FORUM

for the discussion of new trends in education

This issue

The Teachers' Action
Symposium on Profiling
The Multicultural Debate

Editorial Board

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The Next Forum

Caroline Roaf on Whole School Policies; David Reynolds on the 'Transformative School' (case study of a successful comprehensive); Anne Yeoman on her teacher enquiry group; with other articles on curriculum change in a county area and a critical evaluation of TRIST; these are among articles planned for September — together with 'Goodbye, Sir Keith', by the editors (if appropriate).

Save Our Schools

The Conservative party is in a state of crisis — and so, it appears, education is going to suffer. This comes across very clearly from the almost uninterrupted flow of inspired press leaks over the last few weeks; and especially since the Westland affair.

The Tory search is for credibility — for an issue (or issues) around which they can launch once more the kind of populist appeal that played so important a part in their return to power in 1979. Hence the cry to bring back the egregious Rhodes Boyson; to hoist the flag of privatisation here also, and so to go to the country with a 'radical' programme that will bring in the votes and ensure a third term for Margaret Thatcher.

At a time when the publicly maintained system of education has been brought to its knees by cheese-paring and inflexible government policies, these new proposals and rumours, clearly an exercise in kite-flying to estimate public support, are totally irresponsible, to say the least. With morale in the schools at an all-time low and when, as a result of government initiatives, a whole variety of issues are awaiting decision, this continuous leakage of officially sponsored proposals can only have the effect of undermining the system yet further. It is an act of desperation.

What are the proposals? These seem to have two main thrusts. Some analysts regard them as opposite, reflecting the right and left in the conservative party. Actually the two sets of proposals could well be meshed together, and perhaps that is the intention — certainly that would be the best way of achieving maximum damage to the publicly provided system, which seems now to be the intention.

The first set are based on the theme of privatisation. These range from the proposal to 'denationalise' the system by the introduction of a so-called credit (or voucher) system whereby school funding is derived directly from parents, though of course actually from the central government via the parents (this was proposed in an article in *The Times* by one Oliver Letwin, until recently a member of the Prime Minister's 'Policy Unit'), to hare-brained proposals to 'privatise' schools in whole sections of cities by simply selling them (apparently) to industrial or other concerns (though here profitability, without which privatisation is a nonsense, would again depend on central government monies being made available on a sufficient scale to ensure a profit to the takers at least equivalent to the rate obtainable elsewhere). And of course there are other schemes.

The second set of proposals are for the radical enhancement of direct central control over the system as a whole. This has now been openly proposed by Patten and certain DES officials (so the leaks tell us), and of course direct central control is clearly a major objective of the latter whose determination to enhance their power and influence is now very evident. Within this thrust, proposals to establish 'direct grant' primary schools, the so-called 'Crown schools' scheme, even to establish secondary technical and other selective types of school can all be grouped. **Central** control, over the system as a whole, or over individual or groups of schools, suddenly emerges as a panacea.

So, at a time when relationships within the educational 'partnership' have been brought to an all-time low, as a result of deliberate government policies and actions over the last few years — when the crying need is to restore those relationships to some semblance of partnership; when above all the schools and teachers (and local authorities) need support and encouragement to undo the damage of the past and rebuild their systems, what we get is yet another set of bizarre (so-called 'radical') proposals, which have as their main purpose securing the return of the Thatcher government for yet another term. This, surely, is politics gone mad.

This is a period when those concerned with the schools and their well-being (and therefore the well-being of the pupils within them) need to keep their heads, refusing to be intimidated, and above all seek to explain the real issues facing education to the wider public, and to do so consistently and without quarter for those responsible for this deliberate mismanagement. Local authorities (and the government, incidentally) have the statutory function of ensuring that effective educational provision is made for the entire population. This entails equalising provision across local authority areas and across the country as a whole. For this reason the strongest opposition should be mounted against schemes which seek, as their main objective, to introduce divisions — and especially to enhance opportunities for the few as against the many.

Privatisation (and the voucher system, if it can be made to work) will do just this — inevitably leading to a hierarchy of schooling within a given area. The 'Crown' schools and an extended Direct Grant system will have exactly the same effect, as any enhancement of the Assisted Places Scheme will also. Central control, it seems, is desired (among other things) as a means of driving new differentiating procedures through the system as a whole.

All these proposals must be thoroughly opposed. Instead, the maintained system, large enough in all conscience, must be given priority as a whole, as well as the resources needed to overcome the disasters of the present cutbacks. It must be developed as a **unified** system, with the teachers and local authorities playing their full parts in its control and functioning. What is needed now is a **crusade for state education**, as called for in no uncertain terms by Bob Richardson in his Presidential address to the NUT conference in April. In any such campaign, FORUM stands ready to play its part.

Is there life after the teachers' action?

Harvey Wyatt
A long-standing member of our Editorial Board, Harvey Wyatt teaches at The Woodlands School, Coventry. Here he analyses the long-term influences behind the unprecedented teachers' action over the last year, and considers its likely effects on the schools in the future.

'Curiouser and curiouser!' cried Alice (Lewis Carroll).

To the impartial observer the present chaos in our schools must seem nothing short of extraordinary indeed, the vast majority of teachers must feel almost as perplexed. They do not wish to be at this point, but are unable to see an alternative. How is it that one of the most conservative and conforming groups of workers in the country appear to be dismantling and destroying their own working environment, brick by brick? As recently as eighteen months ago no one could have forecast the mayhem that now surrounds us. What then has driven teachers to the brink of self-destruction? Is it merely a lack of money? I suggest not. The origins of the present dispute, recognised and unconscious, go much deeper.

'Everything's got a moral, if you can only find it'

Certainly poor remuneration, relative to other groups in both the public and private sector is a root cause of discontent. However, apart from short periods after the Houghton and Clegg awards, this has always been the case. Nearly everyone, both inside and outside education, supports the case for better pay and conditions for teachers. The notable exception to this is central government. Even given the present situation though, I am convinced that teachers are primarily concerned about the future of the profession, and the present difficulties of recruitment. Pay is important, but not all important. For over a decade now there have been increasingly acute shortages in major areas of the curriculum, notably mathematics, physics, craft-design-technology and modern languages. It is amazing to the informed observer that the DES should respond to the problem so belatedly and so insensitively by offering PGCE physics students an extra £1,200 for their training year. In addition the notion of differential payments for teachers in shortage areas is equally disastrous. One sometimes wonders whether Sir Keith and his advisers live in the real world.

'That's the reason they're called lessons,' the Gryphon remarked: 'because they lessen from day to day'.

Certainly if pay were the only issue teachers would be as long suffering at present as they have always been. There are many other strands that have led to the present impasse, not least of which is the feeling that professional determination of the curriculum has been badly eroded by bureaucrats and politicians. Witness Lord Young and The Manpower Services Commission.

Arguably the question of teacher accountability started as early as 1960 when David Eccles announced his intention to 'make the Ministry's voice heard rather more often and positively and no doubt controversially'. This was in line with his statements about teachers' control of education and his pronouncement on 'the secret garden of the curriculum'. These attacks were followed by the 'Black Papers' from 1969 onwards and the development of the A.P.U. to monitor standards from 1974. The whole offensive on teacher sovereignty over the curriculum reached a crescendo with James Callaghan's Ruskin speech which opened the 'Great Debate' in 1976.

As a result of these events and many other moves by central government, culminating in the introduction of G.C.S.E., tied to closely defined national criteria, teachers have become increasingly alarmed by central control of the curriculum. Indeed, Sir Keith Joseph's attempt to design a system for only the top sixty percent of students and force the rest into areas like his DES Lower Achievers Project is a less than veiled attempt to produce two nations of pupils. Together with T.V.E.I. it reflects a view of education for many pupils based on utilitarianism and the preparation of students for industry.

At the same time the government has been openly hostile about the quality of the teaching profession and the need for schemes of appraisal, linked to removing inadequate teachers, rather than developing and encouraging the competent ones. This attitude has been paralleled by centralised attempts to weaken the fabric of the state system of education. The unworkable voucher system is still not properly buried, while there are constant attempts to extend the assisted places scheme in independent schools. Such stances reflect a government that is not serious about a healthy and thriving public system, and sends shudders through the profession who fear for the future of education.

At the same time that the government has questioned teachers' competence they have accelerated the process of change, often without reference to teachers. These are expected to accept heavier workloads with no increase in pay or resources. Whatever happened to the recommendations of the James Report on teacher training? Presumably, as they required a capital outlay, they went the way of other government reports.

'Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get

somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!'

In an increasingly unstable society where divorce rates are high, families divided, and city areas where the social fabric is decaying, a large number of people find great difficulty in establishing sound guidelines for a disaffected adolescent generation. Many schools have responded well in attempting to fill that vacuum and teachers have been involved in wider social responsibilities. Thus when inevitable breakdowns in relationships occur it becomes increasingly irksome to observe the lack of support schools receive from LEAs. The stance taken by Manchester LEA over the Poundswick High School graffitti case, following the suspension by the head of five culprits, has become a cause celebre, but it is the tip of an iceberg and reflects the negative attitudes adopted by LEA administrators over a whole range of issues. Teachers' unions could identify many cases of similar indifference to the problems in schools. Heads now have less freedom of action than previously and the fact that this is now known to both staff and parents undermines their confidence in the system. All this is occurring at a period when fewer and fewer sanctions are available to teachers.

'No admittance till the week after next!'

Finally, and critically in the present situation, are the enormous tensions and self-doubts in the profession about where education is heading. Ally this to the massive rise in youth unemployment over the past five years and we have a potential disaster of the greatest magnitude. Young people have been deprived of a sense of direction, teachers are no longer able to dangle the carrot of academic qualifications in front of the majority, and often a vacuum in relationships has been created that requires a radical renegotiation. We have poured a plethora of courses with high sounding titles into the gap — active tutorial work, personal and social development, political education, peace studies, TVEI, CPVE — in an attempt to fill the vacuum. However, unless these are matched with a corresponding shift in attitudes about aims and the process of learning we are in serious difficulty. What is really required is a renaissance of concern by teachers, parents and administrators to the real needs of children, to carry us through this crisis. The nursing profession has an old fashioned phrase for it — tender loving care.

'Consider anything, only don't cry'.

None of the points raised in the list of factors contributing to the present situation are of themselves dangerous, or indeed, negative. In fact, many of the trends have positive long term benefits to both teachers and students. What is missing is a positive atmosphere. Given good will on all sides almost anything is possible, but without it the fabric of our education system continues to crumble and the government must shoulder most of the responsibility. Their constant ability to shift blame, firstly to teachers' unions and more recently to LEAs is an abdication of their responsibility.

'You believe in me and I'll believe in you'.

To identify the reasons underlying the present situation is complex enough, but to project any scenario for life after the dispute is virtually impossible, such are the number of variables involved. A new generation of teachers are emerging who have not experienced during training or the initial stages of their careers normal working conditions — parental consultations, staff and departmental meetings, in-service training and extra-curricular activities. Considerable numbers of teachers in mid-career have left the profession, and many teachers over fifty years old have opted for early retirement and quieter pastures. All of this is undermining the structure and fabric of the service.

We have all lashed the government for the ills in the profession, and rightly so, for they are our ultimate paymasters through the rate support grant. In doing so we should not forget our own shortcomings. We have allowed an obsolete Burnham negotiating machine to continue for the last decade, stumbling from one annual crisis to another. There has been the demoralising power struggle between the NAS/UWT and the NUT, culminating in the latter's withdrawal from the recent ACAS conciliation discussions. At the same time less militant unions like AMMA, PAT and the headteacher associations have been prepared to let the big battalions fight trench warfare with the government on their behalf. Surely when this dispute is concluded, as a profession, we must make a concerted effort to pool our considerable resources into a unified teaching council. It must speak with one voice on behalf of all teachers, laying down conditions of entry, dealing with standards in the profession and generally restoring dignity and wisdom to the situation. Unfortunately we are in a period of confrontation politics and I fear that the path of modernisation may well be spurned. If so, we will provide, as now, half the ammunition for the government's case.

'The question is', said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be the master — that's all'.

Traditionally the school has normally been a place of goodwill, compromise and unwritten agreement. For example, a deputy head, responsible for staff absence cover, might protect staff who had suffered serious illness, family bereavement or similar traumas from any extra workload for a period of time. All this took place with the unspoken consent of the rest of the staff. The dispute has hardened attitudes in many quarters and negotiation has become more legalistic, with all management decisions being scrutinised and checked by union representatives. In some schools the head and deputies have been seen as an arm of local government rather than as leaders and friends of professional colleagues. When we return to normal there will be many bridges to be rebuilt or repaired, memories will be hopefully short and really meaningful relationships will return. If they do not, for most teachers, the future will be less than rewarding.

It is naive to pretend that modernisation alone will ease the present problems. Better pay and conditions are a major factor in the argument. There is now little doubt that this will in turn be related to a contract and it is the means rather than the ends that are disputed. Unless there is a substantial rise in salary for all teachers and considerable restructuring of the lower scales the present discontent will continue. The professional development of teachers, whose promotion opportunities are restricted by a contracting situation, must be provided for by more flexible opportunities to develop curriculum and administrative skills. This requires a reappraisal of the way in which schools are

organised. We have encouraged more active staff participation in discussion but not enough to their active involvement in planning the curriculum and administration of schools.

'The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday — but never jam today'.

The means of re-opening work on curriculum development is more problematic. For more than a year all management initiated schemes, school, local and national (particularly GCSE) have been suspended through teacher action. During that period many teachers, previously inundated by meetings, must have questioned their usefulness. They have enjoyed the extra marking and preparation time afforded by their removal, and, whisper it quietly, have arrived home at a reasonable hour! It will need very sensitive management initiatives to wean teachers back to their previous lifestyle. Yet were it not to happen the very vibrancy and excitement generated by in-service education will wither and we shall be selling a new generation of teachers very short indeed. The tradition of voluntary in-service courses, after school hours, has been a treasured and valuable part of the educational scene in Britain and as a profession we will deal ourselves a mortal wound if we abandon it as a retaliatory act against government attitudes. It must be a priority to restore it and I am sure every professional career teacher accepts the wisdom of that. When the new block grant to LEAs for in-service training is introduced in April 1987 we must ensure that maximum benefit is derived by local insistence, not national mandate.

'Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast time'.

The greatest difficulty will be to re-establish a meaningful and close relationship with parents. However sympathetic to the teachers' case for improved pay and conditions, they have had severe reservations about the methods employed. As a parent as well as a teacher I find it very difficult to reconcile treating other people's children in a way that I would not treat my own. That is a moral dilemma we have all lived with and it rests on uncomfortable shoulders. In parents' eyes we are now regarded as any other group of workers who will use their industrial muscle to achieve their own ends. That is the rubicon we have crossed and we will have to live with that fact from now onwards. Until the present dispute we were different in that respect from other groups. Fortunately, as a new generation of children pass through schools old scars will heal and relationships will improve. The onus lies with us to take every possible opportunity to show parents we do care for their children.

'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,' the Queen remarked.

It is with children, however, that the greatest reconciliation must be made. If we believe in leading by example, we have set a poor one and let me not pretend otherwise. They have innocently become the victims of a mind sapping struggle. Not only have they been deprived of basic education but a whole range of extra-curricular activity that makes the English education system so much richer and rewarding than that of many of our European neighbours where pastoral care and voluntary activities lie outside the jurisdiction of the school. All really successful teachers have been devoted

to a positive 'hidden curriculum' in which clubs, teams, societies, journeys, plays, orchestras and sports teams have become almost a way of life. The whole range of informal contacts and relationships forged outside the classroom, enrich and warm the transactions that take place within it. Good schools are about people and the way they relate to each other, but write that into a contract and their true value is destroyed, and the quality of the experience irretrievably devalued. The orchestra on Thursday evening and the soccer or netball teams on Saturday morning is a joyous experience. We need it as much as our pupils, but never insult us by paying us for participating.

'That's not a regular rule, you invented it just now'. 'Its the oldest rule in the book', said the King. 'Then it ought to be Number One', said Alice.

At the end of the day, whatever the merits of the case against the government, and they are considerable, our first and abiding loyalty must be to the pupils and parents who place their trust in us. That confidence has been badly dented and we now have a job to do in rectifying the situation. Sir Keith and his mandarins are a temporary feature in the landscape, eventually to be replaced by those who care more and are sensitive to the ideals of universal state education. Let us be certain that when that time comes, as it surely will, there is still something of value to care about.

'Contrariwise,' continued Tweedledee, 'if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be: but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic'.

Shifting Emphasis in the Multicultural Debate

David Ruddle

From multiculturalism to anti-racism; in this article, David Ruddle, Head of Birmingham's Multicultural Development Unit since its foundation in 1983, considers the change of emphasis over the last few years, together with the implications of anti-racism for the schools.

The Swann Report **Education For all** was a very long time in gestation. When it finally appeared in March 1985 it had been six years in the making; it had had two chairpersons, countless comings and goings on the investigating committee, and a major expansion of its area of concern — from the education of 'West Indian

Children' to 'Education for All'.

It would have been foolish to expect a government Report of this type to have come up with something that was both comprehensive and bold, and was also completely acceptable to all interested parties. At the end of the day Lord Swann presented us with a hefty volume that was a fair enough account of what had been happening in some schools when the evidence was collected between 1979 and 1983, but gave only minimal direction as to where we should be going. Almost drowned in the wordiness of the Report (and totally absent from Lord Swann's personal summary, which was distributed to all schools) are powerful statements on racism, which clearly take the lead from what black people themselves have been saying for ages, and from the findings of Rampton's Interim Report.

Racism Played Down

Governments, of whatever political shade, appear to be somewhat frightened of tackling the issue of racism. Indeed, such a clear pattern of attempts to diffuse the significance of race is discernable, that one is led to believe that it can be nothing less than a deliberate policy. This has serious implications for the victims of racism, and serious implications for our schools.

The history of Swann's enquiry is a case in point. Originally chaired by Anthony Rampton, the committee's Interim Report **West Indian Children in Our Schools** laid much of the blame for Afro-Caribbean underattainment firmly on the racism of the teaching force, and of schools as institutions. The government's reaction was to sack Rampton and replace him with Lord Swann. It is difficult to separate this dismissal from the main thrust of the Report, which was to highlight the potency of personal and institutional racism in black youngsters' low levels of academic achievement. Swann's publication of a personal summary of his committee's Report, unknown to other members of the Committee until it appeared, was provided free with each copy of the somewhat daunting, 800-odd page Report sold. It was also widely distributed to schools *without* the main Report. It can hardly be a coincidence that Lord Swann's so-called summary fails entirely to refer to the centrally important chapter on racism, a chapter which provides a framework for much of the rest of the Report.

Within months of the publication of Swann, the disturbances on the streets of Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham again highlighted the frustration of black youngsters. But within hours of the outbreak of violence, government and opposition spokespersons were denying the relevance of racism to what was happening, and these denials grew more adamant in the aftermath.

DES Inaction

Many LEAs, including some with very few minority ethnic children in their schools, have produced policies and guidelines on multicultural education, and have appointed inspectors or advisers to oversee multicultural and anti-racist development in their schools. Yet the DES, though it has stated its commitment to multicultural education on numerous occasions, has never given a clear lead, effectively inhibiting other LEAs from making similar moves. As far back as 1971 a policy statement was promised from the DES: this has yet to materialise. Though Section 11 monies have been available to LEAs with large numbers of black children since soon after the 1966 Local Government Act was passed, there have never been guidelines from either the Home Office or the DES as to what types of initiatives would qualify for this money, thus ensuring that much of it remains untapped. HMI school inspections, even in areas with large black populations, have frequently failed to criticise, or even draw attention to, a school's neglect of this whole area of concern. When the Rampton Committee was set up, and again when the Swann Report was published, the DES and the government made it clear that no extra resources would be available to implement the recommendations of the Report.

The DES appears impervious to criticism on these issues; even the normally forgiving Home Affairs Select Committee has criticised the Department for this neglect. And this in a period of much greater centralised DES involvement and assertiveness in curriculum matters than ever before. To conclude that 'doing nothing' is a deliberate government stance on what are primary issues to the black community would be neither far-fetched nor 'political' in the pedagogically pejorative sense.

Shifting Emphasis

Lacking clear guidance from above, individuals, schools and LEAs have had to feel their way on multicultural education. Motives have varied; a simplistic but popular view is that it was initially a response to the needs of black pupils in what had previously been all-white schools. In practice, though few would admit it, it often emerged as an attempt to control and contain what was seen as the potential threat posed by large numbers of minority ethnic youngsters in schools which had until then propounded an assimilationist stance. The early history of multicultural education in Britain is littered with the ruins of government-inspired social control mechanisms, the best-known of which must be Boyle's dispersal policies (no more than 30% black intake in any school), and the ill-fated burden of 'bussing' that followed.

With the passing of the assimilationist period, multicultural education proceeded on the basis of a deficit model of black children. Believing that black children had low levels of self-esteem, multicultural education sought to bring aspects of minority culture into the classroom, and give them legitimacy, thus raising the self-esteem of the pupils. While it must be said that many teachers resisted this deficit/ethnic revitalisation model, there was a good deal of indulgent, sloppy work done in the name of some vague ideal which emphasised cultural fulfilment and self-expression for the black pupils, while pupils in white schools continued to develop the skills and knowledge that would lead to their passing exams. Little wonder that this approach came in for heavy criticism from black educationists.

The most popular version of so-called multicultural education, and the one which has forced the unfortunate polarisation of multicultural and anti-racist education, is the version based on the idea of cultural diversity, or what is increasingly being called 'cultural pluralism'. This version sounds attractive. It stresses the

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xenophobia of much of our curriculum content, suggesting that it alienates black youngsters from their ethnic backgrounds and perpetuates the narrowness of white children's outlooks. This version of multicultural education aims (to quote then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins 1966 formula) for 'mutual tolerance'. To date this idea in 1966 is misleading; twenty years later 'mutual tolerance' may have given way to 'mutual understanding', 'peace and harmony', 'cultural diversity' or even 'pluralism', but the ideas are still as vague as ever. What they mean in terms of classroom practice has been left to individual teachers and individual schools. No lead has been offered by the DES, analysis in the educational press or academic journals has been thin and unrigorous.

It is in the name of this 'cultural diversity' approach that many developments, good in themselves, have taken place, some of them even in all-white schools. Books with black faces in them have appeared, RE teachers have started teaching about Islam and Sikhism, history teachers and exam boards have added elements of the history of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to their syllabuses. Some schools have been exploring ideas of racial prejudice in their classrooms, in the hope of contributing to better race relations. Many schools have prided themselves, as a result of these developments, on being 'havens of peace' where the pupils 'don't notice colour' and where they are immune from the nasty racist happenings outside their gates.

The new cultural diversity of Britain is fully celebrated in these schools, the teaching materials and resources go some way towards reflecting this, and the wall displays stand as evidence of the school's meeting the demands of multiculturalism. It would be churlish to pooh-pooh the work going on in these schools, for it is very much in the right direction. Teachers of minority ethnic children give witness to instances of a new animation in some pupils, and the levels of involvement and learning have sometimes improved. It is all hard work but it is generally rewarding, and we feel good afterwards. But has it tackled the problem?

Anti-Racist Perspectives

The *Daily Mail* once ran an editorial attacking ILEA's promotion of 'anti-racist mathematics'. Anti-racist education was pilloried, and presented as nothing less than political indoctrination. It was pinned on the notice-board of a staffroom this writer visited at the time, and the Headteacher referred to it with a "whatever next?" type of comment, qualified with the remark that this was a *positive* school, and that this Headteacher did not like 'anti' anything. This school was 'doing multicultural education', and the purpose of the visit was to be present at a Diwali assembly which involved parents as well as pupils — and white parents at that. Cultural diversity was being proudly celebrated here, but thinking had not gone beyond presenting it as an unproblematic, joyful norm. That all the teachers were white was simply 'the way things are', and that parent involvement was limited to special events like the Diwali assembly was defended on professionalist grounds. This school epitomises the concerns of the black communities and those teachers who profess the need for an anti-racist dimension to multicultural education.

Britain and particularly those urban areas with large black populations, are increasingly being referred to as a plural society. This is presented in the same uncomplicated way as the Diwali assembly school presented its vision of cultural diversity. But history tells us that nowhere has there yet been an example of pluralism that does not have elements of subordination and superordination. The education system of a plural society will certainly reflect the structural inequalities of the society unless great efforts are made to avoid such an outcome. It is this realisation that has forced the educational debate to shift from a cultural diversity model incorporating the study of black people's lifestyles, to an anti-racist model which examines the white phenomenon of racism. In the anti-racist version of multicultural education, the problem is relocated in white teachers' practices, schools as white institutions with structures, practices and traditions that can result in racist outcomes, and white financial control that marginalises issues that are central to black parents and pupils.

An anti-racist teacher will be less than effective in a school environment which does not acknowledge the extent to which racism may be distorting its educational raison d'etre, or does not act to eliminate it from its total curriculum. An anti-racist school is a difficult thing to be, except in an LEA environment which acknowledges the pervasiveness of racist structures and positively acts against them. An LEA that wants to be anti-racist will find itself near-paralysed by lack of real DES and government support for its actions. However, these difficulties are not let-outs. Each individual teacher, each LEA is responsible for their own actions, and cannot abdicate responsibility for them.

Anti-racist multicultural education will have many of the same elements in it that the cultural diversity model has, and indeed will incorporate much that has been central to good practice for many years. But it will not discuss racial prejudice without exploring its relation to the structural position of black people at the bottom of the heap. It will not involve Asian parents in Diwali assemblies without involving them in the central concerns about their children's exams and futures. It will not assume that the goodwill and liberal persuasion of the teachers is enough. It will need to recognise that the nature of racism has implications for the school itself, as an institution involved in the whole complex process. It will have to examine its selection, setting or banding processes, its pastoral system, its staff recruitment policies, and all other aspects of its hidden curriculum for racist outcomes. It will not assume that, because there are no race riots in the playground, all is well and the children 'don't notice colour'. An anti-racist school has to nail its colours to the mast and take sides; it cannot play the neutral chairperson role.

A number of schools have been attempting to be both multicultural and anti-racist; unfortunately the current debate has at times polarised these as alternative options. But it will need real commitment on the part of government and DES, as well as LEAs, if there is to be any real move forward. The denial of funding to implement even the recommendations of the Swann Report does not augur well.

Profiling: a symposium

Among new forms of assessment, profiling is now being developed in a variety of contexts. To assist discussion and evaluation of this new development, this symposium describes developments in different contexts and offers different views as to its rationale. First, Diane Fairbairn, who works at the Assessment and Examinations Unit at the University of Southampton, reports on school based developments, derived from her study of four secondary schools involved in assessment and profiling development work. Second, Keith Spencer, Adviser for the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement (OCEA) coordination (and TRIST) at Coventry, together with two of his colleagues (Roy Donoghue and Ruth Snow) contribute on profiling developments within this area. Finally, Ron Needham, Senior Lecturer in Vocational Preparation and YTS Coordinator at Park Lane College, Leeds, focuses on profiling in the general field of pre-vocational courses.

Profiling — Resourcing School-Based Development Work

Diane Fairbairn

Pupil profiling is back in fashion. For many teachers and students in this country it will be their first encounter with this particular approach to the recording and reporting of assessment information. However, profiling is not new. Examples of what would now be called Portfolio assessment can be found in this country as far back as the 1860s (TES 1982). Smith and Tyler's work in the 1930s in the USA on appraising and recording student progress is an excellent example of the detailed and long-term (over 8 years) development work that has been done in school-based student assessment (Smith and Tyler 1942). More recent examples in this country of school-based assessment and profile type recording would be the Sutton Centre Profile (Fletcher 1980) and the Evesham High School Personal Achievement Record (Duffy 1980). What is different now is that the development of profiles has become a nationally co-ordinated exercise with widespread interest and support. The DES has declared its commitment to the provision of records of achievement for all school leavers by the end of the decade (DES 1984). The object of the nine DES funded pilot schemes on records of achievement is to help establish a framework for achieving this.

So, at the policy level profiling has begun to develop a semblance of coherence. It is being guided by a DES policy statement; organised within LEA and inter-LEA projects with objectives to meet and targets to achieve, with monitoring by both local evaluators and a national evaluation team. But it is individual schools that are having to deliver the goods either by developing assessment, recording and reporting methods or by working out ways of using those produced by others. We must not forget that school-based development work will have the tendency to follow paths dictated by the peculiar circumstances of each school rather than one prescribed by the grand plan for profiling.

Whether or not the nation will have school leaver profiles that conform to DES requirements by 1990 remains to be seen. Schools that have embarked on profile development work, whether they are part of a DES or LEA funded project or are working independently, will have realised that it is a difficult and lengthy process. There is no doubt that many teachers support the principles of profiling: principles such as the recognition and assessment of a broader range of achievement both within and beyond the academic curriculum; the possibility of negotiation between teacher and pupil during learning and assessment; the fact that the record should be open; that assessment has a formative as well as summative purpose; the use of a wide variety of individuals; the avoidance of judgements about personal characteristics; the recognition that profiling is for all pupils. Nevertheless, there is concern about the feasibility of putting these principles into practice.

From my research in secondary schools that are involved in profile development it was clear in September 1984 (when development work started) that many teachers were responding positively and enthusiastically to, what was in effect, a considerable challenge to their existing assessment practices. Schools working in one of the DES funded pilot schemes took full advantage of the extra resources available, for example: money for books and materials; supply cover to allow staff to attend meetings and to visit other schools; the knowledge, expertise and support of the scheme's project team; the provision of workshops and an annual conference on assessment and profiling. School-based work here is within the parameters set by the DES policy statement on records of achievement and by the local authority's curricular intentions. Schools in other areas working on their own initiative have not had the benefit of extra resources however, though nor, of course, have they encountered any constraints which may be imposed by such schemes. Dissatisfaction with existing assessment practices, the DES's general encouragement of profiling and the relevance of the principles of profiling to many current education and training initiatives (e.g. CPVE, TVEI, YTS) have prompted these schools to find out what this approach to assessment and recording has to offer.

The development work I have observed has involved teachers in lengthy reviews of their curricular and assessment methods; the identification of individuals to co-ordinate development work; the organisation of working parties on profiling; the production of

newsletters to keep all staff informed and the trial and revision of new assessment and recording methods. This has involved detailed and difficult work which has been undertaken on top of heavy teaching commitments and other projects within the schools. It has been during such development work that teachers have realised that if what is wanted is a genuinely comprehensive approach to assessment and recording, significant changes are necessary not only in assessment but in almost every aspect of school provision.

The need for change can be argued to be most acute in pre-service teacher training. Probationary teachers over the next few years will be expected to cope with the new assessment demands of GCSE, CPVE, TVEI and profiling. Training courses should provide students with the knowledge, skills and ideas in assessment that will enable them to stimulate and contribute to the profile development work that is going on in schools. Practising teachers will be looking to probationers for fresh insights that recent training can provide. New teachers should complete their training feeling confident in their ability to take on assessment as an integral part of their work. They should also have some awareness of the issues surrounding the carrying out of assessment, its recording and reporting.

Some practising teachers will be in the position of receiving in-service training in assessment and profiling, but many more will not. If we are talking about developing and using a comprehensive approach to assessment that adheres to the principles mentioned earlier, we should also realise that this requires teachers to extend their repertoire in terms of activities and roles. From my research it is clear that, in school-based development work on profiling, teachers are finding themselves in roles they were probably not trained or prepared for when they entered teaching, for example: the roles of student counsellor, curriculum evaluator, action researcher, clerical assistant. The new demands come thicker and faster than the INSET and support. In order to prepare teachers adequately for their more varied roles in assessment and recording INSET needs to accompany involvement in development work and be continued throughout to sustain and to tap and make the most of the enthusiasm and experience of staff. In addition, the provision of more non-contact time would be invaluable as a self-help in-service device which would allow staff to concentrate on development work. The school timetable will have to come to grips with the problem of releasing staff, together, for perhaps one afternoon per week. Likewise, the preparation of pupils for their full involvement in formative assessment and profiling must not be neglected. Most pupils are unpractised in self-assessment; many will not have the confidence to negotiate learning and assessment with a teacher; many will not be experienced at making decisions about their own learning. Development work on profiling needs to take this into account.

Formative assessment and profiling necessitate frequent contact between teacher and pupil, ideally, on a one to one basis. The guidance, counselling and negotiation that are part of the profiling process have been feasible, though still problematic, in Further Education and on the YTS where staff/student ratios are better than those in schools. The question many teachers are asking is how thoroughly can profiling be done with groups of thirty and above, or even, indeed, with smaller groups, given that schools are simply not structured at the present time to operationalise such a radically different form pedagogy? Furthermore, a considerable amount of the work involved at the development stage is clerical, for example: the layout, typing and storage of forms, checklists and record sheets; the distribution of information and materials; the arrangement of meetings. Extra secretarial support is also likely to be important, therefore, to secure the success of a school-based project.

Recent contributors to **Forum** have pointed out the potential for development work on profiling to move assessment thinking forward and away from our traditional preoccupation with what is publicly examinable. It is assessment ideas similar to those outlined by Murphy (1986) in the last issue of **Forum** that are behind much of the development work that I am observing in schools. Macintosh (1985) includes the principles of profiling in his agenda for a coherent and comprehensive 14-19 curriculum. However, the path towards school leaver profiles is not without its obstacles. The teachers' industrial dispute has held back development work on assessment and profiling. The Government's White Paper on public expenditure, published on January 16th, foresees an overall cut of 10% in education spending over the next three years. This is grim news for those arguing that schools are not properly equipped or resourced to undertake the designing, implementing and evaluation of a major pedagogical innovation like profiling. So, profiling is back in fashion and we like the design, but are we going to get a product of sufficient quality to attract the customers (pupils, parents and employers alike), to improve the quality of learning in the classroom and, thus, to make the effort to change worthwhile?

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Personal Reviewing and Recording — Principles in Practice

Roy Donoghue, Ruth Snow and Keith Spencer

In the dedication to his book: **Uses and Abuses of Profiling**[1] Bill Law refers to the profiling 'bandwagon'. Although a tongue-in-cheek remark, it does articulate a cynicism with which many educational practitioners greet attempts to assess students' efforts and achievements other than by public examinations. It does not, however, do justice to the broad range of attempts to represent more fully students' experiences and achievements.

There is a general awareness that examination results do not adequately present either the range of students' experiences and achievements or teachers' commitment to students' personal development through education. There is a further awareness that students often fail to recognise their learning beyond the acquisition of grades and that they tend to see learning as happening in separate areas of the curriculum and only within academic experiences. Examinations have acquired too great a significance in the eyes of many students, parents, employers and teachers. Some teachers use examinations to try to motivate students but this is becoming more difficult in a period when examination success does not necessarily lead to employment. Parents often demand examination success because they feel it will aid their children's job chances. However, they often resent the pressure put on children by the fear or reality of failure. Many employers, who are currently using examination grades for selection procedures, would welcome a more informative record of students' abilities and qualities than that which is offered by a simple brute grade.

The need to assess has traditionally meant comparing one student with another, and it generally follows that any assessment is the teacher's and is rarely discussed with the student. Central to all learning is the ability to reflect on and learn from experience. Therefore a crucial task of education is to enable students to develop their capacity to review and reflect upon their learning and to plan what they want to learn next. This requires teachers to examine the priority they give to helping students recognise their own learning beyond the mere acquisition of examination results. With this in mind, how far do current methods of assessment develop students' ability to recognise their learning?

Although public examinations can encourage memory and study skills, disciplined thought, objective analysis and a pragmatic use of examination systems to one's own benefit, they place emphasis on written communication and summative brevity. They give little or no recognition to the vast amount of oral interchange between teachers and students and between students themselves. Even if students are encouraged to talk about what and how they learn ultimately there is no formal recognition of that self-assessment.

School reports make an attempt to record some of the personal experiences, achievements, skills and attributes which a student may have demonstrated. However, these are usually written from the teacher's point of view and the time and size of task dictate that the reports are either too brief or too general. Often reports do not provide either a significant feedback for students or an adequate description of students' personal achievements.

'Profiles' have come to be regarded as the answer to many of the issues already raised — they can take into account the student's viewpoint, they can describe the many skills which a student may have developed; they can encourage teacher-student discussion; they can encourage a more continuous assessment and they can involve the student in their learning and assessment. However, the word 'Profile' has many different interpretations and has often been associated with underachieving students.

In the sixties, a number of approaches were developed to facilitate pupil recording (R.P.A., R.P.E. and P.P.R.) which encouraged the use of written comments by students on cards, largely about extra-curricular activities. Such practices are formative and can help develop self-image and some skills of self-assessment. The student-centred approach avoids labelling and comparison with peers and discussion with teachers can help to develop the student-teacher relationship.

Profile Grids, developed from an FEU philosophy, are designed to enable a positive recognition of a limited range of skills and competencies. However, they clearly record what the student has not achieved. Information is presented in a compact and uniform manner and can be read quickly, but the range of skills is limited by the nature of the format. At best teacher-student negotiation is possible, at worst a grid profile can be filled in entirely by the teacher.

Comment banks are a refinement of grid based profiling. This is a method whereby prose statements describing students' abilities are pre-written and available for selection but not arranged in a grid format. The wide range of descriptions provides positive comments and can help students to see progression; but as the statements are pre-written this takes away the student voice. The large number of statements makes familiarization difficult thereby creating the possibility of just a few comments being utilised. The reduction of clerical work using computers and coded descriptions tends to discourage teacher-student discussion.

In developing the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement (O.C.E.A.) the participants used the experience of earlier projects. The Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, the University of Oxford Department of Education together with the local education authorities of Coventry, Oxfordshire, Leicestershire and Somerset are working together to produce a certificate which will contain a recognition of external assessments (the E component); criterion-referenced assessments in subject areas (the G component); and a summary statement by the student (the P component). These components are not separate parts of a curriculum but represent three perspectives of a student's learning. The Personal Record Component aims to "involve students as active participants in their own development by encouraging personal reviewing and recording processes which offer opportunities for self-assessment, reflection on past experience and forward planning".[2]

The P component is intended for all students, regardless of ability and age and should involve students reviewing and recording within curriculum areas and also in tutorial time. O.C.E.A. will not require students

to be measured against any pre-set criteria of personal qualities and skills. Personal qualities may be inferred from students' personal statements. O.C.E.A. encourages teachers to plan regular opportunities for students to recognise the significance of their experiences and achievements. Through such opportunities they will be able to develop and articulate their own viewpoints on their learning. This will involve students in keeping some form of personal record through reviewing and recording processes leading to interim and summary personal statements developed with appropriate support from teachers and other students. Students will, therefore, be encouraged to recognise what they learn, how they learn and to express a viewpoint on that learning.

In attempting to address such issues, Coventry LEA had, for some time prior to O.C.E.A., been working to develop educational processes which offered students the opportunity to become more actively involved in their own learning through initiatives such as TVEI, the DES Project for underachieving students, and Personal and Social Education Programmes. Consequently, the introduction of the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement complemented an existing commitment within the LEA to the principles underlying O.C.E.A.

Individual advisers were given responsibility for the development of each of the components of O.C.E.A. Five teachers were seconded by the authority to work in collaboration with advisers in research and development for O.C.E.A. These teachers were to be based at the Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, but were also to be actively engaged in developing the initiative locally. Local working groups were formed for each of the four 'G' component subject areas and the 'P' component. Teachers who became members of these groups were prompted to review the ways in which they worked with students in the classroom. Discussions about the principles of O.C.E.A. and sharing thoughts on appropriate practice led to the use of different classroom strategies. Feedback to these working groups indicated that students were helped to understand more fully the purpose of the learning activities they were engaged in and how they were assessed.

However, relatively few teachers could be involved in these working groups and as the pilot phase of O.C.E.A. drew nearer, it was clear that it would be necessary to stimulate other teachers' awareness of teaching and learning strategies. Although a great deal of good practice already existed in the schools, many teachers were unfamiliar with the working process of O.C.E.A.

Schools were introduced to O.C.E.A. by means of in-service training sessions held at the Teachers' Centre. Programmes were planned for each of the 'G' areas and 'P'. These lasted different amounts of time, but generally initial induction courses lasted for the equivalent of three days. The courses were run by advisers and seconded teachers who aimed to:

a) develop and stimulate thinking about the principles inherent in O.C.E.A and to illustrate how they are based on existing good practice within many schools;

b) exemplify, through the delivery of the INSET, the classroom approaches and practices which teachers might employ with students;

c) enable schools to develop their own approaches to implementing O.C.E.A. principles;

d) provide school co-ordinators with an appropriate basis of materials, content and procedures from which they could construct their own school-based, in-service programme;

e) demonstrate the complementary nature of the 'P' and 'G' components;

f) initiate and cultivate a partnership between schools and the LEA and between schools themselves.

As it was not possible for all the teachers involved in O.C.E.A. to attend centre-based in-service, schools mounted their own courses for teachers. Many schools attempted initially to inform the whole staff about O.C.E.A. so that it would not be seen as a separate initiative confined to particular aspects of the school. There was a more specific INSET programme for teachers directly connected with the pilot phase.

Schools planned their in-service courses on the basis of their own experiences of the centre-based courses and advisers and seconded teachers acted as consultants, taking part as appropriate. Consequently, the general aims of school-based INSET courses were the same as those of the centre-based courses. However, school co-ordinators were particularly keen to help.
— appreciate the advantages of piloting an initiative which did not dictate or prescribe content;
— develop their confidence and enthusiasm to implement appropriate learning processes based on O.C.E.A. principles;
— respond to the needs identified by staff;
— recognise that help and support would be available from the authority in-service teams.

Some teachers expected to receive packages prescribing content and structure. However, by the end of the courses, teachers came to value being given the opportunity to discuss and decide how O.C.E.A. principles might be practised in their own classrooms.

The pilot work in schools has begun and is continuing to emphasise the developmental nature of O.C.E.A. The experience of teachers during the pilot phase will inform the implementation of the principles inherent in the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement.

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Profiling in Pre-Vocational Programmes
Ron Needham

Of all of the issues highlighted in the aftermath of the 'Great Education Debate', dissatisfaction with current methods of certifying student achievement in vocational and pre-vocational education is one of the most valid. The proliferation of qualifications has led to confusion over standards and comparability, with employers, parents, and often FE college staff uncertain of whether, for example, and RSA Stage I is equal to a Pitman II, or BTEC General grade C. In any case, the argument goes, what does possession of such certificates mean that a student can actually do? And what about the student without such a paper qualification, does that mean that he/she can do nothing?

Out of such confusion, has been born the Joint Board for Pre-Vocational Education (originally with one aim being to provide some rationalisation of pre-vocational provision) and the Review of Vocational Qualifications, which has recommended the establishment of an accreditation body for YTS certification. It has also led to an awareness of the need to record in a positive way the competence of young people — so that an employer, or anyone else for that matter, can have an indication of what a student can actually do without having to resort to guessing what examination grades may mean (the fact that employers, in practice, do *not* appear unhappy with the present situation is recognised and discussed below).

This process of recording competence has become known as 'profiling'. Most courses and qualifications which come under the general umbrella of 'pre-vocational' such as RSA Vocational Preparation, CPVE, City and Guilds Foundation, BTEC Preparatory Programmes, etc (as well as some RSA Teachers' Certificates) incorporate some form of profile, whilst the method of certification for the Youth Training Scheme at the moment invariably involves some degree of recording of trainee competence.

The concept seems simple: to tell whomsoever it may concern what the individual can actually do. In practice, however, profiling is a time consuming, often misunderstood process, with the results all too often ignored by those whom it was originally intended to help — the employers. Nevertheless, some advantages have become obvious. These, together with some of the practical problems associated with profiling, are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The aim of the profile, as previously explained, is to supply a summative statement of the young person's competences. It is the process of formulating such statements, however, where the greatest advantages have been discovered. 'Good' profiling technique depends upon the young person and the tutor being involved at regular intervals during the course in full and frank discussions about progress, achievement, and competence. Such discussions often become 'counselling' sessions, with not only the student reflecting upon his/her achievements, but with positive guidance being offered by the tutor on how further progress could be made.

Unlike traditional forms of reporting, the emphasis is upon the *positive* nature of *agreed* comments and upon a meaningful dialogue taking place between assessor and assessed, thus avoiding the nebulous and sometimes condemnatory statements which are found on the worst of traditional school reports.

The process of profiling, then, helps to build up a relationship between tutor and taught, allows the negotiation of agreed future action to give progression in learning, and helps the young person to develop the facility of positive self-criticism. In short, it becomes part of the learning process. This is at the moment the strongest argument in favour of the technique — those of us who have witnessed the relaxed and informed way in which young people who have participated in profiling (as part of, say, a pre-16 pre-vocational course) are able to discuss with adults their progress, their achievements, and aspirations, can vouch for its effectiveness.

The value of the 'summative' profile (the final statement of competences) is, however, in doubt. If, as is claimed, employers actually do want to be supplied with this form of competence testimonial, they often show scant regard for it when it is presented to them. Numerous cases have been quoted of employers ignoring profiles and asking for more traditional qualifications ("very good, but how many 'O' levels has he got?"), or of employers being too busy to read through profile documents, or simply not understanding what the profile document is all about.

Those of us in Further Education are becoming used to claims by Ministers, the CBI, and, of course, the MSC, that we are inflexible in not changing to meet the needs of employers — only to find out that employers do not really want the change at all, or that we are actually in front of employer requirements. Profiling is no exception. Many employers and YTS managing agents, in fact, are still demanding confidential reports on trainees, often asking for the negative aspects of the trainee's work and behaviour to be highlighted, and totally ignoring any 'negotiated' profile.

Faced with such responses, I can fully understand the MSC's apparent reversal in now requiring a recognised vocational qualification as a means of certifying the two year YTS. Itemising student competencies, it seems, is still a good idea (possibly because of the advantages provided by student-centred reviewing), but employers may feel more confident if it is accompanied by a qualification, the value of which they believe they can recognise.

Part of the difficulty for employers may, in fact, be the terminology used. Many profiles take the form of a grid in which degrees of competence in a skill can be 'ticked'. Another increasingly common form involves the use of a bank of statements being selected and then printed on to the student's individual 'certificate' (CPVE, in fact, uses both: the grid system for the Preparatory Modules, and the bank for the core areas). The problem is that competence statements are very difficult to write (hence the need to 'bank' acceptable statements) and too often they become lengthy and confusing descriptions resorting to the use of educational jargon. Such statements cause confusion to students (and sometimes tutors) in the formative interviews and, far from being of use to employers, the summative document can become worthless.

A further criticism levelled by employers at the 'bank' system is that the same descriptions inevitably appear on profiles concerning a number of different students — in which case, the profile loses its individuality and there

arises the suspicion that students are being fitted to descriptions rather than the other way round.

Employers' lack of understanding of the philosophy of the profile, though, also stems from a 'norm-related conditioning'. Employers are so used to the ranking of students in some form of achievement order that they fail to grasp the value or meaning of true criterion referencing. It is quite common, for example, for employers to seek clarification when presented with a profile, asking for information of how the student matches up to the rest of the peer group ("does this mean he's above average then?"). Readers may think this rather odd when Sir Keith and the MSC are constantly telling us that employers need to know what a young employee can actually *do*. In truth what employers seem to be really saying to us is that they need to know what *potential* the recruit has and not what work skills he/she already possesses — and the yardsticks with which employers are familiar, and therefore prefer, are the existing, norm-related, graded qualifications, even though the proliferation of these confuses the issue. A further possible reason for this may, of course, lie in the fact that profiles are essentially teacher assessment — something which, rightly or wrongly, has always been regarded with suspicion by employers (and some colleagues in education).

It is interesting to note here that colleagues responsible as 'gate-keepers' to BTEC National and other courses appear to be reacting in a very similar way to employers when they are shown a CPVE profile. In fact, Joint Board indications that progression could be based upon performance in the core makes sense, as this may diagnose potential to perform at a more academic level than competence in, say, book-keeping operations in a Preparatory module. It is also interesting to note that the Joint Board is to provide Board set tests in the core (Communications and Numeracy initially). Cynics may point out that perhaps this is to aid those confused by what the profile really means and, therefore, in need of a nationally set 'comparative standard' to assist them.

Colleagues may by now be aware of the fact that criterion referencing demonstrated by a profile is not, in reality, the complete answer that some have claimed. Those who may be faced with profiling as part of GCSE or other non-pre-vocational initiatives may also wish to reflect upon two further practicalities which they may find even more of a problem.

Reference was made above to the advantages of the *process* of profiling. Unfortunately, this requires a major commitment in terms of time. Profiling interviews have, in my experience, taken anything from 20 minutes to, in one case, 3 hours. With a class of 25 students, requiring a review session say termly, an additional requirement of 1½ hours per week can easily be added to normal teaching commitments. Add to this the time spent by course team members in meeting to discuss student achievements prior to the review, and the extra paperwork generated, and it is easy to see how profiling causes a resourcing problem.

Secondly, I have already referred to the fact that competence statements are difficult to write. Many existing profiles refer to competence in *practical* skills; it becomes even more difficult when we try to write and then apply competence statements to a student's comprehension of a body of knowledge, and his/her personal characteristics and social skills — a glance at the Joint Board's core competence statements in these areas will indicate how such attempts may lead to difficulties with subjective interpretation.

As a means of certifying student achievement — the summative aspect — the experience in pre-vocational courses to date has not been good. It is in the 'formative' stages — the process — of profiling where the value lies, and where our efforts should really be directed, at least until employers catch us up. Indeed, with the need to tap and assess that which a student learns implicitly in work experience (or on-the-job in a YTS scheme) as part of the CPVE Alternative Route or RSA Vocational Preparation courses etc, the process of profiling becomes even more important, as it becomes the means by which what has been learnt is drawn into focus for the trainee. It will be interesting to see how this analysis compares with experiences of profiling met by colleagues working in GCSE and other fields.

Self-help in the small village school.

It certainly seems at the moment that I will have to hold workshops at all six feeder schools. In fact this takes up twelve sessions, as an informal initial meeting over coffee seems to point the way to the issues that are concerning parents. I can then make sure I come back for the workshop meeting with materials/information to help satisfy demands.

Of course, the problems do not end once the children are safely into their middle school. How can the upper schools — some of them fed by three middle schools (each of which may be served by five or six first schools) — follow on? Will they need to? Will parents gain enough confidence before this point so that they can contact the school direct if they have a query? And still we come back to the parent who is fifteen miles away from the upper school and without means of transport.

Is it worthwhile speculating that first schools could continue to be a "clearing-house" for questions, problems and general information handling for the full length of a child's education? Some may argue that this already happens, that parents are used to bumping into familiar first school staff and talking through problems with them, often being guided in the right direction towards the information they need. A surgery system, not unlike that used by MPs in their constituencies may well prove invaluable. Certainly most of the first school colleagues I know would be delighted to welcome upper school staff into their classrooms and schools in the sure knowledge that it would be a mutually beneficial experience.

If Success had many Faces

Thinking About the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme*

Penelope Weston

The Lower Attaining Pupils Programme (LAPP) has received little publicity, although it is a major DES-funded development programme (supposedly directed at Keith Joseph's 'bottom 40 per cent'). Penelope Weston, Project leader of the National Evaluation Team (for the NFER) is engaged on this evaluation nationally (there are local evaluators as well). We are glad to publish this article, which discusses some of the major issues facing this project.

The title is taken from some comments which Charles Handy made about schools towards the end of his excellent and thoughtful review of organisational issues **Taken for Granted**[1]. He was suggesting that schools should make a virtue of what is often seen as a problem by allowing multiple criteria for success. Only this kind of shift would enable all the 'customers' to leave satisfied with their experience: 'A department store in which the customer wandered happily but found nothing they wanted would soon go out of business'. Interestingly he had come to this conclusion from a concern for the organisational health of the school, in which he saw a need for important changes in order to create more varied opportunities for staff as well as students to experience success. This conjunction of a better professional deal for teachers with more sense of achievement for learners sums up rather well the goal and the style of the projects that go to make up the Lower Attaining Pupils Programme — the Cinderella of the current 14-16 curriculum and assessment pageant.

Like any Cinderella, this story has a godparent to watch over the heroine's progress. Sir Keith Joseph has from the outset stressed his particular interest in the Programme which he launched in July 1982, and to what he defined as its central aim: to develop a more effective education for fourteen to sixteen year olds for whom the current examination system was not designed — a group described in other statements as the bottom forty percent or simply lower attaining pupils. Starting in 1983 — the same time as the TVEI pilot scheme — thirteen local authorities have been developing strategies to realise this aim, with a certain amount of ambivalence and a singular absence of razzamatazz. LAPP will, however, be making its entrance on the public stage before long; the DES are hosting an open day at the beginning of July, when the story will be presented to a wider public. Over the last three years this production has been characterised more by hard graft than by glamour, and as might be expected things have been fairly difficult backstage; but that's not to deny that here and there some transformations have been accomplished which may be of considerable interest to the non-LAPP audience of LEAs.

As LAPP is not too well known it may be useful to begin with a brief outline of what and who is involved. The funds for the Programme — some £2¼m a year — come from the Urban Aid budget, and the intention from the beginning was to focus the initiative mainly on schools in urban areas. These include Bradford, Corby and inner London, as well as less likely candidates such as Swindon and Bridgwater. Over 60 LEAs put in a bid in 1982, and the 13 which were selected represent, quite deliberately, an extraordinary diversity of approach, in the scale, style and goals of their projects.

Guidelines for the programme were broad, indicating areas for development rather than any structural patterns or curricular frameworks[2]. This caution was understandable, given the educational world's poor showing over the last forty years in providing much experience of success for the 'Newsom' half of the school population, particularly in their last years of compulsory schooling. So each LEA was free to decide its priorities and the means by which these were to be achieved, as long as the initiative was targeted on the Secretary of State's intended population (not always an easy matter to decide, as we shall see) and provided with a properly accountable framework at LEA level.

Some form of local evaluation was to be organised, but the scale and style were not specified. The Programme was to be overseen by a small team of administrators and HMI within Elizabeth House. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by the DES to undertake a national evaluation of the programme from April 1984. The majority of the 13 LEAs began their projects with the first cohort of fourth-year pupils in September 1983; a few used 1983/4 as a development year. All these projects were funded up to the end of the 1985/6 school year, but the DES have signalled their intent to make funds available for at least one further year, subject to approval of LEA submissions. Two of the projects (in Manchester and Northamptonshire) are jointly funded under the European Community Action Programme, as the English participants in the second phase of the Transition from Education to Adult and Working Life programme. Meanwhile, four more authorities have joined LAPP since 1985; these projects are scheduled to run until 1988.

So the programme can best be characterised as a loose federation or family of projects, linked by certain common emphases and issues. In many ways these similarities may be more important that the differences which are superficially striking: from one school (Lincolnshire) to thirty (Coventry); and from funding of

£60k a year to almost ten times that sum. All the projects are concerned with developing more practical approaches and with helping students to re-engage with the *process* of learning.

In thinking about the programme over the last two years, we have found ourselves viewing its development from various perspectives. From a policy viewpoint, the programme has a certain interest as the first of the DES's ventures in direct funding of curricular innovation; Educational Support Grant minus 1, as it has been called in some quarters. Issues that have arisen for LAPP in this context are inevitably going to have echoes in other centrally funded initiatives. One such issue is the structure of evaluation, national and local. Secondly, the programme can be seen as an exercise in the management of change: 'how to bring about constructive change through deliberate means'. It is recognised by many project leaders that the real problem is securing institutional support for new approaches to learning which have ;proved themselves within the shelter of the project, but which may fade as easily as earlier initiatives without such support. Both these perspectives could apply to any of the current initiatives. But there is also a more immediate concern with issues particular to this programme — for example, who is it for? And what should they be doing? It's these two last questions that I want to explore next.

Who is LAPP for?

This question has created problems from the outset. A few projects did not initially see it that way; they accepted the criteria that had been offered and sought to implement them. But even then there were difficulties; supposing one sets out to identify the 'bottom 40 percent', what is the 100 percent from which it comes? Is it a national population or a local one? If the former, then the bottom 40 percent may turn out to be 80 or 90 percent of the local population — as one school pointed out in its submission. Furthermore, how should these pupils be identified? In practice, most of the schools or LEAs which decided to draw up a list of project pupils used a variety of criteria, reflecting judgements about pupils' motivation and behaviour as well as their attainment or perceived ability. On the other hand, some LEAs, it seems, were unhappy about what they saw as the inherent anti-comprehensive bias of the programme; that is, the very idea of identifying a 'lower attaining' group who would receive some kind of distinctive curriculum. Discomfort about the implications of the programme's title is indicated by the rash of alternative names devised by LEAs for their projects. And on the issue of pupil selection, some insisted on a different kind of approach; for example working with existing (mixed ability) class groups or providing a range of activities, some of which would be offered to the whole year group.

The corollary of the decision about selection — and there are many other questions not considered here, for example about the degree of choice offered to pupils — was the organisational form that the project adopted within a school. At one extreme, the school might have a clearly defined project group spending the greater part of their timetabled week together and perhaps working in or from their own project base room. This format offered maximum flexibility for curriculum planning but

ran the obvious risk of creating a school within a school, thus realising the fears of those who were concerned to defend the comprehensive ethos. On the other hand, some schools have worked from the outset to create differential provision, perhaps through the mechanism of a modular structure, with extra support for those who needed it and some 'project' opportunities for the whole year group. Questions have also been raised about the 14-16 age limits, since it can be readily agreed that the problems being addressed by projects would be more effectively tackled lower down the age group. A minority of schools have used the project as an opportunity to question the fourth/fifth year curriculum structure; far more have fitted the project into the existing structure, with project pupils perhaps spending up to half their week (for example two or three options) on these activities.

What should they do?

In **Better Schools**[4] the government have associated LAPP with the principle of differentiation; there was also a stress, in early discussions about the programme, on a practical approach to learning in all areas of the curriculum. But such comments offered little direct guidance to curriculum planners. In some projects the underlying intention has been apparent from the outset; in one case it is even built into the project title — the Wiltshire Oracy Project. Others adopted a client-led, diagnostic approach, planning the curriculum in keeping with the perceived needs of the group. Observation of projects in action might suggest little that is not familiar from other schools or other eras — murmurs about 'ROSLA revisited' have been heard. A visitor to many projects would notice an emphasis on community-based activities, some concern for 'pre-vocational' interests, a stress on the spoken word, encouragement for co-operative learning and planning and the recording and review of what has taken place.

Given the limited opportunities that there have been for interaction and exchange among the projects, one could hardly expect any distinctive LAPP approach to have emerged. But it is possible to discern a growing consensus about the importance of the *process* of learning, and the need to make this more explicit to learners and teachers. In some projects the underlying intellectual strategies have been tackled head on through problem-solving, 'thinking skills' schemes, of which the most publicised is Feuerstein's 'Instrumental Enrichment' programme[5]. More often the approach is exemplified through activies which try to involve pupils in a planning/decision-making sequence; defining the question or problem, generating alternative solutions, evaluating them and reaching a decision, planning and executing the preferred solution, reporting on this and reviewing the performance before identifying the next problem and beginning another cycle. This kind of sequence, used by individuals and groups in planning a whole variety of activities, bears a strong resemblance to that followed by project teams in planning their work, or indeed to the pattern employed by almost any decision-making group. It involves careful attention to the 'practical' art of deliberation to which Schwab, among others, has been drawing the attention of curriculum makers for many years[6]. It relies on a range of skills which many projects are explicitly trying to develop,

such as the effective use of sources of information, the ability to argue a case and to listen to others, to work constructively in a group and to report on what has been done.

Such an approach should offer plenty of opportunities for experiencing success, as well as exploring the reasons for failure without feeling it as a personal affront. Above all, the skills which can be developed through this kind of approach are clearly of relevance to all pupils. In this way it can be readily demonstrated that LAPP projects following this approach are operating in the mainstream of the 14-16 agenda outlined by Henry Macintosh in a recent issue of **Forum**[7]. At the same time, it would be unrealistic to suggest that a learning revolution is taking place in all LAPP schools. Apart from the corrosive effects of action on many project developments, concerns persist about the project curriculum and its relationship to the mainstream. Are specific areas — numeracy, science, aesthetics — being adequately covered? Is sufficient opportunity being offered to pupils to progress beyond a 'basic' level of skill? Projects vary widely, too, in the confidence with which they have tackled the integration of learning and assessment.

Thinking about the management of change

If project staff can reassure themselves that they are addressing questions about learning which are of relevance to all, the fact remains that they are dealing with obstacles which some of their colleagues prefer to avoid if they can, and with solutions which call for significant changes in pedagogy and attitudes. Most project staff would readily acknowledge the complexity of their task and the importance of receiving continuing support during the lengthy process of implementation. While opinions may still differ about the best way to initiate the process — the quick and stimulating (if confused) start versus careful diagnosis and planning (and possible loss of momentum) — the need to build in opportunities for regular, team-based review and revision would be widely acknowledged. In practice, it has been very difficult to meet this need, particularly since in many cases it was not recognised initially and therefore was not built into the timetabled structure of the project. For those who have ears to hear, much is known about why and how some innovations succeed, and indeed how to plan for change. It is important, for example, to recognise that innovations which involve changes in attitude and pedagogy — as most worthwhile curriculum innovations will — are bound to be disturbing; managers of change should expect the early stages to be marked by confusion, and be ready with strategies for support and back-up. But this needs to be combined with a continuing challenge, so that the process of questioning and self-evaluation carries on. This pattern of support and challenge, which in the first instance is the priority of project leaders in schools and LEAs, has also to become part of the management structure of the institution if the innovation is to succeed. Some projects have recognised from the outset the importance of providing for this kind of challenge and support, but the hard reality of knitting new ideas and practices into the fabric of the school (or LEA) remains a challenge particularly in the current climate.

In thinking about how the process of change occurs and can be promoted, we have already moved into evaluation territory, assuming that we should include within that the deliberations and reflection of the participants. In practice, projects have differed widely in the way they have interpreted the local evaluation requirement and the relationship between evaluators and developers. To these varied patterns have to be related two kinds of national evaluation — our own and the work of the inspectorate — and a further international dimension, in the form of European rapporteurs, for Manchester and Northamptonshire. It is surely possible to argue a case for national and local evaluation for programmes of this kind, but there is not much indication yet of an agreed policy about the respective contributions of the partners or their interrelationship in government-sponsored national initiatives. Agreements have had to be worked out along the way, bearing in mind the possibly conflicting demands of cooperation and independence of judgement.

While there are many evaluation issues which cannot be explored further here, it seems increasingly clear that the unique contribution which a national evaluation should be able to make is to present to the participants as well as to the sponsor a cross-project perspective against which each group of participants can test their own perceptions. In this respect there is a formative role for a national team which can and should fit alongside the project-specific feedback which is provided by local evaluators.

Notes

The 13 projects are as follows: Bradford Skills Foundation Course, Coventry DES Project, Gateshead DES Project, Hertfordshire Achievement Project, London Educational Assessment Project, Lincolnshire Pre-vocational Technical Project, Manchester Alternative Curriculum strategies, Northamptonshire 14-16 Curriculum Project, Nottinghamshire Projects in Alternative Curriculum Experience, Oxfordshire New Learning Initiative, Sandwell 14-16 Project, Somerset Project for Lower Attaining Pupils and Wiltshire Oracy Project. Four more LEAs have now joined the programme: Hampshire, Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield.

1. Charles Handy, **Taken for Granted? Looking at schools as organisations**, Schools Council Programme 1, Longman 1984
2. The 1982 speech included the following areas: work experience, practical learning methods, appreciation of industry and commerce, development of interpersonal, literacy, numeracy and communication skills, profiling, in-service teacher training, and appreciation of computers and microtechnology.
3. Michael G. Fullan, 'Improving the Implementation of Educational Change', **School Organisation** 6 (3) 1986
4. **Better Schools** p.15 para 45 (4). HMSO, 1985 (Cmnd 9469)
5. R. Feuerstein, **Instrumental Enrichment**, Baltimore University Park Press 1980
6. J.J. Schwab, 'The practical: a language for the curriculum', **School Review**, 78, 1969, pp 1-24
7. H.G. Macintosh, 'The GCSE and the Future', **Forum** 28,1 Autumn 1985.
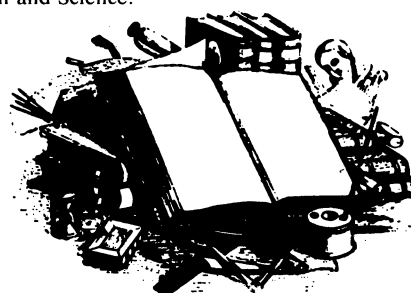
The Politics of Education

Bernard Barker
The first comprehensive school student to be appointed as a comprehensive head (at Stanground School, Peterborough), Bernard Barker has recently published a passionate but highly relevant study entitled *Rescuing the Comprehensive Experience* (Open University Press). In this article he analyses current government initiatives and argues the need to recover earlier versions of the role and function of the common school.

The teachers' dispute has been widely misunderstood and misinterpreted. Press and television report developments as if they were dealing with yet another public sector pay saga; Tories believe that the N.U.T. is a weak, easily out-faced union, less formidable by half than the recently humiliated N.U.M. Giles Radice supports many of Sir Keith's technocratic dreams and can be distinguished from his opponent only by his lack of office and willingness to pay. Neil Kinnock has not yet realised that if the teachers trudge back to lunch behind tattered banners there will be no hope for his values in this generation. Fred Jarvis and Fred Smithies squabble over 'end-loading' without daring to recognise the deep political significance of the rebellion they are supposed to be leading. Sir Keith himself believes this his 'generous' offer is misunderstood. The great difficulty with trade unions is that they can express their members' desires only in terms of percentage points; protest acquires meaning only as part of the cash nexus. Arthur Scargill's altruistic but excoriated contribution, unique since the war, has been to challenge the pay rise as an instrument of self-expression. He did not unite his men with realistic, Gormley-like figures; instead he rallied whole families and communities around their very existence and traditions. Like the Sioux Indians a hundred years ago, crossing the Canadian border in winter, he was doomed to defeat, to enact the death throes of a peripheral economy, unable to reach suburbia with his people's agony and despair. He is reviled now for making such a fuss.

Unlike the miners, teachers are at the hub of modern society, part of a network that helps define and express the nature of every community in the land. Their protest touches the self-interest of millions and the aspirations of almost everyone. Uncharted events in the next few months will have a decisive influence on the mood, values and assumptions of working men and women into the next century. The future will not be decided at Tolpuddle or Tonypandy, at Grunwick or Orgreave; it is being fought for now in every comprehensive school. If the right succeeds in redefining and then privatising the process of teaching and learning there will be no public sector for Mr Kinnock to defend and the image of cooperative enterprise in Britain will be smashed forever. The idea of a commonwealth, in which each is inextricably linked with neighbours in the creation and enjoyment of a material and moral culture, will be lost beyond recall.

It must be acknowledged that the struggle has been bitter and long because it touches issues of status and self-esteem as well as a fund of latent idealism. Graduate teachers raised in the post-war decades cannot accept a philosophy of private affluence and public squalor which has converted their working lives into a threadbare drudgery. Comparisons with the private sector stimulate envy and fuel discontent. But the heart of the matter is not money but the attempt by the right to use schools as an instrument to create a new, Americanised culture of competition, self-help and self-advancement, to make grocers of us all. From John O'Groats to Lands End the most articulate and highly educated workforce in Britain is screaming in unanimous fury against the definitions of learning offered by a Conservative Government drunk on its aggressive, entrepreneurial individualism. The assault on the professional autonomy and standing of teachers which has aroused such opposition is also a prelude to an imposed set of values designed to promote an enterprise culture.

The serious political purpose of those who wish to 'denationalise' teachers and schools (a phrase used by Robert Dunn, education minister) should not be underestimated or confused with everyone's desire to improve their schools. Teachers have been slow to recognise the partisan, ideological character of the Josephite programme because it is addressed to weaknesses in the system they have identified and criticised themselves. No one wishes to defend the neglect of the less able, the narrow definition of success (an 'O' level pass), an obsession with literary modes of expression or norm-referenced examinations. Sir Keith has seized the initiative by tackling these questions and uses the failures of comprehensives as a justification for his policies. The critique is so persuasive that teachers have not known how to construct a defence and it is only the Secretary of State's folly in demanding so many things at once (for a pay rise below the cost of living) which has at least provoked an inchoate, unfocused rebellion.

It is difficult to oppose Sir Keith's reforms when educational discussion is so thoroughly permeated with terms like 'experiential', 'active', 'technical', 'vocational' and 'practical' which suggest a consensus for change and obscure deeper meaning. Teachers need to remember George Orwell's warning, in 'Politics and the English Language', against the 'invasion of one's mind by ready-made phrases ... every such phrase anaesthetizes a portion of one's brain.' 'Technical' and 'Vocational', for example, do not denote any particular knowledge or form of understanding. The words are,

rather, a shorthand for desirable attributes and behaviour, an incantation to revive the slumbering shadows of Richard Arkwright and George Stephenson. The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative is reminiscent of Harold Wilson's 'white heat of the technological revolution' during which scientists in white coats were supposed to solve insoluble political problems. There is an uncanny convergence of right and left in the obsession with micro-circuits and visual display units. It is as if our political imagination had surrendered entirely to science fiction.

Sir Keith's policies are intended to secure obedient teachers and pupils, willing servants of capitalist competition. Teaching will be defined in new contracts and monitored through a complex, hierarchical mechanism of reporting and appraisal. There will be no more voluntary activity, goodwill or professional discretion; only prescribed duties and targets. Pupils will find their every move recorded in profiles and reports; their efforts will be constantly measured against national criteria and fixed standards. The new General Certificate of Secondary Education will establish an effective national curriculum, destroying autonomy and diversity in the interests of competition and efficiency.

These developments will have the strange consequence of reinforcing meritocratic individualist elements in the schools. Children will compete for merit and distinction awards; their work will be finely graded in terms of precise educational objectives. 'Successful' students will strive to climb a careers ladder; destructive competition will be fostered in the name of standards. Sir Keith is reinforcing, not removing, the obscene apparatus of sixteen plus examinations which convinces so many of our pupils that they are worthless. He plans to convert teachers into contract labour, instructors required to approach the English Language as though it were a course in plumbing, to teach skills, not culture.

The aim is a generation of loyal workers who exist only in their enthusiasm for the firm. Like earlier utilitarians (Jeremy Bentham, for example), Sir Keith subscribes to a 'psychology by numbers' in which inputs and outputs can be mathematically calculated and by which desirable man can be cloned into being. In reality this programme inverts the reform agenda it has apparently annexed. The 'less able' are to be 'saved' from the treachery of their teachers by useful toil, presented as 'practical' studies or 'work experience'. Literature and politics will become the preserve of the public schools, irrelevant to the functional lives of the working classes. Pupil profiles will broaden the definition of success to include behavioural attributes desirable in enterprising black economists. Instead of 'academic' language there will be 'hands-on' 'experience' of button-pressing. A centrally dictated set of approved objectives will replace norm-referenced examinations.

Teachers can reject this programme without endorsing the worst features of the early comprehensive schools. The profession needs, rather, to *Rescue the Comprehensive Experience*, to rediscover the partnership of parents, teachers and children which was emerging in common schools. We need to recover a vision of school as the cooperative focus of a community, a medium for sharing and extending understanding through language and knowledge. Parents and teachers

need to challenge self-help individualism at every step, to insist that knowledge is a social artefact, that people learn best when they are together, free of an imposed framework of discrimination and differentiation. The left should argue that Britain needs citizens able, in Nye Bevan's phrase, to hold the 'Royal sceptre', not skilful Japanese look-alikes. Neil Kinnock could transform the debate by demanding that educational success should be measured not in terms of job-getting or GNP, but by the degree of effective participation in mass democracy. The economic, technological fixation leads us to face the Thatcherites on their favoured ground. Let us leave the grocers to their shop and pose instead questions about the dignity and status of ordinary people, fundamentally threatened by educational reform.

The Swann Report and Pastoral Care:

Some implications for practice

Jean M. Howard
What can the individual teacher do to assist in implementing the main recommendations of the Swann Report? This issue is tackled here by Jean Howard, a member of Local Authority Officers for Multicultural Education (ALAOME).

I am often asked by teachers what they can do to implement the sweeping moral exhortations of the Swann report in their own humble and overburdened classrooms. In particular the question is asked by teachers who are sympathetic to many of the sentiments expressed, but at a loss where to begin the Herculean task.

Take for example one of the key paragraphs in Chapter 2,

> If, in the face ... of racism ... the school seeks simply to remain neutral or uninvolved, we would see this not only as a failure in terms of its educational responsibilities, but also in effect condoning and thereby encouraging the persistence of such occurrences.

Where is the school and the individual teacher to begin dismantling a previously "neutral" approach and what is it to do to honour its educational responsibilities as outlined in the Report?

The temptation is to plunge into a variety of well-intentioned "multicultural" activities, but sadly this can often stoke the very prejudices teachers are anxious to overcome, when such initiatives are embarked upon without thoughtful and informed groundwork on the part of staff. "Other people's" customs become

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obligatory curiosities tacked on at the edge of the curriculum, in such a way as to cause discomfort and embarrassment to all concerned.

In such circumstances it is understandable when parents whose lifestyle is built around such cherished practices and deeply held beliefs come to the school to plead against the "multiculturalising" of the school's curriculum. Not only are they concerned about the trivialising of important aspects of their children's experience, but often more urgently about the ridicule and physical abuse which their children are exposed to, subsequent to this kind of superficial attention being drawn in class to their culture, language or religion.

So where then do we start?

Surely in all conscience with the abuse, both verbal and physical which even the most minor attempt at "multiculture" reveals. We have to start by believing what our black pupils and their parents tell us — that their experience of school from the first day they set foot across the nursery threshold is of being called names and otherwise abused because of their colour.

We have to accept that this is a constant in the experience of all black children, no matter what their personal qualities. They do not have to do anything to provoke this response, though of course, if they do upset another child, a racial taunt will be the first thing that comes to his lips, since this is the commonly accepted everyday language of the street and the playground.

All black children — cheerful or withdrawn, generous or spiteful, friendly or aggressive — are called names in school.

Many teachers find this difficult to accept, or when they do accept it, are reluctant to acknowledge it as a matter of any seriousness. "All children get called names, they have to learn how to cope with it," is a common response.

But this kind of "Tom Brown's Schooldays" approach to racist abuse has the most serious implications for the school and the community in general.

Consider the options of a pupil who rightly objects to the multitude of abusive terms directed at his race and colour. He or she can tell the teacher who responds that it is something that you expect in schools, and that it is best to ignore it. The pupil recognises that there is no support to be gained in that quarter, so if anything is to be done, he or she will have to take matters into their own hands.

Consequently pupils have only three courses of action open to them.
1. They can hit their abuser.
2. They can withdraw from participation as much as possible and try to avoid attending at times when they feel particularly at risk.
3. They can become the class clown, joining in the larking around, calling names with the others — preserving their own position by becoming one of the lads, the "white" wog.

The most effective of these three is undoubtedly the first. Schools who pride themselves on the absence of racial abuse in their corridors or playgrounds often neglect that this is more likely to be the result of the out-of-school efforts of their black pupils, than of a low-key non-interventionist school policy. The children who are most frequently described as "well-integrated" are often those who have earned a wary respect through street or playground fights.

As pastoral staff we have to ask ourselves if we wish to perpetuate an approach to discipline within the school that leaves pupils with violence as the most practical option in achieving a tolerable learning environment. And what are the implications for society as a whole if we educate pupils in the practice of violence as the most effective means of obtaining justice and fair treatment? For make no mistake, this is precisely the lesson we teach, when authority figures are seen to be powerless or unwilling to achieve these ends through other means.

But how can we as teachers achieve these ends by peaceful means?

First we must take name-calling seriously. We should never say to a child who complains of racial abuse that he or she should accept it or make the best of it, nor should we assume that he or she must have done something to provoke it. We must make it clear that it is wrong for people to be treated as inferior because of their race, and to be taunted or vilified on account of it.

No disciplinary situation is ever simple and either or both parties may be to blame in other respects, but we must acknowledge, before going on to discover the ins and outs of the particular incident, the wrongness of racial abuse in any situation. We must make it clear that we do not accept anger or revenge as a valid excuse for such abuse, nor the weak retraction of "But I didn't really mean it — we're friends now".

If we wish to alert pupils to the morality of their actions, we have to make it clear to them that they are responsible for their words and cannot take away the hurt or harm they may have done by a later disclaimer, when the consequences become uncomfortable or inconvenient to them.

True, it is not their fault that they have grown up in a society that accepts racial abuse as the norm, but it is our fault as teachers if we allow them to go on thinking and acting as though such a situation were right and just.

However, the individual teacher may feel that alone there is little impression he or she can make on the incidence of racial abuse in the school as a whole, and it is likely to be much more postively effective if a group of teachers can work together with the support and backing of senior staff and officers. But every initiative has to start with someone, so what can one individual do to involve colleagues and superiors in their efforts?

Following the Swann Report, it is a good idea to contact the adviser or inspector who has responsibility for Multicultural Education, even if that individual is not always easy to find or run to ground, and request a series of workshops to be organised to give interested staff from different schools a chance to share their experience. This exercise not only gives staff a chance to voice their concerns and to feel less isolated in their situation, but it also gives the inspector a chance to gain more insight into the schools for which he or she is responsible and hopefully enables him or her to use both influence and persuasion to involve senior staff and officers in initiatives to combat racist abuse and bullying in school.

Alone the teacher can only refuse to accept behaviour in his or her classroom which is offensive to him or her. Although pupils may come to respect that, without the support of other staff, especially senior staff, the individual is often seen as some sort of crank, and their

Learning about Learning

Pat D'Arcy
We continue our series on teacher enquiry or research groups with this article from Pat D'Arcy, Adviser for English for Wiltshire. The Learning about Learning group, whose approach and activities are discussed here, consists of some 40 to 50 teachers in Wiltshire and around 30 in Somerset.

RE-search, PRO-search, I-search, WE-search ...

With all these possible prefixes, let's start with the root verb and consider briefly the implications of 'searching'. Searching suggests that there are no obvious answers — who knows where the search will lead? Searching has to be an exploratory activity into terrain which is not already clearly mapped although it may be signposted. Searching suggests a looking for, a desire to find out, to discover, to arrive at new perceptions, to gain fresh perspectives.

As for the prefixes — why should we, in the searches that may be made in educational fields confine ourselves to 'RE'? Surely searching is as much about looking forwards as looking back — and about the searcher as well as about the journey.

The American writer Ken Macrorie coined the term I-search to provide just that personal focus for his students; their papers he insisted, had to be about a topic which each of them wanted to investigate because the search they were intending to make was of genuine importance to them.

WE-search becomes a joint expedition for I-searchers — no longer lone explorers but a party who will support each other in their quest.

I like to think of the Learning about Learning groups as we-searchers who have undertaken a variety of forays together into the tangles and thickets of classroom practice.

'We-search' in school can happen in a single lesson, in a series of lessons, over the days and weeks that teachers and pupils spend together. Searching doesn't HAVE to attach itself to a University Higher Degree, although that kind of highpowered expedition can provide valuable time and resources which are of course a great help to any research team.

For the last five years or so teachers in Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Somerset have foraged on a much smaller scale. Our compass was provided by the Bay Area Writing Project based in Berkeley, California. Like them, we began by inviting a small group (20) of experienced primary, middle and secondary teachers to spend time together (10 days and nights) at the very beginning of the summer holiday, in order to share successful practice.

We started deliberately from a very positive base: every teacher had 45-60 minutes in which to take the whole group through an activity which in her/his experience had led to successful learning in the classrooms — at infant, junior or middle/secondary level. We all joined in — Venn diagrams, batik, dissecting a sheep's lungs, responding to poems and stories, making hardbacked books, making music, observing slugs, maggots, old stone walls ... Whatever 'it' was we all did it as learners ourselves discovering in the process how mixed the abilities of each one of us were.

By the end of ten days we had experienced success and failure, negative feelings as well as positive, the need to

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objections to abusive expressions viewed no more seriously than another staff member's idiosyncratic dislike of certain forms of colloquial English. Indeed the very lack of importance put on the issue by other pupils or staff may act to impress on black pupils the hopelessness of their situation within a system which so undervalues and disregards the reality of their distress.

No amount of "multiculture" can overcome this impression. That is why individual teachers need to be given the chance to work together to create a fair and tolerable learning situation for both pupils and staff. We need to talk about discipline and pastoral care and we need the opportunity to be honest about the difficulties we experience. We don't want to be preached at or politicised. We need the time to sit down together as caring professionals and discuss the skills and strategies we require or seek to foster in order to ensure a reasonable learning environment for our pupils, which allows equality of opportunity for all.

This then is the starting point that I would recommend to any school or individual teacher who wished to follow through the guidelines of Swann, for although it takes time to review syllabuses and reassess resources, we can begin straight away to act in a way that acknowledges the unacceptability of racial abuse, not as some minor sort of social gaffe, but as a major issue of human rights.

Without this commitment to creating a safe and just learning environment for all our pupils, our attempts to initiate a variety of curricular reforms will have a cynical and hollow ring. Our treatment of racist name-calling and bullying is the most important way we demonstrate to pupils and their parents the degree of commitment which the school or the individual teacher has to the principles outlined in Swann.

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reject, to value help, to glow with achievement, to drown our sorrows, to talk and to write ... pretty well continuously those last two.

After every activity we talked and wrote. Everyone from day one kept a think book/learning log. In these we set down honestly what we were thinking and feeling. We then used these formulations to talk through each activity from our viewpoint as learners, not as a group of teachers evaluating a colleague. Neither during the activity sessions did we role play, simulating difficult children or slow learners. We took on each assignment as ourselves — and sometimes we found that we *were* slow to grasp and grateful for help, and sometimes difficult too ... frustrated, intolerant of others, obsessive questioners ... there was no need to pretend!

In thus switching positions and becoming learners together, we were reminded sharply of the uncertainty and vulnerability that many of our pupils must feel on so many occasions. This helped us to focus as a group on strategies that could help to counteract such feelings, turn reluctance into enthusiasm and frustration into pleasure.

Writing fast to catch what we were thinking and feeling before it slipped away became one such strategy. Since our first Summer Institute in July 1980 getting on for a hundred teachers may well have introduced the idea of think-writing to their classes — writing which is principally to help the writer herself recollect, make connections, sort out, ask questions.

Teachers from each year's Institute (like their American counterparts) have continued to meet together sometimes on a regular basis and sometimes informally to share ideas about work in progress in their classrooms and about their own progress as teacher-learners. Sometimes they have undertaken joint expeditions and some of these have been written up in a series of short booklets* which combine accounts of classroom practice with the teachers' analysis of their own intentions and of their pupils' responses. **Everything to Hand, Birds of Prey** and **Drawing Ideas Together** are typical examples. Other booklets have focused more specifically on first efforts to encourage think-writing and reshaping first drafts with primary as well as secondary pupils.

Which brings me back to the nature of research. These teachers, including me, would be the first to acknowledge that in some respects what we have written is 'low key' – – a descriptive, analytic account of some aspect of our own practice: a sequence of lessons or a case history of a particular child's 'writing journey' on some occasion. There are no lengthy bibliographies, the text is not studded with references to such partnerships as Fastbender and Telstreitcher, there are no graphs. Our accounts have not been 'validated' by those who work in Universities.

And yet, as one of the co-ordinators of the Learning about Learning groups, I am convinced that together, over the past 5-6 years we have indeed slowly arrived at new perceptions about our role as teacher-learners and about the strategies that we can offer to pupil-learners that will increase their confidence and thus increase their motivation to learn more.

Teachers need confidence too to make changes in their day to day practice, especially when the outcomes are not a foregone conclusion. In today's climate of criteria referencing and detailed checklists, teachers who set out to encourage an exploratory attitude to learning certainly need the assistance of like-minded explorers!

To finish this brief account I would like the voices of some of the teachers who were in our most recent Summer Institute to be heard:

> The presentations and their effect on me as an individual and as a member: I did feel that they all touched nerves that were common to education for all ages — the enthusiasm, discovery and rediscovery. I said to someone yesterday that I didn't feel the ten days had changed me in one large way, but in several smaller ones. These materialised in learning through experience what it WAS to experience, and how it was possible to achieve.

> Realistically things will go on, on the surface, much as before. I hope I'll be better able to give and receive help from strangers, be quicker to praise than criticise thoughtlessly. If this course has shown nothing else, it's shown us all naked and afraid.

> I have felt that the discussion after each activity was vitally important and went a long way to exploring the situation in ways that were across the group. I feel that sharing thoughts with a class group after an activity will somehow make that activity more important from the point of view of the learning experience and I hope to do a lot more of it in the classroom.

> The feeling of wanting to be a better teacher — to tune in more sharply. There are now lots more directions open.

> Facing things I would normally avoid — painting, drawing ... furthermore 'drawing' much satisfaction from those tasks.

> Art materials available in the early stages for those in trouble with writing now I see as a way in ...

> Reassuring because I feel I work in isolation. I now have a network of support I can ring up, meet, talk with.

> I found the fact that we were not harassed to produce set pieces of writing very helpful.

> Finding space when one is feeling negative is crucial and coming to a learning situation with a negative mental set can seriously affect the learning process. This is something I had not really considered previously and it is very important in terms of the allowances made by me as a teacher.

> One of the main gains to myself personally has been the experience of writing and writing with meaning. It has started me wanting to explore experiences through writing and I shall go back with a different perspective of the value of writing. I feel that before, writing in all its forms had only superficial meaning for me.

> The learning situations may help us identify the weaknesses of the children we teach, they have identified mine.

If searching can help us to see ourselves, the children we teach and the activities we offer a little differently it must be worth undertaking — but out of the four kinds of searching that I started out with, perhaps the most important for education has to be we-search, the joint endeavour, as I believe these teachers testify.

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*For the full list of Learning about Learning booklets write to the Chief Education Officer (PC/SJH) County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

Primary Schools — time for action

Michael Clarke
In this article Michael Clarke, a long-standing member of the Editorial Board and head of a primary school in Leicestershire, considers the current situation in the drive to improve primary schools. He identifies a central theme in the 'Thomas' report (*Improving Primary Schools*, ILEA) which he feels could be a recipe for positive action.

The drive by various agencies towards improving schools continues, with discussion documents still being produced in abundance. As far as primary schools are concerned communications from central Government and most LEAs are still mainly at that level, though we have seen an increase in parent representation on Governing Bodies and the implementation of parental choice as hopeful practical moves.

Discussion will go on but the teaching profession must now show that it can improve, or change, schools' performance to take into account public opinion and the nation's needs. If this can't be done, and be seen to be done, then the likes of Geoffrey Driver, a typical local politician in a hurry, will try to do it for us.

Mr. Driver, chairman of education in Leeds, is reported to have sent specially trained teachers into schools, by-passing headteachers, in an attempt to change attitudes and methods to those more appropriate to the needs of urban children. He has said, 'there is no evidence that the teaching profession has been able to criticise itself or bring about significant change from within'.

The ILEA Report, **Improving Primary Schools**[1] on the other hand states 'one of the most crucial points in this Report ... is that the development of schools grows from within and that they should work continuously and actively towards their own improvement. They should set up arrangements to review where they are in relation to the many aspects of their internal and external environment and make plans for working on some of them'. In the light of Geoffrey Driver's view, and Sir Keith Joseph's various proposals for intervention in the running of schools, it might be concluded that teachers are incapable of considering the external environment. Perhaps they are too involved in promoting the development of the 'whole person' as an abstract aspiration.

The changes which have been brought about in primary schools over the last thirty years listed in **Better Schools**[2] are:
— a broader curriculum;
— English and Maths taught in a way which transcends simple skills;
— Science, craft and art taught as an integral part of the curriculum;
— history and geography introduced effectively in topic and project work;
— pupils encouraged, across the whole curriculum, to learn by active participation rather than by the passive reception of facts and rote learning.

These are all examples of teacher initiated improvements. They are, however, changes directed towards suiting the curriculum to the abilities and levels of maturation of primary schoolchildren. They do not indicate changes in content or method chosen to take account of the external environment.

I believe that schools should not be insular and ignore external factors which affect the present and future lives of their pupils. However, there ought to be fairly clear lines of communication to transmit society's requirements to schools and accepted procedures for demonstrating the accountability of schools. Central Government, LEAs and Governors ought not to interfere directly in the running of schools, which in turn should not expect to be left alone and unaccountable for their performance.

The ILEA's 'Thomas' Report includes a wealth of practical, school-related considerations and positive recommendations which I feel could go some way towards protecting the interests of schools and the communities they serve.

In the section of that report on the content of the curriculum it is stated that 'we are struck far more by the unanimity of the statements (i.e. official views of the curriculum via DES, LEAs, Schools Council, etc.) than by their differences' and 'it would be perverse to interpret any as a demand for narrowing the curriculum.' Then later 'The fact that there is no nationally prescribed curriculum for schools is not a sign that schools in London or in England, are widely different from one another, but rather a sign that they conform broadly to common expectations. The greater inclination in recent years, of the central government and local authorities to express views about what should go on in schools is probably an indication that the consensus has weakened, not that it has broken down'. I wonder whether it is not that the consensus within schools has weakened, but that it is as strong as ever but excludes certain elements which the teaching profession fails to see from its somewhat cloistered position. Hence direct interference from politicians.

So I believe we must accept directives from politicians but it must be left to the profession to translate these into action, firstly via the education department of LEAs even if this means having Chief Education Officers rather than Directors of Education, and then via headteachers.

At school level the translation of society's

requirements into action could be facilitated by the 'Thomas' Report suggestion that 'every school should have a plan for development taking into account the policies of the authority, the needs of the children and the known views of parents'. This plan, agreed with the local education department, could then serve two functions:-

1. form the basis of communication with parents about the way in which the school is progressing; and
2. form the basis of school staff deliberations and action to promote both curriculum development, and continuity and consistency of teaching throughout the whole school.

The first function could be overseen by Governors as part of a role which I believe should be only a watching brief. The 'Thomas' Report states what I'm sure headteachers have always known: 'many governors are perplexed as to what their role is. They seem to occupy a key position between school and the Local Authority, and between the Authority and parents, yet virtually all the day to day work of school and contact between it, the Authority and parents inevitably goes on without their involvement'. Governors, for lack of experience, knowledge and time are unable to do more than watch and question. But, with their privileged position of being able to visit the school to look around on a regular basis, they could represent and safeguard parents' interests at school level, making representations, whether in support or criticism, to headteacher or LEA as appropriate. Should the recommendation in **Better Schools** to have an annual parents' meeting actually happen, then the school plan would form the basis for discussion at that time.

If schools are to be accountable for their performance then the organisation within the school must be examined with a view to making this possible. Accountability for what is taught, I would suggest, will mean no more than schools demonstrating that they have a coherent set of policies and that the staff as a whole is making every effort to implement them. This in itself would be a major change and would give impetus to a movement aimed at creating whole school team work, a theme which runs throughout the 'Thomas' Report. The HMI observation that there is too much work being done according to the whims and fancies of individual teachers, and the belated emphasis on the management skills of headteachers, indicates that schools in general have not worked in this way.

It is the lack of a unified effort by staff which I feel has hindered the implementation of much that is accepted as good practice. Reasons for this situation can be found in the rapid growth of schools and high turnover of staff in the 60s and 70s as well as the development of teaching methods which fostered flexibility and individual initiative. These latter methods gave wonderful results in the hands of dedicated, confident, emotionally mature, well informed, skilful teachers. But the cumulative result of allowing individual initiative with little control or direction was that the range of quality in children's education became unacceptably wide. Teachers decry differences in educational standards when these are due to differences in financial provision e.g. from one authority to another, but accept them when they are due to variations in teacher ability or organisation at class or school level.

To take no action to improve schools is to deny the existence of any body of opinion about good practice. Parents certainly recognise the effects of different schools and teachers, even if teachers themselves indulge in what David Reynolds[3] calls "their well documented tradition of blaming everyone except themselves and their schools for their pupil's problems."

Although in his article in the T.E.S. on 'The Effective School', Reynolds later says 'we have as yet not a clue about what mix of people and policies makes up the effective primary school,' he does identify two contributory factors:-

a) 'most important of all, it is highly likely that the key to what makes some schools 'good' is their headteacher,' and
b) 'a consistency of approach in dealing with pupils' needs.'

It is surprising that the work and selection of headteachers has not received more attention in the past and of the two options — reduce their opportunity for exerting influence or carefully select and train — the latter appears to be getting most support in official reports. But training for any position is reduced in effectiveness if the conditions of work militate against it.

Headteachers in primary schools have to fulfil many roles, the major ones being teacher leader and administrator. It would help considerably if more support could be given for administration, and headteachers be left to concentrate on the role no-one else should play. As Professor Handy[4] noted when observing schools, headteachers often find themselves performing simple routine tasks because there is no one else free to do them. He concluded 'Schools would be wise ... to have leaders and administrators. To combine the two roles in one person is an invitation to stress'.

If headteachers could concentrate their efforts on leadership of the teaching staff they could more easily facilitate the co-ordination of teachers' work on which a whole school approach so much depends.

For an effective whole school approach the 'Thomas' Report makes many suggestions but identifies three aspects which I felt are most important.

1. In-Service Training

There is a growing body of opinion that in-service training is most effective when it is school based. The ILEA Report seems to me to have accurately identified the problem when it states, 'It has long been recognised that attendance at courses away from school ... is not by itself sufficient to bring about necessary changes in the whole school. If the whole school is to benefit and the improvement be consolidated a clear and preferably corporate view has to be formed about the school's strengths and weaknesses and how the course related to them.'

This is not to say that outside courses serve no purpose, for they obviously do. But the practice of teachers implementing what they have learnt without first considering how it should fit into the school curriculum or whether it conflicts with the school ethos or philosophy must stop. 'The shift of emphasis proposed here,' (the Thomas report maintains) 'is to strengthen the trend towards developing schools rather than individual teachers'.

2. Individualism

There are several reasons why teachers prefer to work alone rather than in co-operation with colleagues. One is lack of confidence; another is the desire to meet a challenge and feel the satisfaction of solving a problem single handed; and yet a third is the feeling that a course of action is preferred and interference would be resented. 'We have been worried by some witnesses who told us of primary school teachers who are reluctant to refer children for special help' writes Thomas and 'Teachers and Heads need not and ought not to stand alone'. But it happens — often.

If we can develop an atmosphere in schools which encourages constant dialogue about children and their progress and if teachers can begin to feel the satisfaction of a corporate venture and shared success, then no teacher should worry on his/her own and no child should suffer repeated trial remedies for their problems, unrelated to previous teaching strategies.

If the traditional isolation of teacher and class is to be removed teachers must have the opportunity to visit other classes and schools, either to observe other teachers at work or to share specialist knowledge. Few authorities will provide staffing to allow this at the present time but help from many heads has enabled a start to be made.

3. Professional independence

It is a widely held view that teachers have the right to organise the teaching of their class in the way they consider is the most effective, without reference to school programmes. There is a feeling that professional independence is at stake. This is obviously a sensitive issue and has wide implications. The whole question of how far central direction should be allowed is involved. But if children are to be taught with consistency and continuity then there should be a 'clearly expressed school agreement which must be binding on all teachers in the school'. Teachers must understand the principles inherent in the agreement and should choose methods which allow those principles to be realised. The real skill of teaching lies in "the judgements by individual teachers about how to apply those agreements to particular children and groups of children."

In practice there are many difficulties to be overcome in operating a whole school programme really effectively. But I think the 'Thomas' report is right to emphasise this aspect of education because the implementation of new ideas is difficult under any circumstances but impossible without the co-operation and commitment of all staff.

I feel that schools must take account of the views of society but that teachers should be responsible for their implementation. Politicians should realise that neither market forces nor crude direct intervention are appropriate. The former is too random in its effect and the latter fails to build on the good that is already present. There is also a limit to what schools can do well and this limit is determined by a number of factors including resources. Teachers should not delay action while waiting for ideal conditions but then neither should Sir Keith Joseph burden them with a work load which it is impossible to carry.

Self-help in the Small Village School

Lee Enright
A member of our Editorial Board, and head of first year at Cranborne Middle School, Dorset, Lee Enright is closely involved in a funded project directed at assisting her (and other) local feeder first schools. These, mainly small and isolated, village schools, working together, are now the centres of what may be important developments.

Sixpenny Handley, Monkton Up Wimborne, Cripplestyle, Piddletrenthide and Gussage All Saints, all villages in Hardy country, conjure up to the uninitiated pictures of rural utopia, where children grow up straight and true without any help or interference from outside. Parents with young children, however, may tell a very different story.

Mothers are generally left at home with no transport in a village (or perhaps between villages) which boasts — if it is lucky — a weekly bus. Pre-school provision for children in the county is only available for the lucky 20% who are within easy reach of (or who have access to transport to) playgroups and LEA nurseries. Thus, many children in the county are starting school with little experience of working, playing or communicating with anyone who is not a member of their immediate family. A fair proportion of these will start school in a century-old building staffed by two teachers, one of whom is the full-time-teaching head. Aged five, children may have something like a three mile bus journey to school; at nine, a six mile bus journey; and at thirteen they may travel fifteen miles morning and afternoon. Feelings of isolation and detachment quickly arise. If you cannot collect your children from school, how can you get to know their teachers? Popping in to sort out minor (yet important) difficulties is impossible. Children find their world is soon split down the middle, with communication between the two sides down to sick-notes and newsletters.

Teachers, too, are victims of the system. Colleagues teaching the same age-range won't just be in the next

References

1. **I.L.E.A. Report — Improving primary schools** Report of the Committee on Primary Education — January 1985
2. **Better Schools** — Government White paper, HMSO 1985
3. David Reynolds — Author of **Studying School Effectiveness,** Falmer Press. Article in **T.E.S.** T.E.S. 20.9.85
4. Charles Handy — Schools Council Programme 1 **Taken for granted? Understanding Schools as organisations.**

village, but more like three or four villages away — again, not easy to pop in on the way home. Courses at Teachers' Centres are likely to be held during the winter months, some fifteen miles away.

For several years now, small sets of Dorset village schools (5-9 First and 5-11 Primary) have begun self-help groups in an attempt to dispel the feelings of isolation which appear all too rapidly when the golden gingerbread of autumn days fails to last through the daily routing of 60+ children with you and one other adult.

At Rolle College, Exmouth, there have been D.E.S. Regional Courses for headteachers of small schools since 1983, which have brought together colleagues from Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. This article will concern itself with some of the issues raised at these courses, and how the suggested solutions are promoting further issues at subsequent stages of education.

It was at one of the Rolle College courses that Ann Hodgkins, Head of Sixpenny Handley First School met headteachers from the rest of Dorset and discovered what was actually happening in the county. Staff from small schools in the east of the county tended to go to courses at Teachers' Centres in Bournemouth or Wimborne, where they found themselves in a minority, their circumstances being so different from the town schools. Even colleagues so near at hand have fallen under the spell of Wessex cosiness and fantasies of plentiful staff. Soon after this, Ann met Bryan Slater, one of Dorset's Senior Education Officers. He had come from Cornwall where he had been closely involved with small rural schools. He formed a small working party to look at the ways in which Dorset could help its small schools by co-ordinating what was happening, and to put in a bid for extra funding from the County Education Committee. While this working party was carrying out its investigations, one of its members, Joan Hickmott (a County Adviser for the Early Years) put in an application for an Education Support Grant for rural schools in the county, while another Adviser put in one for small urban schools. Across Dorset, many bids were made for E.S.Gs, and five were granted. Funding of £50,000 was granted for two Pilot Projects to run for three years. Difficult decisions had then to be made about how best the money could be used. Knowing of the clusters of schools which had already been working together helped in this. When the actual make-up of the groups of schools were examined, it turned out that in the east of the county there were as many small urban schools as there were small rural schools. Thus, the rural element of the project was dropped. It was decided that the two pilot projects should be set up in the East and in the West of the county.

Decisions about which schools to involve were difficult. Groups were spread right across the county, rather than conveniently in the East or West. Whose needs were greatest? How isolated was isolated? Should groups who had motivated themselves already be supported? Or should funding go to areas which needed something started? The working party of headteachers all had vested interests, and eventually the decisions had to be made by the Chief Adviser and the Chief Education Officer. In the West, a group centred on Dorchester (which had already been working together) would be funded. In the East, a group known as the Cranborne Chase group would be funded. This group consisted of 12 small First Schools, many of which are sited on the edge of Cranborne Chase. Five of these schools feed one middle school at Cranborne. The project was based at one of the First Schools involved.

The County also gave some financial support to groups not included in the E.S.G., but this was obviously nothing like as great. Because some of their colleagues were left out of the E.S.G. funding, participants in the Dorchester and Cranborne Chase Projects became aware that it was vital to make the projects work if they were to keep the confidence of both County and their colleagues. In both projects, a Head from one of the schools involved was to be seconded for each of the three years to co-ordinate and record its activities. In the Cranborne Chase Project, Ann Hodgkins was appointed co-ordinator for the first year. The twelve schools met, and decisions were made regarding their participation in the project.

The funding was for the group of schools, not individuals. Much of the money was for staffing. As far as the participants are concerned, the great thing about the project is that it is run by the heads themselves — i.e., full-time classroom teachers. Also, there is no March deadline to spend the money — budgets can be planned to meet needs as they arise — no more February wastelands.

It was decided that each year, one area of the curriculum would be examined and developed according to the needs of the schools in the group. Running alongside this for the three years would be another strand — that of liaison between the parents, pre-school provision and the school. It is this strand which I believe will highlight issues of great concern at all levels of schooling.

Within the catchments of the twelve project schools are children with no pre-school experience outside the home. Playgroups exist, but too many parents have no means of getting their children to them. Also, the importance of home/school liaison around the time of entry to school has long been recognised but has been impossible to achieve because of the teaching commitment of those involved, as well as that inevitable problem of transport.

Jenny Proctor, a qualified teacher specialising in the needs of 3-5 year olds was appointed to the Cranborne Chase Project. With a transit van full of playgroup equipment, she began her peripatetic life with the group. Schools were visited and discussions took place to decide how best to meet individual needs. Health Visitors, clinics and doctors were all involved in an attempt at early identification of children with special needs, instead of waiting until problems arose at school.

The flexible organisation of project staff means that rather complex arrangements can be made very simply. When more than one playgroup feeds a school, heads may take the opportunity to visit them with Jenny, while a member of the team takes the head's class. Similarly home visits can be made. In the past, heads would always visit those children who were known to be at risk, but this was difficult, if not impossible, during the day. After school visits were complicated by the presence of older children, as well as the meal and bedtime demands of the average family. With the support of Jenny and Ann, a few heads have visited all February entrants, and some schools have run pre-school clubs where the

children can come into the school for an hour a week before they start full time. During this hour, arrangements are again flexible. Ann can take the head's class while Jenny and the head take the new entrants, or all three can take the whole lot where the head is the reception teacher. Combinations are almost endless, and chances of finding one that fits the bill are highly likely. Parents are also invited to stay with their children for this hour, and the nature of the set-up means that they have a chance to talk with their children's new teacher or with Jenny or Ann, as well as with each other. There is also a minibus available to the project, and this has been used to collect parents and their young children so that they can take advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the school.

Another school had the playgroup actually on site, and asked for Jenny to work with the playgroup for the first half of the morning in the autumn term. The second half of her morning was spent in the reception class working alongside the teacher with the children who have only just started school. Some of these children will not be five until January or February. Extra teaching support would not normally be available until the second intake arrived at the end of February and pushed up the numbers over the county yardstick.

At Sixpenny Handley, Jenny works in the playgroup with the four-year-olds. Some playgroup staff are concerned that such children have been in the playgroup and are getting bored because the staff don't know what to do with them. Jenny takes these children in the minibus to the school for the second half of the morning and works with them with the class teacher.

Jenny also takes in extra equipment to playgroups, and offers them further ideas and activities. With Jackie the support worker, she has made and bagged up over 150 games and loaned them to playgroups and parents. When the transit van visits the playgroups or schools, parents and children climb in together to choose books and games.

Running alongside the home/school liaison work is a shared reading development project known as Booked by Dorset, whose main aim is to involve parents in their children's reading and language development. This project is being run across 20 schools in the East, including those in the Cranborne Chase Project. Some £8,000 has been allocated to be spent on books, games and tapes, all designed to involve parents with their children's reading. This is not a replacement of existing work being done on the teaching of reading within the schools, but is an extra bonus. Before the children are actually involved, parents are invited to come along to the workshops held at the First Schools, and to try out the various activities and techniques. Parents have come along who have never been near the schools before, because they have been reassured that this project is not just about learning to read, but more about the excitement and joy that can be had from sharing books and stories. Among parental comments has been, "You know, you're not really trying to educate the children in all this, are you? It's us you're getting at!" as well as, "This is great — but what will happen when they go on to the middle school? How will it be carried on?"

Once again, it seems, First Schools are pointing the way that teachers of older children would do well to follow. The active seeking-out of parents, the

demonstration of the school's belief in the importance of their participation needs to be followed up when children move on to the next tier of schooling. Parents and children at all levels get anxious about things which teachers/parents/children may regard as trivial, not something they are necessarily prepared to stand up and ask about at a formal meeting attended and addressed by the Area Education Officer. Only if parents regard school as something which recognises *their* needs as well as those of their children will they be able to help their children move smoothly through their school life.

In the Cranborne Chase Project, workshops are to be held in the schools, and with Jackie's NNEB qualification it may be possible to run a creche to look after children aged from six months where pre-school facilities (or helpful neighbours) are non-existent. Without the distraction of their young children, parents are able to get involved in games and activities and the consequent relaxed atmosphere allows for valuable dialogue between parents, heads and teachers.

As First Year Leader of a middle school, I have been allocated two hours per week for visiting our six feeder First Schools. By juggling with lunchtimes, breaktimes and a one-hour non-contact session, it is possible for me to spend a whole afternoon in a school, getting to know parents as well as the children. As the children become interested/excited/agitated about transfer to middle school, so these feelings are reflected by many parents. (How much of these feelings travel in the opposite direction is surely well worth exploring ...)

At a pilot workshop session I held for parents whose children will be coming to me in September 1986, I got the distinct impression that parents were very happy to take on board new ways of looking at learning, but that they doubted their ability to do so. Yet, having experienced some of the work that will face their children next year, they were more than able to tease out the learning potential of exercises in sequencing made from a page of the Beano, or speculate about reading comprehension and the Read and Draw technique; they discovered that recent mathematics textbooks helped them to understand something which had been incomprehensible to them in their own schooldays; and they talked at length about the importance of discussion skills. While all this was going on, queries about buses, school dinners, rewards and punishments and homework were raised and discussed.

While the need and value of such workshops becomes more and more obvious, how to plan them is no simple matter. It would appear that parents feel very comfortable coming into their children's First Schools. Because of the very age of the children, even those parents with the greatest transport difficulties have had to find ways round them. First School staff are generally very reassuring people who are able to put people at their ease. Therefore the onus is on the visitor (i.e. the teacher from the next school in the tier) to establish him/herself as an acceptable member of the group. It will be interesting to see how parents who have attended first/middle school liaison workshops respond to subsequent invitations to meet at the middle school.

Discussion

'Playing at Schools' (vol 28 no 2)

Annabelle Dixon's article on how four year olds are subjected to inappropriate formal schooling today reminded me sharply of the debate at the beginning of this century. Over 40% of three to five year olds were then attending Elementary Schools largely because of the lack of alternative provision other than unofficial child-minding. This was before there was any recognition of the intrinsic value of pre-school in terms of socialization and social and emotional development, but when overcrowded and unhealthy working class homes and the needs of the working mothers indicated a need for safe care before compulsory schooling at five.

In 1904 the five women HMIs were asked to report on 'Children under five years of age in Public Elementary Schools' and their findings were published the next year. Here are some of the Chief HMIs conclusions:

'there is complete unanimity that the children between the age of three and five get practically no intellectual advantage from school instruction. The Inspectors agree that the mechanical teaching in many infant schools seems to dull rather than awaken the little power of imagination and independent observation which these infants possess ...

'the evidence is very strong against attempts at formal instruction for any children under five'.

'these little children should have no formal instruction in the three R's, but plenty of opportunities for free expression: they must learn to talk before they learn to read; to understand before they learn nu nber by heart; and to use arms and fingers freely and boldly before they hold a pen or pencil'.

'It would seem that a new form of school is necessary ... nursery schools rather than schools of instruction'.

Three years later the Consultative Committee reported in similar terms on the 'School Attendance of Children Below the Age of Five' and argued the case for extensive provision of Nursery Schools or **separate** Nursery Classes attached to elementary schools. Interestingly they also commented: 'A well-organised nursery school will have a beneficial effect upon the teaching and curriculum of the lower classes of the school to which it is attached'.

Ms. Dixon's concern is all the more worthy of serious attention in view of the likely danger of the downward effect of Sir Keith Joseph's obsession with normative attainment standards at specified ages which HMI are dutifully promulgating in their Curriculum 5-16 Discussion pamphlets and the APU is busy at. In 1905 and 1908 HMI noted and warned against pressures on teachers for premature 'preparation for the inspection in Standard I'. Can we have confidence that their successors, some eighty years on, will give a similar lead?

NANETTE WHITBREAD
(author of **The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School** 1972)

What's in a Cluster?

There are days when education depresses me. There are days when I think we have been here before and called it something different. Finally, there are days when I feel that I am participating in some unholy sacrificial rite resulting in unique dismemberment of the English language and the scattering of coherence far and wide.

No, I am not referring to HMI's reports but to the literature surrounding CPVE.

I am at present teaching a component of the CPVE framework — Communication as a core competency, 'broadly based and capable of application in a variety of situations'. Core competencies, I read, need to be fully integrated with each other and other parts of the programme if they are to be achieved successfully. I was told that further advice would be given me in the Tutor's handbook and that I would not be teaching English as I knew it. (Having read the Tutor's handbook I felt inclined to agree.)

The papers connected with CPVE must surely qualify as some of the most evasive and recalcitrant literature I have ever met. Our Consortium always possesses them in varying numbers so meetings tend to start with 'Have you all seen these?' — 'No, we've not had that' etc. The variant population of Consortium personnel does not help; there seems to be a lot of 'I'm standing in for John because he's tied up'. It takes a while to find out who's in charge but this is merely the fault of local politics.

But even if substantial heroic efforts to amass all the documents are successful (via illicit borrowing from other schools and phoning up friends in desperation) and one sits down at leisure to get one's teeth into it, the texture is decidedly resistant to comprehension.

Core competencies, Categories, Clusters, Contexts and Components are not, as I first suspected, exercises in alliteration with the letter C. They are subjects or parts of this course.

The definition of the Modular approach, Introductory leading to Exploratory leading to Preparatory nearly misses suggesting a palindrome. Surely some other word apart from Preparatory could have been found to suggest the final stage?

Studying the CPVE framework, I note that the Core offers 'a resource from which objectives can be drawn to build into courses' whereas Vocational Studies (courses) 'provides the focus for the development of Common Core competencies'. This is wholly logical, but I am still reminded of a Dire Straits track 'But the music makes her wanna be the story and the story was whatever was the song'.

'Each student must have the opportunity of relating to all core aims, in order to study, gain experience and optimise his/her core competencies according to individual need and potential'. This seems to me to side-step the relationship between student potential and a clearly grasped target. If all the values are expressed in such floating currency how will we ever know what the course or the student is worth? And why is a file now a portfolio?

There is something rather Taoist in the philosophy. It is the journey not the destination; basically CPVE allows students to demonstrate the readiness to progress. Much is made of the negotiation of learning and its experiential nature (but surely this methodology entered English, Science and Maths curricula in the Seventies? But was it called Proactive learning?).

In the Tutor's handbook I read that Preparatory Modules are intended to help students to

d. refine preference and identify opportunities for progression

e. obtain necessary competencies related to specific routes for progression.

It begins to feel like a verb stuck at the auxiliary, or a sentence always in the subjunctive. If there is no finite goal, no tangible demand, then it is difficult for the teacher and student to be clear where they are progressing.

Taoism, apparently, started with some admirable features and degenerated into polytheism and an inextricable mass of jugglery.

The language of the Vocational Module Specifications needs ruthless decoding into the language of every day speech before it becomes intelligible to teachers and students. This seems to me to be a fault in a course which addresses itself to the average one year sixth former and teachers from widely differing disciplines — a course which has communication as a Core Competence. The students have to 'write effectively' and 'maintain the confidence of the intended audience'. It is a course which claims to be a preparation for the grassroots real world.

A secondary implication from linguistic confusion is the confusion of ideas. This is more worrying. When the language is nebulous and serves to obscure meaning rather than elucidate in simple terms, then the content becomes a rather indeterminate quantity as do any standards by which it is measured.

Would not a simpler text in normal English prose with some sample work schemes and a summary of desired attainment in different areas have been feasible? Surely this would have generated more enthusiasm from teachers and ultimately more confidence from parents and employers?

I should say that I like this course; that I and the students are enjoying it. This is because the Head of the Sixth and myself have waged interminable war on ineffective communication at more than one level. But I think it is sad if relevant contemporary aims and interesting, challenging content have to struggle for their life in linguistic dressing.

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REVIEWS
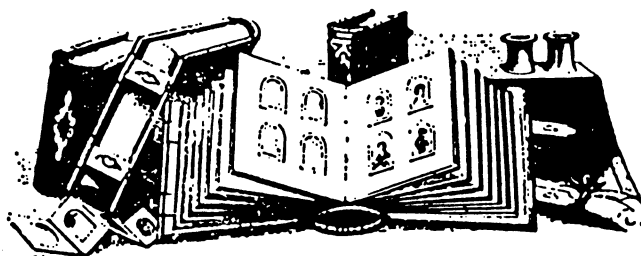
Teacher as Researcher

Doing Research; a Handbook for Teachers,
Rob Walker (1985), Methuen, pp. 212.

This book is a timely introduction to research aimed at the practising teacher. The idea that teachers can promote their own professional development through school-focused INSET owes much to the influence of those who believe that the pedagogical knowledge of teachers is important. It seems strange to consider otherwise but the fact remains that generations of teachers have been trained to assume that social science theories alone are the basis for developing practical educational theory. Only relatively recently have philosophers acknowledged that practical theory which guides practical decisions should be grounded in the tacit knowledge of the practitioners.

Trying to deepen our understanding of the processes by which tacit knowledge becomes practical theory should be a major concern for those who engage in educational research. Lawrence Stenhouse's influence runs through this book and is generously acknowledged by Walker. Through his work on practical curriculum development, Stenhouse grasped the importance of trying to understand the teacher's perceptions and the constraints which operate within any educational context.

One of the values of this book is its willingness to expose the tensions within the academic research community. In the search for objectivity, and credibility within the academic community (Education isn't a real academic study!), the academic will sacrifice contact and dialogue with practitioners. Common sense can quickly come into conflict with obscure generalisations couched in language which can even divide members of the academic community. When honesty prevails, researchers will acknowledge the limited application of their work when it relates to work in classrooms. The influence of research on policy is more tangible, and Walker makes specific reference to research findings supporting the introduction of comprehensive education; he might also have referred to the 11-plus being equally justified on the basis of research findings.

Pure, objective, social scientific research in education retains its integrity by distancing itself from the subject it studies and by not having any specific outcome as a priority. Walker's book introduces teachers to applied research where there is an explicit commitment to reporting to professional and lay audiences (as opposed to reporting exclusively to your social scientific peer group), to the involvement of teachers in the development of their own research enquiries, and to the improvement of children's learning.

The book leaves teachers in no doubt that these commitments are not intended to lead to a form of research organisation which undervalues careful preparation and precise use of research techniques. Three chapters give details of how to prepare a piece of applied research, and of the range of options open when the teacher begins to think about collecting data. Underpinning the idea of the 'teacher as researcher' is the notion of reflection; the ability to look back over a lesson, for example, and to record and make judgements about what was actually happening to children's learning. Deliberating with a trusted colleague can help sharpen these reflections and lead, hopefully, to improved practice.

Not only is Walker sensitive to the tensions within the research community, he is also sensitive to the growing professionalism of teachers leading to their being distanced from the thoughts of parents and children. One of my concerns about the move towards 'teachers as researchers' is the feeling that it could involve such esoteric knowledge that the idea is little more than an invitation to some exceptional teachers to join the academic research community. (The continued emphasis on award-bearing courses supports this.) The professional development of teachers needs to grow out of classroom experiences refined through reflection and further developed in an open climate of mutual support — how many staffrooms give this feeling? Walker's book is a valuable introduction, for teachers, to the subject of research which must remain linked into the general debate about the professional development of all teachers. The book needs to be viewed in this wider context if it is to be a significant influence on the debate; it is certainly to be recommended as an introduction, for teachers, to the subject of research.

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Laputa Revisited

Sociology and School Knowledge, Geoff Whitty, London: Methuen (1985) pp. 207, £6.95 paperback.

Not the least of E.M. Forster's contributions to our understanding was his observation that 'everything is like something': the question to ask, therefore, when confronted by intellectual artefacts is 'What is this like?' Education attracts so much speculative writing that Forster's critical approach is essential if teachers and others whose prime concern is the practice of education are to make sense of what passes as theory.

So what is this book like? How can we characterise its field of interest, the nature of its discourse? After struggling through a chapter or two of this sociological exegesis, increasingly baffled by its arcane arguments and opaque prose, I realised that it was like peeping into a private world. There are, for example, those specialist magazines with titles like 'British Railway Modelling News' which intense, raincoated men read on the train toWaterloo; in their pages, enthusiasts argue incessantly about Webb's design of the smoke-box venturi on the London and South Western's 0-6-0 locomotive of 1891, and whether it influenced Churchward's nozzle profiles of 1902. All very scholarly stuff, in the category of what Aristotle termed theoretical knowledge: the pursuit of truth for its own sake. But it picks away at a very small area, using its own conceptual apparatus to work over a field in which small deviations can have endless significance. Qualification, modification, re-assertion: a fascinating gavotte, but essentially a private one. Whitty, for example, tells us that

> I do not therefore find the argument that our own position was wrong — though well it may have been — because it was different from either Lenin's or Gramsci's an especially convincing or compelling one.

Really? But are you aware that 'the lack of successful ideological incorporation of working-class pupils and their spontaneous perspicacity is a possible source of vulnerability in the reproduction cycle'? And the reproduction cycle has nothing to do with population growth: it's a jargon term for the way the capitalistic hegemony is impositionally influencing the school curriculum (I invented that last phrase myself, and it was surprisingly easy. You get the idea?) Notice also the word 'possible' in the last quotation: never 'certain', not even

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'likely'; just 'possible'. It's by constantly generating fragmentary distinctions of this kind that the whole edifice is sustained.

There's nothing new about this kind of enquiry. Swift observed it in the early years of the Royal Society, and so Gulliver told us how the Laputians, on an island floating safely above ground level, devoted themselves so completely to abstruse reasoning in mathematics and music that 'in the common actions and behaviour of life, I have not seen a more clumsy, awkward and unhandy people'. They were, moreover, 'perpetually alarmed with apprehensions of impending dangers ... delighting to hear terrible stories of sprites and hobgoblins'. Our latter-day Laputians seem greatly drawn to sociology and psychology: in both these fields one can observe a preoccupation with abstractions only remotely connected with practice, and bitter dispute between rival camps. And for a certain kind of sociologist in particular, the capitalist ethic is an evil hobgoblin, forever subverting the friendly working-class pixie.

Life, as Swift tried to tell us, is not as simple as this, and elaborate Laputian complexities fail to address the problems of practice. And although Schwab pointed out as long ago as 1969 that a preoccupation with theory had rendered the field of curriculum 'moribund', there's little sign in this country that the arts of the practical have been given the central place they deserve.

A useful way of discovering where particular curriculum nostrums actually come from was suggested by Bill Reid (in Lawn and Barton's **Rethinking Curriculum Studies,** 1981). The two questions to ask are: how is the school system being viewed, and how is theory related to experience? Is the system seen (Reid 1981) as 'an instrument of bourgeois exploitation', or as something we seek to improve 'by gradualist action'? And is theory a way of 'conceiving ends and means in terms of *a priori* notions of control', or is it seen as 'more exploratory', concerned more 'with individuals than with systems'? The interaction between these two characteristics defines four positions, of which Whitty's is the 'radical': the school must be radically changed by the application of theory derived from perceived structural defects in society.

Like Reid, I find this an unhelpful stance because it fails to address the nature of educational activity as essentially a practical art. My sympathies lie with the 'deliberative' resolution of these two characteristics: I see 'curriculum decision-making as transactions between morally engaged individuals in the context of social institutions' (Reid 1981).

These matters are important, since personal beliefs frame judgments and those readers who are sympathetic to Whitty's radical perspective will now know how to regard my opinions. And it is much to Whitty's credit that, in his introduction to this book, he tells us how he came to adopt his point of view. Neither is his political purpose in doubt: his concern is with 'the relationship between sociological work and the pedagogical and political programmes of the radical left' and he regards 'the Labour Party and its affiliated organisations as amongst the most relevant political movements'. His belief is that'existing patterns of class, race and gender relations should be radically transformed into socialist ones'.

They are important matters, too, because Whitty is often an able and perceptive writer

whose targets are not insubstantial. He takes issue with the notion of a common curriculum, and particularly with Lawton's interpretation of it; with the work of CARE, following Stenhouse, at East Anglia; and with the attempts of Crick and others to establish political education in schools. We need to know where his critical position is located. Moreover, many of us would share his distaste for recent vocationalist policies towards the school curriculum without necessarily sharing his platform.

He adds nothing new to his earlier attack on the notion of core curriculum, and this, following the Australian work of Ozolins, derives from Bourdieu's 1971 objection that working class pupils lack 'cultural capital', and are therefore disadvantaged within a core. But should they therefore have a separate working class curriculum, thus stigmatising them further? And, in any event, are there not practical, pedagogical ways of providing a variety of learning experiences, so that social backgrounds need not be a determinant of school encounters? Whitty is on much firmer ground in suggesting that formal curriculum analysis, of a Hirstian kind, avoids 'confronting the complexity of the real contexts in which educational transactions take place'; but his whole approach prevents him from addressing these real contexts. So there is no contest.

The impoverishment of Whitty's critique is well illustrated by his study of the Hansard Society's efforts to establish political education in the curriculum. His object is that a 'genuinely critical approach' was lacking; there was too much emphasis on existing Parliamentary institutions and on support from MPs, on preserving 'the basic form of society' rather than improving upon it. On the evidence, I think this is less than fair to the intentions of those who have sought to put political education on the curriculum. But that is beside the point: the real point is, surely, that this was a daring reform which could never be achieved without regard for what R.A. Butler called 'the art of the impossible'. In short, achieving reform is unlikely to follow from laying down rigid social principles and seeking an apparatus by which they can be applied to practical action. Rather is it a matter of identifying problems, deliberating upon dilemmas, resolving ambiguities and thus allowing 'morally engaged individuals' to bring about change conducive to our true good and happiness. This takes time, and attempts to achieve it by political fiat — from right or left — are likely to do more harm than good.

For me, then, the book is a disappointment. In an early chapter Whitty writes of 'a decade of increasingly obscure theoretical debate' on the sociology of education, but it is hard not to conclude that the debate continues just as obscurely as before. The index gives six references to something called 'possibilitarianism': the socio-babble clouds everything it touches. And you are, it seems, either for it or against it: an academic who ventured to suggest that an earlier work of Whitty's was 'of limited or even negative value to teachers' is dimissed as a 'mainstream educationist'. The success of many schools in implementing curriculum approaches which seek to offer all pupils contextualised cultural experience finds no place in the book. The test appears to be: Yes,

it may work in practice. But does it work in theory?

And even where one is sympathetic to the line of argument — as when Whitty examines the pre-vocationalism of the 80s — one is surprised to see that the elaborate analysis brings forth nothing that is not obvious: we can readily accept that 'many of the special courses now being introduced to cope with rising youth unemployment contain the implicit message that unemployment is the fault of individuals rather than the system that creates it': indeed, Lord Young has made that message perfectly explicit. So what's new?

If Whitty's book hopes to establish that the new sociology of education can throw fresh light on the key problems of curriculum studies, then this 'mainstream educationist', for one, is unconvinced. Social, political and moral philosophy seem infinitely more promising fields of inquiry. As Lemuel Gulliver observed, upon leaving Laputa: 'I cannot say that I was ill-treated in this island, yet I must confess I thought myself too much neglected, not without some degree of contempt'. What seems too much neglected in Whitty's book is the central role of practice and its practitioners, and I suspect teachers may dislike this seeming contempt for the capacity of schools to define and solve curriculum problems. I'm happy to leave the island of Nova Sociologia and return, if not to the mainstream, at least to the mainland.

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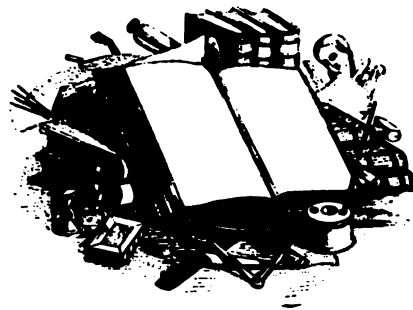
Educational Apartheid

Power and Policy in Education: The Case of Independent Schooling, by Brian Salter and Ted Tapper. The Falmer Press (1985), pp. 261, £15.95 and £8.95.
Private Education in Britian, by Clive Griggs. The Falmer Press (1985), pp. 230, £14.95 and £7.95.

In an earlier book **Education, Politics and the State,** published in 1981, Salter and Tapper argued that social and economic pressures for educational change have to be politically negotiated into particular educational changes through specific institutions which may themselves have their own rationale for promoting certain types of change rather than others. In their view, the process of change was increasingly controlled by the Department of Education and Science. As the central bureaucratic apparatus chiefly responsible for the management of schooling, it was in a unique position to respond positively to the new climate in which the

British educational system found itself in the late seventies — a climate of disenchantment and mistrust which, paradoxically, the DES itself played some part in fostering. Salter and Tapper have conceded that the 1981 study failed to credit the MSC with sufficient importance. But they would argue that the MSC is simply an important arm of the educational state which continues to incorporate the DES as its major component.

A key chapter in the 1981 book was called 'Redefining the Ideology of Public School Education'. The argument was that whilst the state sector, then operating with a shrinking budget, was being forced into a painful redefinition of its purpose (partly as a result of DES initiatives), at the same time the independent schools continued to hold their own and, for the most part, remain flourishing institutions. This thesis has now been expanded into a full scale study of the recent political history of private schooling: from the insecurity of the days of Circular 10/65 to the comparative security engendered by Margaret Thatcher's re-election in 1983.

Salter and Tapper argue that the Labour Party missed its great opportunity to abolish the public schools in the late 1960s when their political position was dangerously exposed. Their pupil rolls were declining, their internal organization was generally weak and fragmented, the prevailing climate of opinion was swinging against elitist education, and the Labour Government had embarked on a programme of comprehensive education which was bound at some point to lead to an attack on independent education.

The public schools have responded with a well-organised campaign to seize the political and ideological initiative. They might still believe in training their pupils for leadership roles, but the stress now is upon the attainment of examination success which is seen as the key to future individual promotion in today's meritocratically ordered society. Anxious to help foster the prevailing ideology with its emphasis on parental choice, the market mechanism and standards, the public schools have earned for themselves a place in the mainstream. They are perfectly at home in Thatcher's Britain and their position seems assured. According to Salter and Tapper, 'the evaporation of the progressive consensus in education and the rehabilitation of such ideological marginals as Rhodes Boyson has put Labour party intellectuals into a quandary. How can they 'sell' a policy which aims to eradicate private education, and hence the ability of parents to choose it, in an ideological atmosphere which eulogizes not only parental choice but also the values of competition and standards which independent schools epitomize?'

The Griggs volume is far less speculative and even-handed in its approach, though one thing both books have in common is a section called 'The Empire Strikes Back'. Like R.H. Tawney, Clive Griggs believes that 'the hereditary curse' upon English education is its organization upon lines of social class. He compares the practice of educating children separately according to parental income to the apartheid system in South Africa. Indeed, his book represents a sustained and well-informed attack on what amounts to a form of educational apartheid supported in the name of parental freedom of choice. It is not claimed that if the public schools were abolished, all social injustices would rapidly

disappear. Griggs believes that these schools are a reflection of social inequality rather than the main cause, while at the same time accepting that they do help to reinforce the basic divisions in our society. The author's general conclusions are clear and uncompromising:

The disproportionate influence of private schooling in the UK has proven detrimental to our economic performance, and both encouraged and reinforced the social divisiveness of our society. It is neither good for those in the private schools genuinely interested in education nor is it good for the future economic, social and political welfare of the country for this situation to continue.
CLYDE CHITTY

Content and Method

This short book by Alex Main in the Croom Helm 'New Patterns of Learning' Series is designed, according to the publisher's blurb, 'to provide a comprehensive review of the subject' — an aim which does not seem to coincide with the author's own view of his work, as given in the opening sentences of his Preface:

In this book, I have not presented a survey of staff development programmes in education. I have not tried to document what is done to support teachers and managers in school or post-school education in any part of the world. There already exist some such surveys: to bring them together would require an encyclopaedic work.

Surveying the field is, it seems, of less concern than considering 'the values inherent in what is being done' — not methodologies but strategies. It is in its investigation of a wide variety of methodologies in order to attempt an analysis and evaluation of strategies that Dr. Main's work does, in fact, provide a review of the subject. As adviser on Educational Methods to the University of Strathclyde and, previously, the first Coordinating and Research Officer for the Training of University Teachers in the United Kingdom, Dr. Main has extensive experience of staff development. The model described in this book, and the case-studies cited as evidence, can, it is claimed, be applied successfully in secondary, further and higher education.

Those who have experienced educational staff development courses will recognise the gap which frequently exists between course *design* and course *content* and will appreciate Dr. Main's emphasis in Chapter One 'What is Staff Development?'

The purpose of this chapter is not to present one acceptable definition, but rather to paint a broad picture of what is generally meant by the term: broadly, what aims people believe they are pursuing in the name of educational staff development. Against this background, the rest of the book will examine what

people actually *do* in its name.

One instance which highlights the premise that 'the method *is* the content' is given in Chapter Two 'Development Through Formal Courses'. Here use is made of a recent study of initial in-service training of university teachers in the United Kingdom. The study showed that the method used on training courses to impart information about *lecturing* was singularly appropriate: *lecturing*. An apt match of content and method: the one mirroring the other. Yet much else that was taught fell down in this regard.

The 'lesser' teaching methods were included in most courses; and when they were, they too were mostly taught through the medium of the lecture. Many new university teachers were lectured to about how to conduct tutorials, how to organise seminars, even how to plan programmes of individualised learning for their students! Clearly, method did not always reflect content!

Although this book is designed to a large extent with university teachers in mind, the need for institutions to be supportive of their staff who undertake courses is relevant to all staffs, managers and academics alike. With appropriate support, the idea of life-long development instead of once-and-for-all training can gain general acceptance.

One consequence of such an approach is that less distinction is made between the new and the experienced teacher ... Such a lifelong-learning model gives a new dimension to the concept of staff development: it frees it from the 'management' model that tends to pervade development through training courses.

The idea of 'sending' people on courses as a kind of 'remedial therapy' will serve only to identify development courses as being intended for 'failures'. The basic problems of getting people to identify their needs so that courses can be constructed to meet the teachers', rather than the organisers', requirements is that all teachers tend too readily to translate their 'needs' into 'difficulties'.

Alex Main's own model assumes that 'the whole enterprise should be supported by some sort of self-help service, so that teachers can explore their needs, their own self-sufficiency and their reliance on external help in an informal and unthreatening atmosphere'.

Sadly the final chapter 'Staff Development and Recession' opens with the admission that much of what has been achieved on even a small scale may seem idealistic in a period of cuts and retrenchment, despite the obvious truth that 'it is precisely at such a time that a learner-centred staff development pro-gramme should come into its own'. Alex Main's model would seem to have the appeal of being relatively inexpensive — informed and supported self-development does not require a separate Staff Development Centre, for example — and might appeal to the financing authorities for that reason, if not for its educational value as providing a way to personal change centred on the individual. It is certainly hard to argue with the statement:

The member of staff who is faced with uncertainty from without must be helped to develop certainties within.
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