.95, pp.162 (1985)

An article in my daily newspaper concluded with the sentence: 'The problem is that we always fix on cases that are radical exceptions.' The article was concerned with a much-publicised case in which rape had been claimed, then years later denied. Clearly, absolutely no connection can be made with the trials of democratic comprehensives over the last two decades but a curious link was prompted by my breakfast-time reading immediately prior to writing this review. **Schools on Trial** concentrates on four schools: Risinghill, Summerhill, Sutton Centre and Countesthorpe, and includes a reasonably detailed section on Madeley Court and some referneces to Tyndale. All these schools and their heads are as well known, in name at least, to concerned educationalists — readers of **FORUM** foremost — as any major political issue of the last two decades may be to the general public. What have the many hundreds of schools to learn in their more pedestrian struggle towards the comprehensive ideal? The authors have not undertaken a process of educational voyeurism — there but for the Grace of God go — but a serious investigation leading to 'lessons of some significance' that may help those following these remarkable and courageous pioneers.

In the mid-sixties I was privileged to work in a rural West Country comprehensive. The school was formed from an ancient foundation grammar school and the last of England's all-age schools. In a 'true Blue' area it was intended as a bilateral and as a practical solution to old and decaying buildings. Credit must be given to the planners who obviously sought to give the area a fine building as a focus for the community and for the proper education of children. I doubt that any had seriously considered common strategies that would bring 'grammar' and 'modern' together or the development of a process of corporate decision making. But an outstanding and vigorous head had the whole place bubbling right from the start and was soon to establish that 'vital ingredient' detected by the authors of **Schools on Trial** in his 'efforts to innovate, to be progressive and to be democratic'. Like the more famous case studies he soon 'ran foul of some parents and some local politicians.' Unease over religious education (it was a voluntary controlled school) led to a Teachers Service conducted by the Bishop. When the Bishop was so obviously captivated by this committed educationalist, some of the steam went out of that issue. There were other examples but the balance was just preserved and a particular 'trigger' (identified as a crucial factor by the investigator in **Schools on Trial**). Two factors in particular: the key role of the head and the ultimate failure to win the understanding and confidence of *all* sections in the community at large.

In their introduction the authors look at the rhetoric about comprehensives. Of the schools in their case study they felt all had made 'determined efforts to realise a comprehensive form, content and broad purposes'. The point was that they had openly struggled towards what they called 'comprehensive ideals' and innovated in sequences which could be described as 'progressive processes'.

Part one examines Risinghill, Summerhill and Countesthorpe. It is doubly painful to realise that the closure of Risinghill is almost 20 years ago. The issues seem remarkably contemporary: the more so because of current problems caused by falling rolls and contraction. Both Risinghill and Summerhill were highly personal battles with first Michael Duane and then a decade later R.F. MacKenzie being forced from the field. Of the trio, Countesthorpe College is described as 'surviving the stresses'. At the peak of the struggle the support of the governing body, in particular the chairman, was crucial. 'The school has succeeded in establishing the means whereby children learn more and become more autonomous. Many critics have suspended judgement or retracted their criticisms in the light of the relatively smooth running of the school'. That latter point seems to me to be the key to the way in which the general public assess schools.

In Part two the authors examine in some detail nearly a decade of development from 1973 at the Sutton Centre. Unlike the other case studies the school is integrated with a shopping centre and sports complex. A common curriculum was designed to develop all pupils' abilities. That 'all pupils would work towards Mode IIICSE' was an early contentious issue. There was some parental alarm over 'the informality of dress and speech' whilst others applauded the liberating effect of the Centre. In 1977 there occurred a key 'trigger' event when a teacher began a lesson by asking the question: 'Why do people swear?' There followed a media campaign and a complex set of responses from LEA, Head, Unions, Staff, Parents, and an enquiry.

'Virtually at the moment when their successes began really to outshine their failures they were stopped from developing any further.' 'The momentum declined and so did the less tangible quality of staff unity.' 'Each had an event, a cause célèbre, which could stick in the public eye like a piece of grit.' 'Each, too, had rumblings of deep issues of principle.' In all cases concern was first centred on management and control aspects. Response was 'high profile' and involved the local press.

In the final chapter the authors attempt some conclusions and to point the way forward. It is clear that schools need to improve their techniques of self-evaluation, of consultation, and of political skills. In this **Schools on Trial** is helpful. It is a readable book, and pertinent to all who strive towards the comprehensive ideal. The difficulties and pitfalls are made clear as well as the sheer bad luck of timing and the accident of a wrong word at the wrong time. I would have hoped for more on how the momentum of change, organic growth, might be sustained. How can the development of democratic comprehensives be sustained against a background of falling rolls, decline in resources and a dramatic change in accountability? Are there examples of good practice which, though less colourful, illustrate sound progressive development? To what extent have teachers from the case study schools transferred their work to new institutions? How replicable have some of the developments been? We need inspirational developers with the ability to challenge the conventional but also a way forward that is manageable and practical for the rest to follow.

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