

FORUM

for the discussion of new trends in education

Spring 1986

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This issue

Racism and Community Education

Girl Friendly Schooling

Educational Assessment

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The Next Forum

There will be a focus on certain D.E.S. initiatives in the next FORUM. Penelope Weston, of the N.F.E.R., who is directing the national evaluation of the D.E.S. funded 'Lower Attaining Pupils' Programme' (LAPP) contributes on this, while Diane Fairbairn, Ron Needham and Keith Spencer contribute to a symposium on profiling, each from a different angle. Harvey Wyatt makes an assessment of the long-term effects of the current salary dispute and the clear devaluation of teachers which government attitudes embody – things will never be the same again, he argues. In addition Michael Clarke, in an article on primary education, assesses the ILEA's Thomas Report, while Patricia Potts writes on Special Needs, with particular reference to the ILEA's Fish Report. Our series on teacher research (or enquiry) groups is continued with an article from Pat D'Arcy on her Wiltshire/Somerset group, 'Learning about Learning'.

Line Management – or ‘Process’ Model?

The educational scene is becoming increasingly macabre. At the top, Sir Keith Joseph continues his public agonising – while at the same time announcing plans to tighten the screws on an increasingly alienated profession. In an impassioned article at the end of November, John Fairhall, the distinguished and experienced **Guardian** correspondent, focussed directly on where responsibility lies. ‘It was Sir Keith and his government’, he wrote, ‘who systematically ran down public sector pay below private sector levels. It was Sir Keith who, with missionary fervour, preached the virtues of the contract and the market place. Now that he sees the results of several years of the application of his theories – the undermining of the whole education system including even that scientific and technological element he was trying to foster – he lashes out at the teachers.’ Failing to spot a demonstration (of *parents*) on arrival at a Berkshire school since, he told the teachers there, he’d been asleep, adding that he was now getting only three and a half hours sleep a night. ‘It would be a kindness to Sir Keith’, Fairhall concludes, ‘to relieve him of responsibility for education. It could be a blessing for education’, (**Guardian**, 26.11.85).

Everywhere cries of protest are heard – even from the most unexpected sources. Arguably the Black Paper movement of the late 60s and 70s played a key role in the turn to Thatcherism; such was quite clearly its intention in a highly politicised campaign. Now we see Brian Cox, editor of all five of these semi-scurrilous documents, protesting publicly and passionately against ‘the immense folly of the present government’ in allowing spending on school and public libraries ‘to fall so dramatically’ (**Sunday Times**, 1.12.85). Such ‘catastrophic cuts’ are having a disastrous effect, he argues. In many primary schools ‘children are forced to use an inadequate supply of dog-eared readers which may fall to pieces in their hands’. ‘The increase in ill-educated unemployables has vast social implications,’ he writes, ‘and is clearly related to the growth of juvenile delinquency and crime’. By reducing spending on school books, he adds, ‘the government is ensuring that more money must be spent on law and order. It’s a crazy sequence’.

If even Black Paper propagandists are concerned, indeed deeply so, the breadth and scope of a wide movement of resistance to present policies begins to take shape. And none too soon. For in spite of his agonising, the Secretary of State presses relentlessly on with his plans to gain, so far as possible, total control of the education system on the line management model castigated so effectively by Jackson Hall, this year’s President of the Society of Education Officers, in his **FORUM** article in our last number: ‘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’. And, it might be added, the teachers at the bottom, who are seen (and described) as ‘agents’ whose job is the ‘delivery’ of the curriculum – as if it were a package of fish and chips.

An important means by which control is to be exercised (one among many) is through the imposition of teacher ‘appraisal’. Legislative powers to compel local authorities to introduce such systems have been announced by the Secretary of State at a special ‘conference’ called by the DES. Of course Sir Keith hopes that the sheep will come quietly into the fold without the need for compulsion. These powers, he states, are to be held in reserve. Having failed to introduce appraisal schemes through linking these with salaries, resource now had to be the big stick.

Given the actual situation concerning the morale of teachers, no worse time could be chosen for threatening the imposition of such schemes. If we place this move in its current political context (as Keith Morrison does in relation to School Self-Evaluation in this number), the implications in terms of the role of schools and teachers are clear – and challenging. That context is one of the deliberate and strategic arrogation of central control over the system. A top down management system requires a docile teaching force. Teacher appraisal, in this context, appears as a clear means to that end.

Within all the chaos and confusion of the present time, it may be as well to re-state what **FORUM** stands for. We reject the line management model being foisted on the service, regarding it as essentially counter-productive and above all inhibitory of the essentially creative process of teaching. We also reject the objectives model embodied in almost caricature form in the draft ‘grade related criteria’ now being published, and agree with Desmond Nuttall that these will lead to tightened central control and are likely to act as ‘a serious brake on curriculum development’ – as well as with his conclusion that the new GCSE is likely to be ‘divisive, bureaucratic and irrelevant’.* We stand for a full, all-round, general education for all including science and technology (also for *all*) within fully organised local systems of comprehensive education under enhanced local community control. We would like to see the teachers (properly rewarded) and the local authorities (effectively financed) playing their full part in this development, as they have the capacity to do. Finally we prefer a *process*, rather than an *objectives* model of curriculum development. It is at the point of interaction between teachers and students that the true values of education are realised.

*Desmond Nuttall, ‘Evaluating progress towards the G.C.S.E.’, unpublished paper delivered to the British Education Research Association (August 1985).

Racism and Community Education

Paddy Hall

In many urban areas in this country, schools are learning how to cope effectively, and humanely, with communities made up of people (and students) from many different parts of the world — in particular from Afro-Caribbean countries, from Asia, as well as from Europe. These schools are deliberately, and effectively, developing a multi-cultural and above all anti-racist approach. Here, Paddy Hall, who has had five years experience as Vice Principal (Community) at Moat Community College, Leicester, reports on the agonies, rewards, and new procedures being developed in just such a community.

1985. We have had the Rampton Report, the Scarman Enquiry, and now the Swann committee's report, 'Education For All'. It still isn't easy to be a white teacher talking to a black student in a predominantly black school and claim that this country is making any real progress against racism.

The black students know the truth. They know that unemployment for young people is high in many parts of the country. They also know that for them the curve goes up another twenty per cent or so. They know, particularly during the current round of industrial action, that an eighteen year old policeman is valued by both society and government some twenty per cent higher than a fully qualified degree holding teacher at twenty-three. They know that whether the police are playing it rough or smooth at the moment the treatment is likely to be different for them because they are black. They know that the hate/fear ingredient that is often involved means that if a policeman or woman comes into the neighbourhood on serious business (apart from 'Frank' the community copper) there is likely to be a van full in a nearby street on standby. They know that the banks that are advertising for new accounts from employed school leavers are unlikely to mean them, and that many of those same banks still invest in South Africa, and may soon be advertising on school exercise books in some authorities. They recently watched local sportsmen accept places to tour in South Africa, claiming that there is no apartheid in sport. They were delighted to see on their return the City Council refuse them permission to use local authority playing fields, and then dismayed to see the High Court overturn the decision. Why is their (own) government the only European one to refuse to discuss sanctions?

Five years into Moat Community College's history, early optimism takes on a more sober hue. The Highfields, Leicester, is still a terrific neighbourhood to work in. The institution is a stimulating and rewarding environment for professionals, and the students are as good a bunch as you would expect to find in any urban school . . . a deal better than most, but . . . and it is a big but, how far have we actually come in narrowing the gap between our students abilities and aspirations, and the goals they can realistically set themselves?

As a 'parachuted-in-white-professional' I bring with me a number of problems. If racism is 'prejudice with power', then I am by definition racist, or at least part of A RACIST STRUCTURE. I hold a powerful job in a black neighbourhood, that can easily reinforce the

assumption that there are no black professionals around of sufficient calibre to do the job. If I fail it will be said 'who could be expected to succeed in an area with so many problems?' If I succeed the first view holds.

We never quite shake our own education, even if intellectually we know its errors. My own was crammed with 'pink' history and geography texts, colouring books of the Empire. We studied the Greeks and Romans and ourselves as the great civilisations and civilisers. All were based on conquest and slavery. I read Rider Haggard, G.H. Henty, and anthropological studies of 'primitive people' written in the same language as natural history books. I was taught nothing of the contribution to science, religion or art of the Asian or Afro-Caribbean peoples. I learnt of them, alongside the American Indian, under the twin headings of 'noble savage' or 'starving millions'.

Moat became a community college in 1980 under the Leicestershire system. It had been two single-sexed secondary modern schools. It became co-educational against the wishes of many of the parents, particularly Muslims. The catchment area is less than a square mile in size and accommodates 26,000 people. Moat houses an 11-16 school of 1,100 or so pupils, 13 per cent Afro-Caribbean, 11 per cent Europeans and 75 per cent of Asian descent. The Asian students, many of whom came via East Africa or were born here, include large Muslim and Hindu communities, and a smaller Sikh group.

Most of Leicestershire's urban community colleges are built on the outskirts of the city, where the land is. The black population lives mostly in the centre of town, travels to day school and returns in the afternoon. The local, predominantly white population therefore make the major use of community facilities. Moat, quite properly, was built in the centre, but pays the price of a cramped site with no playing fields to hand.

When we opened as a community college there was no policy statement to guide us. We were to be part of the supposed 'liberal' tradition of education, and with considerable local autonomy. Local discussions produced some guidelines that have sustained us.

The first was both architectural and pragmatic. The authority decided to remove the wall that separated us from the community, and instead built paths with seats at intervals to ease approach. The rider was a decision to be continuously and massively full of local people if we were both to meet needs and avoid the damage that attends many new school buildings.

Secondly we would relook at the gentle, liberal, approach to immigrant communities adopted by the local authority, of providing ethnic groups lots of help to become 'more like us'. Excellent and extensive ESL programmes, the kindly insistence by teachers that children should not 'talk Gujarati in corridors' all reinforcing views in young minds that theirs were second class cultures needing to be shed as rapidly as possible. We felt that this coerced integration, though done with the best of intentions, and undoubtedly needed if people uprooted from another continent were to survive, was, on its own, racist. We became, I suppose, aggressively multi-cultural. The college would encourage all communities to celebrate their own cultures in terms of language, history, religion, the arts and social life. We reasoned that any culture threatened with dilution, or of becoming overwhelmed by another, becomes defensive or eventually crushed. These must be the worst possible ingredients for an ultimately secure society. We hoped the reverse would be true, that confident cultures would extend the hand of friendship at times and places of their own choosing, and to those they trusted.

Sir Keith Joseph visited the college in the wake of the 1981 disturbances (our neighbourhood underwent what were described as four days of serious rioting) and questioned the policy by asking how, if we encouraged cultural diversity, would we create 'Patriotism'. We argue that patriotism mirrors success in this society. It is earned not ordained.

The third guiding principle was to assume that the professional staff were by definition, not qualified to be the sole determiners of local needs. It followed that massive participation by local people was needed. Participation is meaningless without three things; power to act and decide, information as a basis for good decision-making, and of course, resources. Resources mean both the physical resources of money, plant, and equipment and the appropriate skills and experience. The staff have access to training and to a whole infrastructure of advisors, administrators, INSET, and professional colleagues. If we are asking local people to join us in shared tasks, they too must be entitled to appropriate training and support. Although the college needed to become a major community provider, it began to signal its intention to concentrate on community development as both method and goal,

WE HAD NOT AT THIS STAGE MADE ANY CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN A MULTI-CULTURAL APPROACH AND AN ANTI-RACIST ONE.

Five years later we look at ourselves again. The Swann Report says it is '... primarily concerned to change behaviour and attitudes'... and '... the fact that ethnic minorities are 'particularly disadvantaged in extra deprivation is the result of racial prejudice and discrimination'. It goes on to say 'it will be evident that society is faced with the dual problem; eradicating the discriminatory attitudes of the white majority on the one hand, and on the other evolving an educational system which ensures that all pupils achieve their full potential'.

The messages for us are clear. There is racism, intentional and unintentional, individual and collective, and it must be fought in all its forms. The quality of education is primarily the result of the attitudes of the teachers and the resource providers. Failure to achieve

is not the result of generic defects in any group of children. However the status, confidence and aspirations of the community must be a major motivational influence. Poor housing, and racism in public services and employment practices must be inhibiting factors to high expectations. You cannot separate the student from the context of his or her environment. Community Education has a key role to play, and certainly an unavoidable responsibility to act in all neighbourhoods, black and white.

Five years on there are signs of encouragement and reasons for despair. First the good news. We have a college council of 70-100 local people and they have a management committee. More importantly we have a series of open 'working' or 'curricula' councils, (education, arts, womens, youth, sports, finance and new developments, and soon I hope, elderly). Each one has 10-20 regular members, although anyone can join at any time. Each has an annual development programme and an accompanying budget. Each is serviced by a member of staff. Forty members of the school teaching staff have exchanged ten, twenty or thirty per cent of their timetable for a community contract. We have a full-time Staff Training and Development Officer to support them as they venture into adult education, youth or community work.

THE EDUCATION COUNCIL enrolls 1,200 adult and youth students in community class programmes. Eighty per cent are from the neighbourhood, eighty per cent claim fee remission because they are in receipt of one or more state benefit, or are dependants. Seventy five per cent are people with no previous experience of continuing education. The programme includes, in addition to traditional vocational and leisure subjects, fourteen ESL classes, eight community language classes, six Asian or Afro-Caribbean dance forms, sitar, tabla and harmonium classes and several design classes taught in a community language (why should the language of instruction always be English?). The Education council conducts surveys of local need, consults with students and staff on appropriateness and quality of teaching, syllabi and materials, asks for new programme areas and co-appoints the new tutors required alongside professional colleagues. They also organise trips, speakers, give small grants and buy new books and materials

THE YOUTH COUNCIL administers the youth budget to its member groups, supports and co-appoints the part-time youth leaders, runs a £10,000 a year summer activities programme of arts, sports, trips, camps and international exchanges. It is currently getting its collective head around the idea of positive discrimination within the college on behalf of Asian girls (we have recently appointed a community tutor with special responsibility to develop the college's policy in this area).

THE ARTS COUNCIL runs a range of activities from community classes in dance, music and drama, supports many local community arts groups, and runs us as a venue on the Arts Council of Great Britain's Grid System for touring companies. Black theatre companies from Soweto and Southall, a dancer in residence from the Jamaica National Dance School, classical Kathak dance, the purchase of hand built African drums and sitars have all led to changes in our own thinking and

level. A student leaves us for a national dance school and returns to tutor on the summer school.

THE SPORTS COUNCIL runs the college as a seven day a week sports and recreation centre for forty affiliated clubs and societies. The sports hall doubles as a venue for major religious and cultural events. It provides venues for local teams and sessions for the unemployed and local womens' groups. Following the success of the first summer scheme we piloted (with support from the Sports Council of Great Britain) sports leadership schemes for young black men and women many of whom used it as a route to further training on employment.

THE (reforming at present) WOMENS' COUNCIL has been responsible for persuading the college and the authority that it needed to open on Sunday afternoons for protected activities for women, this being the only time that many ethnic minority women are free of the cultural pressures of family and religion. It organises conferences and theatre events on women's issues and supports creche provision throughout the programme.

THE FINANCE COUNCIL ensures the other councils develop good practice on budgetary planning and accounting, and that local people have the opportunity to gain grant aid from external sources. It then advises the management committee on the apportionment of some £40,000 needed to run each year's programme, all raised and spent via the community council's private accounts.

Forty teachers now have direct contact, through their part-time community contracts, with members of the local community other than 11-16 students, in many of the programmes outlined above, and in special projects (Afro-Caribbean Saturday school, work with the handicapped, setting up a translation unit for community languages, neighbourhood newspaper, community transport scheme, research into underachievement by Afro-Caribbean children, and many others). The college, through a teacher on such a contract, runs continually changing programmes of exhibitions that reflect the calendars of all the major ethnic groups as well as local and national issues.

On a wider front we have become a regular venue for conferences, particularly those with a multi-ethnic or inner-city flavour; a closed Asian girls day, a rate-capping conference, multi-cultural education conferences, community language seminars, a housing conference, young people and the police, women writers, Gujarati poets and many independence day celebrations by the cultural associations of former colonies.

The multi-ethnic aspects of Moat's development, though far from fulfilled, have been a delight to be part of. They result in a healthy dialogue with many visitors from throughout the country and abroad. Almost a case for congratulation until we come face to face with the realisation that we (the institution) may have changed dramatically but life for most of the ethnic minority citizens of Highfields has not. Multi-culturalism on its own runs the risk of being purely decorative, unless accompanied by much stronger anti-racist policies and activities. We have created a pleasant environment, there is a degree more trust, and debate is certainly possible. Now must come the real work.

What can an institution like a single school or college be expected to do? Three years ago some of the departments in the school began to rework curricula areas (multi-culturalism), discarding and burning many of the 'pink' textbooks, and pointing up with new purchases the contributions to literature and science of black scholars (anti-racist). The anti-racist staff group meetings have been buried under the necessity for prolonged industrial action. Overt racism is now a disciplinary offence in the authority. Some people have clearly been able to change their awareness and attitudes, others have prudently buried them from public view.

The college has, over a variety of issues, challenged the activities of our own authority, sections of the police force, the Gas board, local media, employers, examination boards and others when we felt local people were suffering discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour. A new threat is looming. GCSE developments will remove locally designed (more appropriate? less Eurocentric?) mode 3 syllabuses. Ethnocentric examinations clearly mitigate against ethnic minority students achieving equal grades. Our influence, ranged alongside other neighbourhood organisations, has on occasions, clearly contributed to changes of policy or behaviour. This has not always made us popular, particularly when it involves the hand that pays us. We have had to argue the right to criticise where such judgements are inescapable if we are to maintain any credibility in the area we serve.

We have made many mistakes. We have had to learn not to act as cyphers for the black communities and thereby continue systems of control, but to insist that the authors communicate directly. We have to learn to avoid stereotyping in the way we write and describe our activities. We advertise for jobs in the ethnic minority press and are slowly gaining ground in our own employment practices. However eighty per cent of our full-time staff are white and we do not yet have an ethnic-minority appointment above scale 111.

As a community college we have a duty not to assume that we can be the be-all and end-all of community development in the neighbourhood, and act as a safe umbrella for everyone else (a traditional role for Leicestershire colleges). We must not obscure the authorities direct view of local black organisations and projects, in order that they can demonstrate their skills and leadership, particularly in non-traditional areas of development and on their own terms. If projects run into bad times or 'fail', we must argue their right to do so without public condemnation if they do not have the levels of resourcing, infrastructure and support from the authorities that we enjoy. We are but one project among many working for the neighbourhood.

Racism is prejudice with power. It is a symptom of fear and weakness, not of strength. Education has not led society in this country for a long time. It has reflected it, good and ill. Perhaps, optimistically, community education is in a position to give away a little of the power, ease by contact a little of the fear, and begin, with local people as allies, to give prejudice a good kicking!

To conclude at the beginning. What can I, a white teacher, say to a black pupil about community education's success in combating inequality and racism?

What little Moat has achieved has been as the result of

Girl Friendly Schooling: What Does It Mean?

Judith Byrne Whyte

In our last issue we published an article by Alison Kelly, based on the 'Girls into Science and Technology' project. Judith Byrne Whyte co-directed that project. Here she reports on the 'Girl Friendly Schooling Conference' held recently at Manchester, which directly confronted problems of gender in education. The author has written **Beyond the Wendy House** on sex stereotyping in primary schools and **Girls into Science and Technology** (in press). She is Senior Lecturer at Manchester Polytechnic.

In the last ten years there have been several national conferences about gender equality in education, most of them meetings either of writers and academics in the field, or of feminist 'grass roots' teachers exchanging views respectively on theoretical perspectives or intervention strategies.

The conference on 'Girl Friendly Schooling' held at Manchester Polytechnic in September 1984 was slightly different in the intention to assemble practitioners with some direct responsibility for changes in policy as well as practice: headteachers, advisers, the responsible HMI and LEA representatives, together with academic researchers who could provide the evidence for concern about gender issues, and feminist activists with experience of initiating intervention projects.

The response was enthusiastic. Over 50 papers were received and sent out in advance to the 100 plus participants in the hope that this would permit the maximum time for fruitful discussion. Day 1 was devoted to an analysis and critique of contemporary educational practice for failing to provide a school experience which is genuinely 'girl friendly', Day 2 to reports of interventions around the country, and Day 3 to reflection on the achievements so far and strategies recommended for the future. Unfortunately, not every contribution can be referred to here, so in this article I shall draw out what seemed to me to be some of the more important, and especially the new emphases that materialised in discussion of the papers. An edited volume of papers from the conference is due out in

December 1985¹, but it necessarily represents only a limited set of contributions.

Over one third of the papers reported research or intervention on the related problems of gender differentiation in subject choice, and the shortfall of girls in science, technology and computing. Some feminist impatience was expressed with the apparently unexamined assumption that science and technology are 'good' for girls. A paper making international comparisons between governmental interventions to encourage girls into science implied that the underlying philosophy was frequently one of 'blaming the victim': why do these females persist in avoiding the sciences?² There was some feeling that all this is already old hat, too well-rehearsed an issue, and that it is now up to scientists and engineers to start an overhaul of their subjects to make them more girl friendly. However two papers took up the theme of Alison Kelly's article in the last issue of **Forum** — the immense difficulty of getting teachers to regard such gender issues as either personally or professionally significant.

It appears that male teachers of 'boys' subjects hold markedly retrogressive views on such matters as working mothers or technical girls.³ Amongst teachers in general there is a somewhat woolly commitment to the principle of equal opportunities combined with strong reservations about actually doing anything positive in practice.⁴ So a major theme of the conference was working with teachers.

Two or three local authorities have made adviser

Racism and Community Education *(continued from page 38)*

considerable additional resourcing. The money came at the community's insistence, not of the providers' free will.

The ability to spend it wisely has required all the skills and energy we can get from local people. Without them we would continue to make the same old mistakes. Continuous listening, and frequently checked perceptions, are all important.

The authority's reaction to, and ability to support, our first teacher of Gujarati in the school day was very different to the introduction of a European language.

The 'twitchiness' surrounding the setting up of ethnic minority Saturday schools (black) is very different to the casual acceptance of the long standing Polish Saturday school.

I am still haunted by the Muslim boy who told a

teacher that when he wished to pray reflectively, he had to use The Lord's Prayer. English is now his only thinking language. Would we not have supported his potential for bilingual success differently if he had been Anglo-French?

Three glimmers of hope

The college is neutral territory, owned by many and debate happens.

The Authority has issued a policy document telling us we need not hire the facilities to any organisation with racist aims.

... and the fifteen year old Afro-Caribbean girl I am addressing this to has just joined a conversational Hindi class.

appointments at a level senior enough for planned in-service training and consciousness raising to begin amongst the teaching staff. Most LEAs have not gone so far, but the pioneers had something to say about failures and successes already encountered.

In Brent, for instance, the strategy has been to break the teaching force down into interest groups, and focus separately on the distinct concerns of primary heads, CDT teachers and so on, without neglecting the committed feminist teachers who were partly responsible for the appointment of an equal opportunities adviser in the first place.⁵ In Inner London, the very different response of men and women to a course offering experiential group work and consciousness raising as well as pedagogical elements led to the suggestion that there might be some advantage in single sex INSET.⁶ One can imagine horrified reaction to the very idea, at least outside the more radical atmosphere of the capital, yet I have noticed that much of the theory as well as the practice of gender study and intervention is more enjoyable for women, who can find in it an expression of their own experiences, than for men.

Other LEAs have not progressed so far. The contributor from Humberside recalled the press furore which followed the publication by an equal opportunities working party of its guidelines for schools: 'Equality booklet "sinister",' 'Insult to intelligence of teachers' and 'County guide to sexism futile — claim'.⁷ Manchester had also issued admirable guidelines on sex stereotyping with, so far, no very dramatic effect upon the schools.⁸ Sheffield, Wigan and others had appointed staff at a level below adviser, and their reports indicated a consequent narrowing of the focus of effort to limited initiatives such as careers work or liaison with small groups of schools.^{9, 10, 11}

Perhaps it is indicative of the relative strength of the girls and science lobby that so few papers were received about primary schooling. The argument that gender differentiation is imbibed through a cumulative accretion of experiences and attitudes during the nursery, infant and junior years is possibly more difficult to present and disseminate than a straight-forward comparison of girls' and boys' subject choices. The power and subtlety of informal social interactions and unspoken expectations suggests the need for more thoughtful analysis of why it is that in schools largely staffed by women (if often run by men), where girls are notably achieving well, the outcomes appear nevertheless to include an exaggeration and confirmation of gender divisions.

An animated evening session explored why it should be that in a profession numerically dominated by females, it is still men who manage while women teach. There were five papers on this topic, but to give the flavour of the session, I shall refer to just one, rather telling incident reported in a paper about the 'macho culture of the school'.¹²

The 'pinnacle of the macho system' was the strong powerfully built deputy head, on whom teachers with discipline problems were invited to depend. His toughness had the effect of stressing physical rather than moral force as a way for teachers to maintain control. The paper tells the story of a woman PE teacher, about to take some boys down to the deputy head's office for

making obscene comments outside an all girls' dance class. To her dismay the deputy was out of his office so that almost without reflection, she was forced to rely on her own moral authority. She insisted the boys apologise publicly, then and there, to the girls, and in fact they did so.

The incident illustrates a point on which most of the conference participants were agreed, that 'gender' is not a peripheral issue in schooling, but a central perspective with wider ramifications than most educationists yet admit. Problems of discipline, pornography and sexual harassment at school are intimately connected, but the macho solutions are already proving inadequate.

The idea that feminists have perhaps underrated the real significance of their challenge to the status quo in schooling, was raised by a visitor from Australia, Lyn Yates. She argued that girl friendly schooling does not just mean cutting up the existing curriculum cake more evenly, or even just focusing more explicitly on the female experience, in both classroom practice and studies such as history. Although both attempts are understandable and important, a sexually inclusive curriculum has the potential to transform curriculum process and praxis, altering the relations between people and the ethos and norms of schools as organisations, in perhaps unexpected ways.¹³

For example, a session on Day 1 discussed two papers on the pros and cons of mixed physical education. For some, it seems a natural and desirable consequence of equality policies, but Sheila Scraton suggested this may be simplistic, as mixed PE classes could come to suffer from the same sort of male domination as occurs in science and technology, and it is even possible that female PE teachers would lose out on promotion opportunities available in the existing gender divided departments.¹⁴

On the other hand, in the case of TVEI schemes, Val Millman argued that without positive intervention to rename traditional 'occupational family' areas, the supposedly innovative TVEI initiative will be doing little more than reinforcing stereotypical job expectations.¹⁵

Tessa Blackstone rounded off the conference and chose to end on a positive but challenging note. If we look at the statistics, she said, by the vast majority of measures, girls are doing better than boys. Therefore, we should not imply that girls are in any sense underachieving. The one exception is science and technology, but when girls do take science subjects they do better than boys. At GCE A level the big gap in the number of girls getting three passes compared with boys is closing, and will disappear in the near future. More girls than in the past are staying on at school and going to university, and these significant facts and achievements should not be overlooked or undervalued. However she considered that a more intractable problem was the division of labour, not just at work, but in the home, and that men must begin to share household and childcare tasks on a more equal basis.

Two reports, from the Equal Opportunities Commission and the HMI with responsibility for Equal Opportunities, reflected on the weakness of existing legislation and of government policy statements.^{16, 17} While the latter do encourage schools to make positive efforts towards changing their practice there seems to be a lack of will to undertake fundamental innovation. My own view, and one expressed in many of the discussions,

is that well-meant policies will have little effect on practice until there are more women participating at policy-making level in educational institutions. It has already happened in the States, but there are fears in this country, obliquely mentioned in a paper by Gaby Weiner, that this could result in a division between those feminists concerned with working from the grassroots upwards, and those seeking to occupy positions of power.¹⁸ The argument supposes that the latter will inevitably compromise on feminist principles. Yet as the debates on girls and science/technology, and on mixed PE showed, there continues to be a lack of clarity about what tactics, strategies and principles need to be applied. The effects of current interventions need to be carefully monitored, so that we can better understand the sorts of changes and the kinds of strategy which are genuinely beneficial. The trouble with educational innovations is that they are rarely implemented in the form envisaged by the innovators.

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A Revolution in Educational Assessment?

Roger Murphy

FORUM continues to keep a close eye on the whole issue of examinations and assessment. Here Roger Murphy follows up Henry Macintosh's article in our last issue (on the GCSE and the Future) with a critical look at current developments in this area. Lecturer in the Department of Education, Southampton University, he is the first Director of the newly established (in 1984) Assessment and Examinations Unit in that department. At present he is involved in a wide range of research projects exploring alternative approaches to pupil assessment in schools.

Anyone, with even a passing interest in educational assessment in British secondary schools, would accept that currently we are going through what airline pilots refer to as a moderate degree of turbulence! Switching to a more down-to-earth metaphor one could say that an apple cart has been upset. The apple cart, in this insistence, being a set of assumptions and values that have long been associated with public examinations and which have to a great extent been dominated by the practices of the GCE examining boards in England and Wales during the last thirty five years. History, however, reminds us that the apples can be put back into the cart and it would take a lot of courage (or foolishness) to predict the outcome of the present period of questioning. Those who participated in the development of the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) examinations back in the mid-1960s, or the early discussions about the creation of a 'Common Examination at 16+' from 1970 onwards, will be only too aware of how difficult it is to alter policy and practice radically in relation to educational assessment in British secondary schools. Many of those who enthusiastically supported CSE, as an examination system that could more adequately serve the needs of teachers and of schools, have largely ended up disappointed by the system as it has developed, regarding it as having been turned into a weak imitation of the GCE examination (Macintosh, 1982). Similarly, those who supported the idea of a comprehensive system of examinations for comprehensive schools in the early 1970s are, on the whole, uninspired by the new GCSE examination that is about to be introduced (Nuttall, 1984).

If the GCSE is taken to represent the re-stocking of the apple cart with familiar and somewhat battered apples, then some will take heart from the fact that other approaches to the challenge of the upset apple cart are being pursued with considerable enthusiasm and ingenuity (even if with less resources). Very few readers

of this article will need to be reminded of the diversity of assessment practices that are to be found within innovations such as CPVE, TVEI, YTS, the profile reporting and graded assessment movements, individual LEA initiatives towards developing their own Certificates of Educational Achievement, the DES records of achievement initiative, and the many variants on the theme of assessment geared to the needs of modularised or unit based curricula. Alongside some of these other developments GCSE may appear to be rather insignificant both in terms of the curriculum-thinking upon which it is based (a theme explored by Henry Macintosh in the last issue of *Forum*) and in terms of the extent to which it represents a new direction in educational assessment. Within the other initiatives one can find much more in the way of innovative approaches to pupil assessment, in many cases involving a much greater degree of teacher involvement in the processes of assessment and a definite attempt to develop genuine alternatives to the pervasive model of external end-of-course examinations that has dogged our educational thinking for so long.

The apple cart of the GCE dominated public examinations system is probably well enough understood for it to be unnecessary to go to great lengths to describe its characteristics. The major features along with their associated shortcomings have been fully exposed elsewhere in sources such as Mortimore and Mortimore's (1984), ironically entitled, *Bedford Way publication Secondary School Examinations: the helpful servants not the dominating master*. Central among such analyses has been the theme of the stranglehold on the curriculum that the examination boards have held through their published syllabuses. It has been shown that such syllabuses fail to meet the demands of equally laudable but different approaches to the teaching of various areas of the curriculum, as well as inevitable changes within curriculum areas over time. Alongside problems of curriculum sensitivity and flexibility has been the problem of a very narrow view of both educational achievement and the means of its assessment. The old adage 'we tend to assess what we can easily assess' provides an apt description of what has traditionally happened within the GCE examination-led system. The plea from the Boards, that their syllabus aims are not intended to encompass all teaching aims, has hardly prevented a narrow concentration on a restricted range of cognitive, academic areas of achievement in both assessment and teaching.

This issue of allowing narrow thinking about assessment to lead to a narrow view of educational achievement is critical in any analysis of what has happened in British secondary schools during the last twenty or thirty years. It is probably not surprising that this was the first issue addressed by the Hargreaves Committee in their 1984 inquiry into under-achievement in ILEA secondary schools. They rejected the view that any realistic estimate of overall achievement could be obtained from the results of public examinations. They then went on to outline four separate, but equally important, aspects of achievement only one of which is, in their view, adequately assessed by current 16 plus public examinations. Clearly, their concern to re-educate people towards a more holistic view of educational achievement, to include the application of

knowledge, social and personal skills, and motivation and commitment, requires a major shift in emphasis, and the development of new assessment systems so as to ensure that such aspects of achievement are accorded equivalent status. The Hargreaves Committee has attempted to do just this through their proposed system of units and unit credits, which bears many of the characteristics of other modularised curriculum and assessment systems that are being developed simultaneously in other parts of the country.

As soon as one attempts to break away from a traditional view of educational achievement, one is confronted with the need to make a similar break with traditional views of assessment. In the same way that, for years, intelligence tests restricted the view of human intelligence, prominent assessment methods (as used in public examinations) have tended to distort concepts of educational achievement. Indeed, one can go even further, in claiming a strong link between the two movements. Much of the development work, in the area of educational assessment, conducted by the public examination boards, has been influenced by psychometric concepts and ideas (Woods, 1982), borrowed directly from the same psychologists who promoted the development of intelligence tests in the early part of this century. The traditional presentation of results in the form of single letter (or number) grades, and the aggregation of such grades, by many users, to give an overall estimate of a child's achievements (and potential), reflects much of the former thinking of psychologists such as Burt and Spearman who believed in a basic (largely inherited) single trait of mental ability that could be used to explain most, if not all, human behaviour.

A major challenge, for those attempting to explore new initiatives in educational assessment, is the need to resist such powerful traditions and influences. A broader concept of educational achievement must certainly imply a broader range of assessment methods. This follows from the fact that many of the aspects of achievement that we now wish to assess cannot be assessed by formal written tests or examinations. In the same way that educational researchers have had to argue the case for alternative qualitative and interpretive research methods in order to improve the overall quality of research data, so increased status and kudos will have to be given to teachers who become actively involved in the collection and recording of qualitative, naturalistic, observational data on the achievements of their pupils. This is just one consequence of changed ideas about desirable characteristics for current assessment initiatives.

There is undoubtedly widespread interest in promoting such changed ideas, which could be summarised by many as containing most, if not all, of the characteristics listed below. Thus, new assessment methods should ideally:

1. record information about a *much wider range* of the achievements of pupils than have been emphasised through a narrow approach to educational assessment in the past;
2. lead to *meaningful* and positive descriptions of what *all* pupils can do;
3. *promote* rather than inhibit curriculum development and reform;
4. enhance pupil *motivation* and teacher morale and

thus lead to an overall improvement in educational standards;

5. lead to a more *harmonious* relationship between assessment methods, curriculum design and teaching methods within individual schools.

Such criteria will be dismissed by some as being too radical and out of step with current thinking. They do, however, represent a summary of many of the issues outlined in recent educational reports and statements. Perhaps, the four most influential examples that could be quoted in this respect are: Sir Keith Joseph's January 1984 Sheffield speech; the DES policy statement on Records of Achievement (DES, 1984); the HMI report on 'The Curriculum From 5-16' (DES, 1985) and Hargreaves' (1984) ILEA report on 'Improving Secondary Schools', to which reference has already been made.

As Macintosh (1985), Torrance (1985) and other contributors to **Forum** have indicated, through their analyses of different aspects of GCSE, it is difficult to see the new GCSE examination matching up to even some of these ideals. Despite the rhetoric that has led to an expectation of such things as a criterion-referenced grading and increased pupil motivation and achievement, there is little in the developments so far to provide a realistic expectation of anything other than 'more of the same' (Murphy and Pennycuik, 1985). Thus, those who are really interested in revolutionising assessment methods in line with the ideas outlined above, would be well advised not to ignore the other alternative assessment developments that are going to have a difficult time as they attempt to steer a course through the current turbulence. The philosophy underlying developments such as profile reports and graded assessments appears to be much more in line with these ideas, and it is these initiatives that will become even more vital if the GCSE examination turns out to be the disappointment that many fear.

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Group support for self-directed teacher research

Marion Dadds

One of the more encouraging developments in recent years has been the 'teacher as researcher' movement whose inspiration came largely (but not entirely) from the work and encouragement of the late Lawrence Stenhouse. Here, Marion Dadds, of the Cambridge Institute of Education, writes on the work of the 'action research study group' which she and a group of teachers were instrumental in founding two years ago.

What is the action research study group?

The group met for the first time in September, 1983. A steering committee of six teachers including myself started the venture. Each had conducted some classroom research through either an award bearing research based course to which I was course tutor or through the Schools' Council Project' to which I was one of the consultants. Interested teachers in the region, with and without previous experience, were invited to join. We aimed to participate in the steering group on an equal footing, each interested in researching our own practice, each offering what strengths and 'expertise' we could to the group, each being willing to share in the administration of the group's affairs.

Why was it formed?

What happens to teachers' research skills after the life of the course, or the funded project? There was a felt need for what had been achieved to be extended and to be shared with others interested in becoming action researchers. The initial aims and aspirations were:

- to provide a supportive context in which teachers committed to self-evaluation through action research could continue to develop their skills
- to provide a supportive context for teachers with little knowledge of classroom action research who wished to explore the possibility of researching their own practice
- to provide a sufficiently open-ended context for teachers to run their own in-service group in a way that reflected their own needs as they perceived them
- to provide a constructively critical audience for sharing classroom research
- to encourage teachers to support each others professional development
- to continue the tradition of teacher research already well established in the region

The intention was to foster collaborative planning, management and learning as a way of achieving these aims.

What has been learnt?

The group has now been running for two years. There is a hard core of ten to twelve regular members. It is still evolving, searching for improved ways to run its affairs and provide support for members' research processes. During this time a number of important and interesting considerations have emerged.

What does action research offer?

Evaluation by members of their experience of classroom action research has identified many advantages. Responses suggest that action research offers

- a structured way of studying one's own classroom
- a way of evaluating teaching more systematically
- a way of using research to improve the quality of teaching
- flexible approaches to assessing pupil development
- a continuous, long-term venture since the research raises more questions and problems than it solves
- an opportunity to stand back and reflect upon ways to help children more effectively
- a meaningful link between the in-service experience and one's own school

As a voluntary response by teachers to their concerns, group members are confident that action research is a valuable form of teacher development. It also increases interest in educational research since it enables teachers to identify their own problems. This freedom to study an issue relevant to one's own teaching, in contrast to problems being defined by outside researchers, increases teachers' motivation to make practical use of the outcomes of research.

Starting the research process

Members have varied in the ease and confidence experienced in the research process. For some it has been a fairly straightforward move from focusing down on a topic to final analysis and description to the group. For others it has been a slow, confusing and difficult task with no clear set of steps through the process. Many members felt the stage of getting started to be an extremely risky one, verging on the self-destructive at times, one they may not have passed through successfully without the support, advice and encouragement of the group. Initial expectations that the process would be easy, and that the group would solve one's own problems were gradually eroded. These members came to learn that the autonomy and control central to action research have to be earned through the individual's own efforts. Each seems to have needed to find their own style of working, though initial insecurity seems to have been a common experience. Members coming with a traditional view of the in-service experience — tidy packages of knowledge to be taken from the 'expert' — have undergone a drastic re-framing of expectations. They have come to recognise their own capacities as creators of educational knowledge,

bringing to consciousness their implicit theories about teaching and learning.⁵ Other models describing the action research process^{2, 6} omit the complexity of these beginning stages that several of our group members experienced.

The research agenda

In its openness the research agenda has accessed a wide range of areas of study, including

- integration of children with special needs into the ordinary class
- listening to children read
- writing in an Infant classroom
- how teachers in a First school start the day
- looking at generalist v. specialist teaching in a Middle school
- does it matter where the school houses its computer?
- what are the advantages of child observation in the classroom?

At times the group has considered adopting a shared focus but, to date, the openness has enabled each to recognise their own concerns more clearly. As these change within school, the research can change in response.

Collaborative support

In its original conception it was felt that the external support group could offer a learning context for teachers who felt isolated or who did not have similarly interested colleagues in their own schools. This had proved to be the case for some. Others have been able to share their research with colleagues, though no group member has succeeded in institutionalising their research.³ As this was not one of the original aims, any interest developing within members schools is an added incentive to continue.

Some members prefer the relative anonymity of the external group. Here they feel they can openly reflect upon the weaknesses and problems in their teaching in a way they would feel unable to in their school. For some, the degree of honesty and trust they find in the external support group is not present in their schools. Without this, self-evaluation is more risky, professional development less likely. Institutional support may be preferable to external support, if individuals are to grow in their own working context. But external support is better than no support for those who benefit from collaborative learning.

Members who have been bold enough to subject their data to group scrutiny have found collaborative analysis extremely helpful. The range of perspectives brought to the task has, on certain occasions, raised invaluable insights for the owner. In collaborative analysis teachers working across the Secondary, Primary divide and across age ranges have recognised, and worked at, common concerns about teaching and learning. Group support for individuals falling into negative self-analysis has also been a feature of these collaborative discussions of data. Self-evaluation often leads to overly negative self-criticism. Members have been constructively helpful on these occasions, enabling the owner to see the positive aspects of their practice as well as carrying them through analysis of the problematic. At its best,

collaborative support offers improved insight alongside maintenance of self-respect and self-identity. We also constantly expand our horizons through the stories that members' data tell about schools and classrooms outside our experience.

Organising time in meetings

The group has been meeting three times each term. Each meeting lasts for two hours. In the first two terms one hour was given over to 'input', for an experienced group member or outsider to talk about a specific piece of research or related research issues. The second hour was reserved for members to discuss their research, as it progressed, in small groups. This regular structure seemed popular, giving time for established expertise to be fed into the group and to enable new expertise and research to develop within. The small group work offered a forum for each member to participate and to feel that their research interests were valued. Organisation of time became a source of tension and dilemma towards the end of the first year when the group was invited to make a contribution to the Classroom Action Research Network Conference,⁴ since this put a new and somewhat lengthy item on an estimated and reasonably comfortable agenda. Time has become a persistent problem throughout the second year as other activities outside the group have become attractive propositions — a joint meeting with an established group in the region, an application for funding, an invitation from a group of teachers interested in establishing something similar in their county. These challenges have been welcomed by the group and have added a dimension of interest in their personal research but they have taken a good deal of time to plan, discuss, evaluate. This has inexorably eaten into the individual's research time during meetings, causing some to feel that fostering research within the group has taken too low a priority on the agenda. This may have threatened interest and enthusiasm for some and arrested growth of confidence for others as they have been thrown back onto their own resources, which may not be as yet, firmly developed. An attendant period of insecurity was manifest in requests to hear from 'experts' once more, another feature of our meetings that had been eroded by business. Out of this tension and frustration has been borne a commitment to meet more often, and to draw up a formal programme that will regularly include time for members research to be discussed, for external 'experts' to expand the group's skills, knowledge and confidence and for the very valuable meetings with other groups to continue.

Group management

The life of the original steering group was short lived. We had originally planned to meet for twenty minutes before, and after, each meeting to plan and evaluate. As the first few of these took place in the refectory over tea and buns, these meetings soon took on a very informal and democratic flavour. The steering group discussions soon grew to include all those members who needed sustenance before meetings.

Yet democratic decision-making and management take time. This has been a hard lesson for us to learn

within our first two years. An easy solution to the problem of the overcrowded agenda at meetings might be found if the group dispensed with collaborative management. Far quicker if a group co-ordinator made decisions on behalf of the group. But also far less effective in allowing members to determine their own affairs. The group has yet to resolve the dilemma between its wish for autonomy, and its wish to hand over the management task to a co-ordinator and group leader, thus reducing 'business' time. There are differences of opinion within the group as to which way it should move. Whilst this is being worked out, the group has improved its collaborative management. Each meeting is now chaired and minuted by different people to spread the responsibility. All members are expected to take a turn. All are kept in touch with group affairs through these minutes. This small, but highly significant initiative has been systematically maintained. We hope members will feel much more an integral part of the management as a result. The group may, at some point, have to acknowledge that mass consultation on all decisions is too time consuming. A co-ordinator on some, but not all, occasions may be a reasonable compromise.

Beyond the group

A talk in the second year by Peter Holly, a Cambridge Institute tutor, on the history of action research enabled the group to consider its continued activities in historical perspective. The broadening of activities into joint meetings with similar groups began to make sense at a deeper level; in sharing experiences beyond itself, the group may help to perpetuate a tradition which has self-determination and self-understanding at its centre.² Members who had been a little vague about the nature and function of the Classroom Action Research Network also began to see themselves as part of an established, international movement. These timely inspirations and external stimuli have given the group much heart; they have helped it to clarify its own affairs and bolstered its aim to promote classroom action research further. If teachers are to add to the growth of knowledge about the complex lives of classrooms, then it is important that small scale practitioner research be shared outside these support groups.

Research and professionalism

There is little doubt that self-evaluation, especially in a supportive action research group, is demanding. Not only are members acquiring classroom research skills,⁶ they also need multiple skills for clarifying and communicating their findings. In addition, membership demands a range of skills and sensitivities for functioning effectively in a self-managed group. Evidence shows that the pay-off is well worth the effort over a sustained period. The knowledge members gain about their own and each others practice feeds back into the craft of teaching. A new attitude, more constructive and optimistic, seems to develop. Being an action-researcher becomes an integral, indispensable part of one's professional role and self-image. After talking to a group of Headteachers about her research, one of our members was asked why, after such difficulties and hard work she continued her commitment. She was clear that, for her, it meant the difference between fulfilment in her

Playing at Schools

Annabelle Dixon

One unexpected outcome of the present school situation is the way in which new groups of four year olds are coming into the schools though neither the facilities nor the teachers they need are available. The result of this short-sighted policy is analysed and discussed in this article by Annabelle Dixon, long-standing member of the Editorial Board, and, of course, an infant school teacher herself.

You walk into a busy Third Year class of your local comprehensive school: they are discussing some future group projects. The first group are going to compare the various translations of Icelandic Sagas into English; the second are going to study the work and training of marriage guidance counsellors; the third group are to look at the complexities of insurance problems to do with certain professional groups like surveyors and civil engineers etc. etc.

Silly? Look again. None of the projects are that far-fetched and some would be within the intellectual capacity of a certain number of third years. Maybe they haven't got the maturity or experience to discuss such matters? Surely, if some have the mental ability shouldn't they all try? It shouldn't matter that they haven't got the experience or maturity — and should these be the concerns of schools anyway? Should such things play any part in deciding the curriculum? Does the silliness lie in the irrelevance to the supposed needs and interests of third years? Who decides what is 'relevant' and on what grounds? Is the question a matter of *should* they be studying such issues, rather than *could* they?

Somewhere, some third years are undoubtedly studying issues that many would consider 'irrelevant'.

Teacher Research *(continued from page 45)*

work and sterility, between growth and stagnation. Such self-directed teacher development holds great potential for classroom and school improvement. Research, curriculum development and teacher development become inextricably bound.⁷

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The above examples are just taken to the point where they would appear ludicrous and foolish to the majority and we would expect that there would soon be noisy public and professional criticism. How would we and they know it's ludicrous work for third years to be doing? Because we're either engaged in teaching that age, or teaching their teachers, being a parent to that age, or simply because we remember what it was to be that age.

Can you remember being four? What is 'irrelevant' for a four year old? What counts for experience or maturity in a child of that age? What would be considered 'relevant'? We can't remember, our children have grown up and as they shouldn't be in schools anyway, what is it that is being discussed?

They are in school though. Not just a few more than ten years ago, nor even hundreds but literally thousands. 29,000 four year olds in the UK are now in regular full time schooling (DES figures). The majority are not in Nursery Schools, nor in nursery classes and many are in classes with children up to seven or eight years old. Many are following what is not only a foolish but potentially harmful curriculum. A number of groups and individuals are now becoming deeply concerned about the four year olds and their life in school and are equally concerned that they cannot get over the seriousness of it to other colleagues elsewhere in the education system.

We all understand about fourteen year olds; we would all make a fuss about an inadequate or foolish curriculum for that age. Why aren't we making the same fuss about what is actually happening at this minute to a great many four year olds?

Firstly, how did this all come about? In brief, the present situation of falling rolls mean schools which wish to ensure future numbers now open their doors a little bit earlier than in the past; parents in areas without nursery school provision are often more than willing to place their children in such schools; falling rolls also mean amalgamation of many infant and junior schools with more junior trained heads and teachers with responsibility for an age group for which they have had no experience or training. Schools can't afford extra equipment for this age group as children under statutory school age do not count in the capitation grant. Unhappily, there are schools who don't consider special equipment is necessary anyway; in either case, the situation is a bleak one for the four year olds in their care.

The effect, unintended though it may be, is, in many

areas, as if there had been some edict that children of four years old, let alone that quaint group calling 'rising fives', should now be actively encouraged to start formal schooling as soon as possible. Three corollaries of the edict seeming to be that junior trained teachers should be chosen in preference to those trained for reception class teaching, and that the infant schools should be deliberately run down so that the majority of the headteachers are themselves without any experience or training whatsoever in this new age group that is coming into their schools. Thirdly, not only will there be sparse re-training for the junior teachers or their heads, it will also be part of the policy that they will not receive the kind of extra adult help to which the four year olds would be rightly entitled should they be in nursery schools. Teachers are to be reminded that once in formal schooling, four year olds will not be sick over each other, wet themselves or the carpet in the reading corner, poke a bead up their nose, or need someone to chat to about their new baby — or even their new Mum or Dad . . .

Of course it is nonsense and there is no LEA in the UK with such a policy. Yet it *has* happened and is going to go on happening. If it had been decided by policy, there would rightly be many not only disturbed by it but trying to change the situation. As it is, it has happened by default, and only here and there are various interested and concerned people beginning to realise the implications. HM Inspectorate has already voiced its concern and is shortly going to the lengths of publishing a couple of reports on the issues involved.

NAPE and a number of organisations concerned with early childhood education have publicly expressed their disquiet in recent months, e.g. the joint policy statement issued by the Pre-School Playgroups Association and the British Association for Early Education in October 1985 'Four Years Old but Not Yet Five', and the *Times Educational Supplement* even gave it the status of a leader on 17 May 1985. Local inspectorates, in Shropshire and Sheffield, are also taking the initiative over enquiring into the whole issue in their own localities. This might spell the beginning of a movement towards a proper enquiry, if not public debate about the whole domain of early childhood education, or it could merely remain a matter of piecemeal objections from those powerless to do anything about it.

The situation looks likely to become worse before it becomes better. Not only is there now an acknowledged dearth of infant-trained teachers in some areas, a CLEA sponsored questionnaire report recently stated that a third of the responding LEAs reported 'serious difficulty' in recruiting nursery trained teachers. Add to that a CACI Market Analysis which has found that the number of under-fives in inner cities is rising by between 4.6 and 21 per cent (compared with an overall national figure of 4.2 per cent).

The DES may be funding local courses like that being currently run by the Cambridge Institute of Education by Mary-Jane Drummond but the initiative for it belonged to a local inspector in the field, Norma Anderson from the Cambridgeshire LEA, who has particular concern about the education programme she saw was increasingly being given to four year olds.

We now understand something of how and why the situation has arisen but not perhaps the reasons for the deep unease with which some groups of educators perceive it. So what is it that is so disturbing? Surely it is

one area of education where the battles have been won? Our dreams are looking tattered enough already, have we really got to add this one to the list? It was so comfortable to feel that we had the education of the youngest children right: to imagine colourful, sunlit scenes of happy, chattering groups of infants purposefully involved in a variety of well chosen play activities, surrounded by real books and real things, all learning through experience. Bit like Christmas really: the further towards a non-religious society, the rosier and more unreal the image of a family Christmas becomes. The further we move away from understanding the basic principles upon which such education in the early years is really based, the less likely our dream is able to bear inspection. Young children in schools, particularly the four year olds, are less likely now than perhaps in the last twenty years, to be purposefully involved in play activities.

It isn't that four year olds are now blasé about sand, water and large bricks and can't wait to get down to colouring in the humorous four dogs in their 'Funway' Maths workbook; they simply don't have any option. Those whose job involves visiting schools and infant classes, cannot decide which is the most depressing picture: a class of quiet (how do they *do* it?) passive children who sit a great deal of their time in classrooms whose only decoration for example, is a row of twenty eight identical clowns and a jolly pull-out picture of 'Spring' and gambolling lambs. Play materials? Some Lego, plasticine and a few dressing-up clothes; the teacher conscientiously prepares her lessons though and diligently keeps detailed records. The children are wizards at colouring in and tracing but oddly, not so hot at counting. Their teacher complains that the four year olds especially, have little concentration span and suck their fingers a lot. The second class has more than just the noise of busy activity, it has the noise of physically active, bored four year olds who have finished their four dogs and don't know what to do with themselves; moreover, who are disturbing the other older children. The complaint is of restlessness, and a distressingly poor attitude towards all things academic, albeit the teacher conscientiously prepares and marks their work and daily writes up her record-book. Such teachers, incidentally, will probably be favourably assessed by their (Junior/Secondary trained) Headteacher, who may well take a rather unfavourable view of another infant classroom down the corridor where the children are not all doing the same thing at the same time, are not yet on English/Maths workbooks or Science workcards and the whole place looks distressingly unlike a school. And who, if anybody, in future years, will be assessing the head's own understanding? They and frequently their LEAs often confuse the point that while they may be *in* authority, it is unfair and unrealistic to expect the heads to be *an* authority on all matters educational. A subtle point maybe but it can and does insidiously creep into others' and their own self-image.

Training or awareness programmes for Junior/Secondary trained JMI heads who have overall responsibility for their children of infant age, should become obligatory if, as seems likely, they become involved in appraisal schemes. As a retired chief county inspector recently pointed out (*Guardian*, 8 October 1985) sheer arithmetic alone precludes the task being

undertaken by local inspectors. To increase the number of Inspectors/Advisors by relieving the schools of some of their best teachers must, to anyone of common sense, appear to be entirely counter-productive.

It is evident though, that some very young children can and do manage to survive stultifyingly formal regimes. As with the suggested topics for third years in senior schools, the question one returns to is not whether they *could*, but whether they *should*, be doing the things that they are being proffered. It is worth a moment's thought to compare the UK with the programme offered to four year olds, even to six year olds, in other European countries, let alone that offered by some of our own nursery schools to the same age children.

What will be the fruits in coming years of children introduced far too early to an academic curriculum that in no way matches either their emotional or intellectual level? It will be children who are disaffected with school, who see little relevance to their own lives and interests and who may well be turned off reading and/or maths, for example, because of the long lasting effects of early 'failures'. I can verify from personal experience, it is not only hard to change the attitudes of disaffected eight year olds but that the roots of their disaffection are only too easy to trace. It should always be borne in mind that in growth it's roots that get put down first . . .

A relevant education for the youngest children, some would say for all children, is provided when it is realised that to be effective, to maximise children's potential, understanding the essential principles of human development is the first step, putting those principles into practice is the second and ultimately vital one. To do so may be to move inevitably and even courageously away from what we associate with schooling in the later years; timetables, subjects, work-cards, blackboards and marks out of ten. Young children sometimes play out such schools as these in their 'home corners'. Using real children for their dolls, and not knowing or not even believing in anything else, many teachers of our youngest children are, dangerously and damagingly, now doing the self-same thing — Playing at Schools.

Our last issue

Len Masterman and Eric Ashworth have asked us to note that, although they were responsible for writing the analysis of **English 5-16** which appeared in the last number of **Forum**, their document was based upon discussions held by the Nottingham University In-Service Advisory Committee in English. The authors wish to acknowledge the contribution of all members of the committee for the production of the final document. (Mea culpa. Ed. B.S.)

CPVE and the Sixth Form Curriculum

Roger Titcombe

In our last issue we carried two articles 'defending' TVEI. Here, Roger Titcombe, who taught until recently at Beaumont Leys school in Leicester (as deputy head), reports on the radical changes brought about at that school through involvement in CPVE. This article deals with this development as an aspect of 16-19 provision within the context of full-time schooling. The author is now Vice Principal of Bosworth College, Leicestershire.

When the City of Leicester was reorganised for comprehensive education in 1976, Beaumont Leys School became one of a small number of 11-18 schools co-existing with the ex-Secondary Modern 11-16 schools and the ex-Grammar School Sixth Form Colleges.

During the 1970s, when the Leicestershire Upper Schools were making names for themselves for radical innovation, Beaumont Leys School remained a very traditional and strongly authoritarian urban secondary modern. Like most City schools it remained almost totally unaffected and uninspired by the practices of nearby County schools, long after Local Government reorganisation brought education in City and County under the same administration.

The Upper Schools soon developed a tradition for heavy involvement in curriculum development around the CSE Mode 3 framework and philosophy. It was natural therefore that attempts to cater for 'the new 6th' in the Upper Schools should have followed an essentially similar CEE subject based model.

Being unaffected by any loyalty to the CSE Model 3 of curriculum development, or to the CEE, Beaumont Leys faced the problem of providing for its new sixth form population in an essentially pragmatic manner, by innocently exploring the possibilities of City and Guilds foundation courses.

This led to the establishment within the school, over the succeeding years, of a considerable expertise in the organisation and teaching of pre-vocational courses and with the associated developments in profiling, skills based assessment, work experience, and link-courses with FE Colleges.

It was a natural development, therefore, for the school to become heavily involved in the new CPVE which was seen as a desirable rationalisation of the pre-vocational provision which had hitherto existed through B.TEC link courses as well as City and Guilds Foundation courses. Since, at its upper level, CPVE

should provide comparable academic respectability to GCSE, it is also seen as a tool for eventually dismantling totally the largely unrewarding pre-occupation of schools and students with 'O' level type courses in the sixth form.

Why pre-vocational course?

The pages of this and other educational journals are currently filled with dire warnings concerning the malevolent intentions of the Secretary of State for Education regarding the fate of comprehensive education. Educators are rightly suspicious of trends towards centralised control of the curriculum combined with Sir Keith's undoubted pre-occupation with anti-egalitarian philosophy.

It is, however, difficult to deny that the CPVE framework *could* provide a radical synthesis of many progressive developments in assessment and in process-centred curriculum construction.

Indeed our experience during 1985 in the City of Leicester consortium shows that the constraints upon CPVE as such a progressive tool come not from Sir Keith or from the Joint Board, or its Assessors, but largely from moribund anti-educational practices and organisational structures in the schools and Further Education Colleges themselves. A subject based curriculum in the sixth form (and arguably at all levels in schools) is now seen by many as necessary only for the minority of students following academic disciplines in Higher Education. How could any combination of *subjects*, based on CEE or anything else, really be the best way to equip 17 year olds with the *skills* they desperately need for survival in the adult world of employment, unemployment, and social and family life?

The CPVE provides for:

1. A skills-based curriculum unimpeded by subject content divisions.
2. A framework where learning through interaction with the material and social environment (a process approach) is *designed* to be compatible with the methods of assessment employed.
3. Negotiated learning with student control and choice regarding content and levels of work, combined with formative self-assessment and profiling.
4. Provision for the educational environment of the student to be enriched by contact with industry, commerce and social services, as well as traditional school and college environments.
5. A curriculum which is clearly perceived to be significant and relevant by parents and students as well as teachers and other professional educators.

The figure on page 50 shows in schematic form the weekly time-table for CPVE at Beaumont Leys. The different areas of study will now be described.

The CPVE core competences have been assigned between the following three notional content areas although many competences clearly appear in two or more areas.

Communications

Numeracy and language skills

Industrial Society

Commercial and Social Studies

Science and Technology

Practical, Investigative and Manipulative skills

A 1 hour and
a 2 hour
session each
week

Teaching is mainly through medium term integrated assignments developed co-operatively by groups of teachers organised in the three core teams. Teaching is in tutor groups or by team teaching across the population, according to the activities and wishes of the teams. Assignment banks were designed and resourced during early 1985 by the core teams building on expertise gained from teaching City and Guilds foundation courses, with some linking with core teams in other schools in the consortium.

Additional Studies

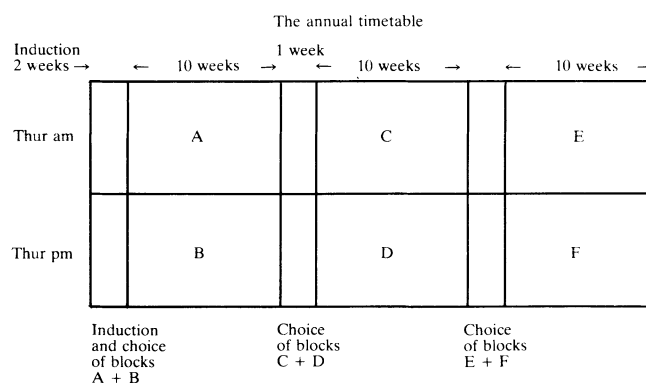
This is a modular program where students choose from a wide range of recreational, aesthetic or vocationally linked activities.

Students are engaged in two different modules during each week (Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons) and complete at least 5 modules during the course.

Guidance

Profiling and guidance is the responsibility of tutors during guidance time (2 × 1 hour sessions per week).

Vocational Studies



Introductory, Exploratory and Preparatory modules are of equal length and all types are available in all blocks.

Students choose their next vocational module within CPVE at the end of each 10 week block. Introductory and Exploratory modules were designed by 'Category teams' of teachers drawn from all contributing institutions including FE Colleges during In-Service sessions at the Westcotes Centre during the period March to June '85. They are in no way vocationally narrow and involve the same learning strategies as those employed in the core. Preparatory modules are the responsibility of the FE Colleges. Students on the City of Leicester CPVE thus complete six vocational studies modules rather than the four envisaged as a minimum by the Joint Board. This provides great flexibility in combinations of introductory, exploratory and preparatory modules so that students may construct their own courses concentrating on breadth or depth of vocational experience. They can take these decisions on three occasions during the year.

The Effect of CPVE on GCSE and A Levels

Beaumont Leys School bravely abandoned one year 'O'

CPVE AT BEAUMONT LEYS
The Weekly Timetable

Population A generally at C & G Foundation level		Population B generally at B. TEC General level	
	Tutor groups arranged according to vocational aspirations		
	INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY (CORE)	COMMUNICATIONS (CORE)	2hr
M	COMMUNICATIONS (CORE)	SCIENCE + TECHNOLOGY (CORE)	1hr
	FREE TIME OR EXTRA VOCATIONAL STUDIES IN FE		2hr
T	ADDITIONAL STUDIES IN SELF CONTAINED 24 HOUR MODULES		3hr
	LINK TIME FOR WORKING ON ASSIGNMENTS ORIGINATING IN FE (ESPECIALLY EXPLORATORY MODULE PROJECTS)		2hr
W	COMMUNICATIONS (CORE)	SCIENCE + TECHNOLOGY (CORE)	2hr
	GUIDANCE — ASSESSMENT + PROFILING		1hr
	INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY (CORE)	COMMUNICATIONS (CORE)	1hr
	SCIENCE + TECHNOLOGY (CORE)	INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY (CORE)	1hr
Th	VOCATIONAL STUDIES IN FE COLLEGES (CONSORTIUM PROVISION IN 10 WEEK MODULES)		2hr
	SCIENCE + TECHNOLOGY (CORE)	INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY (CORE)	
F	GUIDANCE — ASSESSMENT AND PROFILING		1hr
	ADDITIONAL STUDIES IN SELF CONTAINED 24 HOUR MODULES		2hr

level courses in the sixth form, despite the continuing high demand from students, many years ago, because of poor results and because of the impoverished curriculum and low morale of students and teachers — the inevitable consequence of such inappropriate provision. Up to now they have been replaced by 2 year packages containing some 'O' levels designed to provide some coherence and vocational direction for the students concerned. Results have certainly improved. However problems of inappropriate content continue, combined with concern regarding the usefulness of 'O' level qualifications at age 18.

A one year B.TEC General Course was introduced in 1982 linked to Charles Keene College which has proved to be popular with students and very successful with regard to results and certification.

It is certainly the intention in the City that the new CPVE should provide at least as suitable an experience for appropriate students as was provided by B.TEC General, but it is regrettable that considerable opposition to this role for CPVE remains in the FE Colleges.

Provided CPVE is introduced in a manner which exploits its educational potential, and is properly organised and adequately resourced, then it could and should eventually replace virtually all the present non-A level curriculum provision in the sixth form. We may

then begin to ask pertinent questions regarding the appropriate use of A levels even for academically able students.

This is a necessarily brief description of a CPVE scheme which clearly provides a highly flexible framework consistent with the aims of a liberal comprehensive education, and in accordance with modern ideas regarding experiential learning. This article was written before the courses began in August 1985 and it is not expected that, in practice, things will run quite as smoothly as planned. The liaison and co-operation between the many institutions involved has been well planned, but is, as yet, not deeply rooted. It is clear that there remains in the FE Colleges, considerable resistance to CPVE and to much of the radical innovation specific to the City of Leicester scheme.

It remains to be seen how well the consortium can hang together during the inevitable crises of delivery of CPVE in the disparate institutions involved.

Further information can be obtained from the City Cluster Coordinators, Alex McManners or Dane Gould, at the Westcotes Annex, Southfields College, Narborough Road, Leicester, or from Peter Flack, Head of CPVE, Beaumont Leys School, Ansty Lane, Leicester.

Challenge to the Science Curriculum

Benjamin Collins

It is some time since we carried an effective article on science teaching at the secondary stage. We are glad, therefore, to include this analysis by Benjamin Collins, reflecting on the present position, new initiatives and discussions in this area. Mr Collins is Head of Science at The Beauchamp College, Leicestershire. He has a background in curriculum innovation in Avon, and at the Stantonbury Campus. He is now engaged in writing a new 'Science as Process' syllabus.

The DES has now published its policy on the future direction for school science education. At the same time the Secondary Science Curriculum Review, set up under the auspices of the Schools Council, enters its disseminating phase. This article attempts to bring together some of the issues, both past and present, that are at the centre of the debate amongst science educators. After a general introduction giving the background and the rationale for curriculum innovation, a brief history of the evolution of the new DES policy is outlined. Finally some of the practicalities that still have to be tackled by schools wishing to move forward are discussed.

Science teaching today has been faced with an unprecedented challenge to its traditional curriculum structures. The potential consequences of the proposals outlined by the DES could, if implemented, amount to a radical change in the way science is taught in schools, especially at examination level. After several years of deliberation over the basic aims and objectives of science education, which has involved such diverse interested groups as the Royal Society through to classroom teachers themselves, the DES is backing a policy of 'Broad Science For All'. It is a policy which cuts across much of present practice at school level, and one for which the government, if serious, will need to show greater support in kind than it has done up to now.

Whilst the context within which the present policy change has occurred may be somewhat unexpected, progressive science educationalists have long been seeking to establish a curriculum framework which is in closer accord with the broad ideals of comprehensive education. The traditional division between the separate academic sciences of the grammar school and the 'general' science courses of the secondary modern have, to date, survived almost intact; consequently students still have their career options constrained at age 14. In its policy statement **Science 5-16** the DES calls for a fundamental shift away from the convention of separate Physics, Biology and Chemistry which it sees as a restrictive package because many pupils cannot follow all three subjects up to examination level. Instead it indicates that single and double combined science courses should be introduced for pupils of all abilities. It is acknowledged that the separate science courses still make up the essence of comprehensive school science teaching and carry high status in the minds of teachers, parents and employers alike. As a consequence of this the more wide ranging and undoubtedly more

appropriate general courses, intended to provide a broad base of scientific literacy, have acquired an unfortunate but inevitable stigma. Many students continue to 'choose' specialist science at 13 and end up following courses for which they obtain little reward. The level of abstract conceptualisation makes them too difficult, and it is little surprise that many of these pupils lose motivation and interest and fail to succeed in their final exams.

Science has held a somewhat special position in the past. The privileged status that scientists have enjoyed, especially in the decades after the war, has allowed the subject in schools to develop almost in isolation from the rest of the curriculum. The frequently mystifying image of science has given it an almost untouchable position in the minds of the curriculum planners. Management structures in school science departments have reflected and emphasised the separateness of the various fields; co-operation to produce unified science is often hampered by departmental boundaries, and a narrowing of pedagogical objectives has ensued. Some recent changes of attitudes in society at large have served, however, to challenge old beliefs. Science is no longer necessarily seen as the saviour it once promised to be. Technological and scientific advance is in some quarters seen to be as much a threat to our existence as it is a solution to our problems. The possibility of nuclear annihilation has brought into question the basic assumptions of scientific progress. Against this background it is increasingly acknowledged that science teachers can no longer hide behind their white coated image. Any reform in science teaching will need to take account of this shift in attitude, particularly amongst young people, and should introduce considerations of the wider issues of science and society.

In 1979 the Association for Science Education, which has a considerable influence in curriculum policy, published a consultative document **Alternatives to Science Education**. In it the authors brought together the thinking of the previous decade and concluded that whilst science education had improved significantly in the 60s and early 70s, this had on the whole been true only for the more able pupils. The ASE noted that science syllabuses had become more heavily content laden: 'more conceptually demanding and complex, less concerned with everyday reality' and had evolved in such a way as to 'become a complex symbolic system accessible to the few'.¹ The document called for science education programmes to be broadened to enable

teachers and pupils 'to explore more flexibly and creatively the wider implications of science' and argued that young people of all abilities and aspirations 'should have the right of access to the world of science'. The document was widely circulated and discussed both within and outside educational circles. Two years later the ASE was able to be more specific in its views, and issued a policy document **Education Through Science**. It called upon schools to take a broader view of the science curriculum they offered and indicated that the subject option system which operates in many schools to support specialisation was inadequate for future educational and social needs. It noted that many students were opting out of whole areas of science training. Physics especially had become highly exclusive of girls, and further, the system denied success to many boys who could otherwise usefully go on for training in the growth fields associated with engineering. Even those able students with ambitions to become scientists were acquiring a background knowledge of only two sciences. It is not uncommon, in Britain, to find graduate scientists with a very narrow basic experience of science.

After full consideration of all the issues, the ASE concluded that there was a need to develop a much wider concept of science education in schools and a need to place science closer to the centre of the students' learning experience. It advocated a core science curriculum designed to cater for pupils of all abilities and career aspirations. Such a change, the Association realised, would be a radical one entailing some fundamental rethinking and planning on behalf of all involved in science education. It foresaw the need for a period of considerable teacher retraining and in September 1981 enlisted the active co-operation of the Schools Council to launch and finance a major science curriculum review. The Secondary Science Curriculum Review was established.

Whilst the Review was getting under way the DES published its own consultative document. To the relief of some who feared a more conservative doctrine, the DES had accepted much of the ASE's philosophy and recognised the need to provide every pupil with a broad science program. Furthermore, unnecessary content was to be removed in a bid to provide space for the teaching of the skills of the scientific process. In its final policy statement in the spring of this year the government concluded that 'the case for a move in the longer term towards a combined or integrated course is a powerful one'² and suggested that the concept of double certification, giving students about 20 per cent of their curriculum time in science was a desirable long term aim.

Whilst the case for broadening and integrating the science curriculum has been clearly articulated, the strategies that schools are to adopt to bring about these changes are far less obvious. There are clearly many obstacles at school level and it is important that the broad objectives are well understood and supported by all involved. The DES has, if anything, unwittingly hampered progress. By allowing the publication of the draft national criteria for the traditional specialist sciences in advance of those for unified science, it projected confusing messages to teachers. Furthermore the specialist criteria seemed once again to place a heavy emphasis on traditional content. Accordingly many of the resultant draft examination papers emerged looking

more like well worn O levels than anything new.

The criteria for combined science were much less specific and clearly were intended to allow examiners and teachers to develop innovative courses and assessment procedures. Their late arrival, however and the longer wait for sample syllabuses to be published may prove to be a significant handicap in establishing the enhanced status combined science courses need to acquire. It would have been helpful at this opportune moment if the various science subject teams writing the GCSE criteria had shown evidence of a co-ordinated approach. This in turn could have encouraged the longer term process of unification. There is a danger that unified science courses will emerge as problematic and intangible, amongst the stable, separate and historically legitimated specialist courses. (It should be said that the recent publication of the draft grade criteria and skill 'domains' (TES 25.10.85) outlined for the three specialist sciences indicates co-ordination; however, combined science remains the odd one out.)

What then will be the nature of the new courses if they are to meet the recommended shifts in DES policy and what progressive steps can science departments undertake against a background of financial restraint and little in-service support or training? Integrated or combined science courses at 16+ which would accommodate the current guidelines are not entirely new. The now ageing Schools Council Integrated Science Project (SCISP) and related schemes have been seen to be inappropriate for the full ability range and failed to establish themselves on a large scale. The alternative and more recent 'Nuffield 11-16 Science' resource materials, which include topics such as Earth Science and Environmental Science (areas previously neglected) are worthy of note. The 'Nuffield 11-16' is a course which is being adopted by some schools and is probably the most useful ready packaged combined science scheme available. Although seemingly content intensive, its modular format allows for teachers to plan and design their own courses. Examination Boards seeking to establish their own GCSE mode I's have been looking at this type of scheme. At the time of writing news is coming in of alternative formats being produced, including courses made up of separate sections of traditional Physics, Chemistry and Biology. This would be going somewhat against the spirit of the ASE policy of moving towards integration, but may be a way forward for many schools faced with problems of 'integrating' their departments. The emergence of more 'practical' and 'vocationally' orientated science schemes, possibly with limited grade 'ceilings' is also possible, but these again would seem to militate against a policy of 'core science for all'. A school adopting such schemes may well find it difficult to progress at a later stage.

It is to be hoped that the boards will find it within themselves to place emphasis on reducing the amount of factual recall required for success in completing their courses. Sadly, early indications are that examiners are finding it difficult to adapt to the new philosophy of rewarding students of all abilities with appropriate assessment formats and there is clearly much more thinking needed before examination questions reflect the 'process' orientated science teaching being sought. Perhaps for these reasons Mode III schemes are the

most likely to generate the type of learning experiences progressive teachers want for their pupils and their particular situation. However the present unsettled climate regarding teachers' conditions of service probably makes the implementation of such schemes a longer term prospect.

Central to the outlook of the DES policy statement is the long term growth of science education at all levels in our education system. Whilst many pupils already take two sciences at examination level, the notion of 20 per cent science for all is advocated. Schools looking to move forward to combining their sciences will probably be looking at a scheme that offers the choice of doing a simple certificated combined science or a double certificated science. There are two broad ways in which current schemes are packaged, either as:

- A) 'Science' (1 certificate) and 'More Science' (2nd certificate) or
- B) as 'Biological' (1 certificate) and 'Physical' (2nd certificate)

with the option of a combination of half of the latter two to make a single combined science course. Most schools could not cope with all students doing double science, hence a modular structure would allow for flexibility in the production of these courses to comply with facilities and demand. In many ways the 'Biological' and 'Physical' package is a compromise with the old subject system and may be easier to introduce in practice. What should be avoided and is less likely to lead towards a 'broad core science for all' policy is the reintroduction of 'General Science' courses, designed to run alongside separate sciences. This is especially true if such courses are narrowly constructed to cater for the less able in such a way that they are unable to provide access to 'A' level study. Courses constructed around a core content with extension work for the more able are recommended to avoid this problem.

The introduction of new curriculum packages however will need to be accompanied by a programme of staff development. There will be a need for teachers to get together to reflect on the basic aims and objectives of science education. Curriculum development is probably best done when meeting immediate needs, for instance, when planning teaching materials for the coming months or the coming weeks. Attendance at outside courses, whilst useful in limited ways, often fails to engage the hearts of those who didn't attend, however good the reporting back.

But how in the final analysis will science be taught under the new philosophy? For many the 'discovery learning' of the Nuffield era provided a methodology for engaging students in the investigative skills of the scientific process. Others, however, have now realised that many such schemes require further development: there is a need to place more emphasis on pupil initiative in planning and designing experiments.

At Beauchamp College we have been experimenting with such pupil centred approaches. We have found that, provided the broad parameters are controlled, groups of students of all abilities can organise themselves to plan, design and carry out investigations. Indeed some of their ideas have been as original in conception as they have been scientifically acceptable. The degree of involvement was notable even to the sceptics. The resounding features of a new science: student centred learning, individual initiative, team co-

operation, hypothesis formulation, problem solving, process science—our teaching contained all of these. But can these be effectively examined? Only the GCSE boards can tell us if the leap can be made to accommodate the appropriate assessment procedures on a national scale.

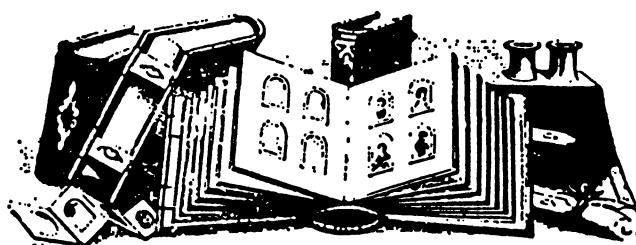
School Science, as the APU researchers have suggested, is simply passing many of our students by. Young people today have the right to a better understanding of the processes that control their technological worlds and a right to be enabled to discover their own means of reaching that understanding. It remains to be seen how the proposed new examination system will enable school science to meet the needs of those young people and whether the DES will support its policy document with the training and resources needed to follow its implications through.

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Information Skills and Information Technology in Secondary Schools

James E. Herring

If students are to be motivated to solve problems for themselves, as they should be, they need to know how to retrieve information, and indeed to master 'information technology'. This is a neglected aspect of school learning, and we are glad, therefore, to publish this article by James Herring. The author teaches at the School of Librarianship and Information Studies, Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology, Aberdeen, and here puts his expertise at our disposal.

If there is one buzzword which will be cited by future historians of education to describe the 1980s, it will surely be 'information'. The new courses being mooted at different levels of secondary education in the UK cite the importance of information-related skills in their outlines (e.g. in the Scottish 16-18 Action Plan). Perhaps the greatest influence affecting the use of the term 'information' is current developments in information technology. This article seeks to examine the terms 'information skills' and 'information technology' and examine how developments in some schools demonstrate the importance of linking the two terms in the minds of pupils, teachers and school librarians.

The term 'information skills' has developed from the realisation that the way in which pupils handle information in curricular work implies knowledge of a number of different skills. Traditionally, there has been an emphasis on the pupil's ability to find information, e.g. for assignments or projects. Skills have been taught in relation to the use of books and other printed materials in the classroom — contents pages, index, sections in chapters etc; and in the library — distinguishing fiction from non-fiction, using library catalogues and finding materials on the shelves. The term 'library skills' was used to encompass these skills, which are obviously still important.

A second term which is still current and used mainly by librarians is 'user education' which implies the education of users of libraries, although many school librarians see it as meaning the education of users of information. The main problem with both 'library skills' and 'user education' is that they imply skills in the use of the library and discussion of such skills, according to Hounsell and Martin's is

'an invitation to many teachers to switch off mentally, secure in the knowledge that the library was not something they need be concerned with'.

The third term, used mainly by teachers, is 'study skills' and also poses problems. Firstly, 'study skills' are often only cited in relation to pupils of high academic ability and secondly, such skills often lay stress on the pupil's organisation of time when exams approach, as

well as skills in notetaking and presentation of material. Such approaches obviously do not fit in with the broad educational aims of comprehensive education and it is now argued that study skills are relevant to all pupils, from S1 to S6, whatever their ability.

Since the 1970s, much of the work done on library skills, user education and study skills has been brought together under the heading 'information skills' which seeks to encompass the skills above and establish links with other skills such as reading skills. Information skills can be described as the skills a pupil needs to identify the purpose of, to find and to successfully use information in curricular work. The major published work which has become the focus of attention in this area is 'Information skills in the secondary curriculum'² in which Ann Irving's nine steps — a guide to the questions pupils need to ask in using information (e.g. What do I need to know?) — form the basis of a suggested approach for teachers.

The first important area in information skills is purpose. Many teachers criticise pupils' assignments or projects because the written work is either too narrow or (more likely) too wide in its approach. One of the reasons for this may be that pupils do not take time, or are not encouraged, to write down or clearly define their information need. It should be stressed here that information skills are not just related to project work but to any work done by pupils which necessitates finding and using information. In short, unless pupils define exactly what they need, how can they know what information to look for; and subsequently, how will they know how to use that information if they have no clear purpose? One way of overcoming this is to allow pupils to plan assignments before they use the information sources.

An important skill here and throughout the process is classification. Pupils are expected by teachers to logically organise or classify aspects of their topic, so that a pupil asked to write on TELEVISION would firstly have to identify what aspects of TELEVISION s/he wished to examine (i.e. purpose) by dividing the topic into relevant headings or keywords, depending on

whether the pupil was examining the technical aspects of TELEVISION such as SOUND or VISION or the social aspects such as ENTERTAINMENT or VIOLENCE. Classification needs to be used by pupils in seeking resources, in notetaking and in the presentation of material. It is often the ability of pupils to classify ideas and information in a logical manner which teachers praise. Rarely, however, are pupils encouraged to think about the concept or process of classification.

The skills in finding information have been well documented and much literature exists in the field of school librarianship³ but only recently have such skills as alphabetical skills, use of the catalogue, finding materials on shelves and using reference sources been seen in the context of information skills. That is, finding information is NOT the beginning of the process. In order to find relevant information, the pupil needs to link his/her information search strategy to the purpose in hand.

Once materials have been located in the library or in the classroom, the pupils have to use the information in a logical way, again related to their purpose. Thus skills in reading for information, skimming, scanning and notetaking should not be seen as separate entities but as part of an information flow which begins with the teacher, who sets the task and ends with the teacher, who receives and evaluates the written or verbal presentation.

There are obviously many other skills involved here, especially in relation to the pupils' understanding of what they read, see or listen to and how they relate this new information to their existing knowledge, but many teachers and school librarians feel that pupils, until recently, have not been given adequate help in finding a constructive approach to handling information. Current research in information skills⁴ is seeking to give guidance to teachers and librarians who recognise that faults exist and that new approaches are needed. Such approaches include the recognition that pupils across the ability range are required to handle information in various ways in their curricular work.

One cause of the current interest in information skills is the increasing use of information technology in schools. In many cases, teachers have seen the term 'information technology' as laying stress on technology — computer programming, systems design, robotics — or on CAL programs for use in a wide variety of subjects in school. What is sometimes forgotten is the 'information' part and that developing pupils' skills in using technology to find relevant information will be relevant in school, as well as at work or in higher education. Much information in the future — on leisure, employment, and social benefits — will be computerised and success or failure in these areas may depend on the individual's ability to ask the right questions of the expert systems they will face i.e. how good their information skills are.

One project⁵ which seeks to link information skills and information technology in schools is MISLIP (The microcomputer in the school library project). The project is funded by the Scottish Education Department and was based at Bankhead Academy, Aberdeen until August 1985. From September 1985, six schools in the Central Belt of Scotland will be involved. This author is project head, Dorothy Williams is research assistant and Lynda Bain, school librarian at Bankhead is a project

director. The project works mainly with S1 and S2 pupils in MACOS (Man: a course of study), an integrated studies course covering social studies, English, History, Geography and Science but teachers in other subjects and at other levels in the school have asked for help in developing information skills and using the microcomputer in their own areas.

Pupils in MACOS classes were given outlines on planning assignments in the classroom before they went to the library to find information, in order to develop their sense of purpose. In interviews with pupils and teachers, it has been found that both teachers and pupils put a high value on this stage of the process. In one area, pupils were given an assignment entitled ACHIEVEMENT in which they had to study characters from the theatre or sport or music. In classroom discussions, pupils were encouraged to pose questions about what information they would need and also to think about keywords they would use in searching for information. The pupils were also encouraged to see their assignments as a whole, from definition of purpose to presentation, and plan accordingly.

The use of the microcomputer in such assignments allows pupils to retrieve relevant information in a structured manner. The datafiles created for ACHIEVEMENT were done via co-operation between the research assistant, the teachers and the school librarian, but would normally be done by the librarian and the teachers. The value of using a microcomputer is that the datafiles — of references to materials in the library and in the S1 and S2 resource areas — can be created using curriculum-based keywords i.e. the language used to index a particular book or slide-set is based on terms which pupils have already used in class. The co-operation between the teacher and the librarian involves identification of material of value to a particular project in the library and elsewhere and the creation of entries on the datafile using curriculum related keywords as retrieval terms.

The software used in MISLIP is KWIRS⁶ (Keyword Information Retrieval System) which allows the creation of entries on a datafile on a particular topic and includes SEARCH, the program used by pupils seeking information. The pupil using the micro-computer is asked to input search terms (i.e. keywords) and in a search on the ANIMALS file, linked to the study of animal behaviour in MACOS, a pupil might key in the terms

BIRDS

AGGRESSION

The computer then searches the file for entries indexed with these keywords and would find a number of entries, including

SPARKS J: Bird behaviour. 1982

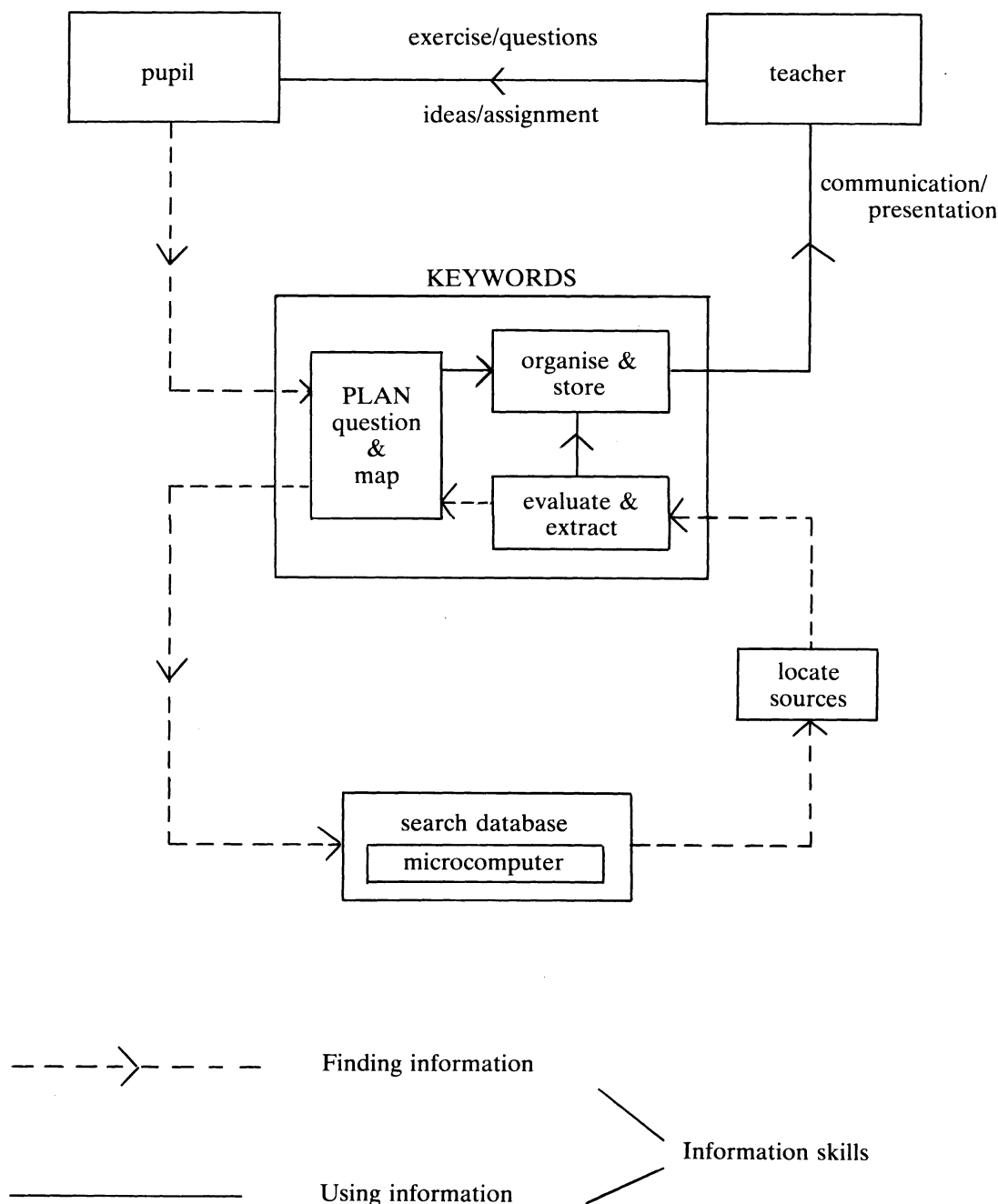
Pages 62-64 Hostile behaviour.

FORMAT.....BOOK

LOCATION.....598.2 SPA

KEYWORDS.....BEHAVIOUR
AGGRESSION
THREAT
POSTURES
BIRDS

The advantage of using a computer as opposed to a traditional card catalogue is firstly that the computer asks the pupil to enter keywords, implying that the



The 'flow of information' in school

pupils should have given preliminary thought to what keywords are needed before s/he reaches the microcomputer. Secondly the computer can produce a list of references for the pupil in relation to materials which might be scattered in the library — a book on birds and a book on animal behaviour will not be next to each other on the shelves — and to materials which are relevant to the pupil's need. More importantly, the computer presents the pupil with keywords which the pupil has not used but which might act as a stimulus either to further searches or as a guide to headings for notetaking or presentation.

The use of the microcomputer in the 'information flow' from teacher to pupil to teacher is illustrated in the

diagram above.⁷ One of the origins of MISLIP was to see how information skills teaching could help pupils and teachers improve project work done in school. As can be seen in the diagram, keywords can be used when pupils plan projects or information searches, when they use the microcomputer, when they take notes and when they organise their information into a written or verbal presentation. Pupils in MISLIP have confirmed that they use keywords in this way. One problem identified by teachers in Bankhead Academy and in other schools, is that pupils often drift away from their original project during the information gathering stage and interim observations have shown that the use of keywords can help in this area.

School Self-Evaluation: Establishing a New Consensus?

Keith Morrison

Many schools, and local authorities, are closely concerned with school self-evaluation, an issue on which there is much debate and research. Here, Keith Morrison, of Durham University, sets this movement in an overtly political context, and challenges those concerned to address such contexts and their implications.

The movement to school self-evaluation has been characterized by rapid growth, energetic support from several parties in education, and accompanied by a flurry of documents from both LEAs¹ and DES.² Teachers regard it as an acceptable response to calls for increased accountability,³ LEAs accept it as a legitimate and desirable form of promoting curriculum and professional development, DES see it as a means of improving teaching quality.⁴ Whilst such overt and demonstrable acceptability appears universal it should not allow more deep seated issues to be concealed, for in them one can ascertain the germ of conflict, power and increased DES control. It is significant here perhaps to remark the absence of theory or debate about the underlying issues in many LEA school self-evaluation documents — the whole exercise is treated as practical and relatively unproblematic. When school self-evaluation is examined in the context of current DES action however the issue becomes less penetrable, for whilst school self-evaluation can foster more democratic schools, clarify policy, promote curriculum and professional development — all round improvement of the school — it can also be the instrument of DES intrusion even further into the day to day organisation and curriculum of schools.

Given that school self-evaluation potentially minimizes or subjugates dissent or differences amongst

teachers the first stage for DES hegemony is reached — the promotion of consensus amongst the work force.⁵ Indeed it reaches beyond that — witness the underlining of the professional image of teachers in the popular and educational press. Government is being seen to positively support a grassroots form of teacher development and professionalism in its advocacy of both school self-evaluation and school based curriculum development, a move which, understandably, the teaching force accepts as it accords with their own professional image. The government's sponsorship of school self-evaluation under the guise of democratizing education is shot through with classical notions of hegemony and incorporation⁶ — ruling by consent to sustain its own power. Whilst DES clearly endorse such moves they are at the same time initiating and nurturing vigorous debate about common curricula, national guidelines, and curricula to meet technological and industrial needs of the late twentieth and twenty first centuries.

School self-evaluation is time consuming. Teachers committed to it, for whatever reason or from whatever pressure, will be involved heavily, and, if four yearly reviews become the order of the day, almost continuously in the evaluation process. Whilst such evaluation may be eminently desirable the ramifications of this are interesting. Teachers hard

Information Skills *(continued from page 56)*

It is hoped that the approaches taken in MISLIP which have already been adapted by other schools in the Grampian Region⁸ and supported by Grampian Region School Library Service, will stimulate interest in the development of information skills which are so fundamental to all areas of the curriculum and in the use of information technology in a way useful to pupils at school and later in life. Many problems remain, not least the poor provision of libraries and professional librarians in UK schools; the lack of awareness among teachers of information skills work; and the tendency not to equate microcomputers with information. Comprehensive education allows all pupils opportunities to develop a wide range of skills and all pupils who leave school to go to work, to further education or into unemployment will require the information skills to cope in a society where access to information is important but also often restricted by technology. Given the government's current insistence on producing pupils with skills for the information age,

the linking of information skills with information technology should be given high priority.

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3. For a review, see Herring, J.E., **School librarianship**, Bingley, 1982, pp.64-71.
4. Existing projects include — Study and information skills in schools (NFER) and Teaching information handling and learning (CARE, Univ. of East Anglia). Information on these and other projects can be gained from Sharon Markless, NFER, The Mere, Slough.
5. Other projects include SIR, see Rowbottom, M.E., **The schools information retrieval project**, British Library, 1983.
6. KWIRS is available for the BBC-B from School of Librarianship and Information Studies, RGIT, Hilton Place, Aberdeen and for the Apple 2 and 2e from N. Paton, 21 Airyhall Gardens, Aberdeen.
7. The diagram is taken from an interim report on MISLIP and copies are available from Dorothy Williams, RGIT, Hilton Place, Aberdeen.
8. For example, see Davison, S.G., **Data file creation — a case study**, Education Libraries Bulletin 27(3) autumn 1984, pp.52-58.

pressed to sustain a problem-solving approach to their evaluation because of its heavy time commitment will turn to guidelines, published documents and frameworks — all of which are being amply furnished by DES⁷ — an instance perhaps of covert intrusion into the curriculum field, schools accepting almost by default or lack of time government policy and thinking. This is particularly feasible in authorities whose LEA support for school self-evaluation and for INSET to develop appropriate expertise is less than adequate.

Is the government then allowing school self-evaluation and its associated school based curriculum development to run their course in the knowledge that they almost of necessity will fall in the present climate — where teachers are not involving themselves in time consuming extra curricular work, where they are demoralized (a factor which is exacerbated by protracted pay talks), where they are underresourced,⁸ fearful of accountability linked to pay and appraisal schemes?⁹ Is the government deliberately giving schools so wide and large a brief that their tasks are unmanageable — consigned to failure — starving schools of the resources and INSET support required to make school self-evaluation and its ensuing curriculum development succeed? Is the pressure created by school self-evaluation a diversionary tactic to steer teachers away from addressing issues of resourcing and conflict at all levels?

It is similar to the person being asked to lift himself out of a quicksand with no external aid. How can teachers caught up in the quicksand of either questionable school and curricular practices or inadequate resources in reality lift themselves out? When school self-evaluation has run its course and failed for any number of reasons to stimulate growth or change, there, waiting in the wings, ready to take centre stage will be the DES with its battery of APU material, appraisal systems¹⁰ and curricular frameworks, this time given increased legitimacy to intervene because schools visibly were unable to meet the demands of the task. Hobbled from the start the schools will be overtaken by DES guidelines and recommendations. The DES promotion of school self-evaluation then, under the mantle of professionalism, can establish a consensus which will not challenge nor threaten its hegemony.

The situation for school self-evaluation is problematic; for all major parties in education it must work. From the teachers' perspective it must succeed as it meets their demands for professional control of education; from the LEA perspective it must succeed as it meets both DES and teachers' requirements for professional and curriculum development; from the DES perspective it must succeed as it is both a palatable form of teacher accountability, the springboard to curriculum development, and a potential mechanism for hegemonic control.

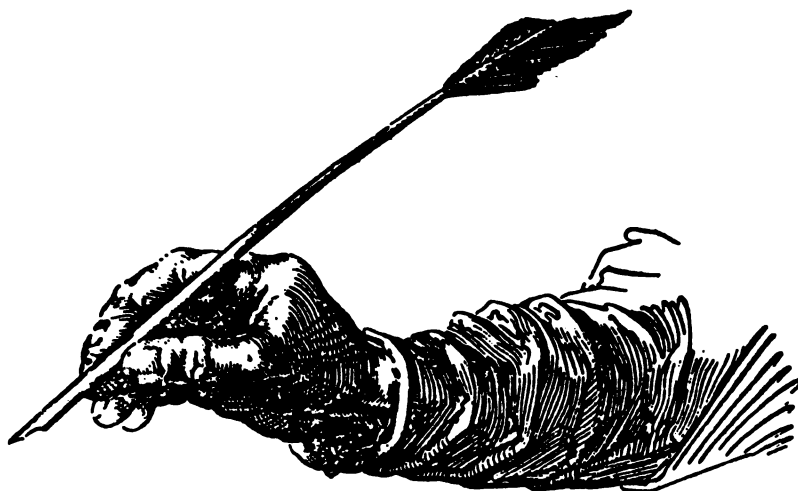
If teachers are to resist this latter risk then school self-evaluation needs to be recharged with a firm theoretical base, with teachers firmly setting and communicating to appropriate parties the parameters of their capability to meet the demands of the task under existing educational, political and economic circumstances — articulating the terms of the evaluation and its limitations, constraints and audiences. Teachers will need to address the issues of

the origin of, and reasons for, the demand for the evaluation, an appropriate response to this demand, its causes, purposes, foci, form, style, methodology, strengths, weaknesses and problematic areas (e.g. honesty, staff involvement, appropriate experience and expertise, objectivity, confidentiality). Teachers will have to engage vigorously and volubly in the debate invited by DES on their Curriculum Matters series.¹¹ School self-evaluation will require a positive commitment from LEAs to provide necessary INSET support, capital expenditure to implement changes in schools as a result of the exercise, and continuing aftercare.¹² Seen thus school self-evaluation is a political issue rather than solely a practical problem.

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Discussion



Sex Equality and the Arts

In recent years, the educational system has witnessed a quite justified burgeoning of interest in promoting sex-equality, both in schools and in society at large.

Organisations such as EOC and GIST have, in their blueprints for change, laid emphasis on encouraging girls' involvement in sciences. My recent research into Arts-based activities in early education has, however, instilled in me a quite contrary conviction.

My contacts with pupils, teachers and parents through interviews and questionnaires led me to the following conclusions. Teachers and parents have broad agreements on qualities which they associate more clearly with girls than with boys, and vice versa. Many of these qualities associated with girls (e.g. 'graceful', 'painstaking', 'emotional', 'sympathetic') were associated, by teachers, with Arts. Boys and girls generally hold Arts activities, and particularly performing arts, in fairly low esteem. Parents and teachers also hold Arts activities to be relatively unimportant.

Given that all this is so, does it matter? I feel strongly that both questions, that of sex-appropriateness in the Arts and that of their low hierarchical status, matter very much indeed. I do, however, differ fundamentally in my reasons from those at the forefront of the sex-roles war. Whyte (1983) writes that: 'The masculine subjects — physics, chemistry, mathematics and craft, design and technology are the most useful for getting into further education or secure jobs'

and certainly this view of the purpose of education would find support from the current Secretary of State for Education. I find myself, though, being drawn away from this product-orientated view of the educative process towards that of Ross (1978) who writes that it is

'... essentially a cultural matter and there is no definition of culture that excludes human relationship, human communication and human interaction'.

Inequality in our society, and in the education system which it has spawned, certainly exists. It exists on the grounds of race, religion, sex, class, age, region and on others equally irrational. These prejudices have survived changes in government and religion and ethnic composition, in rural and industrial communities, through Acts of Parliament and commissions and through fundamental changes to the life-style of virtually every member of that society.

Change can be imposed on the peripherals of our lives (our monetary system, for example, or our motorway speed limits) but real change, of the kind necessary to start to eradicate prejudice, must come from within. Involvement in the Arts-process can both plant that seed and nurture its growth.

The APU (1983) writes —

'Involvement with the arts can extend and deepen the capacity to learn about oneself; it can give increasing perceptiveness and insight about almost every aspect of the world around us.

It can be argued that the arts can achieve this in ways which could not be achieved otherwise'.

If we accept that qualities such as 'co-operative', 'sympathetic', 'even-tempered', 'patient', 'responsive', 'observant', 'imaginative' and 'sensitive' are associated strongly with children who tend towards the Arts can we also accept that those are the very qualities which, if developed by girls and boys, would fundamentally change relationships at personal, social and professional levels?

Witkin (1974) describes drama as being — 'hotly defended by its protagonists in terms of the important part it can play in personal development and since it has no status as an "academic subject" it is difficult to see what other justification there could possibly be for it'

and the same could be held about other Art-forms. This lack of 'academic status' may well be an element in parents' low valuation of activities in this area. On the other hand, it may be something very different. It may be that parents value what can be learned, as claimed by art-educators, through the Arts but like many teachers simply do not connect those activities with those areas of learning.

I hoped that a final exercise during my research with parents could illuminate this question. I asked parents to consider what abilities their child would need by adulthood. (It was not implied on my part that these could all be learned within school nor on the part of the parents that it was the school's right or responsibility to do so.)

What was emphatically demonstrated was the high value which parents put on learning in the area of personal development. Those often cited as Vital or Very Important include 'Show myself to be a Loving and Caring parent etc.', 'Judge others on Personal

Qualities', 'Think for myself and take considered decisions'. 'Form and maintain close personal relationships' and 'See a situation from another person's point of view'. Bolton (1979) describes this kind of knowledge when he writes:

"Knowing at the deepest level" suggests something that cannot be articulated and is therefore not accessible to the terminology of educational objectives; this is especially true where objectives have to be spelled out in behavioural terms'.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of accessibility to (a cognitive-based) terminology should not deflect us if we are convinced that drama, dance etc. can actually fulfil objectives which we all, parents, teachers and children, value for living.

As Rose (1978) writes —

'The teachers first concern must be the child . . . and the curriculum only has validity if it centres upon and is adapted to meet the child's needs'.

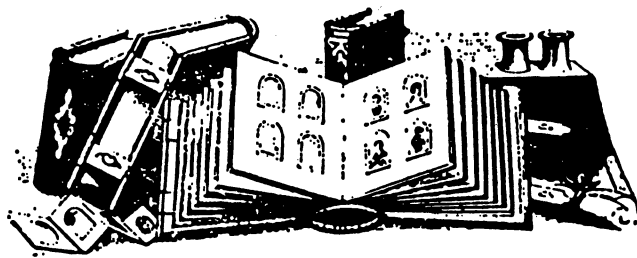
My belief, therefore, has two main strands. The first that it is necessary to intervene in order that Arts-based activities such as drama and dance are regarded more highly by parents, teachers and children. I feel that without this improved status it is unlikely that the vital areas of knowing available through participation in the Arts-process will be thoroughly propagated. My second is that intervention is necessary to minimise the sex-role dimension of these activities; for the future well-being of our society and the individuals that compose it depends more on boys adopting the 'feminine traits' of sensitivity, co-operation and so on, than on girls adopting 'masculine subjects'.

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REVIEWS



A Radical Critique

Schooling for the Dole? The New Vocationalism, by Inge Bates, John Clarke, Philip Cohen, Dan Finn, Robert Moore and Paul Willis. Macmillan (1984), pp.236, £20.00 hardback, £6.95 (paperback).

Schooling for the Dole? is a book of remarkable insights and puzzling inconsistencies. It offers a brilliant critique of the New Vocationalism — without at the same time providing a clear alternative programme which is theoretically coherent or wholly convincing. Thatcherism at all levels — and not least in its philosophy of education and training — has an awesome tendency to acquire and retain credibility, if only perhaps because the Left seems totally incapable of devising an effective and radical response which unites all the disparate factions. And, to be fair, the authors of this volume recognise the dilemma they face. As Paul Willis observes on behalf of the six contributors: 'it is easier to provide educational critiques than to provide educational alternatives and practical applications . . . We are seeing a tendency towards the vocationalisation of the whole timetable. However, we do not share a detailed view of what a progressive attitude towards these changes should be; nor can we offer a tight alternative curriculum.'

The New Vocationalism can be seen as part of the attempt to stimulate and nurture those values, attitudes and practices thought to be necessary in order for Britain to 'succeed' once more as a capitalist economy. At the secondary level of schooling, this means the churning out of model workers — trained, skilled, flexible and, above all, disciplined. Yet, according to the authors of **Schooling for the Dole?**, this is only one of the current perspectives on the transition from school to work. It could be said to represent the view of industrial interests and those speaking for them — determined, as they are, to subjugate young people more completely than ever before to the needs of industry and, therefore, the needs of capital. According to this analysis, schools simply have the task of furnishing industry with the workers it needs; no other rationale is necessary or appropriate.

Yet a major flaw in this line of argument centres on the existence of vast numbers of unemployed youth who have no role to play in

the new streamlined Britain. And in this respect, the 'state' view is perhaps more realistic. It accepts that youth unemployment will not be 'spirited away' by up-skilling and higher qualifications and sees the major problem as one of maintaining social control. Training schemes must be devised to keep youngsters 'off the streets' and prevent a repetition of the riots of 1981. In a society with accelerating rates of youth and adult unemployment, the state must use its schools and training programmes to produce men and women who not only want and are able to work, but who are also quite happy to 'maintain these qualities in suspended animation' for long periods of time without letting them deteriorate or allowing the human capacities behind them to be diverted to activities that threaten the social fabric.

It is far from easy to understand all the subtle methods by which 'youth' is being redefined as a result of the new 'utilitarian' concept of education. And teachers have the near-impossible task of coming to grips with the supreme paradox of an increasingly vocationalised curriculum in a world with fewer and fewer jobs. The authors of this book attempt to chart a course which takes account of the material experiences and cultures of the youngsters themselves.

In a long and penetrating chapter, Phil Cohen looks at some of the 'hidden agendas' of the New Vocationalism and at their relation to a wider debate about the future shape of British society. He describes in considerable detail a concrete example of an alternative practice for teaching about work and vocational preparation which is truly responsive to school-leavers' needs and which attempts to uncover the issues which are neatly side-stepped in existing forms of careers guidance and SLS (Social and Life Skills).

Cohen argues that although SLS emerged out of an apparently radical critique of State schooling, it quickly came to be incorporated in MSC schemes in order to provide 'a nice liberal gloss to an otherwise all too crude utilitarian philosophy' and at the same time assist in the promotion of official codes of practice. In his exposure of the ideological nature of much that is published by the human relations industry, he analyses one particular storyline from the 1982 Longman **School Leavers Book** which attempts the 'cooling out' of school leavers' aspirations by depicting the dignified acceptance of rejection. A white boy and black girl are shown ringing up a garage in reply to an advertisement for a

salesperson. The boy does it all wrong, while the girl follows all the correct procedures as laid down in the accompanying guidelines. However *both* applicants are turned down; the manager thanks them for ringing but says 'there are a lot of people we have to interview'. Far from losing control, the black girl remains calm and good-humoured throughout. Even when she gets the brush-off, she politely thanks the manager for his help! As Phil Cohen points out: 'self-possession has been turned into a highly convertible currency — both a selling-point for prospective employers and an insurance policy against feelings of indignation or disappointment triggered by rejection.'

Dan Finn's chapter questions whether vocational education, as at present envisaged by the MSC and the DES, is in any sense 'necessary' for the majority of the school population. His research into the experiences and aspirations of fifth-year students in a number of comprehensive schools in Coventry and Rugby challenges the myth that today's teenagers are ignorant of work routines and disciplines. Around 75 per cent of the youngsters interviewed had had some involvement in the juvenile labour market and knew all about work — and exploitation — from the inside.

What, then, is the alternative to the New Vocationalism? John Clarke and Paul Willis argue that we are currently witnessing a battle over whether schools should produce 'ideal workers' to help solve the economic crisis or 'critical and independent people' who can develop their own capacities to the full. Too often, they suggest, the battle is resolved by the former pretending to be the latter. In the end, they reject both models in favour of an education which takes into account the 'material culturalism of growing up in the working class'. And here the argument seems to wear very thin. Clearly the authors are right to be chiefly concerned with the main victims of the present crisis, but even allowing for this, they often display a very limited and pessimistic view of the role of education and schooling. It may be true that 'school is often rejected, rebelled against or treated as a comic interlude before "real" life begins'; but must we accept this as a fait accompli? There are many of us on the Left who believe passionately in an education which is neither narrowly academic nor exclusively rooted in the practical, the vocational and the ethics of an enterprise culture.

CLYDE CHITTY

Teachers' Struggles

The Politics of Teacher Unionism: International Perspectives edited by M. Lawn. Croom Helm (1985) pp.302, £17.95.

The widespread and escalated industrial action through sanctions and strikes that has characterised the long drawn out pay dispute in Britain will have led all teachers, to whichever teachers' association they belong, to consider many of the issues raised in this symposium. Its publication is opportune. The book consists of national case studies of teachers' unions in Australia, France, Japan, Malta, Portugal, Scotland, Sweden and the USA, and ends with reflections on the NUT. It provides a series of national perspectives, but with little attempt at comparison and without any international perspective. Readers may be tempted to draw comparative conclusions nevertheless.

Despite the great national diversity of contexts in terms of economy, politics, religion, school structures and the number of teachers' national unions, several themes recur and strike chords readily recognisable here. American, Australian and Japanese struggles against various forms of teacher assessment used for salary purposes, French and Swedish teachers' resistance against attempts to increase legal working hours while curricular changes already increased their workload, Australian and Swedish experience of defending tenure against increased use of temporary contracts — these are the more obvious examples. Significantly, all relate mainly to periods under right-wing conservative governments.

In view of the increasingly centralist control of schooling in England and Wales, some of the discussions of strategies used and effective strength of teachers' unions in centralised and more decentralised systems raise interesting points. Scottish and Swedish experience in developing organisation and expertise at local level are illuminating, as is the French neo-corporate relationship between unions and government bureaucracy.

Certain norms shared by all the other national systems highlight unique features of the English and Welsh scene. Specific differential qualifications to teach restricted phases or types of schooling and the prevalence of contracts stipulating class contact hours — the two often interrelated — are significant instances.

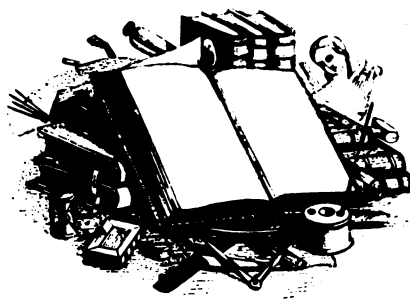
Almost inevitably, there is unevenness among the contributions, several being less analytical than required to be illuminating. Why the long tradition of left political orientation among French teachers' unions, and why has the French left opposed nonstreaming? Why do distinct party political allegiances divide teachers' unions in some countries but not others? Why have some unions been far more concerned than others with curriculum and other matters of educational policy? These are issues that are not addressed with consistent attention: they would require closer analysis of the wider national political scene than was probably possible in such short essays. A warning on the risks of trans-cultural borrowing may be drawn from the Maltese experience of modelling on the NUT.

Two articles not overtly concerned with union politics, but very relevant to the politicising of educational matters, are those that examine the impact of computers on the

role of Australian teachers and of the vast testing industry on that of American teachers. Both warn of the dangers inherent through deskilling and loss of autonomy, with distortion of educational objectives, if teachers fail to assert their professional control over how such externally intruded measures are used. Yet nowhere do these risks seem to be seriously concerning teachers' unions.

Various interpretations of 'professionalism' and 'militancy' are either overtly discussed or are implicit in other contributions. It is evident that both concepts are more complex and more context bound than stereotyped notions which juxtapose the two and are apt to confuse debate among teachers. That teachers need to be unionised and must be always developing new strategies in the interests of their own working conditions and of the education service are conclusions clearly apparent from these distinctly national studies.

NANETTE WHITBREAD



A Whole School Exercise

Self-evaluation for Primary Schools, by I.A. Rodger and J.A.S. Richardson. Hodder and Stoughton, £4.95 paperback, pp.216.

There are many different aspects of education on which schools can focus attention and on which teachers can spend their time and energy. However, teachers tend to spend their time on those aspects of school life which have the most immediate and public effect. Hence practising for the current concert takes precedence over all else, or it could be a garden fete or parents' function. There is no such urgency attached to evaluating those activities which form the core of a school's work. A science scheme introduced with much enthusiasm by the person responsible could well drift into obscurity and be lost in a pile of broken apparatus.

Who knows what is actually being done in school and how much of it is worthwhile? What is a particular school's order of priorities and how far are teachers devoting the time and resources to achieve those things which are put at the top of that list? Is too much being expected so that those activities with the less immediately noticeable results

get left undone? These, I would suggest, are questions to which teachers should be directing their attention, professional expertise and considerable time. Enough time to thoroughly examine the questions, formulate answers, implement action and monitor the results.

Self-evaluation for Primary Schools directs teacher attention to these issues which should properly be the teachers' main concern.

As I read this book, I realised that never once in thirty-five years' teaching in eleven schools had I been engaged with a whole staff, in thoroughly teasing out those problem situations and those inconsistencies in the curriculum which produce so much frustration to a conscientious teacher. Enthusiastic individuals ploughed a lonely furrow, but seldom in any particular subject and never in respect of the curriculum as a whole, were all staff united in purpose, direction and method.

The authors of this book point out that the Schools Council finally 'placed great emphasis upon localised, school based, small scale curriculum developments involving teachers themselves working together to solve problems which they identified . . .'. They also state that there are now 'teachers in schools who have realised and have been encouraged to realise, that curriculum reform is one of their professional responsibilities'. But are we, as a profession, facing up to those responsibilities? To do so, teachers need to spend considerable time (no apologies for repeating that) on evaluation and they need guidance on how to achieve their aims. Only a change in attitude by employers and teachers can facilitate the first but the book under review goes a long way to producing the second.

The book's introduction begins: 'This book is something of a traveller's knapsack for those schools prepared and seeking to tread the self-evaluation road. Its contents include guides, maps and a few traveller's tales . . .'. The guides suggest the use of numerous techniques — questionnaires, debates, brainstorming, short-term diaries, balance sheets, venn diagrams, rounds, buzz groups — little that's new but each technique is fitted in to serve a specific purpose. One of the purposes is to get every member of staff involved and making worthwhile contributions; whilst another is to ensure that any aspect of school work being evaluated is kept clearly in everyone's mind.

The traveller's tales come in the form of progress reports on two schools which decided to start the journey. Drawing on the experience of '300 teachers in thirty five primary schools' the authors ensure that the progress — or lack of it — is realistic.

Self-evaluation for Primary Schools, one of the Studies in Teaching and Learning Series, is very readable and well constructed. It will, I'm sure, prove to be most helpful to those schools who dare to plunge whole-heartedly into that exercise which is so necessary to provide staff cohesion and a well-planned curriculum. Rodger's and Richardson's book could also be the catalyst to produce action by a school shivering on the brink.

M. CLARKE
Little Hill Primary School Leicestershire.

A School Support Team

Preventing Classroom Disruption: Policy, Practice and Evaluation in Urban Schools, David Coulby and Tim Harper. Croom Helm 1985. ISBN 0 7099 3424 6 hardback £15.95. 0 7099 3425 6 paperback £7.95.

Classroom disruption is no new phenomenon — it has existed as long as classrooms themselves. What has changed is its interpretation and management. Behaviour which often used to be dealt with by 'six of the best' has now become a legitimate cause for concern about the nature and purpose of the schooling we offer our young people.

Both Right and Left furnish ready-made explanations for it. On the one hand, it is seen as the coming home to roost of the laxity and permissiveness of the '60s — the concomitant of child-centred pedagogy and school democracy; on the other, as a reflection of the contradictions inherent within the latest capitalist model of schooling for conformity and unemployment.

In **Preventing Classroom Disruption**, David Coulby and Tim Harper make no such sweeping generalisations. In their opening chapter they critically review the history of the creation of the category of disruptive pupil. They rightly reject formulations which locate the causes of disruption within the individual child — the pathological model particularly favoured by psychology — and instead seek the causation within the wider social and economic circumstances of the pupil and her/his (and it is usually a his) family coupled with the curriculum and organisation of the school.

The main body of the book is a detailed account of the establishment and operation of a Schools Support Team in Division Five (Tower Hamlets) of the Inner London Education Authority. It was set up in 1979 in response to the concern felt by the Authority over what they perceived to be a marked increase in disruptive behaviour in inner-city schools. This was variously ascribed to the raising of the school leaving age, the large turnover of staff in inner-city schools, the abolition of corporal punishment and the creation of comprehensives; and local authorities all over the country took steps to combat it.

Unlike most other provision for disruptive pupils inaugurated at that time, the work of the Schools Support Team was mainly on-site and concerned with attempting to hold the pupil in her/his parent school. Through the techniques of close classroom observation, followed up by assessment of the situation, formulation of the difficulty, and intervention, they aimed to offer support and advice to the teachers directly experiencing the behaviours.

At the same time, they attempted to work within the school as a whole to help develop practices that would minimise and contain disruption without necessitating the removal of individuals. Parents were also involved from an early stage in partnership with the school and the Support Team.

The study describes in detail the theoretical model (drawn from the areas of social psychology, organisational management theory and social learning theory) which informs the *modus operandi* of the team. Lest it appear too abstract, case histories are used to illustrate the intervention of the team.

The examples cited bear out the authors'

assertion that much disruptive behaviour can be dealt with by alterations in organisation and management both at a classroom and whole-school level, and by a sensitised approach to the observation and recording of disruptive behaviour. Increasing the 'relevance' of the curriculum on offer and re-assessing the messages conveyed in the 'hidden curriculum' are also seen as important tasks for schools.

There is obviously much that can be done within schools to ameliorate problem behaviour. Coulby and Harper see change as being possible on three fronts — in the practice of individual teachers, in the management and ethos of schools and in the attitude to the problem on the part of Local Education Authorities. They stress the dialectic nature of the enterprise engaged in by the Schools Support Team and are honest in cataloguing its failures as well as its successes.

Preventing Classroom Disruption contains much of relevance to teachers in mainstream classrooms as well as those working off-site. When attempts are being made to re-evaluate the plethora of provision that now exists for disruptive pupils, this study could provide a valuable reference point for future developments.

The authors, both of whom were members of the team, conclude: 'a successful and positive experience of education alongside peers is the ultimate antidote to classroom disruption'. Although this might be seen as a little wishful under present circumstances both within and without schools, it is philosophically in keeping with the anti-segregationalist ideology underlying the Warnock Report and the more recent Fish Report produced for the ILEA, and with the ideals of comprehensive education itself.

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Editor, **Teaching London Kids**



To be a Teacher

Classroom Teaching Skills, edited by E.C. Wragg. Croom Helm (1984), pp.228, £15.95 hardback, £7.95 paperback.

It is now widely accepted that the teacher training programme in colleges and universities should place a major emphasis on the acquisition of properly structured classroom skills — and that such skills can and should be taught in a professional and

organised way, even allowing for all the variables involved. **Classroom Teaching Skills** describes some of the research undertaken by Ted Wragg's Teacher Education Project, a 4-year research-and-development project funded by the DES and based at Nottingham university. The findings are based on observations of over 1,000 lessons, interviews with more than 200 experienced and novice teachers, and the development and use of new sets of teacher training materials, some of which have been published as FOCUS workbooks by Macmillan.

Of course, it is far from easy to identify and define teaching skill in a way that will receive universal endorsement, even though parents and pupils often seem to be quite clear about the qualities they expect to find in a decent teacher. As Professor Wragg says, in his brief but illuminating introductory chapter, 'there is less dissent about what constitutes effective teaching in discussion between people *outside* the profession than there is in the research and evaluation literature. Good teachers, it is commonly held, are keen and enthusiastic, well organised, firm but fair, stimulating, know their stuff, and are interested in the welfare of their pupils. Few would attempt to defend the converse: that good teachers are unenthusiastic, boring, unfair, ignorant, and do not care about their pupils.'

The difficulty comes when one attempts to translate these fairly vague qualities into the more precise characteristics demanded by the tenets of rigorous systematic enquiry. American researchers, in particular, seem to have gone to quite extraordinary lengths in their determination to dissect and analyse the art of teaching. One zealous academic produced a list of 1,276 approved competencies under the heading **The Florida Catalog of Teacher Competencies**. Mercifully, the Nottingham team chose to focus on just *four* major areas: class management and control, the teaching of mixed ability groups, and the skills of questioning and explaining — areas designed to represent activities which required skill, intelligence and sensitivity from the teachers studied.

Altogether some 23 research studies were undertaken during the 4 years. The main chapters in the book describe some of that research work, with a final chapter reflecting on some of the findings of the project and discussing the implications for teacher training. The nine contributors are all those who were involved with the project on either a full-time or part-time basis. All the analyses are of secondary teaching.

'Class Management During Teaching Practice' (Wragg and Dooley) analyses and compares the classroom handling abilities of 'good' and 'poor' students. In this chapter, we learn that the effective managers were those who were well prepared, organised their lessons and materials efficiently, and developed the skills of explaining, questioning and using their eyes to read pupils' difficulties and anticipate problems. And in 'Teachers' First Encounters with their Classes' (Wragg and Wood), the first lessons of a sample of experienced teachers at the beginning of the school year are compared with the lessons given by a sample of third-year BEd. students at the start of their final teaching practice in October and then with the first lessons given by a group of PGCE students on their block practice in January. In general, the experienced teachers were clear about their practice and had their strategies

carefully thought out. The majority sought to establish some kind of dominant presence, chose to make up their mind about children from their own experience rather than from a scrutiny of pupils' records, tempered any initial harshness with humour, and conveyed to their class that they were firmly in charge, using their eyes, movement and gesture to enhance what they were trying to do. For some, the first lesson with a new class was a time when they were acutely conscious of the need to reinforce and even exaggerate whatever they saw as the predominant features of their reputation in the school. In a number of cases, this reputation was thought to be fearsome:

'I have a reputation before they arrive here. They come in fear and trembling because they think I am severe . . . It's important to put on a bit of a front at the beginning' (French teacher, male). 'I'm very stern and very hard. I am consciously being a little harder than I am' (PE teacher, male).

The student teachers, on the other hand, were more confused about rules and relationships, giving a great deal of thought to lesson content and little to managerial aspects. The PGCE students, in particular, wanted to be friendly and approachable, and were reluctant to be 'socialised into the "hard teacher" stereotype', giving rise to this fairly typical comment:

'Ideally, I'd like a fairly intimate relationship with the class, but I realise that requires drawing a line between intimacy and cheek, a fine balance I'd like to achieve. I don't know how. I haven't given it a lot of thought. It's important. I need to think about it' (PGCE English, male).

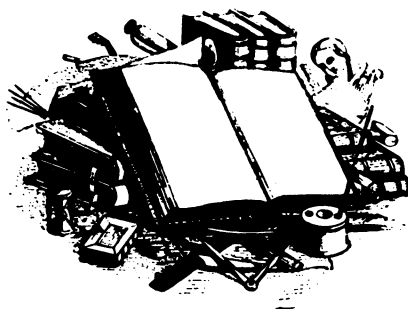
When consumer attitudes are analysed in 'Pupil Appraisals of Teaching' (Wragg and Wood), pupil conservatism is the dominating characteristic. The pupils in the sample respected teachers who were firm but fair, consistent, stimulating, interested in individuals and endowed with a sense of humour; but, above all, they were impressed by teachers who explained things clearly.

Perhaps the most controversial and disturbing findings are those concerned with mixed-ability teaching. The pupils themselves were quite clear about their preferences. When offered a choice between streaming, setting and mixed-ability classes, 72 per cent opted for setting, 19 per cent for mixed-ability and 9 per cent for streaming. And the researchers go on to describe a profound 'mismatch between the underlying *philosophy* of mixed-ability teaching and its *practice*'. In 'Classroom Organisation and Learning' (Kerry and Sands), we learn that even where mixed-ability classes were well organised, there was too much reliance on work-cards and too few teachers were able to articulate clear aims and philosophies. In 90 per cent of the lessons observed, the whole class was given the same task. The authors conclude that 'mixed-ability teaching may suit some curriculum areas such as religious education more than others (maths and modern languages). Probably, as with most educational fashions, its strengths have now been harnessed and its weaknesses probed. It will find its natural level in a "mixed economy" of school organisation.' All somewhat pessimistic and depressing.

In his final chapter, Professor Wragg argues that in many teacher training courses,

there is still too little attention paid to such important basic classroom skills as questioning and explaining. He believes passionately that 'good' teachers can be 'made' and that it is not enough for college and university education departments to restrict their teaching to the foundation disciplines of sociology, psychology, history and philosophy. He sometimes gets carried away by his enthusiasm for a theory of classroom practice, but he is surely right to imply that there are ways of doing things in the classroom which will work for the majority of teachers for the majority of the time. There *is* a craft to training teachers. In Professor Wragg's words: 'if teaching children is one of the most important responsibilities that a society can ask some of its members to undertake, then the challenge to nurture the professional skills of the new generation of trainees and sharpen those of the present cohort of practising teachers must be an equally vital assignment.'

CLYDE CHITTY



Also received:

Involving Parents in the Teaching of Reading: Some Key Sources is an annotated bibliography by a group of researchers at Sheffield University, which aims to bring together information on over 100 publications relevant to involving parents in teaching young children to read.

The booklet is organised in *five* sections:

1. Parental involvement in the teaching of reading.
2. Related forms of parental involvement.
3. Resources for teachers and parents.
4. Surveys and other research.
5. Discussions of home-school relations.

It is written by Peter Hannon, Roy Long, Jo Weinberger and Liz Whitehurst and published by the University of Sheffield, Division of Education, as **USDE Occasional Paper, No.3, 1985**.

Copies are available, at a cost of £2.00 each, including postage and packing, from the following address: Publication Sales, University of Sheffield, Division of Education, Floor 9, Arts Tower, Sheffield S10 2TN.

Also received (2):

Readers of **Forum** will undoubtedly welcome the recent publication of a collection of essays, articles and lectures by Brian Simon, with the provocative title **Does Education Matter?** (Lawrence and Wishart, 1985, £5.95 paperback).

A lecture delivered at the University of British Columbia in October 1983 tackles the controversial issue of the relation between educational and social change; while another, to the University of Melbourne in April 1981, looks at the relation between theory and practice in education.

Three Memorial lectures tackle issues of abiding concern to the author: the roles played historically by teachers and local authorities as partners in the development of the publicly-provided system of education (the Lady Simon of Wythenshawe Memorial lecture: 'To Whom Do Schools Belong?'); the development of the whole movement for secondary education for all as seen through the career of Raymond King, Headmaster of Wandsworth School for some thirty years and Chairman of the **Forum** Editorial Board from 1964 until his death in 1983 (the Raymond King Memorial lecture: 'Secondary Education for All in the 1980s'); and the contribution of the work of Karl Marx to an evaluation of the current situation in education (the Marx Memorial lecture for 1977: 'Marx and the Crisis in Education').

'Why No Pedagogy in England?' advances reasons for our amateurish and essentially pragmatic approach to educational theory and practice; and a previously unpublished essay looks at the work and thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Another paper returns to the IQ Controversy and the career of Cyril Burt; and the collection ends with two contributions on the politics of education previously published in **Marxism Today**: 'Education and the Right Offensive' dating from 1980 and 'Breaking School Rules: Keith Joseph and the Politics of Education' first published in September 1984.

Brian Simon's answer to the question posed in the title is that education does indeed matter — and very much so in terms of human development and social change. He is confident that education, in its broadest sense, *can* change society; but this is a matter of long-term outcomes and does not mean that any educational reform should be judged by its ability to transform society in a matter of years. The new comprehensive system will not, therefore, *by itself*, achieve the creation of a more equal society — but recognising the right of all youngsters to be educated must have profound long-term consequences. A recurring theme of this book is that genuine advance requires general recognition of the formative power of education. 'Schools have the function of deliberately promoting not only the skills of numeracy and literacy, but, through a progressively deepening grasp of knowledge and culture, the autonomy of the student able to function effectively within society, and to use his or her abilities to change that society according to developing aspirations.'

C.C.

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