

# FORUM

**for the discussion of new trends in education**

Summer 1988

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**This issue**

**The Education 'Reform' Bill  
Conference Report**

**by  
Edward Blishen**

**Anti-Racist Teacher Education  
Parents as Governors  
Scottish Struggles**

# Editorial Board

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Summer 1988

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## The Next Forum

We continue our focus on the Education 'Reform' Bill in this issue. There will be two articles on assessment; Caroline Gipps contributes a critique of the Black Report, and Peter Mitchell writes on the teacher's role in assessment as related to teaching. Peter Cornell contributes on the future role of local authorities as regards the curriculum, while Gordon Hainsworth (Manchester's CEO) writes of the role of the local authority in convincing parents of the value of coherent local planning. Liz Thompson writes on the impact of the Bill on the future of INSET, while David Winckley considers how to secure good primary practice despite this Bill. Alan Eales writes on the experience of Oadby Beauchamp school in developing effective equal opportunity practices. Maxine Tallon, whose article was unfortunately held over, reports her study of pupils' workload perceptions.

# The Struggle Continues

FORUM made its position on the Education 'Reform' Bill abundantly clear in the Editorial of our January issue. Under the heading **A Malign Bill** we characterised this measure as an attempt to destroy the statutory system of public education created by the 1944 Education Act; as 'an integral part' of the present government's attack on local democracy and 'the principle of collective responsibility for community services'.

Nothing which has happened since has caused us to modify this assessment — rather the reverse. Although, in the face of widespread protests, the government has introduced many amendments and new clauses (the Bill is now 35% longer than it was when originally published), these do not alter in any significant way its main thrust, which retains all the characteristics it had when first presented to Parliament. It is as well to be absolutely clear about this.

The Bill still gives totalitarian powers to the Secretary of State over all areas of the National Curriculum and Assessment (and testing). It still retains its initial formulation concerning open enrolment and opting out (grant maintained schools). Both as regards structural change (specifically directed to downgrading local authorities) and as regards the curriculum and assessment, all remains as originally proposed. It *may* be that the Black Committee's (TGAT) proposals will be accepted; but even this is uncertain and, even if they are, any future Secretary of State has full powers in the Bill to abrogate them whenever he or she wishes — or, more likely, when the right-wing pressures render it politically advisable.

Some concessions appear to have been made to the Churches on these issues; others possibly to the universities. But these are of marginal significance and in neither case alter the main thrust of the Bill as it affects the schools. Their object has clearly been to ease the passage of the Bill as a whole, with all its most obnoxious clauses intact, through the House of Lords. These, together with a number of emollient remarks directed to local authorities and teachers, are no more than sophisticated acts of political cynicism.

The aim is brutally clear. It is to get the Bill through Parliament fundamentally unchanged. That is the challenge.

As we go to press in mid April, resistance continues to mount — in some respects quite dramatically. The Bill (and the more recent Scottish Bill) is being presented as a charter of parental rights — as the means of liberating parents from the malign grip of the despised local authorities. But it is parents themselves who, within organised forms open to them, are giving the lie to this increasingly unconvincing populist demagoguery.

If there is one organisation that can claim to speak for parents, it is the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, with over 4 million affiliated members. Its annual conference in April was the largest ever held. It totally condemned the government's opting out proposals, and, further, determined on a national campaign to alert parents to what it sees as the great evil of opting out — the creation of a divided school system. It is surely significant, and indeed symptomatic, that Kenneth Baker and Angela Rumbold were both invited to the conference, but both refused (including Mrs Thatcher). 'All said they were too busy', reported the *Guardian* (11.4.88).

Parents have also raised their voices to extraordinary effect in London. The postal ballot was an immense achievement, and all concerned deserve the warmest congratulations. A majority of 19:1 came out against the abolition of the ILEA — 137,021 to 8,004, with a 54.7% response. Mr Baker had preached parent power, commented Jack Straw, 'He had better practise it now'.

The total rejection of parental views, as made clear in these two cases, exposes more clearly than ever the real significance of the government's policy. Parental power had to be erected as *the means* of downgrading local authorities; but as the organised parents have made clear, they want none of it. The parents have stunningly shown up the real intentions behind the rhetoric. The Emperor has no clothes.

It is to be hoped that the House of Lords, and indeed Parliament as a whole, will pay some attention to the views of parents when considering the Bill — or rather, both the Bills, that for England and Wales *and* that for Scotland. Attempts are likely to be made, it appears, to introduce an opt-out clause in the Scottish Bill, in spite of official protestations to the contrary. The virtually unanimous, highly organised and effective opposition to the proposal in the original consultation paper for Scotland provide a good example of what may be Achieved (see Aileen Fisher's article in this issue). The fight is in no sense over; nor will it be even if the 'Reform' Bill is carried. Indeed it is at this stage that the real battles will commence, *if* the Bill passes virtually unamended.

The FORUM conference, reported in this issue, was a remarkable experience. It crystallised the unanimity among the 25 organisations cooperating. This is best expressed in the **Statement of Intent**, carried with acclamation, which we include in this number. FORUM has responded to all the consultation papers (published in our last two issues); organised a mass conference in London against the Bill, and contributed to current discussions in other ways. We will certainly continue this line of action into the future.

# What happened to reality?

Forum's Demonstrative Conference in Opposition to the Education 'Reform' Bill

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## Edward Blishen

In March, as many readers will know, FORUM organised a mass 'Demonstrative Conference' at Friends House in London, in opposition to the Baker 'Reform' Bill. In this initiative FORUM had the cooperation of over twenty teachers', parents' and other organisations. Here, Edward Blishen, for many years a member of the Editorial Board, presents a full report of the conference, in his own inimitable style.

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**It happened on Saturday, the 19th of March, at Friends House, in London: an astonishing day, on which 500 people listened to nearly thirty speakers, drawn from most of the corners of education, and the most extraordinary professional unity was manifested. The day ended with the unanimous acceptance of a Statement of Intent, pledging those present 'to continue the fight against this reactionary measure while it is still under discussion in Parliament', and, if the Bill was carried, to carry through a powerful campaign to protect schools and colleges from its worst effects. The report that follows is a necessarily concentrated attempt to give some notion of what was said by each speaker.**

'I find it hard to imagine,' said Michael Armstrong, speaking as a primary school headmaster and member of the FORUM editorial board, 'that the children of this country have ever been more grossly betrayed.' It was one of the moments during the day when emotion broke through: always, as in this case, in the context of a closely reasoned argument. Rhetoric was thin on the ground. For much of the time, what this demonstrative conference demonstrated, powerfully, busily, was the anxious thoughtfulness and simple, and carefully stated, alarm caused by 'this ridiculous Bill' (Brian Simon's phrase) in virtually the entire educational profession.

If, under all that anxiety, jubilation was anywhere to be sensed, it was clearly rooted in a speaker's awareness of this unprecedented unity. Notions of what might be done next seemed to draw much of their confidence from it. In a sense the conference had made its most important point before a word was spoken: as Harry Ree put it, few Bills could have been presented to Parliament against such convinced opposition from those who knew most about the system the Bill sets out to change.

There were few doubts as to what lay behind the Bill. It was, said Tessa Blackstone, one more manifestation of the obsessional wish of Mrs Thatcher and some of her colleagues to reduce the powers and role of local government, and to strengthen central government. Proposals for opting out and open enrolment were not

random inventions: they were part of a scheme to destroy the local authorities. The end sought was the privatisation of education: on the way to that, the Bill was about the reintroduction of selection. It was social engineering based on the Conservative belief in the survival of the fittest.

Tim Brighouse, Oxfordshire's Chief Education Office, saw the Bill as fitting into a modern version of the Speenhamland System. For the Poor Law you could substitute Social Security: for the workhouse, the Camden bedsitter: for the Factory Acts and the Revised Code, the Education Act of 1988. It was a pattern essentially leading to voluntarism.

Speaker after speaker made the point that the satisfaction of parents was everywhere being referred to as a justification of the Bill, while care was taken to keep them uninformed and impotent. As someone said, there were two ways of ignoring them. If they were knowledgeable, they could be dismissed as atypical: if they were inarticulate and spontaneous, they could be held to be unworthy of attention.

Some of the best moments were provided, no one would object to admitting, by representatives of the primary schools. Michael Armstrong was soberly impressive about the national curriculum, as crudely conceived by the Bill, and Christopher Davies made similar points with a kind of triumphant hilarity. If a



class was inspired to launch a project on Joshua and the walls of Jericho, he said, they would cover RI, History, Art, English and Science (Why did the walls tumble?), as well as Technology (Can you design a Joshua-proof wall?) It would also involve music (Run round the school blowing trumpets and banging drums and see what happens) and Mathematics (If the 12 tribes of Israel marched round Jericho 7 times ....?) Projects, he said, those ventures that caused the curriculum simply to take off and fly, could be incredibly efficient vehicles for learning. As many said, the national curriculum as proposed by the Secretary of State was not a curriculum, but a bare list of subjects.

Having made notes throughout the day, I was aware of the huge number of questions that were framed, arising out of the hasty imprecisions of the Bill. Many were questions the Bill appeared not to have asked, many had remained obstinately unanswered and some seemed unanswerable. Mary Jane Drummond, of the Cambridge Institute of Education, who made one of the best and most sensible rallying speeches of the day ('If we are to fight back,' she said, 'we must be clear what we can and what we cannot attribute to the Bill'), told a story about a four-year-old who complained to a teacher that another child had hit him. 'No, no', said the teacher. 'It can't be. We don't *have* hitting here.' The child walked away, looking dazed and clearly wondering: '*What happened to reality?*' The Bill, said Mary Jane Drummond, was in many respects a denial of the reality of the people who worked in education.

Jim White, of NALGO, was one of those who pointed to a Scots example of success in fighting back. Mrs Thatcher's favourite acolyte in that region had been 'hammered into the woodwork', and there would be no reference to opting out in the Scottish Bill. 'They can be beaten.' In any case, said Mary Jane Drummond, there was no legislation requiring the teacher to be impotent, and frustrations and furies could be converted into emotional energy. Harry Ree stressed that in its very weaknesses the Bill offered opportunities. And Graham Terrell, of the NAS/UWT, said he did not intend that his members should be cowed or compliant.

The fact remains that the desperate feeling behind speech after speech was that the Bill, hastily cobbled together, resistant to professional comment and advice — the response to the consultative document, 16,000 statements, being locked away in the House of Commons library — was about to overturn something like a century of development. Maurice Plaskow was reminded of the work of Lawrence Stenhouse. '*At stake,*' he said, '*is one hundred years of adventure beyond the mere basics.*'

### Open enrolment and opting out

The first session considered the proposals for structural change — that is, open enrolment and opting out. There were two main speakers: Tessa Blackstone, Master of Birkbeck College, and Tim Brighouse.

Having said that both proposals were an attack on local government, Tessa Blackstone spoke of the way the expectations of parents had been unrealistically increased. In fact, many children would be turned away from schools of their choice. Some schools would be overcrowded: others would become uneconomical.

There would be more children travelling, and increased transport costs.

The purpose behind the proposed grant-maintained schools was to create a new tier of semi-selective schools and to destroy the concept of the common school. When Baker claimed that schools opting out would not be allowed to change their character, she did not believe him. Once they were free of local authority regulations, the pressures on them to be selective would be enormous. Inevitably, selection would be a matter of invidious social discrimination.

The Bill actually encouraged opting out. It was very easy under the Bill as drafted for a small number of activists to make the decision. And what kind of compensation would the local authority have for the loss of buildings? What would the Secretary of State do, when schools opted out, to stop closure? How were the back-up services now provided by the local authorities to be found? If a community school opted out, would its facilities be lost to the community? What appeal system would there be for parents whose children were not selected? Who was going to investigate a complaint against such institutions?

If all this was about giving schools more autonomy, there were proposals elsewhere in the Bill that would achieve that. In fact, it was about re-introducing selection.

Tim Brighouse was thinking of three summers. There was last summer, when a kaleidoscope stopped shaking and he saw a pattern. Apart from Sweden and Switzerland, we were alone among European countries in not having been invaded this century. So changes hadn't occurred, and radical change seemed impossible. Then Mrs Thatcher had plunged us into institutional change in such a fashion as to make it the equivalent of invasion. The changes she introduced made those brought about by Gladstone and Peel seem child's play. Economic liberalism had taken hold of our way of life. The rule was that you could be relied upon to engender wealth as an individual if the others would get out of the way.

This Bill specified what the system should deliver for 94% of our future citizens. It was a clever recipe for social control, or perhaps a recipe for social dislocation. What it did not stand for was giving all children the same opportunity to grow up as citizens whatever their schools. A market would be created in children's abilities. There would be a first division of independent schools, with the City Technological Colleges as the second division: the third division would be the grant-maintained schools, and open enrolment would cause not only a fourth division but a Vauxhall League.

The second summer was this one coming ... and beyond that, he wondered what might happen in Moss-side or Tower Hamlets in a hot summer in the 1990s...

One of the consequences of the Bill was that parental choice would be less. In Oxfordshire they would not surpass the 91.18% who last year, under the present system, got into schools of their first choice. He was deeply worried about the fate of the village schools.

There were awkward questions that must be asked. Were the proposals consistent with other reforms? Were they consistent with the Education Acts of 1980, 1981, 1986? Were they fair? Would they strengthen the partnership between home and school? What were the

resource implications, and were these acknowledged? Were the proposals cost-effective? Would they enable State-maintained schools to emulate the best in the independent schools? Was there respectable research evidence to support the details of the proposals? Did they command the respect of the majority of those required to carry them out? Would they lead to political freedom and social justice?

Ada Fordham, Chair of the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education, spoke of Kenneth Baker's claim that he was supported by parents; in fact, all over the country, turning up to hear about the Bill, they were amazed, startled and alarmed. They wanted their children to go with friends to the local school: they feared selection: they did not hate the local authorities. Lacking support elsewhere (including that of the Conservative Education Association and of many Conservative County Councils), Baker turned to the parents, using them as a mechanism for opting out. It was vital that they should be informed: it was vital that they should be able to express their acceptance of the truth that the school belonged to a wider community than of those who have children there at any particular time.

James Hammond for the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations said his organisation rejected open enrolment as a total irrelevance. They also rejected opting out. In his area, if six fairly large schools opted out, they could take with them about 80% of the educational budget for the local authority. Having travelled round the country speaking to thousands of parents he had a message for Mr Baker: We do not want as parents to opt out — we want to opt in to a State system in which we can be confident we can send our children to the local school, and that their talents will be developed to the full.

Jenni Hall from ACE spoke of the parental distress ACE dealt with daily. Against that background, they were struck by the irrelevance and contempt with which the Bill had been drafted. It would create further divisions along the lines of class, race and poverty. It amounted to selling off our children's future. Neville Stewart, director of the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools, said the Bill was a challenge to make the comprehensives better. It was a challenge to take on the Right in terms of values, and to put fraternity on the agenda. In the steady removal of freedoms, he found frightening similarities with Nazi Germany.

Jack Whitehead, of the British Education Research Association, said there was an alarming gap in the knowledge of Mrs Thatcher's advisers when it came to evidence on testing. The underlying purpose of the Bill was utterly removed from what teachers were doing in the schools with their children. The fundamental structural change that was needed was support for the teachers and their practices.

Jim White, from NALGO, said he hadn't come to talk about the tribulations of his members: though theirs was the trade union most concerned about the wider implications of this tremendous piece of legislation. He pointed, with amazement, as other speakers did, to the proposal that opting out should follow from a simple majority. In a trade union it had to be 80%; in a darts league or bowling club, two-thirds. So what sort of democracy was that? Who would run the election: or

administer it: or count the votes? If a school made this stupid choice, how would it operate in the semi-private sector in which it would now find itself? What level of accountability were governors of opted-out schools to have? Who was going to elect them?

To the last question the answer was simple: they would elect themselves and co-opt whomever they liked.

## Curriculum and testing

The second session concerned itself with curriculum and testing. As Clyde Chitty said from the chair, these were sophisticated issues and there were variations of opinion even on the so-called Left.

June Fisher, vice-president of the NUT and chair of its education committee, said the most important statement she had to make at the beginning was that the NUT and the NAS/UWT were united and had agreed their approach together. As to the curriculum, she had to point to a hidden curriculum in the Bill itself. The Government had deliberately set out to promulgate the myth that education had failed, and aimed at dividing teachers from their natural allies, the parents and the local authorities.

The professional organisations were not against the idea of a national curriculum, but it should be an entitlement curriculum, not one cobbled together in three weeks, ignoring the great processes of curriculum advance of the past twenty years. The Secretary of State would choose the groups that would decide on this curriculum. In the view of the NUT they should be accountable to the professional organisations or to the local authorities, or to universities or higher education areas. For whom was the curriculum intended? It was for the children in the State schools. Why was it needed? Brian Simon's research into exam results, drawing on DES statistics, showed that over the last 15 years the level of exam achievement was increasing. The proposals ignored primary practice, the envy of teachers from all over the world, and it ignored special educational needs — devoting to them four throwaway lines about the modification of tests: they ignored the report of the HMIs on modern languages. She foresaw that schools taking a positive view of the curriculum would have to give crammer courses in subjects such as art, dance, domestic science.

Michael Armstrong said twelve years ago it seemed just possible that popular education was on the edge of great achievement. It had begun to address the fundamental problem of the curriculum — how the subject matter could be made more accessible and appealing, and how secondary education could extend and define this. It was a Labour Government that had first given encouragement to reaction, with Jim Callaghan's Ruskin speech.

The national curriculum depended on three fallacies. The first was the fallacy of the subject. The Government's list was more or less arbitrary. Why should science be closer to the heart of the primary school system than art? Why were the moral sciences less fundamental than the physical sciences? Why was there no mention of craft? Most of the really fruitful classroom inquiries had a way of moving in and out of subjects, confusing boundaries. In learning, the significant insights tended to come from teachers and

pupils who refused to be bound by subject.

The second fallacy was the fallacy of the test. Whether of the kind Mrs Thatcher preferred or of the kind Mr Baker preferred, if only he knew, tests measured only the shadow of achievement. When shadow was taken for substance, then children's individual accomplishments would be at best caricatured and at worst denied. The urge to grade and label was fatal to a critical account of achievement. In the end, individual achievement was incommensurable.

The third fallacy was the greatest: that of delivery. This metaphor distorted its understanding of education. Knowledge was portrayed as a commodity delivered by teachers to children. In the consultative documents, the motivation and interests of children counted for nothing. They were seen as passive recipients of whatever teachers chose to put before them.

Graham Terrell, vice-president of the NAS/UWT, said the Government claimed it had a curriculum hot line to parents. Making use of parents, marginalising the teachers' unions, they would call upon the teachers' skills to carry out their design: which was to replace teaching with instruction. Regular testing would ensure that the State-imposed curriculum would be kept to. Under Clause 4, the Secretary of State might by order specify such attainment targets as he considered appropriate. That was unprecedented totalitarianism. It amounted to the party politicisation of the curriculum. The checks and balances lay with the House of Commons, but one had seen how keen the Conservative backbenchers were to correct their front bench. There would be a National Curriculum Council: but the Secretary of State would appoint it. Teachers would be postmen delivering a pre-packed parcel. But he did not intend his members should be cowed or compliant. 'We will not deliver'.

Michael Duffy, ex-chair of the Secondary Heads Association, said the respondents to the consultative document had argued their case on grounds of reason and experience — but the Government wasn't interested in these: for them, it was a matter of ideology and faith. Much of the curriculum as outlined was archaic, rigidly prescriptive and at odds with much good practice that had been seen to work. It was a commodity mass-produced for the indiscriminating, and the tests amounted to quality control. The effect of these proposals was to de-skill the teacher. He recalled H.L. Mencken: 'To every problem there is a simple solution, and it is invariably wrong.'

Cynthia Watmore, president of the Assistant Mistresses and Masters Association, said nothing but harm could come from crude competitive testing. Child-centred learning would become a thing of the past. The publication of results would be divisive. The Bill was also wasteful of teachers' time — a resource barely mentioned. One of the ways forward was that with one voice it should be made clear that the curriculum depended on the teachers in the classroom.

Christopher Davies, from the Association for the Study of the Curriculum, said the learning of the child must be central to the curriculum, not the state of the market. What would result from the proposals was not structure, but stricture: not effective learning, but didactic teaching. Roger Murphy, director of the Examinations and Assessment Unit of Southampton

University, said the debate in the country was not going well. The education arguments against testing were seen as the reaction of those with something to hide. We were being caught up in a movement towards providing an index of pupils, schools, and ultimately of teachers.

Krishna Shukla, secretary of the National Anti-racist Movement in Education, said the black community were completely on the fringe of these discussions. He deplored the fact that the Bill had not been made available in the languages of the minorities, and that no reference was made to education for a multicultural society. In testing, they were already aware of a cultural bias against black communities. Black children always came out worst. In India they had a system of annual assessment: if a child failed, it was not promoted to the following year. If this Government adopted such a system, they might well solve the problem of unemployment.

Maurice Plaskow, chair of the Programme for the Reform of Secondary Education, said that anyone who thought education could be taken out of politics must be simple-minded. The optimism must lie with the teachers and their organisations. He echoed Professor Denis Lawton's hope that teachers could turn any silly suggestion into a sensible curriculum.

Margaret Peter, of the National Council for Special Education, said that since 1975-6 there had been a reduction of the children in special schools from 156,000 to 129,000. They had increasing links with their peers in ordinary schools. But the pressures of the national curriculum and testing would lessen time and energy, however well-intentioned teachers were. We were likely to see a reduction in the support services. The eighteen per cent now in ordinary schools were threatened, especially those with emotional or behavioural difficulties. There was a danger signal in the first clause, where it was said the curriculum was to promote spiritual, moral and mental development. There was no regard for emotional development. Kenneth Baker had told her that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties would be moved from ordinary classes. Had the Government done its sums? The cost in special schools was five times higher than in primary schools, three to five times higher than in secondary schools. Did the Government want to lose the brain power of emotionally vulnerable children? Which did the Government prefer — to let society pick up the bill later, or to change the Bill now?

### **The Fight-Back**

The third session was devoted to consideration of the fight-back, now and later — including post-school education. The first main speaker was Mary Jane Drummond, who said the Bill had been quiet about four-year-olds. Open admission and free parental choice would increase the pressure to admit children earlier: but, unless provision dramatically improved, that would be a bad thing. Why could we not recognise the pressure for four-year-old places as pressure for adequate pre-school provision?

On the other hand, the Bill might imply competition and inertia, but it did not actually legislate for them. She recalled a head teacher who'd said: 'Well, I shall test them when they come in at 3 so I know where I am.' It

was noticeable she said '*I* am,' not '*they* are'. Somehow, she was not torn to pieces. All this could have appalling consequences for four and five-year-olds, *but it was not inevitable*. Teachers, asked how it felt to be a teacher, used the words 'frustrated', 'pressurised', 'undervalued'. Some added 'angry' and 'frightened'. But if they were feeling that way as a result of the Bill, were they to lie down under it? Were they perhaps covering up for saying they were feeling very small and that nobody loved them? Somewhere inside each of us there were urgent questions about the quality of education that we were not answering. But the Bill did not require testing at two, three and four. It did not require that teachers be competitive. It did not legislate to make teachers undervalued, pressurised and the rest. She was often depressed, but she did not mean to be pathetic.

Harry Ree, of the Community Education Development Council, said there were ways in which we could praise Baker. He did get into the Guinness Book of Records with the record number of responses to consultation papers, and of occasions when he and not the House of Commons or Parliament had the power to decide. By uniting the educational profession against him he had done his best to see the task was not well done. Teachers, advisers, councillors — everyone had been against him: with a single shamefully missing group, the HMIs. Too little attention was paid to the unlooked for opportunities the Bill offered. In the short term we could put greatly increased emphasis as teachers on the connection with parents. That could be done by regularly sending them profiles of their children, and informing parents of learning plans and of the extent to which they had been successful. In the short term the agenda included retaining the alliance between previously warring groups in the profession: capitalising on parents' interest in their children: helping to formulate an education policy for the future for one's own party. There should be a Campaign for the Reform of the National Curriculum. It was up to teachers, where stupid things were being done, to influence the governors. It was important to be, and to be seen to be, constructive.

Jackson Hall, ex-Chief Education Officer of Sunderland, said we had a common obligation to make a positive response. Mr Baker was in a hurry, the Act was being implemented piecemeal, and he would run into difficulties: so the Bill's opponents had time in which to make themselves felt. He thought there was a tendency to believe there was only a given quantum of power: in fact, there was the power to create an authentic professional voice. The Secretary of State might have dissolved the partnership, but the partnership remained. There was no possibility of contracting out of it, and there was the continuing commitment to the benefit of the pupils. The Bill could leave the local authorities with a more professional role. Clause 6, imposing on them a duty to be more positive in their approach to the curriculum, amounted to a definite extension of their responsibilities. They should not be seen as some sort of crude enforcement agency. They needed to have a much more systematic knowledge of the schools, and to act collectively. It was a constitutional as much as an educational question. Any disunity among teachers was certainly costly. The teachers must get their act together. Did the professionals at large know what was

going to hit them? He thought the subject associations and others such as the Association for Primary Education had not been sufficiently exploited.

Diana Daly, of Education Alert, Aberdeen, gave another gloss on the story told by Jim White — of the success of the resistance movement in Scotland. Alastair McCrae, of NUPE, said it should be ensured that when, inevitably, complaints came from parents and children, they should know the responsibility rested with the present Government.

Patrick Younge, vice-president of the National Union of Students, suggested that next time the Government compared our economic performance with that of Japan or West Germany, it should look at the proportion who go on to full-time higher education. In Britain it was less than 15%. We must keep alliances going: should perhaps have a National Education Day in which schools and colleges threw open their doors: should be proud of the comprehensive system: and, taking our cue from Mrs Thatcher who said that they must get *their* people on to governing bodies, we should get *our* people on to them.

Lucia Jones, of the National Association of Teachers of Further and Higher Education, spoke of her fears for adult education. They were going to be terribly reliant on the local authorities and on their remembering the existence of adult education. Building up the local authorities was the only defence and protection. David Burbidge, of the National Association of Head Teachers, called for a School Management Development Council to co-ordinate training and monitor courses. There must be access to training for all Heads and senior staff with managerial roles. If the Bill went through such training was utterly essential. Brian Wilcox, Chief Adviser for the Sheffield Education Department, thought the fight back should centre on challenging the central ideology of the Bill. It was necessary to address the black hole at the centre of the last twelve years of educational discussion. As soon as the Bill became an Act the debate must be carried out in every area of the country: jargon must be avoided, the language of discussion must be straightforward: and we must listen to what people said. One great advantage must not be forgotten: each authority had the right, together with the teachers, to formulate a policy which would have to accommodate the national curriculum but must be much broader than it.

Paddy O'Rourke, of NATFHE, agreed that we must not be frightened of change — considered and debated change. The Bill did not change the teachers, who must set out to limit the damage. Dr Ekkehard Kopp, president of the Association of University Teachers, said what Baker was not allowing was academic freedom, the right to be heterodox. The Secretary of State would have the right to veto the publication of research. It wasn't words we wanted, but procedures. We must confront the public more sharply as professionals. Carol Sherriff, of the TUC, called for unity and the informing of parents. Mrs Joyce Trace, of the British Association for Early Childhood Education, said we must have positive policies of our own, and not merely respond to the policies of the Government. Mervyn Benford, general secretary of the National Association for Primary Education, said we had been dreadfully reasonable, but dislike of the Bill ran right

# Forum Conference

## Statement of Intent

*The following 'Statement of Intent' was carried by acclamation at the close of the FORUM conference, 'Unite for Education', held at Friends House, Euston Road, London, on Saturday, 19th March 1988.*

This conference, attended by over 500 people, having heard the view of official representatives of 25 parents', teachers', local authorities', trade unions, voluntary and other organisations, wishes to place on record its clear rejection of all the major measures in the Education 'Reform' Bill. Those present pledge themselves to continue the fight against this reactionary measure while it is still under discussion in Parliament. In the view of the Conference, this Bill, if carried without serious amendment, threatens the destruction of the whole publicly provided system of education, which has been built up, with great effort and sacrifice, since the passage of the Education Act of 1944.

In the view of the Conference, there are four aspects of the Bill which urgently require amendment. These are:

1. Amendment of the Open Entry and Opting-Out clauses, in such a way to ensure that local authorities retain full powers to control and plan the development of local systems of education under democratic control serving their whole communities of children and adults.
2. Amendment of the clauses on the national curriculum, in such a way as radically to modify the totalitarian powers, for instance, over programmes of study and assessment, these provide to the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Conference opposes the concept of crude testing at 7, 11, 14 and 16. Conference regards such amendments as having major importance.

3. Amendment of the clauses relating to further and higher education, both to restore local authority and democratic control over Colleges and Polytechnics, and to provide a statutory guarantee ensuring full academic freedom to those who teach in the Colleges and Universities.

4. Amendment of the Bill to ensure the continuance of a single, democratically elected, unitary education authority for Inner London.

Conference believes that, at the present time, the main struggle must be to amend this Bill in such a way as to render its likely effect less destructive than will be the case if the Bill is carried unamended. Conference members pledge themselves to sharpen this struggle over the next few weeks and months, and call on the members of both Houses of Parliament to ensure responsible amendment of the Education Bill on the lines already suggested. Their responsibilities, at this juncture, are immense.

If the Education Bill is, in fact, carried, virtually unamended, Conference members pledge themselves to carry through a powerful campaign in the country to protect schools and colleges from the Bill's worst effects, and to preserve and develop the publicly provided system of education at all levels. In particular, Conference pledges itself to fight to strengthen the existing system of Comprehensive primary and secondary education under popular, democratic control.

### Unite for Education

The 'Demonstrative Conference' was organised by FORUM, in cooperation with the following organisations:

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)  
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association (AMMA)  
Association for Study of the Curriculum (ASC)  
Association of University Teachers (AUT)  
British Association for Early Childhood Education (BAECE)  
British Educational Research Association (BERA)  
Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (CASE)  
Centre for Study of Comprehensive Schools (CSCS)  
City of Sheffield Education Department  
Community Education Development Centre (CEDC)  
Council for Educational Advance (CEA)

National Association of Governors and Managers (NAGAM)

National Association for Primary Education (NAPE)

National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

National Association of School-masters and Union of Women Teachers (NAS/UWT)

National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE)

National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA)

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

National Union of Public Employees (NUPE)

National Union of Teachers (NUT)

Programme for the Reform of Secondary Education (PRISE)

Trade Union Congress

(continued from page 72)

across the spectrum of informed opinion. There were serious issues of constitutional propriety for the House of Lords to consider, and especially the right to change an institution at the behest of the parents of those at present in it. This was to disenfranchise future parents.

The last speaker in this packed and headlong day was Ela Ray, of the National Convention of Black Teachers. She said no minority community had been consulted: it seemed as if they and their children did not exist. They feared for the future of their children, many of them bilingual. The Bill was racist, perhaps not in its intention but certainly in its consequences.

# Popular Education and the National Curriculum

**Michael Armstrong**

**A speech delivered at the FORUM conference UNITE FOR EDUCATION on Saturday 19th March 1988**

Twelve years ago it seemed just possible that popular education in this country might be on the threshold of a major intellectual achievement. The steady, if uneven, growth of comprehensive schools, and the gradual abolition of streaming, first within the junior school and then in at least the earlier years of the comprehensive school, had at last served to focus attention on the central challenge to any genuinely popular education: how, within an admittedly unequal society, to reconstruct the relationship between organised knowledge and naive experience in such a way as to made the various worlds of the mind — those arts and sciences which are expressive of our culture — accessible to all, irrespective of wealth, of class, of ability (that most artificial and arbitrary of concepts).

We had begun, that is, to address the fundamental problem of curriculum, which is not so much the question of what subject matter to teach as of how subject matter can be revived and reconstituted and extended so as to make it more diversely appealing to those who learn. Already it seemed legitimate to celebrate the achievement, however incomplete, of our most adventurous primary schools as the beginning of “a major reorganisation of subject matter into a common and coherent framework” — to cite an essay written in FORUM in 1973. We were beginning at that time to discover how secondary education might extend and refine this emerging tradition.

But it was not to be. The years between have been years of declining aspiration as Government after Government has quailed at the financial and social, but above all at the intellectual consequences of carrying through the comprehensive reform. Characteristically it was a Labour Government, in 1976, which first gave official encouragement to reaction, and this at the very moment of intellectual advance. It is, after all, no accident of propaganda that the consultation document on the national curriculum cites Jim Callaghan’s Ruskin speech on its second page. For the Education Bill is not so much a radical departure as the codifying of what is already, in many parts of the country, an increasingly common and increasingly narrow practice. And yet, precisely because it CODIFIES a profoundly restrictive and negative practice, the Education Bill threatens the future of popular education to a degree unparalleled in the history of the journal which has called this conference.

\* \* \*

The national curriculum which this Government now seeks to impose on maintained schools depends upon three great fallacies. The first of these is the fallacy of the SUBJECT.

There is nothing wrong in thinking of the curriculum, AMONG OTHER WAYS, in terms of subjects — “a particular department of art or science in which one is instructed or examined” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). Indeed, by the time they enter school at the age of five many children already show an incipient interest in most of the subjects which appear on the Government’s foundation list, as well as in other subjects which the Government has chosen to neglect.

Of course the Government’s list, as it stands, is more or less arbitrary — but then what isn’t in this Bill — and wholly unargued. Why, for example, should science be closer to the heart of the primary school curriculum than art — except on the most crassly utilitarian grounds? Why should the moral sciences — ethics, civics, philosophy — be less fundamental than the physical sciences — unless it be that the latter might appear to be less politically sensitive? Why should history and geography be preferred to Social Studies — other than for reasons of political prejudice? Or art and music to drama and dance? Why is there no mention of craft — or is it simply subsumed under technology? The Government may like to argue that there cannot be time for everything and that choices had to be made, but it refrains from defending the particular choices which it HAS made.

But in any case the entire argument about which subjects to make compulsory and which to leave optional misrepresents the way in which individual subjects permeate a curriculum and subserve it. For to describe a curriculum in terms of subjects only makes sense when set alongside alternative and complementary descriptions. Perhaps the most significant alternative, though not the only one, concerns the material and cultural resources that compose a classroom environment and provide the wherewithal of children’s studies. It is characteristic of the best classrooms, and not only in the primary schools, that they present children with a multitude of focusses which invite, promote and sustain inquiry in a way that overwhelms subject boundaries.

It is not just that there are certain specific THEMES, as the Government calls them, which cut across traditional subjects and offer as it were an alternative body of knowledge. (Health Education and Information



Technology are predictably the Government's anodyne instances.) It is certainly not a matter of finding room for the ubiquitous primary school 'topic'. It is rather that most of the really fruitful classroom inquiries, whether on the part on an individual child, a small group of children, or an entire class, have a way of moving in and out of subjects, conflating traditions, confusing boundaries, eliminating distinctions and creating new ones. So a study of the life of a frog becomes an exercise in philosophical speculation, scientific observation, literary fantasy and artistic method. So designing a set of earrings turns into an investigation of the psychology of faces. So an examination of mathematical powers embraces the geography of the universe and the mythical origins of the game of chess.

In learning, from nursery to university, the significant insights tend to come to those, teachers and pupils alike, who refuse to be bounded by subjects, who are prepared to move freely between traditions and beyond traditions — from science to philosophy to art to some new field of inquiry — without embarrassment. Every significant curriculum rewrites to some degree the history of knowledge. To understand this is to recognise that neither a list of subjects nor a description of resources is enough to define a curriculum. Each point of view requires the other in order to complete itself.

\* \* \*

The second great fallacy that bedevils the National Curriculum is the fallacy of the TEST.

"At the heart of the assessment process", announces the Government in the characteristically sloppy prose of its consultation document, "there will be nationally prescribed tests done by all children to supplement the individual teacher's assessments." It is the most dispiriting sentence in the whole dismal document. For tests, whether of the kind which Mrs Thatcher prefers or of the kind which Professor Black prefers, measure no more than the SHADOW of achievement. Their role is peripheral to assessment. They help us, sometimes, to diagnose particular weaknesses, to locate gaps in knowledge, to detect unevenness in development, or to estimate proficiency at accomplishing a limited number of set tasks. But when the shadow is mistaken for the substance — when nationally prescribed tests are placed at the CENTRE of a school's assessment of its pupils and become the chief criterion of comparison between children, teachers and schools — then children's individual accomplishments will at best be caricatured and at worst be altogether denied.

To describe children's achievements adequately we require a critical account of their most significant pursuits: of their stories, their paintings, their scientific investigations, their inventions, their mathematical speculations, their historical researches, and especially of the work on which they have lavished the greatest care and enthusiasm. To offer such an account requires close observation, careful reflection, considerable knowledge of the children whose achievement is in question, and a strong personal commitment to intellectual inquiry. Above all it requires an openness of mind in the face of the extraordinary richness and diversity of children's most deeply considered thought and action.

The urge to grade, to mark, to label, to say as the

Government wants us to say that "10% got Grade One, 20% Grade Two, 30% Grade Three", is fatal to a critical account of achievement. The first and chief requirement is to DESCRIBE an intellectual performance, not to JUDGE it: that is to say, to examine the purposes or intentions inherent in a child's characteristic pursuits, their development over time, the recurrence of particular themes and motifs with their variations, the relationship of a child's thought to the medium of its expression, the interplay of content and form, the handling of particular opportunities and constraints. The more our attention is focussed on such issues as these the less compelling is the urge to grade.

In the end individual achievement is incommensurable. The act of measurement is inevitably an act of reduction and rejection — an act which deprives many children of the value of their own accomplishments, confining acceptable knowledge to the interests and purposes of the privileged and the selected.

\* \* \*

And this brings me to the third and greatest fallacy of the National Curriculum, the fallacy of DELIVERY.

Just as the metaphor of the market dominates and distorts the Government's understanding of society as a whole, so the metaphor of delivery dominates and distorts its understanding of education. Indeed the two metaphors are essentially the same.

Throughout the consultation document, throughout the Bill itself, knowledge is portrayed as a commodity, delivered by teachers, grocery boys, as it were, of the curriculum, to children. The metaphor of delivery diminishes the status both of teachers and of children at the same time as it lends a spurious authority to the concept of knowledge. For to treat knowledge as a commodity is to place it out of reach of the process of critical inquiry in which it has both its origin and its significance. It is to suppose that knowledge is altogether independent of the circumstances of human experience and the social order: independent of social conditions, of relationships of power, of the interest and purposes of those by whom or to whom it is to be delivered. It places knowledge above reproach. It makes it mysterious and impenetrable, something to be taken on trust at the valuation of those who are placed in authority.

Such a conception is of course only too convenient to those who exercise power in our society, inasmuch as it allows them to control access to knowledge and so to preserve it from the radical scrutiny which might threaten their own authority. It is not in the least surprising in this regard to find the Government re-emphasizing the values of obedience, of uniform, of punishment even, while deploring or forbidding the study of peace, or of politics, or of race, gender and sexuality.

Whatever slender plausibility this naive understanding of knowledge may possess depends on the twin assumptions that neither teachers nor children are capable of, or to be trusted with, a critical engagement in subject matter. As far as teachers are concerned it is all too clear, despite the glib asides, that they are to be allocated no significant role in

determining, revising or challenging the knowledge which they are required to teach. The academic freedom which the Government may yet be forced to concede to the universities is in no measure to be permitted the schools. But still more total is the Government's rejection of the critical enterprise of children. Their motivation is never mentioned in the consultation document. Their interests count for almost nothing, either in the specification of subjects, the determination of attainment targets and programmes of study, or the choice of methods of assessment. They are the more or less passive recipients of whatever the Government happens to decide that teachers should place before them.

Yet critical enterprise is inseparable from learning. The exercise of judgement is embedded in children's earliest experience of art or science, of literature or mathematics. It is, for children no less than for adults, a condition of performance. Indeed the course of intellectual growth can best be described as the natural history of every child's practice of the arts and sciences, from the earliest scribbles to the most advanced speculations. The central responsibility — and the unfulfilled but attainable goal — of popular education is to provoke and sustain the critical enterprise of every child in every school. The present Government has chosen to ignore, to evade, and in the last resort to deny this responsibility. I find it hard to imagine that the children of this country have ever been more grossly betrayed.

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# Focus in education

**FOCUS in EDUCATION**, set up by Maurice Plaskow (ex-School's Council) and Leslie Ryder (ex-ILEA) to produce INSET videos, which last year published a revealing documentary on the marking of A-level, and three programmes for training school governors, has just completed two projects which will be of particular interest to **FORUM** readers.

**THINKING SCHOOLS** is a package of four videos, three of which are case studies of innovative schools. The fourth is an analysis of the issues raised in the three studies. One of the comprehensives set out to monitor the impact of GCSE on students, staff and parents, and realised early on that the implications went far deeper than just looking at a new examination.

A second follows the process of a school moving into a new building, and taking the opportunity to review their curriculum. Of special interest is the structure which was established to involve every member of staff in the discussion and decision-making process.

The third school also began from a curriculum review, which decided that the immediate priority was a new, structured guidance programme. The video illustrates the tensions and negotiations which ensued.

More recently, two studies of **TEACHER APPRAISAL** have been made, in LEAs which have been part of the pilot programme. The videos set out the procedures of appraisal, from the aims and preparation, classroom observation and analysis, and the appraisal dialogue, and reflections by both appraisers and appraised on the experience.

Alongside the appraisal, which is seen entirely as a supportive activity, essentially concerned with professional development, is an examination of whole-school review, which is closely linked to appraisal, since criteria for judgment will depend to a considerable extent on the aims set by the school and individual departments.

All the videos are 'authentic' expositions, in that nothing was rehearsed for the benefit of the cameras. The commitment and honesty of the teachers involved provide unique insight into the complexities and sensitivities of school-based developments which, one suspects, most politicians, and even (?) the DES are scarcely aware of.

Copies of the videos, and further information is available from **FOCUS in EDUCATION Ltd.**, 65 High Street, Hampton Hill, Middlesex, TW12 1NH (Telephone: 01-783-0333).



# The Day the Ceiling Crashed to the Floor

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**Aileen Fisher**

Headteacher at Applecross, in Ross-Shire, Aileen Fisher reports here on the Government's Education Bill for Scotland, which complements Baker's 'Reform' Bill for England and Wales. Michael Forsyth's proposals dropped like a bombshell in the Autumn of last year, and were almost universally rejected — notably by parents, who stood to gain considerable power. These, and later developments, form the subject matter of this article.

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The end of the school session 1986/7 saw a Scottish teacher population battle-weary after three years of industrial action — selective three-day strikes, general one-day strikes, strict adherence to purely contractual duties and boycott of extra-curricular activity. This protracted action had at last culminated in a settlement. Agreement had been reached, substantial salary increases had been achieved, and negotiating rights were still intact. Despite these gains, which did after all represent a victory over what had been seen as Government intransigence, there was, clouding the relief, a general sense of injustice, and in many cases bitterness, in that the undoubted gains were not without strings attached. Many saw these as representing a deterioration in conditions of service. So, approaching the start of school session 87/8, Scottish teachers were facing, mainly with resignation, the prospect of new demands on their time, which might, in different circumstances, with a different timescale and guaranteed resources, have been regarded as a challenge; if, especially, the settlement had not been *conditional* on their implementation.

It was known, of course, that the newly appointed Scottish Minister for Education, young, keen-eyed, Thatcherite Michael Forsyth — described by a prominent fellow-Tory as being "somewhere to the right of Ghengis Khan" — would be issuing a statement on Scottish education, but it was generally agreed that no great rocking of the boat would take place. After all, a breathing space was surely necessary, a chance to rediscover normality, and to take on board the considerable new requirements of the pay and conditions settlement. It was also generally agreed that in the light of the Tories' resounding Scottish defeat at the General Election (Forsyth himself was returned with a very slim majority), any pronouncement from the Scottish Office would be pretty low-key — a very bland statement of aims, with perhaps some impetus towards the replacement of the admittedly ineffectual 'toothless' Schools Councils with something more effective, but certainly no 'Baker Mark II'. (It was soon to be demonstrated, and not only in education, that the Government considered that what Scotland needed was not less, but an even bigger dose of Thatcherism).

It is a measure of just how much of an unknown quantity Michael Forsyth was at that time, that the very day before his bombshell burst, two educational pundits, addressing themselves to some mild speculation as to what, if anything, he might have up his sleeve, were

sagely agreeing, on a radio chat show, that very little in the way of radical educational change in Scotland would be proposed by the Government. No less an organ than the *Times Educational Supplement, Scotland*<sup>1</sup> in a leader of the 14th August, expressed unease about the government's intentions, but failed to predict them. Its editorial unease was expressed in the recognition that 'Mr Forsyth remains an unknown quantity, with a record of hostility to the public services including education'. Unease also derived from concern that 'Mr Baker's dafter notions for English education will drift northwards'. Readers were further cautioned that they could 'hardly expect a *cordon sanitaire* to be drawn across the Cheviots when there is an ideological infection rife in Thatcherite England'. But despite these heavy forebodings, the main assertion of the piece was that with strikes behind them, and attention no longer being diverted to the outcome of the pay campaign, the 'schools should be in better heart than for several years'.

Alas, the issues of *TESS* containing this leader had already gone to press, and therefore appeared almost simultaneously with the unleashing of Mr Forsyth's consultation paper 'School Management and the Role of Parents'<sup>2</sup>. It was a slim enough document — its very slimness lending credibility to the view subsequently expressed widely that it had been hastily cobbled together. (Closer reading of the document after the initial shockwaves receded seemed to reinforce this view, as the sheer unpracticability of many of the proposals was revealed).

The principal proposal was that there would be a separate 'Board' for each primary, secondary and special school with more than 100 pupils. (To appreciate the radical nature of this proposal, it is necessary for those not familiar with the Scottish set-up to understand that no system of boards of governors exists in Scotland; the aforementioned Schools Councils are centred round a secondary school and its feeder primaries. They were set up after regionalisation, and, with no real powers of any kind, have proved to be little more than 'talking shops'). These boards would vary in size from 7 to 13 members, depending on the size of the school. All boards would have a majority of parent members, elected by secret ballot. Staff representatives, 1-3 in number, would be chosen by their colleagues. The board would have the power to co-opt 2 or 3 members representing the local community, it being suggested that these should 'ensure representation of local church and business interests'. The headteacher would have 'a

duty and a right' to attend board meetings in an advisory capacity, but would have no vote. Likewise, no voting power would be allocated to the education authority representative who would be entitled to attend. It was not made clear how it would be possible for education authorities to find enough representatives to attend the meetings of hundreds of boards over wide geographical areas.

It was proposed in the consultation paper that in time, the new boards should take full responsibility for the management of their schools, but that before they could take on this task, they would need to gain experience. The boards would therefore start out with a basic range of powers and responsibilities, taking on further functions as they developed. The boards themselves would decide when they were ready to take on full powers, for which they would apply to the Secretary of State for Scotland. The more limited initial powers were termed 'the floor', and the maximum powers, to be taken on in the fullness of time, were termed 'the ceiling'.

### **'The Floor'**

These initial functions would include: a right to raise questions about any aspect of the running of the school; authority over expenditure on books and materials within the school; a right for parent members of the Board to be involved in the appointment of the senior staff of the school; a right of veto over the appointment of a headteacher; power to raise and spend money for the school; responsibility for communication between the school, parents and the community; responsibility for the use of the school 'out of hours'.

### **'The Ceiling'**

These maximum powers would comprise: direct control over a budget for the recurrent costs of the school; direct responsibility for choosing or rejecting members of staff for the school (the education authority would, however, remain the employer of the school staff).

Submissions were invited by the Secretary of State, 'as soon as possible and not later than 1 October 1987' allowing a consultation period of about 6 weeks. (This date was later extended in the face of an outcry about the brevity of the consultation period).

After the first stunned collective indrawing of breath and expressions of disbelief ('It's not the first of April, is it?') reaction was swift, hostile, and as nearly unanimous as is possible in a democratic society. Mr Forsyth must, of course, have anticipated, one suspects gleefully, the reactions he would provoke from the teaching profession and from the local authorities. A bombshell, after all, is *designed* to inspire maximum astonishment and disruption. His public response betrayed no hint that he had been aware of delivering anything of the sort. 'What's all the fuss about?' he asked in apparently genuine amazement.

There was nothing of the histrionic, however, in his surprise at the lack of enthusiasm in the reactions of Scottish parents. Mr Forsyth, in seeking opportunistically to tap a seething pool of parental resentment in the wake of the teachers' industrial action, had sorely miscalculated the wishes of Scottish parents, from whom the message came loud and clear, that they wished nothing to do with the proposals as they stood. While they welcomed the idea of more

consultation, and greater access to information, they rejected outright, as being totally inappropriate and unworkable, the notion that they should take on managerial powers. Great concern was likewise expressed about the inequality which would arise from such a system. While hundreds of parents made individual written submission to the Scottish Education Department, their viewpoint was also represented in adverse submissions from Parents Associations, the Scottish Parent-Teachers' Council and from the Schools' Councils themselves, up and down the country. (There is an irony in the effectiveness of the protests from these 'ineffectual' bodies which the proposals of the consultation document sought to replace, and which themselves agreed to the necessity for their own replacement). Organised parental opposition in the form of action groups — the most notable being the Lothian Parents Action Group based in Edinburgh, and Education Alert, based in Aberdeen — gave public voice to the Scottish commitment to a strong State education system. An independent survey of parental opinion by the Lothian group found less than 1% of parents in favour of the Government's plans.

Adverse submissions were also made by the teachers', and head teachers' unions, the local education authorities, and the churches. The Educational Institute of Scotland, Scotland's largest teaching union, recognised the need for a response which was not purely negative, and, while drawing attention to the 'dangers, difficulties and impracticalities' of the Forsyth proposals, included in its submission positive suggestions for increased involvement of parents with teachers in the running of the schools (Mr Forsyth took the unusual step, during a consultation exercise, of replying publicly, and with a considerable degree of petulance, to the EIS submission, reinforcing the impression that his mind was firmly made up, and not to be swayed by adverse submissions). All other teaching unions made similar submissions. The STUC forecast that 'The plans will set parent against parent, school against school and parent against teachers'. The Church of Scotland, condemned the proposals as 'likely to lead to a divisiveness among all interested parties and to produce increasingly adverse effects in those sections of the community that most need special provision and protection'. The Catholic Education Commission in Scotland expressed concern over the unlikelihood of boards having the necessary experience and expertise to fulfil their duties.

The most 'heavyweight' opposition of all came from the General Teaching Council for Scotland, set up over twenty years ago, and with which all teachers in Scotland must be registered. While accepting increased consultation in principle, the GTC unequivocally rejected almost all the other proposals which, it was submitted, would represent 'an erosion of professionalism, some of them will not work in practice, and some are constitutionally unsound'. Its 'gravest reservations' centred on what were being widely termed the 'hire and fire' powers to be allocated to boards. (Mr Forsyth disliked this term, and preferred 'appoint and remove'). This power, said the GTC, would be 'dangerously anti-professional and could easily be mis-used'. These condemnations gave voice to the genuine and justifiable fears of the teaching profession that, if these particular proposals came to pass, they would be

forever in a 'walking on eggs' situation. While it might be *unlikely* that a teacher would be dismissed because of the vendetta of a Primary One pupil whose dad was on the board, or that the doors of promotion were permanently closed because his or her eyes were too close together, the new machinery nevertheless would make it *possible*.

Predictably, the Scottish local authorities decisively rejected the proposals. The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland described the prospect they offered as 'an educational and managerial nightmare'. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities claimed that the proposals were being imposed, not in response to parental, or any other demands, but as part of 'an irrelevant philosophy'. In all, nearly eight thousand submissions were received by the Scottish Office, representing many more thousands of individuals.

Michael Forsyth seemed cast in the role of Public Enemy No 1, and not only by those out of political sympathy with him. Headlines like 'Tories desert Forsyth', 'Tory MP hits at plans for schools', and 'Is Forsyth friendless?' appeared.

Meantime, Forsyth was infuriating everyone with a mulish insistence on discussing what 'will' rather than what 'would' happen. He caused further anger by returning from a fact-finding visit to Denmark, lasting all of two days, to view their system of school boards, with an even stronger proselytising gleam in his eye. Parents in Scotland were by now deeply resentful of being chided for faint-heartedness because of their unwillingness to take on school managerial powers. The EIS answer to Forsyth's 'Denmark Experience' was to invite the general secretary of the only Danish teaching union to present his viewpoint, which turned out to be rather different from that presented by Michael Forsyth.

In the third week of January, the Government's response to the consultation exercise was published, in a small, eight-page booklet, the contents of which represented a considerable Government climb-down. The proposal for boards remained, but gone was the 'ceiling' and much of the 'floor'. Gone was any suggestion that boards should have control over curriculum and assessment. Gone were the 'hire and fire' proposals. Little, in fact, was left. It was widely believed that Malcolm Rifkind, the Secretary of State for Scotland, had exerted a moderating influence over Mr Forsyth's more *outré* ideas.

Although one could not underestimate the general and massive relief, it was nevertheless tempered by a sense that the situation was one of truce rather than total capitulation. There is a feeling now that jubilation, even in the face of such a political climb-down, would be misplaced, because the question remains — how could these proposals have been mooted in the first place? There were two *ostensible* reasons. Firstly, the need to replace the Schools Councils with something more relevant and effective. In this, the government claimed to have been responding to Glasgow University's 1980 report 'Scottish School Councils: Policy-Making, Participation or Irrelevance?'.<sup>3</sup> But Dr Alistair MacBeth, who led the study team, was highly critical of the Forsyth proposals, protesting that this wasn't really what he meant. The other ostensible reason was the perceived wishes of Scottish parents for greater involvement in schools. But great improvements in

home/school relations had taken place in the last ten years, and there had never been any suggestion that parents wished managerial powers. This had been confirmed by *research from both Stirling University<sup>4</sup> and Jordanhill College of Education<sup>5</sup>*.

What, then, were the *actual* reasons? Here are the ones most frequently offered: Mr Forsyth has to toe the party line, and be seen to be acting in parallel with Kenneth Baker. Mr Forsyth (whose own child is not educated in the State sector) believed that he could make allies of Scottish parents in two ways; firstly in his crusade against local authorities, and his campaign to erode their powers, and secondly, in punishing Scottish teachers for their 'victory' in achieving a pay settlement. Instead, parents and teachers have been united as never before, and a real feeling of partnership has been established. The Forsyth proposals had made much of the idea of partnership: it would not have been possible in school boards as originally proposed. As John Pollock, the outgoing general secretary of the EIS said, 'Michael Forsyth's most remarkable achievement has been to produce the broadest consensus ever to emerge in Scottish education'. However, there is a certainty abroad that it would be a mistake to be sanguine in a belief that the situation has just gone away. The new document is vague in many of its terms and the Secretary of State has referred to it as 'evolutionary'. At the time of writing, the EIS has challenged the Secretary of State to clarify twelve 'areas of doubt' arising from statements made at the launch of the new document, particularly some by Michael Forsyth.

Lastly, it was widely perceived that the offer of 'ceiling' powers to boards was a step closer to 'opting-out' proposals in England, a system perceived by Scottish parents and teachers as irrelevant, considering that only a tiny proportion of Scottish schoolchildren are in the independent sector, and the strong commitment to State education administered by the democratically elected local authorities. The School Boards proposals have been widely perceived as being the first step towards the dismantling of this system.

Yet again, no 'breathing space' has been possible, as Mr Forsyth's second consultation paper<sup>6</sup>, on curriculum and assessment, has been upon us for some weeks, more nearly a 'Baker mark II' than the school boards paper. The education scene begins to resemble the course of a protracted labour, in which the length of the intervals between pains is in inverse proportion to their intensity.

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# Anti-Racist Action: Setting An Agenda for Teacher Education

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**Ian Menter**

Now lecturer in Nursery/Infant Education at Bristol Polytechnic, Ian Menter has contributed several articles to FORUM recently, focussing on racial issues (Vol 29, No 2, and Vol 30, No 1). Here he follows these up with a hard-hitting contribution on anti-racist action within teacher education.

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The purpose of this article is to identify manifestations of racism in teacher education and to suggest some steps which should be taken by those who work in teacher education institutions. After offering some evidence of racism in teacher education I discuss some relevant 'institutional influences'. This leads to an attempt to summarise the nature of the task at hand, before finally suggesting an agenda for action.

## **What is the evidence for racism in teacher education?**

During 1986/7 some members of ARTEN — the Anti-Racist Teacher Education Network — carried out a questionnaire survey of all the initial teacher education institutions in Southwest England and South Wales (see Crozier, Lee and Menter, forthcoming). The responses received revealed, firstly, that issues of 'race' and education are at least recognised in all of the institutions and in most cases they are not only recognised, but are seen as significant. Only one of the institutions gave any indication of a negative reaction to being asked such questions. Secondly, it is clear that very very few black academic staff are employed at these institutions. In fact only five or six have been identified in the replies and it is probable that some of these are not actually working in *teacher* education. Thirdly, the number of black students on teacher education courses is very small indeed, ranging from about 0.3% to about 2%. These statistics, crude though they are, help to set the scene.

But there is another kind of evidence of racism, that is the personal experience of the black students (and staff) themselves. For example, the question of the treatment of black students on teaching practice is one that crops up frequently. Black students have reported that school staff find it difficult to relate to them and that they have been patronised and/or insulted. One black student on teaching practice in a primary school reported less favourable treatment by the school than the white student he was paired with. A black secondary school student arrived for her first visit to a school and during the course of a discussion with a senior member of the staff she asked whether the school had a multicultural education policy, as her college tutors had asked her to. The teacher laughed and said, 'No we don't have that problem here'. Later in the day when planning her RE timetable with another teacher the following was said to her as an opening remark: 'I suppose you'll be wanting to do World Religions?' How is the student to respond?

How are the College staff to respond when she informs them? Such encounters may well be the beginning of a difficult teaching practice for the student.

The assessment of black students also seems to be problematic. One black student was failed on his final teaching practice. The Examination Board which made that decision was not told until after it had been taken that he was black. So, those members of the Board who did not know the student were unable to ask questions about whether he had experienced any racial abuse or harassment in the school which might have affected his performance.

Assessment of college work too can throw up some worrying issues. Students at one college who had entered the B.Ed. from an access course, where they were told and indeed felt that they had been performing at a high level, had their confidence severely undermined by receiving very low marks for their early B.Ed. assignments, particularly for ones where they had sought to expose and question ethnocentrism within the subject as taught.

Because so few black tutors are employed in teacher education, at least in the region covered by the survey, many of the institutions reported that they invite outside speakers to talk to students and to lead discussions. How many of them share my experience of asking black speakers to speak of their experience in education only to be accused (implicitly and sometimes explicitly) by students of being 'black racists'?

And if there is evidence that white students entering courses are becoming increasingly racist in their views (cf. the 'new racism', see Gordon and Klug, 1986) then what is being done about it? One institution recently mounted an exhibition depicting local black history. During the two weeks it was displayed it was systematically defaced on several occasions.

The transition into employment at the end of the course can be revealing of yet further racism. A black bilingual student who was coming to the end of a four year B.Ed. course recently found it extremely difficult to get a job in a particular area. She had written a number of letters of application as had many of her white peers. Her reference was not even taken up. The white students however had all got interviews and most of them had secured jobs. Given the fact that her letter of application was in every way as strong as that of her peers, what explanation could there be? Could it be the fact that she had a Muslim name? Because of this delay she was given access to her confidential reference and

found it included the following statement: 'She is particularly interested in language development and would be well suited to working with immigrant children.' Such a 'well-intentioned' statement would surely close far more doors than it would open.

Finally, I will give an example of the experience of one of the few black tutors working in these institutions. This lecturer was threatened with deportation by the Home Office because of the way in which his employer had answered a query about the number of hours he worked. Fortunately, after representations, he was able to secure the required work permit for the job which he was carrying out.

My conclusion from this evidence has to be that for many black people teacher education as it exists in this country at the moment is dysfunctional.

### Major institutional influences

For teacher education institutions in the public sector the 1984 Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) discussion paper on multicultural education was very important. The paper focuses mainly on course content and course provision, drawing attention to three modes of approach — core, option and permeation (themes reiterated by the Swann Report in 1985). It did no more than touch on structural or managerial matters. Nevertheless, it represented a significant advance, particularly in its clear espousal of anti-racism.

Consequently it must be a matter of very grave concern that, in the notes of guidance that were drafted for course validators, the CNAA removed reference to anti-racist education and replaced that term with 'education provided without racial discrimination'. In his letter of resignation from the CNAA in protest at this, Gerald Grace of Cambridge University said that the term 'anti-racist education' had important analytical and explanatory power and suggested the CNAA was betraying the black community by its action. An article in *The Teacher* (Castle, 1987) revealed that there does appear to have been central government intervention at work, as Dr Grace had suspected. Does this excision really matter though? What is wrong with 'education provided without discrimination'? Well, put simply, what the CNAA would seem to be supporting is non-racist education rather than anti-racist education. The two terms are not synonymous. To say 'education provided without discrimination' is tantamount to saying nothing, for under the Race Relations Act, all education has to be provided without discrimination in any case. But because of the row no notes of guidance have yet been published.

In December 1986 during an interview about the McGoldrick case in Brent Kenneth Baker said that anti-racist education was alright as long as it didn't go too far! A little further thought reveals the underlying meaning of this. Presumably by definition anti-racism can only go so far as abolishing racism. If Mr Baker thinks anti-racism can go too far he is actually saying it must not actually abolish racism! This is very muddled thinking, reflecting I suppose political calculations rather than educational principles. For educationists anti-racism must mean not only non-discriminatory provision, it must also mean that the effect of the education provided must be to counter racism. In fact as I fear some of the

examples I gave earlier demonstrate, teacher education at the moment may be doing neither of these.

A second crucial influence is the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE). Paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Annex to DES Circular 3/84 will ensure that there is some recognition of cultural diversity in all initial teacher education courses. But these paragraphs are not without their problems, as the report from the first national ARTEN seminar, held in 1984, demonstrates (see ARTEN, 1987). What are black people (or other oppressed groups for that matter) to make of the assumption that this is a 'free society', for example? The document fails to recognise any of the social divisions not to say conflicts within this society. ('Differences' it does recognise.)

If CATE were serious about recognising 'diversity' I would have expected there to be at least one black person on the Council when it was created, if only for the sake of appearances. The situation with regards to the local committees of CATE is little better. In our regional survey we have only identified three black people on any of these committees.

### Policy and 'permeation'

In moving now towards setting an agenda for action it will be useful to ask what it is that an anti-racist policy for teacher education should be aiming to do. It must surely both challenge racism within institutions and prepare students and teachers to challenge and counteract racism throughout their careers. The achievement of such objectives will be hampered if they are based on a poor and uninformed understanding of racism, or if there are conflicting definitions of it.

There is evidence of a serious failure to support black students and teachers and of an almost total absence of black perspectives amongst staff and committees in the institutions. In addition there is an apparent failure to make the links between challenging racism and other forms of discrimination: sexism for instance. This is crucial, I would argue, both because racism and sexism are linked (notably in the treatment of black women) and because seeking to link up these 'projects', that is the anti-racist/black project and the anti-sexist/feminist project will make both of them more successful.

'Permeation' is a key word in many of the discussions of anti-racist approaches to course development. What though does it mean? If permeation is to be taken as a serious attempt to change practice, it must surely mean challenging the mainstream. For example, if one looks at my own field, primary education, the standard texts patently fail to seriously address racism (see Menter, 1987a). Many of them completely ignore it. The same could be said of many government and HMI documents in the field. Permeation must be about changing this but it must also be about the structures and practices which provide the context of teacher education courses. In a racist society, permeated anti-racism in teacher education will be highly visible and not, as some would seem to think, invisible.

### Setting an agenda for action

To conclude and to formalise an agenda for action I would like to suggest ten concerns.

(1) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of

policies: Many policies do not have inbuilt procedures. Without a programme for action a policy statement is no more than rhetoric. In some local authorities there has been considerable resistance to formalised evaluation; will the teacher education institutions be any better?

(2) Black perspectives: What does this mean? Are we talking about consultation, power sharing or what? In some instances white officers or teachers have assumed that once a policy has been accepted, consultation with black people is no longer important. Black participation has to be institutionalised, there must be ongoing involvement at all levels.

(3) Defining racism: It is crucial that developments are based on an informed understanding of racism, its pervasiveness and variety of manifestations inside and outside education.

(4) Employment practices: What steps can be taken within the legislation? If official quotas are illegal (Dorn, 1985) then what affirmative action can be taken, for example under Section 35 of the Race Relations Act?

(5) Student recruitment: With regard to the recruitment of black students how can more black school leavers and graduates be encouraged to apply for initial teacher education courses? In addition, what forms of access courses can be mounted? With regard to recruiting white students, what questions will be asked in interview and how will the institution inform applicants that racism is totally unacceptable?

With reference to points 4 and 5 however, it is essential to ask whether it is reasonable to expect more black people to enter teacher education while so many experiences are going to be negative? Is the reluctance of black people to enter teaching any more surprising than their reluctance to enter the police force?

(6) Relations with schools: This is important both with regard to black students in school and with regard to giving all students experiences where they can see good anti-racist practice. The latter is not simply a case of giving students experience in 'multiracial schools' as the Swann Report naively suggests. It is possible for experience in such schools to reinforce and legitimate stereotyped and ethnocentric notions. (See Mason, McGovern and Menter, 1987).

(7) INSET: There is a clear need for parallel developments in in-service provision. The increasingly popular notion of IT-INSET could be an ideal vehicle for progress in this field and may create a favourable climate for anti-racist developments.

(8) Course content, teaching methods and assessment: During course review (but not only then) combating racism has to be a prime consideration. Such review must include careful examination of resources, library stock, etc. Evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-racist aspects of courses is essential too (see Menter, 1987b, for one example of an attempt to do this).

(9) Staff development: This must be seen as crucial, especially if an institution is serious about 'permeation'. Such staff development will need to be made available for all staff, not just the academic staff, and for governing bodies.

(10) The 'hidden curriculum' of the institution: Any effective anti-racist work in courses may be seriously undermined if there is evidence of racism going unchallenged in other aspects of life within the institution. Does the refectory take full account of

dietary requirements of all students. Does the refectory buy South African food? Does the library display the free propaganda journals distributed by the South African government? Do racist jokes appear in the student rag mag? Do displays and exhibitions always reflect the black presence?

These ten points then, I suggest, are starting points for action. Each of us in teacher education in our various roles (administrator, course leader, teacher, assessor, supervisor, personal tutor, validator, employer, union member) may have different priorities amongst the ten but I believe they do represent a minimum of the considerations we must all be taking into account.

### Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Gill Crozier, whose paper presented to the 1987 Westhill International Sociology of Education Conference significantly influenced parts of this article.

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# Individualized Learning Via Supported Self Study

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**Chris Haines**

Now head of the Science Faculty at William de Ferrers school in Essex, Chris Haines has long been interested in individualised schemes of work, in particular 'Supported Self-Study' (C.S.S.). Here he writes on the whole school approach using SSS at his own school.

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The change in emphasis from content to process is now forcing more teachers to reconsider their teaching strategies. Many critics<sup>1</sup> of secondary schools express anxiety that in some classes students are not being given the opportunity to develop fully. If teachers dominate lessons with talk<sup>2</sup>, it is going to be difficult for students to develop inquiring minds. Today there is an increasing number of resources available to the teacher which makes an individualized approach to learning an interesting reality in the classroom.<sup>3</sup>

What needs to be known is how to adapt these learning resources into a meaningful experience for the student. If teachers are going to make some departure from their current practice then they need some good reasons and some know-how. Perhaps the most important thing is to show what is being done ... to show what is possible ... and to make it seem an exciting and a realisable possibility.

So what is being done? The Council for Educational Technology first proposed the use of the supported self-study during its investigations into how educational technology might help to maintain the breadth of curricula in the face of falling school rolls.<sup>4</sup>

In my own school, which opened in 1982 and is housed in a purpose-built community complex in Essex, supported self-study has had an impact. Our interest in information or learning skills has developed with the school and with the help of the British Library has resulted in a whole school approach to learning.<sup>5</sup> Supported self-study has many links with developing a whole school approach to learning.

Our first group of sixth formers started, in 1987, all their Nuffield science A-level courses using a system of supported self-study. Other groups within the school are also using this system to varying degrees. At the time of writing feed-back has been encouraging from students, staff and the numerous visitors. Time will tell as to the ultimate success, but one quote from a student to a visiting English teacher indicates a real break-through in student-teacher relationships:

'we as a group are continually supporting and helping each other ... our status is on a par with the teacher. He is used as a resource as well as a feeder of information. The tutorial gives us the opportunity to discuss the problems we are having as well as helping us to plan and organise how we use our time.'

It has not yet been possible to evaluate the system in full, but the benefits for the students, teachers and the school are already noticeable:

## **For the Students**

- they are trained to accept responsibility for their own learning
- they are able to practise study skills, learning 'on the job'
- their learning tasks are adapted to their individual needs, both academic and personal

## **For the Teachers**

- their time can be used more flexibly. When their students are more independent they may be able to devote more time to curriculum planning, to assessment, and to staff development
- they can adapt new personal styles, tutorial rather than didactic

## **For the School**

- it can respond with greater sensitivity to the special needs of individual students and all kinds of minority groups
- it can protect minority subjects which are at risk when the student numbers are falling. It may not be able to justify full allocations of teacher time to very small groups, but it can offer a viable and educational alternative through supported self-study.

So what is supported self-study? Perhaps it is better to start by saying what it is not. It is *not* a do-it-yourself system with the teacher abdicating all responsibility nor is it self-supported study, whereby the student is left on his or her own with the responsibility for making an approach to the teacher if help is needed. Independence and isolation are not synonymous. A much more positive and involved approach is required; the learning resources must be rich and varied. It is not a stand alone system to be operated separately from other teaching.

Supported self-study is a system which helps teachers to train secondary school students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Its key features are:-

- learning materials specially chosen for the independent learner
- support from regular tutoring organised in small groups
- a system for monitoring and control

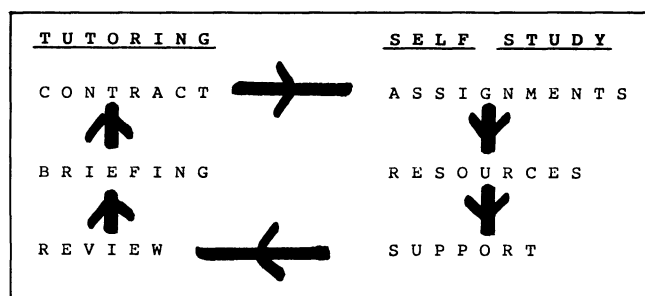
The aim is self-development, but two important points need to be emphasised. First the aim is a long term one. It is foolish to expect instant results and the job of the teacher is to provide supporting structures and



procedures which will help the student gradually to develop a sense of responsibility and the skills which go with it.

Secondly, self-development is not an argument for isolating students and making them work on their own. Self-development is development of yourself not by yourself. Students need a wide variety of experiences if they are to be independent. These include both the opportunity to work intensively and privately in an efficient manner and the opportunity to share, co-operate and compete with others.

Organisation of the scheme is of great importance as students need freedom, but this must be within a framework which offers support and guidance. The most useful support the teacher can give is perhaps best defined in a cycle of events.



The cycle can be likened to a two stroke engine comprising on the one hand the tutoring and on the other the self-study (see diagram). A group tutorial (of about five students) could begin with a strengthening of personal relationships with a chat about a local event which would be followed by a student review and evaluation of the work already completed in the previous two weeks. After discussion and suggestions a briefing would be undertaken to stimulate interest in the new work which is about to be started. Help could be given to the student to make a plan of this work, adapting the guidance to the known abilities, interests and styles of the students. This would then be formalised in a contract. This would be a binding agreement between student and teacher and could be signed by both parties. It is something which is discussed, not imposed. It is a negotiation. A summary of the tutorial by the teacher and the student could complete the first stroke of the engine.

The self study part would then follow using a range of activities and assignments utilising the resources available. These resources are those that are already available in the school. There is no need to buy in whole schemes of individualized learning. A good resource could be a good text book. At all times the teacher is acting as a resource either by giving an introductory lecture, organising a seminar, giving individual or small group help. The role, though, has changed. The flexibility provided allows for things to happen and for problems to be tackled as they arise.

In the cycle described there is an assumption that the style of the teacher-student relationship is different from that normally found. This is where the value of the tutorial and the teacher as tutor is essential. Good tutoring requires the skills of listening, waiting,

questioning, lightly prompting, encouraging and challenging. All this needs to be done against a background relationship which is supportive and personal. A scheme which includes regular tutorials to implement the system will help students in coming to terms with their work situation and break down barriers between student and teacher, providing a link between the pastoral and the academic. Supported self-study supports and is supported by parallel developments which emphasise the active approach to learning and the move towards greater personal responsibility — the TVEI scheme, the CPVE and the developments in study skills and information skills.

As always, everything hinges on the quality of the performances of the teachers. Abandoning a total addiction to class teaching in favour of a more versatile repertoire which includes supported self-study is not easy. The management of independent learning and the tutoring styles that go with it are very different from class teaching. The teacher needs to make a conscious shift in both attitude and techniques. And this cannot be done without a sustained effort.

Like much development work there have been trial and errors. Changes in style and in direction have had to be considered if things seem to be going astray. A universal recipe is to keep the personal relationships in a healthy state. Effective change is a learning process. Teachers need help and support when trying out new ideas — it is an anxiety-ridden process and there is a fear of failure. We spend a lot of time creating a conducive climate for learning for our students, but seem to apply none of the lessons learned with our colleagues. Teachers as well as students need time for reflection on their current practice if they are to improve. Senior staff need to encourage and support risk-taking and experiment rather than frown upon it. They must build the self-confidence of the teacher — this can be done most effectively by emphasising and building on strengths rather than highlighting weaknesses and failures. Teachers must not feel threatened.

For most schools a minimum commitment on a trial basis is the best way to start. There is no great threat to any teacher. A small segment of a course and a few students may be sufficient to give the desired experience. Growth can proceed with security and at a pace which suits all and gives plenty of opportunity to reflect, change and improve. However, for the committed, whole courses can be assigned to supported self-study. Opportunities for all students to experience the benefits of being much more responsible for their own studies can exist, leading to true self-development, a vision which most teachers share, but which continues to elude.

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# The Primary School Staff Relationships Project: Some Findings

**Jennifer Nias**

As Tutor in Curriculum Studies 3-13 at the Cambridge Institute of Education, Jennifer Nias works with experienced teachers on in-service courses. During the course of a varied career, she has taught people of every age from 3 to 56 in several parts of the world. Here she reports on some of the findings of the Primary School Relationships Project, based at the Cambridge Institute.

I have been working with experienced teachers at the Cambridge Institute of Education for ten years. During that time I have become convinced of four related facts.

Firstly, primary teachers at all levels, including heads, are more deeply affected, for good or ill, by the adult relationships (including those with ancillary staff) in their schools than has generally been given public recognition, especially in the published literature on schools. Secondly, they are often ill-equipped by temperament or training, to recognise or deal constructively with differences of opinion, value and practice between themselves or their colleagues or among the latter. Yet many management courses with which I am familiar fail to address either of these two sets of circumstances as if they are problems which affect anyone in a school except perhaps its head. Staff relationships, if they figure at all on many such courses, are not treated as if the staff themselves have a responsibility for them.

Thirdly, there is almost no published literature on staff (teaching or ancillary) relationships. What there is written about or from the perspective of the headteacher, or is drawn from studies of secondary schools and none of it portrays the adults in schools as individuals, facing day to day interactions under circumstances which critically affect their motivation, job-satisfaction and effectiveness in the classroom.

Fourthly, the majority of English primary schools have 5-10 teaching staff, a number which is that of a classic small group (Agarzarian and Peters, 1981). Yet there is no information available as to whether or not such staff behave as groups and, if so, to what extent and in what ways.

So, in 1985, I put a proposal to the Economic and Social Research Council suggesting that they might fund a two-year research project into staff relationships in

primary schools. I was joined in this by my colleague, Geoff Southworth, who is Tutor in Primary Education and Management and by a headteacher, Robin Yeomans, who was at the time undertaking his own research into primary school staffs as groups. When ESRC agreed to support this research, we set about finding primary schools in which we could work as part-time teachers, arguing that to understand staff relationships in any school, one has oneself to become a staff member there.

Given the dearth of public knowledge on staff relationships of any kind and the fact that we wanted people to be able to make constructive use on initial and in-service courses of the information we gained from the research, we decided to focus on six schools in which teachers were working well together. We agreed that schools which 'offered a positive model of adult relationships' would enable us to learn what, for example, teachers, headteachers and ancillary staff actually do when they work constructively together, what attitudes they hold to each other and to their work, what kinds of leadership are associated with productive teamwork. We were also constrained by ethical considerations: we wanted eventually to make our work public and we had therefore to gain the permission of all the staff in each school that we studied to the inclusion of our observations and interviews in any future reports and case studies. Common sense dictated that such a sensitive enterprise would be best undertaken in schools which enjoyed relationships characterised by openness and trust and not by conflict and disharmony.

Although we were not looking for schools which were representative in any statistical sense, we hoped to find ones which differed in a number of respects (eg experienced and inexperienced heads, open-plan and cellular buildings, staff with varying proportions of more or less experienced members, single and mixed sex staffs, different types of catchment area, voluntary and maintained schools) which our experience suggested might be significant. In the event, the schools we studied exhibited most of these differences and were from three local authorities. Overall, they had little in common in terms of structure, organisation and pupil intake, apart from their size (from 6-10 teaching staff, a caretaker, a secretary and at least one ancillary worker).

We felt we needed to work (as part-time teachers) in the schools for a full academic year, in order to allow

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*(continued from page 84)*

**Footnote:** Further information about the scheme at William de Ferrers School, South Woodham Ferrers can be obtained from:

Chris Haines, Head of Science Faculty, William de Ferrers School, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, CM3 5JU.

A video is available which shows the tutorial in action.

More general information can be obtained from the Council for Educational Technology, 3 Devonshire Street, London, W1N 2BA

time for the staff and children to accept us and so that we would include evidence from periods characterised by different types of activity and levels of intensity (eg Christmas, the end of the summer term, periods of staff illness, staff changes). We worked for the equivalent of one day a week, some of the time in blocks of one, two or three weeks. How the schools used the extra pair of hands that we represented was up to them and between us we acted as supply teachers, ancillaries and teachers' helpers, we joined in all the normal activities of the school week (eg staff meetings), went on school camps and journeys, attended parents' evenings and summer fayres, played in staff cricket matches and joined in Christmas festivities — behaved, in fact, as nearly as possible as staff members. Although it would be naive to assume that our presence made no difference to the staff, we felt that we were accepted by them.

We used ethnographic research methods, mainly observation (jottings in a small notebook, converted into lengthy field notes at the end of the day) and interviews, though we also scrutinised documents (eg school brochures, curriculum statements, governors' reports).

For the most part, interviews were conducted towards the end of the school year, though they were also used earlier on to document particular events or milestones (eg when staff left or joined a school or the deputy took the head's place while the latter was ill). They ranged in length from forty minutes to two hours, and almost all of them took place in school, many during school time. All but two were tape-recorded, with the interviewees' permission, and transcripts were subsequently handed to everyone for checking and clearance.

Using all this material, we produced case studies of the schools, feeling that these would be the most likely way of capturing the rich, varied, dense and crowded lives and interactions of the staff members. These case studies were then 'cleared' with each staff member (teaching and ancillary) in the school and were not shared with anyone else until this process was complete. Each case study was intended in the first instance to offer a mirror of its own practices to a specific school; we and the staff of that school needed to be as certain as was possible before we 'went public' that the image the study presented was not a distorted one.

Finally, we drew from five of the case studies general themes and issues which were common to them all. These we are at present disseminating (for what is the point of doing research if none ever hears about its results?) — by writing (articles such as this one, a book, to be published by Cassell later this year), by speaking to teachers and teacher educators and through our own INSET courses.

The main concept to emerge from our five studies is that of '**organisational culture**', where culture is very loosely defined as 'the way we do it here', that is, as a set of common expectations about ways of behaving, perceiving and understanding. A culture is also however underpinned by jointly held beliefs and values and these are symbolised for members of the culture by objects, rituals and ceremonies.

Each of our five schools had its own culture which embodied deeply held beliefs about the social and moral purposes of education and about the nature of effective educational practice. These beliefs originated with the

headteachers and in schools A, B, and C they were exemplified by the heads, as people and in their practice (though they were shared by other staff members). In schools D and E, in each of which the headteacher was endeavouring to change the culture of the school, assembly was particularly important because it gave the head the opportunity to make his/her values and beliefs plain to staff, children and parents.

In schools A, B, and C we described the organisational culture as a 'culture of collaboration' because it was this, we felt, that enabled the teaching and non-teaching staff to work closely together in a natural, taken-for-granted way. At the heart of this culture are several overlapping beliefs: that children should learn to accept and value both individuals and the groups of which they are members (so, both individuality and a sense of mutual dependence should be fostered and encouraged); that this dual aim is best realised through openness; but that openness can exist only in an atmosphere of security, engendered by members' acceptance of agreed constraints (included in which was deference to the headteacher's authority).

In schools D and E, the headteachers and their deputies were trying to move the school culture towards the 'culture of collaboration' but were impeded by conflicting beliefs and values held by long-established staff members. During the year key individuals left each school and enabled the new culture to become more firmly established, particularly since in both schools it already existed in sub-groups.

Within the culture, acceptance of the individual was shown and encouraged by a number of tacitly or explicitly agreed norms. First, there were few status differentials (eg ancillaries and the headteacher used the staffroom; probationers felt free to contribute to curricular discussion and their ideas were taken seriously). Second, staff accepted that everyone had physical states and lives outside the school which could influence their conduct within it. In consequence, they were ready to listen and respond empathetically to one another, to make allowances and help each other and, at the same time, to respect one another's right to privacy. Third, differences in aptitude, skill and taste were recognised, celebrated and used. Fourth, people habitually thanked one another and expressed appreciation for help and courtesies, however trivial, and praise was freely given. Lastly, everyone who came to the school was welcomed into it and into the staffroom; the pervasive atmosphere was one of friendliness.

Acceptance of members' interdependence was expressed and fostered by a range of complementary actions and attitudes. Irrespective of their experience, status or length of service in the school, staff shared ideas and advice, were sensitive to one another's need for assistance and were as ready to ask for help as they were to give it. They flexibly adapted their routines to suit spontaneous developments in one another's teaching and worked productively together on, eg. topics, displays, outings. They treated one another with consideration and courtesy on the occasions when their own behaviour impinged on others' professional commitments. They shared resources and materials and made a point of not being possessive of their pupils. Lastly, they were ready to accept their colleagues'

recognition or admiration and prepared to share with each other the aspects of their work of which they felt proud.

These ways of behaving were encouraged and made possible by an active belief in the value of interpersonal openness. Staff at all levels were ready publicly to share their failures, difficulties and disappointments, to seek one another's advice and to learn from one another. They did not hesitate to display emotion (eg affection, pleasure, anger, guilt). Differences were openly aired, disagreements, even rows, were legitimated. At the same time, directness was tempered with respect for one another's self-confidence and self esteem. For example, differences were normally resolved by negotiation and compromise, from which individuals emerged with a sense of dignity; openness, it was tacitly agreed, should be used to promote interpersonal trust, not to destroy it.

Understanding how far professional openness could be taken and developing the confidence to take it further were themselves facilitated by the growth of interpersonal knowledge and by blurring the boundaries between school and other lives. Some (but not all) individuals chose to share leisure activities, to meet socially, with and without members of their families, to meet for professional purposes in one another's homes (though in school E, out-of-school contacts encouraged the development of sub-groups which, within school, were perceived as cliques). Teaching and ancillary staff would telephone one another at home to talk shop, people often worked at the school in the evenings and at weekends, took work home or brought their own resources into school. In the process many became friends; sometimes school relationships were described in terms of 'a family', but even when they were not, they were frequently characterised by mutual affection.

The sense of security induced by interpersonal knowledge and by mutual respect and liking enabled staff to risk rebuff, eg. in taking the first step towards getting to know newcomers. Indeed, many accepted a sense of personal responsibility within the staff group for fostering open communication. A spiral existed: A sense of security encouraged individuals to take risks in being open with one another, and the resulting growth in interpersonal and inter-professional knowledge increased the likelihood of future openness by reducing the risks involved in acting openly. Openness and security were two sides of one coin, each contained by known boundaries.

The culture had its symbols (particular importance being attached to shared food and drink, eg. birthday cakes; cups of tea), its rituals (eg. morning coffee; assembly) and its ceremonies (eg. presentations to leaving staff).

One result of participation in the 'culture of collaboration' was that situations were defined in agreed ways and common meanings were attached to them. Examples of this included industrial action (1985-6) which in schools A, B, and C was defined as non-disruptive to working and personal relationships and therefore did not disrupt them. Yet an equivalent degree of militancy and union involvement proved very divisive, in one of the other schools in particular.

Participation in this culture also encouraged members to work hard and to a high standard. Individual ideas and initiatives were valued and rewarded while

allegiance to the group encouraged a sense of corporate responsibility. So, 'doing a good job' (defined by reference to the standards of the individual school) was a necessary condition of membership in schools A, B and C and featured more prominently in schools D and E as they became more collaborative.

Despite the large majority of female staff in all the schools, there is no evidence to suggest that the beliefs underlying the 'culture of collaboration' were gender-specific. However, some of the means by which they were expressed (eg. the nature of staffroom chat) may have been.

In a future article, one of the team will comment further on the significance of this culture (particularly in relation to how leadership is exercised and by whom, to notions of change and continuity in primary schools, to the ways in which differences are resolved, and to teacher education) and will describe how it appears to be created and sustained.

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# Serving Two Masters — The Politics of Skills-based Primary Teaching

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**Keith Morrison**

Both a primary and a secondary teacher for many years, Keith Morrison is currently lecturer in primary education at the University of Durham. He is the author of many articles on the politics of primary education and curricula, and is the co-author of *Curriculum Planning and the Primary School* (1988). Here he turns his attention to skills-based primary teaching.

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There is a strange irony demonstrated in the enthusiasm with which primary teachers are advocating skills-based curricula and skills-based teaching. It is an irony born out of the ability of skills-based teaching to serve two very discrepant sets of concerns; on the one hand it can meet the political demands currently being placed on teachers, whilst on the other hand such a view of teaching can simultaneously meet the educational requirements of young children.

The educational arguments are cogent, coherent and attractive; they operate at many levels. On a societal level it is claimed that since the onset of the information revolution knowledge is being generated and rendered obsolete at an increasing rate. The certainty that the knowledge valued by yesterday's or today's generations of adults will equip tomorrow's adults is replaced with a far more tentative and pragmatic view of what tomorrow's generations will need. With the explosion and concomitant redundancy of knowledge children will need skills to be able to interrogate it critically; skills of information handling, accessing and processing acquire greater importance than the receipt of a body of content parcelled up and delivered into empty vessels in a way reminiscent of education in the last century.

On a personal level the impact of technology on the twentieth and twenty-first century person will be to create a need for people who are adaptable, flexible and autonomous in character<sup>1</sup> if they are not to fall prey to consumerism, commodification<sup>2</sup> and materialism or to fall foul of an ever-changing jobs market. Skills-based teaching provides the foundation for the development of such a person. On an ideological level the espousal of skills-based teaching — a process view of the curriculum<sup>3</sup> — is arguably more in keeping with a child-centred rather than a content-driven philosophy which emphasises transmission of a stock of received wisdoms. Children learning skills — however defined — can then appropriate their own curricula, they come to have the intellectual, physical, personal and social tools to fashion their own futures. Furthermore a skills-based approach is sympathetic to integrated curricula and cross-curricular issues which support much primary teaching — from the activity based organization of very young children's education to the topic and project work which characterizes much primary practice. Be they skills of observation, communication, numeracy,

literacy, problem-solving, investigating, studying, or interacting with others, they can all be pursued in the integrated curricula which purportedly serve the interests of the whole child.

Moreover, since skills, basic skills, foundation skills, skills of any hue, are the currency of the primary classroom, the stuff of young children's learning, there is a de facto argument to be adduced in the support for skills-based primary teaching. One can move beyond this to suggest that, since 'basic skills' and the development of skills are so central to primary education, it is both a natural and desirable activity for primary teachers to engage in assessment of skill development in young children. Herein lies the seeds of the irony mentioned earlier.

There is a strong sense in which skill development can, and ought to be, planned to be assessed or measured in performance. Communication skills are evidenced in the child's growing competence in communicating to a variety of audiences through a variety of media; personal and social skills are evidenced in the child's conduct of personal and interpersonal relations; study skills are evidenced in the efficient accessing, processing, retention and production of content; problem-solving skills are evidenced in the child's ability to bring a problem through to its solution, and so on.<sup>4</sup> Skills are, in a manner of speaking, behavioural. If this is the case then it is only a short step to specifying the performance indicators of skill development; that task has already been on hand for decades. The taxonomies of Bloom,<sup>5</sup> Krathwohl<sup>6</sup> and Harrow<sup>7</sup> detail behaviours in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains respectively, whilst, more recently, lengthy taxonomies of reading skills by, amongst others, Barrett,<sup>8</sup> Strang<sup>9</sup> and Niles<sup>10</sup> feature strongly in Open University courses from 1972 onwards. The literature is replete with exhaustive lists of behaviours indicative of all levels and orders of thinking, applications and outcomes. The spectres of such approaches are not yet ready to be laid to rest — the thirst for reading schemes based on such delineation of subskills, superordinate skills, low order and high order skills is barely slaked by the continuing sales of materials in this mould, extension readers and cards, reinforcement and enrichment activities and their like.

There is a paradox wherein discredited curriculum

design models — behavioural objectives and training models — provide the theoretical underpinning of what passes for 'good' contemporary educational practice. The paradox however is perfectly comprehensible when another factor enters the calculus; it is this. With the political spotlight since 1976 being focused on teachers and curricula, and more recently with the National Curriculum emphasizing assessment at seven, eleven and fourteen, there is a certain reassurance offered to teachers caught up in the accountability issue by being able to specify concrete practices and outcomes of curricular processes. The icing on the cake is provided by measurements of performance. The ring of objectively specified skill development and objectively measured results has considerable power both to placate and convince critics of education and to fall in with government thinking on assessment.

It is little wonder then that teachers find the cause of skills-based teaching doubly attractive for it can serve two masters. It has substantial educational value and appeal; now, through the notion of specification and measurement it can serve a political master in a manner which reduces teacher stress. With the forces of education and politics seemingly pulling in opposite directions there is an irony — however understandable or excusable — in the spectacle of teachers at a stroke finding an instrument to serve two masters, whereby the more skills-based teaching is practised the happier the two forces will be.

However the irony cannot be allowed to remain if educational interests are to be fully served. Concealed in the notion of a skill as being measurable or specifiable, concealed in the taxonomic approach to behaviour description, and concealed in the exhaustive lists of skills and subskills, lies a notion which is as politically attractive as it is educationally suspect. It is held as an important belief that because we might be *able* to specify a skill or an ordering of skills it follows that this skill or ordering of the skills *ought* to be taught in this way, that a conceptual analysis can or ought to become a blueprint for teaching. The naturalistic fallacy of slipping from an 'is' to an 'ought' is complete.<sup>11</sup> To proceed to teach according to illegitimate or highly questionable models of the curriculum is hardly a desirable activity, yet the current political rush to measurement and prescription takes us in that direction. That the behavioural objectives model of the curriculum can narrow the curriculum is certainly not a novel view; that it renders children passive rather than active learners in a way which undermines child-centredness has been well documented.<sup>12</sup> The significance of this for the current debate is that the present political climate perceives these two effects positively; the National Curriculum, it is argued, will have the effect of narrowing the curriculum, children will be tested at different ages on their ability to store knowledge passively and perform tasks on demand. The overwhelming danger of this approach is that it reduces education to the production of that which is demonstrable, which minimises the importance of the development of attitudes, feelings, autonomy, awareness, individuality, enjoyment and creativity — those qualities which defy assessment.

Teachers are caught in an invidious position, if they support skills-based teaching they could be supporting the current political will and the instrument of their own

disempowerment<sup>13</sup> — by dint of the sympathy of skills to the politically attractive issue of assessment; if they do not support skills-based teaching they can be castigated for poor educational practice. To untie this knot the solution perhaps is twofold. Initially there must be a recognition that skills-based teaching must not become the basis of curriculum design alone. To emphasize skills to the detriment of considerations of knowledge and content could create a moral vacuum in the curriculum, it risks the insurgence of total moral relativism; its silence on knowledge allows others to take decisions on the content of the curriculum. It is little wonder therefore that there has been political support for skills-based teaching from a government now about to prescribe the content of the National Curriculum. Such a move could render teachers as managers of children rather than contributors to the whole curriculum debate.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, if skills and their development are to be an important element of primary education then the 'isolationist' approach to their specification, planning and assessment is replaced with a view of interrelated sets of skills which draw on the context or content of each child's curriculum, and which are best assessed through profiling. Checklists of skills give way to areas of skill delineation which teachers use to inform and feed into cross curricular planning and assessment. In this latter area the sacrifice of quantifiable results is more than compensated by the sensitivity of the profile to individuals and to context — a realistic picture of primary education.

The saying that 'no one can serve two masters' is predicated by 'either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon'. Given the twin masters of politics and education then, depending on how teachers define, plan, implement and assess skills-based teaching will be the answer to the question which master is God and which Mammon.

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# Where are the Parents coming from?

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**Michael Golby and Stephen Brigley**

The Exeter Society for Curriculum Studies is an independent group of teachers who run termly conferences and conduct research. In their current project, supported by the Leverhulme Trust, the teachers are investigating parent governors in Devon secondary schools. Here Michael Golby, Senior Lecturer in the School of Education of the University of Exeter and Stephen Brigley, full-time researcher with the project, discuss some interim findings from the first round of interviews with eighty parent governors.

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Parents, we all know, are in the forefront of the government's thinking. 'Quality' is thought of as a product of competition, between pupils, schools and the maintained and independent sectors. Competition requires both information (hence publication of national test results) and choice (hence the open enrolment policy). This social darwinism relies upon individuals seeking their own advantage in an environment of scarcity. But what if the benefits sought from education are various, multiple and contradictory? What if parents in key positions as school governors seek a variety of different ends, viewing their work through a number of different and not at all compatible perspectives?

This is the case among Devon secondary school parent governors. On taking up their positions many are surprised at the complexities which confront them. They enter a great variety of settings, urban and rural, with differing local folklore and history. They serve schools of all sorts: large and small schools, selective and non-selective, maintained and voluntary. The governing bodies too have their own traditions, perhaps best exemplified in the way the Chair is passed from one year to the next. Some parents on their own admission flounder. Some are much more active than others. Inevitably, they make sense of their tasks by reference to their pre-existing values and educational experience.

## **The grammar school perspective**

A majority of the Devon respondents, representing over half of all secondary parent governors in the county, have experienced some form of selective education, private or grammar, and almost half hold qualifications from higher education. Some of them harbour nostalgia for the academic ethos of traditional grammar schools.

Devon retains some working models which are accorded high esteem in some of the local folklore. Academic excellence, firm discipline and polite behaviour figure prominently in the language of these governors. There is also residual support for corporal punishment.

A local government officer speaks for this point of view: a good school he says, will be one where 'the students get a good, broad, general education which fits them for the life ahead'. Yet where the curriculum is concerned he describes himself as 'a bit of a traditionalist' because 'In the modern syllabus there are occasions when it all seems airy-fairy'. He is sceptical of the trend towards integrated science and humanities teaching and prefers a subject-based curriculum. He is deeply suspicious of innovation in moral and social education. His admiration for scholarship is accompanied by a belief that 'the Christian point of view' had been devalued by the desire to achieve a fair, balanced curriculum for a pluralistic society. There is an underlying view that 'as a nation we've gone soft, people are getting away with things they shouldn't be getting away with'.

This interlocking of good academic results, sound discipline, Christian values, traditional teaching methods and curriculum will, according to this parent governor, make schools attractive to parents. But is he right? We have found equally strong adherents to two contending perspectives.

## **The 'service' perspective**

This viewpoint is coloured by employment in service, business and industrial positions and an education which has usually followed a path through secondary modern and/or technical schools to some form of further education or training. A broader view of the aims of education is taken. Personal, social and physical skills are stressed and qualities such as adaptability, initiative and facility in personal relationships are cited as equally important as academic attainment. The curriculum will be one which develops the potential of the whole range of its pupils. It will centrally include moral and social education; careers and vocational education are valued. Courses and extra-curricular activities bringing pupils closer to the local community are applauded.

The common critical inspiration here is that schools are public institutions which should serve the community by producing eminently employable, well

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*(continued from page 89)*

- J. Merritt (eds), **The Reading Curriculum**, London, University of London Press with the Open University Press.
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socialised young people. The deficiencies of schools in this direction are lamentable, in one parent's view:

'I feel very strongly that the education system is way out of tune with what's needed ... I find the whole thing antiquated, almost irrelevant'.

In order to effect an improvement, he believes, schools should accept their accountability to client groups and parents should be taken into closer partnership.

Local business, community figures and the police emerge prominently on the educational landscape of such parent governors. They too share the view that an adequate preparation for working and social encounters must extend pupils beyond mere 'qualification gaining'. It is claimed that in this way a modern realism derived from industrial and service sectors may be breathed into education.

### **The egalitarian perspective**

Egalitarian aims are usually described in more overt socio-political language. They are rooted in a more idealistic conception of society, unlike the grammar and service perspectives which tend to assume as given the demands upon the schools and the form of society which produces them. Education in this egalitarian perspective is to contribute to the positive advancement of social justice for the whole community.

A school librarian denies that 'education is anything to do with exams' and objects to the element of inter-school rivalry accompanying the publication of exam results. Each neighbourhood should recognise the local school as the sole provider of education for all its children. She has no expectations of a school except 'openness and honesty'. She deliberately sets out to counteract the 'traditional' or 'old-fashioned' governors around her and aligns herself solidly with the teachers.

This governor is anti-elitist. Education at all levels is everyone's entitlement. Comprehensive schools, progressive teaching methods, even free schools are desirable. There is a particular interest in personal, social and moral education and in the provision of support services for the disadvantaged. All of this is part of her vision of education as serving wider socio-political goals.

### **Accountability**

On a key issue such as education accountability it is possible to view more clearly how the dialogue between the three perspectives might unfold. Both grammar and service perspectives are concerned crucially with the 'products' of education.

The grammar school devotee defends the right of parents to be kept informed and to monitor their children's schooling because: 'Parents are seeing not only the input but the output', and are 'closer to the real world than the teachers'. However, the views of teachers must, he says, be given ultimate priority since they conduct the everyday business of education.

Parents working in service employment also wish to see teachers more closely assessed on their performance. A nurse points out comparisons between those engaged in professional service.

'all of us in responsible jobs are accountable for what we are doing. They should be accountable for what they are teaching and why they are teaching it in a certain way.'

She recommends a hierarchical model of appraisal as in the health service.

A solicitor upbraids teachers for evading the 'vulnerability' which, he believes, professionals have to live with.

'I could be wiped out tomorrow ... I've got the Law Society sitting on top of me who can send financial experts down at a minute's notice. By accepting those strictures the public recognises me as being a responsible person.'

Any refusal to expose their work to public scrutiny shows, in this governor's view, that teachers are trying to 'have their cake and eat it' when pressing their professional status. He supports strong accountability with a majority of parents on governing bodies.

Despite these firm views, which emphasise a clientele much more than the grammar perspective does, serious doubts are expressed about the competence of parents to adjudicate on educational matters and on the merits and defects of teachers in particular. The nurse approves accountability in principle and values more advice and explanation of educational matters. But she draws a dividing line between the interested lay person's and the professional's view of education. Even the solicitor is circumspect about parents' involvement in teacher appraisal:

'Education is a technical science. I wouldn't be able to assess what is a good or bad teacher but I would be very interested to see the results and comment on them.'

The encounter with the curriculum seems to have an unnerving effect on even the most confident among these parent governors. They are not alone in this for enough teachers also struggle to keep abreast of the acronyms and what lies beneath them. For good or ill, the ado about the curriculum has so far worked as a crucial obstacle to parents' exerting a decisive influence.

The egalitarian governor presents a sharp contrast. Her support for the school and its teachers is offered in the spirit of enriching the quality of education experienced by all pupils. She emphatically denies that 'education is anything to do with exams'. The output of education is not her primary interest.

Similarly she regards appraisal as 'very dangerous' and open to abuse by the authorities. As 'state employees' (sic) working in schools, 'controlled by the state' (sic) teachers seem 'very vulnerable' to her. She is suspicious of any covert or moral or political vetting of teachers and generally sensitive to the hidden implications of stricter control of the profession. Differences in competence among teachers simply have to be tolerated. Teachers are the target of far too much unfair criticism when instead they should receive the trust and confidence of a supportive public. 'Parent power' is seen as a means of undermining teachers. In principle, however, she would support reform devolving power to ordinary people at local level, but only so long as it did not constrain teachers.

### **Conclusion**

The Devon research has produced clear-cut examples of



all three of these educational perspectives among parent governors. But it is likely that for most governors most of the time their practice derives from a blurred amalgam of assumptions, such as those we have identified.

The general prospects for parents to act upon their educational values seem uncertain. There is evidence that even parent governors with a clear ideology and the will to exert consumer control over education find themselves constrained by daunting obstacles<sup>1</sup>. A whole range of indispensable knowledge and expertise — political, financial, administrative and educational — may be unavailable or indigestible to them. An existing power nexus within LEA, governing body, or school may be difficult to prise open.

Yet recent thinking and legislation on education grants parent governors a pivotal position from which to challenge professional and political elites. Parents, like teacher governors, are directly elected to school governing bodies. They feel responsible to an identifiable constituency when consulting and negotiating on school decisions.

This may create situations of conflict and confusion when their clients' interests are not in concord with other groups' wishes. School uniform, according to several Devon interviewees, is an issue on which contradictory messages have been received from parents, pupils, teaching staff, and governor colleagues. For a parent governor who feels democratic responsibilities to clients, wants to support the head and teachers, is sensitive to the wishes of pupils, and also seeks consensus with governor colleagues, the dilemmas are obvious.

As they become confident in their growing political power, which perspective will be asserted by the parents? Will their priority be the gradual re-establishment of consensus in educational politics through a benign partnership with professional educators, local politicians and administrators? Or will they become active, citizen-dissenters, brazenly set on 'gingering up' those who teach in and run our schools?

Our research is moving on to investigate the practice of a number of carefully chosen individuals in the hope of understanding the continuing process of negotiation between viewpoints among school governors. In the meanwhile, we can be sure that not all parents are subscribers to Mr Baker's view of quality in education. They will not all exercise their parental choice narrowly-mindedly nor throw their weight behind Mr Baker's kind of educational values. The grammar perspective will live on. But it is being seriously challenged from both the service and egalitarian perspectives. We shall be reporting some of the local detail of this continuing struggle in due course.

#### Note

1. See **Parents as School Governors**, Interim Report of ESCS Research Group, School of Education, University of Exeter available from the authors at £2.00.

# The Education Reform Bill

Three publications relating to the Baker Bill have come to hand too late for review in this issue, but all should be of interest to FORUM readers. These are:

1. **Take Care, Mr Baker!** by Julian Haviland. (£9.95, Fourth Estate)
2. **Education in the market place: the ideology behind the 1988 Education Bill**, by Professor Ted Wragg (£1.00, National Union of Teachers).
3. **Bending the Rules: the Baker 'Reform' of Education** (£4.95, Lawrence and Wishart Ltd), by Brian Simon. (This book was first announced to FORUM readers under the title **The Great Schooling Scandal**)

**Take Care, Mr Baker!** was compiled and edited by Julian Haviland because he felt that the many 'responses' to the DES Consultation Papers of last summer should at least see the light of day. Mr Haviland has compressed the 25 million words sent in (and ignored) to a book of about 100,000 words, arranged into a number of sections, each with an introductory piece by a leading educationist. This was an 'instant' and hurried job, but has been very effectively carried through by the editor, who deserves warmest thanks from all concerned. One of the several FORUM responses is included, incidentally.

Ted Wragg's **Education in the Market Place** is a sustained critique of the market forces philosophy which powers this Bill. The author is in no doubt whatever that the implementation of this ideology through the Bill will have a disastrous effect on the provision of public education. It will, he concludes, take another Act to unscramble its effects, 'if its market-mad dogma has not ruined schools beyond redemption in the meantime'.

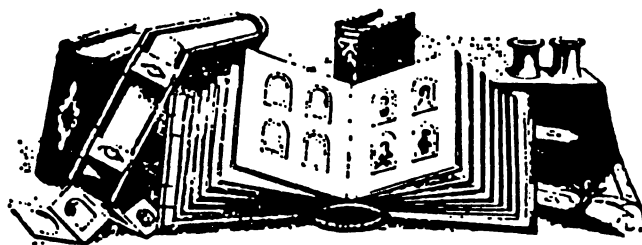
In **Bending the Rules**, FORUM's co-editor submits the 'Reform' Bill to a close analysis and critique.

We should also draw attention to the latest Bedford Way Paper (No.33). This is **The National Curriculum**, edited by Denis Lawton and Clyde Chitty (£4.95, Institute of Education, London University). The nine contributors subject the national curriculum policy to 'urgent critical examination'.

Another very relevant recent publication is **National Assessment and Testing — a Research Response**. This contains all the papers presented to the BERA Conference on 'Benchmark Testing', which took place in February this year. Edited by Harry Torrance, contributions are included by Paul Black, Margaret Brown, Sally Brown, Patricia Broadfoot, John Gray and Roger Murphy. This publication is of special value in that the contributors look closely at the Task Group on Assessment and Testing's first report. It is available, price £3.50 (including p and p) from Dixon Printing Co. Ltd., (BERA publications), Kent Works, Burnside Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4RL. Cheques payable to BERA (British Educational Research Association).



# REVIEWS



## A new Look at Primary Education

**The Changing Primary School**, edited by Roy Lowe, The Falmer Press (1987), pp. 237, £19.95, pb £8.95.

**The Primary School Teacher**, edited by Sara Delamont, The Falmer Press (1987), pp. 228, £19.00, pb £9.50.

These books exemplify the greater attention now being given to primary education, as well as the more acute and penetrating analyses now available.

The volume edited by Roy Lowe, himself an educational historian with wide interests, is literally packed with fascinating material for anyone interested in, or working in the field of primary education. Focussing on developments since World War Two, it covers the postwar revolution in primary school design (Malcolm Seaborne), the extraordinary break-out in the Sixties (Donald Jones), as well as more recent developments — in particular the Black Paper movement (Frank Musgrove), and the recent ruthless trend towards central control (Jayne Woodhouse). Informed chapters are also devoted to parental involvement (Michael Arkinstall) and 'the multicultural primary school' (Christine Brown). The book ends with an authoritative and highly competent survey of 'Gender in Primary Schooling' by Nanette Whitbread.

Without wishing to be in any way invidious, I would pick out three of the contributions, as being of particular significance. First, Donald Jones's dramatic evocation of the primary school 'revolution' in Leicestershire 'during the Mason era, 1947-71'. Controversy as to whether such a revolution was in fact more myth than reality will certainly continue well into the future, but in this chapter Donald Jones focuses on the main personalities involved, as well as that of the Director (Mason), and makes it abundantly clear that something unusual was certainly happening in *the primary schools of this county during that period*. This is an important contribution to unravelling the past.

Frank Musgrove's 'Black Paper Movement' is a hard-hitting piece of iconoclasm. Professor Musgrove does not mince his words, nor his profound distaste for this movement — but then nor did the original Black Paperites themselves as regards their own targets. In a sense, they are getting a taste of their own medicine. This chapter is clearly controversial and as clearly

deliberately meant to be; but these controversies also will resonate into the future. Musgrove has made a distinguished contribution to this debate.

But perhaps the most effective of these well-written chapters is that by Jayne Woodhouse on the increasing thrust towards central control — now of course greatly accelerated (indeed terrifyingly so) by the curriculum and testing clauses of the Education 'Reform' Bill. The author traces this centralising thrust through all the documents, Green Papers, Yellow Papers, Circulars, official statements of all kinds to clarify the motivation behind this movement as well as the various forms it has taken. As a primary school teacher herself for most of this period, Jayne Woodhouse is able to assess its significance, and implications, both in terms of national policy and in terms of the individual school and the teacher, and here she quite clearly states her views as to the outcome of this movement. This is a very valuable, well-researched and well written chapter.

Sara Delamont's compilation is more centrally research focussed. Starting with a characteristically rumbustious introduction by the editor (which is concerned to identify myths and realities relating to primary teaching in the post-war period), the book contains overviews by Maurice Galton (on the 'ORACLE Chronicle: a Decade of Classroom Research', where FORUM, incidentally, gets a mention), by Neville Bennett on 'The Search for the Effective Primary Teacher', and others. Part 2 of the book is concerned with 'The Teacher's Role and Responsibilities' (with chapters by Sandra Acker, Andrew Pollard and Peter Woods), while Part 3 deals with 'Policy and the Primary School'. This includes a characteristically effective and well-written chapter by Margot Cameron-Jones on the improvement of professional practice. The book concludes with an interesting chapter by Colin Richards, analysing 'recent issues and developments'.

Both these books contain matter of vital importance for primary education. Both are well structured and edited. Most of the contributions are lively, well-written and interesting. Both books can be strongly recommended.

BRIAN SIMON

## A Reference Book?

**Control and Discipline in Schools: Perspectives and Approaches** by J.W. Docking, Harper Education 1987 (2nd Edition) Paperback £7.50., pp.193

This would be a wonderful book to have to hand if you were late with an essay on 'Discipline' during initial teacher training. It is full of references and quotable points of view. For, when Dr Docking decides to examine a corner of his chosen thicket, no authors, be they ladybird or slug, escape his scrutiny.

This all-embracing approach can be helpful. I found several references I need to read up. I liked such exercises as his schematic review of researched responses to the prompt 'The good teacher is one who...' I liked knowing that whatever aspect of 'Control and Discipline' I chose, the book would guide me further into the published work. The indexing is excellent with source and subject listings painstakingly cross-referenced. Finally, the fact that the publishers have gone forward to an updated second edition suggests that the book has found a readership.

But this is a reference book, rather than a review of the literature that then builds towards a thesis for the development of practice. Dr Docking has his own views and they are usually sound: he is opposed to corporal punishment, worried by behaviour modification and in favour of integration for SEN pupils and of whole-school policies on behaviour. But the author's perspective lurks modestly at the end of chapters, frequently almost unnoticeable among the line upon line of counter-weighted references. If the medium is the message, the message might well be that most issues are finely balanced: there are few right answers. This impression is reinforced by Dr Docking's apparent lack of interest in the ideology of the authors under review (except for a select few characterized as writing from a Marxist perspective and, for some reasons, the '15000 hours' team). To quote, for example, from the NAS and NAS/UWT's various 'studies' of behaviour (1972, 1975, 1981, 1985), without attempting any analysis of the campaigns to whip up anxieties about discipline that led to their publication is to give the research a spurious respectability. It is not enough, though certainly necessary, to criticize the size of some of the samples involved.

The shape of the book is what finally confirms it as a work of reference. Each chapter examines a different aspect of

'Control and Discipline in Schools'. Perhaps unfairly, I found myself looking for some sort of summary or comparative survey of all these bits and pieces. What might a school or teacher do well to emphasize? Which perspectives or strategies are essential to a school's success and which desirable but optional?

If you want answers to these questions, buy another book. But if you want convenient summaries of much of the published work, together with helpful critical comment, you will find Dr Docking's book clear, comprehensive and well-priced.

NICK PEACEY

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## The New Right's Future of an Illusion

**Training without Jobs: New Deals and Broken Promises**, by Dann Finn, Macmillan (1987), pp.242, hb: £20.00; pb:£9.65

The problems of training and the demands for more training are not new: as far back as 1937, Gollan, in his study, **Youth in British Industry** set out an immediate programme called 'A Charter of Youth Rights'. Historically, Britain's employers have not provided an adequate system of youth training; but just as significant is the inability of secondary schools to effectively teach skills, impart real training or inform about the structure of work processes. The 'crisis' of youth training, whether seen from the side of production (employers and capital) or from the side of education (parents, pupils, teachers and LEAs) has become such a moral debate that neither camp can acknowledge even partial responsibility.

The work of Dan Finn at the Unemployment Unit is not funded by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), which means that he does not have to abide by their clauses of publication. **Training without Jobs** offers a detailed analysis of youth training from the early nineteenth century 'apprenticeships' to the recent training initiatives developed by the MSC. Finn's major concern is with working class labour/culture seen in the context of tradition and change. Firstly, he shows how the gaining of 'secondary education for all' was fraught with struggle and direct opposition from Government of the day. Secondly, he questions the framework of state schooling as a means of fulfilling social aspiration and achieving equity. The thrust of Finn's thesis bears some resemblance to points made over twenty-five years ago by David Glass. Both sociologists passionately show how education and labour market experiences of working-class girls and boys are based on principles which legitimate exclusion from access.

The book can be divided into two parts: in Chapters Two, Three and Four, Finn develops a detailed historical account of the introduction of compulsory state schooling. He examines the origins and optimism surrounding the much-delayed 'raising of the school leaving age' in 1973. And the focus upon 'parity of esteem' within the 'new' secondary schools (of post-1944) has

overtones with respect to the new City Technology Colleges and 'opting out'.

The second half of the book concentrates upon the fast, confusing and complicated world of the 'New Vocationalism'. Finn guides us through the full range of literature on state intervention into schooling and the labour market. He examines the early relationship of the Labour Government and of the TUC with the MSC, and goes on to reveal how the Conservative Government operates the MSC quango as a flexible advertising agency, where political policies such as YTS, RESTART etc. are brought into the home during the commercial breaks amongst the beer, shaving, nappy and perfume ads. Finn provides a chronological and descriptive account of the New Vocationalism both inside and outside school (TVEI/YTS), supported by substantial facts, figures and critical evaluations from official, academic and research sources. Unfortunately, he rarely rises above this presentation of results, and it is here that his interpretation has functionalist overtones. Finn's powerful rhetoric is a source of strength for his argument, but sometimes it appears too patronising towards the working class.

In the final chapter, he puts forward some Socialist solutions to the problem of youth training, as alternatives to the failures of the policies of the New Right. The proposals outlined are similar to those offered by Benn and Fairley in *Challenging the MSC*. The aims are constructive, efficient and reasonable, but stuck on at the end of the book they seem somewhat like an afterthought. These suggestions, although very valuable, nevertheless often require further explanation and clarification.

Additionally, I think an empirical and theoretical analysis concerning the restructuring of democracy, education and the labour market, conducted at the political level, is now timely.

Finn is not alone in arriving at his description of inadequate YTS provision. Other recent studies of young people's 'new social condition' document similar discrimination and exploitation, both at work and in training. This raises two issues. Firstly, despite such a wealth of evidence against the policies on education and training of the Conservative Government, it appears that nothing can stop the New Right in its project to dismantle secondary education for the working class. The greatest threat posed by the New Right is the ability to abolish democracy in the name of 'choice'; surely the future of an illusion. Rotten boroughs there were. Today it is acceptable to destroy mandate where the right wing is not in the democratically elected majority. Secondly, the working class has never been so easily duped as either right-wing politicians or organic intellectuals of the left would like to think.

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## For Computer Buffs

**Re-thinking Active Learning 8-16**, Norman Beswick, Falmer Press (1987), pp. 144, hb £13.95, pb £6.75.

I have to admit that, when I first saw the title of Norman Beswick's book, I imagined it would prove to be a revisiting of some fairly uninteresting (probably American) educational fad of yesteryear.

Nothing could be further from the truth. This is a book about learning *per se*, though learning in the context of today's rapidly widening use of information systems. What it has to say about learning is not new, but here it is stated in a refreshingly vital and clear way (I commend it particularly to Mr Baker). What it has to say about the use of information technologies *may* be new — I am not sufficiently expert on the subject to know, though I can appreciate the good sense of what it says.

The book provides ample evidence of Beswick's wide experience in education, for, while it is firmly based on sound educational philosophy, it speaks clearly to those of us 'at the chalk face'. The author first surveys some of the developments in information technology relevant to education but suggests that predicting the future is much less easy than some have imagined. One of his key points is that 'What we know about learning theory .... is not suddenly invalidated by the coming of the microchip'. He goes on to suggest that the ways in which computers are used in schools today — mainly for drill and programmed learning functions — are 'relatively pedestrian' and that 'prophecies of their widespread adoption seem unrealistic'. We should see the computer as an interactive 'tool for the learner' rather than as a 'teaching aid'.

I found Chapter 3 the most thought-provoking and useful in the book (but then, remember, I'm not a computer expert). It concerns the use of project work in schools and, in my opinion, it should be compulsory reading for all teachers working in this way. In it, Beswick discusses the aims and objectives of project work, the 'discovery' method, teacher preparation, the use of computers, the question of participation ('the use of knowing' — the key to the whole book) and assessment. In just over twenty pages, Norman Beswick presents an incredibly clear and sound rationale for the project method. The book is worth having for this chapter alone. He goes on to consider literacy, or rather, literacies, for here he discusses three: reading, computer literacy and media literacy. He disagrees strongly with those who suggest that the new technologies will render the book obsolete, and stresses the importance of children reading at length and in depth.

He then presents a view of a possible school of the future, in which computers are just one part of 'the school as a library'. He identifies a number of problems relating to the increasing pace of technological change, not the least of which are cost and teacher stress.

The final chapter considers the next steps we should be taking in relation to the primary school, the secondary school, the school management team, local authorities, professional training and national initiatives.

Beswick concludes by quoting from a number of educational writers and reports.

For example, from Case and Parsons: 'Adaptation to such a fast changing culture requires not facts and findings, but procedures and process, not organisational data but organisational skills, not storage but processing'. The 'use of knowing' is what it is all about.

I warmly commend this very readable book both to computer buffs for what it says about learning, and to computer-illiterate teachers like myself for its ability to broaden our horizons.

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## 16 — 19

**The Tertiary College: Assuring our Future** by David Terry (Open University Press, 1987) pp.202.

There could scarcely be a less propitious moment for LEAs to undertake a reorganisation of 16-19 provision — the DES tenderness towards 'sixth forms of proven worth', which has emasculated many a plan for tertiary or sixth form colleges, has now been joined by the opting out proposal as a major discouragement to those who see in such colleges a considerable enhancement of opportunities for young people. As principal of a tertiary college, Mr Terry has experienced at first hand the damage which government policies have done to existing colleges as well as to LEA planning and he very deftly summarises these in his penultimate chapter. Of central importance has been the assumption which seems to underlie DES and MSC proposals that there should be a distinction between 'academic' and 'other' courses:

At the same time long overdue rationalization and reforms of public provision up to the age of nineteen seemed to be in danger of dividing young people into two distinct categories; the academic who would go on to A levels, or whatever succeeded them, at eighteen and then higher education, and the rest who would become full or part time students at an FE college taking what were termed 'work-related' courses. Whether this dichotomy was a product of accident or design was less clear. The evidence of design included the reluctance of the MSC to have anything to do with A level students at tertiary or FE colleges, the separate rationalisations of academic and vocational qualifications, the plan to set up city technology colleges as eleven to eighteen schools in cities, directly funded by government and local industry with the local authority totally excluded, and the different composition of governing bodies for schools and FE colleges.

Mr Terry sees the tertiary colleges as standing in opposition to such conception:

providing not only for all types of sixteen year old, but also doing their best to integrate provision so as to blur the distinction between the theoretical and the applicable.

In such circumstances, there is a real need

for a clear statement of the case for the tertiary option for the 16-19 age group and a demonstration of its superiority over the alternatives. A strong case is made here on educational and financial grounds for the removal of sixth forms from many comprehensive schools — a good range of A level courses taught in classes of an adequate size can hardly be achieved any other way in most areas — but the author is less convincing on the possibility of reform of the curriculum which he insists is vital to the nation's future and which in his view only the tertiary college can provide. Even if we were to buy the idea, little more than a slogan here, of a curriculum which integrates the theoretical and the practical, is the tertiary college the only institution in which such a curriculum can be delivered? Halesowen, Mr Terry's own college, is used as an example throughout the book, but it is not encouraging to find that, at the time of writing, the Liberal Studies programme had not actually been extended beyond the A level section of the college. Confidence in the author's arguments on curriculum matters is further undermined by statements like these (my underlining):

change, or curriculum development as we call it, is to be welcomed. And even in itself. **I do not actually believe in change for the sake of change.** and:

**We live in a rapidly changing world, and education/training — I use the terms fairly interchangeably — must change as well.**

The bulk of the book is not concerned with justification but with administration. In this area Mr Terry reveals himself to be a thoughtful, if somewhat quirky, operator. Open and efficient management systems, clear communication and good relationships throughout the college community are his aim and Halesowen practice is clearly and fully described. It is of course true that what is described, or something like it, happens in many good schools and colleges, and very little is specific to the 16-19 age group. Occasionally one feels that local usage is elevated to essential principle: particular modes of address are not crucial to the promotion of fruitful relationships in educational institutions, still less the absence of reserved parking spaces! Nevertheless, it is good to have an extensive account of a humane and well thought out system of management and for the reader from the school sector the passages dealing with the role of the students' union will be of particular interest.

The danger in any tertiary reorganisation is that it will be regarded, by the politicians at least, as a financial and administrative adjustment rather than as an educational advance. Mr Terry's argument is that educational aims should be central to the planning and running of the new system and that the tertiary college has:

a unique potential to help the nation invest effectively in education and lay the foundations for a society that is compassionate, harmonious and united as well as creative, enterprising and diverse.

Halesowen College appears by this account to be a good model to follow; but those who are concerned with 16-19 provision elsewhere still express doubts about whether a single

comprehensive institution can in all circumstances encompass the needs of the whole age group without 'institutional overload'.

So, while this book is a welcome addition to the meagre body of literature on its subject, there is still an urgent need for a more comprehensive and critical account of the thirty to forty tertiary colleges now in existence.

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## Research Report

**School Matters: the junior years**, Peter Mortimore, Pamela Sammons, Louise Stoll, David Lewis and Russell Ecob, Open Books (1988), pp. 310, £7.95.

FORUM readers were privileged to have a preview of the research into junior school education made available in this book in the series of three articles, by the book's authors, published in FORUM, Vol. 29, No. 2, Vol. 29, No. 3 and Vol. 30, No. 1. Now the full research report is available in this lengthy, but readable volume published in March.

This research was, of course, carried out by the Research and Statistics Unit of the Inner London Education Authority, now, presumably, at risk as a result of the present government's late decision to follow the advice of Michael Heseltine and Norman Tebbit to abolish the ILEA. If this action leads to the demise of the Research and Statistics Unit, which seems likely, a really serious blow will have been delivered to one of the most effective, and prestigious research units in the country. It is just such wanton destruction that, at times, makes one despair.

Since FORUM has carried these three articles by the research team, it is not proposed here to do more than draw our readers attention to this publication. Of course the authors are able to deal in much greater detail with the issues discussed in the articles than was possible there. There is no doubt that this, the most recent serious research into junior school education, is also one of the most effective in terms of its direct relevance to teaching and management within junior schools.

BRIAN SIMON



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