

# FORUM

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

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## The Next Forum

The Next **Forum** follows up our concern with the working of the Education Reform Act. A group of articles will critically assess the reports of the working groups on science (Michael Clarke), mathematics (Leonie Burton) and, if published in time, English (Richard Kuhn). The final report of TGAT will also be examined. These articles will focus on primary education. Other aspects of the Act will also be considered. James Hammond, general secretary of NCPTA, contributes on opting out and Clyde Chitty writes again on City Technology Colleges.

Other contributions include a letter from Scotland by Aileen Fisher, a summary of the proposed timetable for implementing the National Curriculum and testing, Eric Triggs on pre-vocationalism, David Scott on the radical right's critique of GCSE, and Peter Wilby on selection of personnel for the new Committees established under the Act.

# An Act of Challenge

Baker's Bill has been bulldozed through parliament to receive Royal Assent as the Education Reform Act virtually unscathed, despite hundreds of amendments tabled and mounting public anxiety. The Act is some eighty clauses longer than the original Bill, more draconian for Londoners and overtly hostile to a multicultural society; it takes marginally more account of those with special educational needs, apparently legitimates further and adult education, and requires a second ballot on any opting out proposal if less than half the registered parents vote in the first.

With the Act now on the statute book the task is to ensure that its malign potential is effectively contained and the new system constrained to develop in ways that can serve the educational needs and aspirations of the whole community.

Enactment is not synonymous with implementation. Various parts of the Act come into force at various times, with different lead times for their operation, and some enforcement Orders require parliamentary approval.

The National Curriculum entails limited consultations as working party reports are published and is to be phased in for age ranges and subjects, with testing and assessment arrangements to follow. LEAs have to prepare and submit schemes for devolving local financial management (LFM) for the Secretary of State's approval. LFM is to be implemented outside London in three years time.

Implementation depends on local delivery — largely by teachers, school and college governors and LEAs.

The National Curriculum cannot be delivered by the existing teaching force: there are severe shortages of qualified teachers for key subjects. Two of the core subject working groups have stressed that massive retraining programmes are essential before introducing their proposed new curriculum and related assessment. Secondary teachers who experienced the over-hasty transfer to GCSE will be even more wary of another instant switchover: all are forewarned.

Many inexperienced new governors, many of them parent governors, take office this term under the 1986 Act. The training planned for them will have to be enhanced and more put on to equip hitherto experienced governors too for LFM. Meanwhile they are already being wooed with the glamour of opting out.

LEAs were informed in mid August that reorganization schemes involving school closures under the 1980 Act will not even be considered by DES until sometime next year. This will not only be costly but imposes a discrediting planning blight on LEAs.

The admitted purpose of this planning hiatus is to encourage governors to begin opting out procedures. The opt out clauses are thereby exposed as the key ideological thrust of the Act. Governors and parents must understand the full implications of grant-maintained status — for there is no provision for returning to the LEA womb. Teacher and LEA governors therefore have an obligation to ensure that parents and other governors thoroughly understand the benefits deriving from LEA services.

Much more openness, with better lines of communication and dialogue, is urgently needed from LEAs for this understanding. The Government is relying on the poor public relations record of too many. The AMA's decision to produce information packs on the dangers of opting out is therefore welcome.

The phoney war of rhetoric and the parliamentary process is now over. The real struggle to secure and develop genuinely popular public education that comprehensively extends opportunity must now be resumed. This has been the basis for **Forum's** existence over three decades. Our approach has always been to promote informed discussion of issues and trends.

In this number we focus on several professional issues raised by the Act and directly involving teachers and how they can respond with integrity — in articles by Peter Mitchell, David Winkley and John Blanchard. The Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT), so crucial to plans for implementing a National Curriculum, is analysed by Caroline Gipps who warns of the inherent danger that some form of streaming could be reinstated as the delivery mechanism. Klaus Wedell examines the Act's implications for children with special educational needs. Significant aspects of the role of LEAs in 'quality control' of the curriculum and the essentially related professional development of teachers are considered in two articles by Peter Cornall and Liz Thomson. That, as LEAs are also responsible for further and adult education, the future development of post-school open opportunities is imperiled by the Act is forcefully explained by John Field, who urges wide ranging 'support for the principles of comprehensive education throughout life'. Our plans for the next **Forum** are outlined opposite.

The Government's impatience to further undermine LEAs' ability to manage education as a community service is already evident in the move to expedite implementation of opting out.

The hectic timetable for implementing a National Curriculum and attainment testing is patently inconsistent with universal raising of meaningful standards. Likewise the May Green Paper proposal for hiring untrained, underqualified 'licensed' teachers to plug gaps in the supply of specialist teachers. Baker's instant responses in August to the working party reports for science and mathematics reveal the Government's intention to secure an easily tested, narrowly instrumental curriculum with overt differentiation and a return to rote learning.

By means of this Act the Government aims to reverse all the positive and worthwhile educational developments made possible by the 1944 Act. It is vital that governors, parents, teachers, lay and officer members of LEAs understand the intended thrust of this Act. Its malign intent must be thwarted. Its legal framework must be made to deliver a public education service that can be developed to meet the educational needs and aspirations of all. This is the challenge posed by the Education Reform Act to the integrity of everyone involved in the implementation processes.

# The TGAT Report: Trick or Treat

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## Caroline Gipps

A psychologist who previously taught in primary schools, Caroline Gipps now lectures in Curriculum Studies at the University of London Institute of Education. Here she presents her critique of the report by the Task Group on Assessment and Testing.

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The Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT DES 1988) has been received warmly by many educationists, if not by Mrs Thatcher and the New Right.

Much of this is due to a sense of relief after the suggestions for national assessment outlined in the National Curriculum Consultative Document (DES 1987). But in the cold light of day, after the contents have been read, re-read and analysed what is the verdict on TGAT? In this paper I want to look at the major contents of the TGAT report and to highlight the surprises, the disappointments and some of the small print.

The Consultation Document referred to attainment targets and a national testing programme in which

... 'much of the assessment at ages 7, 11 (or thereabouts) and 14 and 16 (for non-examined subjects) will be done by teachers as part of normal classroom work. But at the heart of the assessment process there will be nationally prescribed tests done by all pupils to supplement the individual teachers' assessment. Teachers will administer these, but their marking — and their assessment overall — will be externally moderated'. (DES 1987, p.11).

Since the Government clearly wished this testing programme to be in place quickly, and no doubt cheaply, the most likely scenario seemed to be a series of rather narrow written tests. The likely effects of such a national testing programme, would, we know, include narrowing the curriculum, teaching to the test, and an increase in didactic teaching methods (Gipps, 1988). But the TGAT Report suggests a very different assessment programme.

The simplest way to describe the TGAT proposals is to start with the structure. Each of the core and foundation subjects is to be divided up by the subject working groups into a number of components (eg listening, speaking, reading and writing for language). Each of these components is then to be divided up into 10 levels of performance covering the age range 7 to 16. The attainment targets, which are descriptions of knowledge and activities to be attained (ie, 'know, understand and be able to do', DES 1985, para 81) cluster within the components.

Children are to be assessed on these components (in the subjects) at these levels and this will give profiles of attainment. These profiles of attainment are to serve a formative assessment at 7, 11 and 14 — ie to guide the child's future teaching and learning programme. They will also be used as a basis for communication with parents in records of achievement and this detailed, structured information could be very

valuable. The assessment will be carried out by a mixture of testing and teacher judgement. There will be supplementary assessments available for any children who need further investigation; these will be largely diagnostic. For children with special educational needs, who are deemed not able to take the national tests, there will be test materials and assessment procedures specially designed for them. As the report says: children with special needs require, just as other children, attainable targets to encourage their development and promote their self-esteem.

The two major surprises in the Report are the 'standard assessment tasks' and the system of levels it proposes.

The Report advocates not narrow written tests but rather a wide range of what it calls 'standard assessment tasks'. These will involve practical, oral and written tasks and could be done in such a way that the pupil would not see them as being any different from normal classroom work.

The Report suggests a wide range of tasks in order to avoid curricular distortion, ie teaching becoming limited to a narrow range of activities such as can be tested in simple written tests. This was one of the main criticisms of the consultation document. Professor Black and his Committee have recognised the dangers of narrow testing programmes and conceptualised a much wider, and enabling, framework for which they deserve credit.

The sort of tasks suggested by the TGAT look interesting both to do and to assess, for example:

**A Task for Seven Year Olds** (as part of a topic on 'Winter through to Spring'.)

**Second Activity: Estimation measurement of temperature and time.** Language: Question asked: Which materials keep us warmest? Wrap one layer of a different material around each of 6 milk bottles — cotton, fur, wool, felt, newspaper, nylon.

Science & Maths: Fill the bottles with warm water Measure the temperature in each, using a thermometer and record it. Estimate which bottle of water will cool first. Measure the temperature every half-hour and record it. Which bottle of water grows cold first? Which stayed warm? Why?

However, first it should be said that these are only for 7 and 11 year olds and secondly these assessment tasks must be standardised so that there is national comparability. 'Standardised' means that the tasks must be administered and marked in the same way by all teachers, so there will need to be some form of supervision to ensure that teachers are carrying out and marking them in the standard, prescribed way. It is in any case clear that developing such a wide range of



assessment tasks to assess the sort of activities like the one above in anything but a reliable and objective way is not going to be simple. There is also the issue of whether class teachers can find the time to do the tasks with every child in the class. That being said, these standard assessment tasks look very exciting, far preferable to the pencil and paper type test which some members of the Government have in mind, and they will also allow for curricular integration. So much for the treats. As the Report admits, there is a huge training exercise to be done first, as teachers will have to be trained to carry out and mark the tests. Similar assessments are carried out by the APU; these are, however, expensive of time and equipment and teachers have to be specially trained to administer many of them.

The second major surprise is the system of levels. The Group's remit was to design a system which not only allowed for national comparison but which also allowed for differentiation; to do this it has chosen a system of criterion-referenced hierarchical levels which are age-independent. Thus they hypothesise ten levels of attainment covering the ages 7 to 16. Level 1 would relate to a poor 7-year-old performance while level 10 would be equivalent to grade A/B in GCSE. Children would be assessed at various times and ages at whatever level they had reached, but reporting would be at 7, 11, 14 and 16. Professor Black and his colleagues have chosen a system that is *not* age-related because in a criterion-referenced system, they say, age is a restricting factor. Also because it allows for differentiation, variation and progression: it allows for brighter children to be tested and taught at a higher level; it allows for the wide range in attainment that we know exists (eg Cockcroft's 7 year spread in maths at 11) and children can see that they are going from one level to the next whereas in an age-based system (eg the German *notenskala*) they would probably be at the same grade each year.

An average student would be expected to cover one level every two years, but some would progress slower than this and others faster. What this structure does is to allow the more able child to keep going at his or her own pace up the levels. So at 7, most children will be at levels 1, 2 or 3: being at level 1 would mean a child may need more help than can be provided in the classroom, while being at level 3 would mean that s/he may need additional help to maintain speedier progress. At 11 most will be at levels 3, 4 and 5; at 14 levels 4 to 7 and at 16 from levels 4(1/2) to 9. At 16 it links in with GCSE. Quite how this will be has yet to be articulated; for a cogent discussion of the theoretical and empirical difficulties in linking graded assessment with GCSE see Noss et al (1988).

This is, of course a graded assessment scheme, and one of the issues in graded assessment — where students work at their own level and take assessment when they are ready (ie have a high chance of passing) — is how to organise classes and learning groups.

Part of the rationale behind the TGAT proposals is to encourage differentiation; this suggests that the range of attainment will increase with age. Thus, at age 7 children could be from levels 1 to 4 ie a four-level or eight year range of attainment. At 11 that range could be from 2 to 6 a five year level or ten year range and

so on. How are classes to be organised with such a range where there are specified programmes of work to follow and assessments to be done?

There are three possibilities for classroom organisation: grouping by level regardless of age, which would be an attractive managerial arrangement; streaming or setting within age groups as in the primary and secondary schools of yesteryear; mixed ability age grouping as we have now commonly (up to 13) but with more small group and individual work. Although the first will probably be rejected, the pressure to go for streaming or setting by level is bound to increase. There are, one suspects, few educationalists who would wish to return to streaming at primary and lower secondary level. Whatever happens we will need to think carefully about how teaching groups and classes are organised. This is an extremely radical proposal and we should be aware that the graded assessment movement has not yet solved the problems of organisation (see Brown, 1988).

The other point to make about the levels is that, as with grades in public exams, the reason for having them is to reduce a detailed range of information to a single figure. This allows for easier communication about performance: how much simpler to use a single figure for quick communication than to use the detailed information which is in a record of achievement. The single figure also makes comparison possible. This is an explicit aim at school level, implicit at class (and teacher) level, and will be inevitable at the individual pupil level. Following on from comparison, as sure as night follows day, will be competition. Again, an explicit aim of this administration is to increase competitiveness. The argument in the White Paper **Working Together — education and training** (DoE 1986) is that Britain's economic problems are due to a lack of competitiveness (Stronach 1987). Thus a return to competition in schools is to be encouraged as part of the plan for economic recovery. But as Broadfoot points out, competition only serves to improve the performance of the more able while the rest go to the wall (Broadfoot, 1988).

This brings us on to the publication of results, which is serious disappointment. Results at school level are to be reported in unadjusted form. The Report argues that using statistically adjusted results to compare schools' performance 'would be liable to lead to complacency if results were adjusted and to misinterpretation if they were not'. Now this, of course, is particularly insulting to the ILEA which has led the country in analysing public examination results and is certainly not complacent about them (Nuttall, 1988).

Instead, for each school, the results will be set in the context of a written account of socio-economic and other influences that are known to affect attainment. This is better than nothing and the LEA will have an important role in writing this report. But it is a sop: parents in the real-world market-place shopping around for the 'best' school will not take into account these paragraphs, but simply look at positions in the league table. There is a considerable amount of research on adjusting exam scores for intake and on measuring school effectiveness which TGAT simply ignores (Goldstein and Cuttance, 1988).

As the assessments work their way through the system there will be 11 year old data against which to analyse the 14 and 16 year old scores, and similarly 7 year old data against which to analyse 11 year old scores; but for many schools the damage will have been done by then. There is of course scope for an individual LEA to *choose* to adjust its test results for intake, but how many LEAs will find the facilities or will have the ability to do this if it is not a requirement? One of the pieces of 'small print' is that 7 year old results should not be published. However, if an 'individual school wished to proceed with the publication, then it should be allowed to do so at its own discretion' (para 135). Now if some schools start publishing their 7 year old scores the pressures will be very high on neighbouring schools for them to publish too. In any case, since the 7 year old results have to be made available to parents, governors and providers (presumably the LEA) they will soon become public knowledge.

The print gets smaller: in their final report (DES/Welsh Office 1988 **TGAT Three Supplementary Reports**) TGAT acknowledges this problem but retains its original position: not to encourage the publication of 7 year old results. In the Press Release accompanying this report, however, (7.6.88 DES 175/88) Education Secretary Kenneth Baker strongly recommends that schools *should* publish 7 year old results.

Another major disappointment is teacher assessment. Teacher assessment is to play a major role in national assessment. Mrs Thatcher would be less concerned about this, one feels, if she had read the small print. The plan is this: teachers will assess children's development and performance on the attainment targets and levels. They will rate on a simple scale, for example 0-5, children's performance within each profile component. In order to make sure that these ratings are standardised and reliable, to ensure national comparability, they will be moderated.

Moderation is the process by which individual judgements are brought into line with general standards. This is necessary (for this national scheme) because, due to different intakes, what is average for one school may be quite different from what is average for another. This process of moderation — which is done regularly by the Exam Boards for GCSE and A Level — will be done by groups of teachers (and other professionals possibly) who will discuss examples of work from a range of schools and agree on ratings for them. Without this process it would not be possible to comment on national standards.

My understanding of the purpose of such moderation is that it would be used to ensure that the teacher ratings make a comparable and comprehensive scheme of assessment *in themselves*, so that teacher judgement can stand alongside, and complement, the test results. The consultation document after all talked about test results supplementing teacher judgement. According to the TGAT report, however, it is more simple than that: 'The general aim (of moderation) would be to adjust the overall teacher rating results to match the overall results of the national tests' (para 74). And it goes on to say that when group moderation is not possible — it is after all a time-consuming process — moderation 'should proceed by simply adjusting the distributions to agree with those of the national testing'

(para 77). I can think of few things as demoralising to teachers as the notion that their judgements cannot be right if they do not fit with the test scores. It is very interesting to see that the digest of the TGAT Report distributed to schools does not contain these two sentences.

In their final report TGAT tries to counter this criticism by saying that test results and teacher assessments are equally important: neither should reign supreme (para 11). But it is not particularly convincing in how this could be, since it still requires that distributions of teacher assessments and test scores for individual schools be 'reconciled' with the national distribution for the overall assessment from the previous year. Adjusting test results to fit with teacher assessments seems unlikely in the short term.

Of course the group moderation process could be a useful in-service exercise in helping teachers to see how their children's performance stands in relation to others. But TGAT envisages local, regional and national moderation exercises. This complex arrangement is felt by Kenneth Baker to be complicated and costly. It is in any case a process that is likely to be impractical. This is a classic trick or treat situation: encourage teachers to feel that they are a vital part of the assessment, but then subvert it and make it impractical.

We must work to ensure that the teacher assessments are taken seriously, and that some of the developments from profiling are included in the records of achievement: eg negotiated teacher assessment and pupil self-assessment. Much of the ground work for this has already been done, and there must be space for this sort of assessment in the profiles of attainment.

TGAT's *real* trick has been to adopt educative forms of assessments (graded assessment and records of achievement) or at least their rhetoric, in which the student competes against his or her self, and much is under his or her control, and to harness them to the highly competitive arrangements required by GERBIL, while cloaking them in the benign language of 'formative' assessment and 'profiles of attainment'. These forms of assessment *can* be used formatively and possibly even diagnostically, but make no mistake: the competition and comparison will be malign for many children and are likely to be more powerful in their impact than the positive aspects.

There is, of course, as has probably become clear, a huge development exercise to be done. Subjects must be divided up into components, levels and attainment targets, and then criterion-referenced assessments designed to test these. What the Report does not say is that there is no agreement yet on what an attainment target looks like, and it has ignored the findings of a DES funded feasibility project, (Denvir, Brown and Eve, 1987); there is little experience in dividing subject matter into levels in many subjects (virtually none at primary age); and criterion-referenced assessment is notoriously difficult to develop (Nuttall, 1987). The components and levels are analogous to the domains and grade levels in GCSE: research by the SEC and the exam boards to develop criterion-referenced grade-related criteria for GCSE has failed. One of the problems lies in the difficulty of describing skills at the different levels in meaningful language so that the

# The Professional Teacher's Role in Assessment

**Peter Mitchell**

Now chief Adviser for Leicestershire and a member of **Forum's** Editorial Board, Peter Mitchell was previously been Head of Humanities at Thomas Bennett School, Research Fellow at the University of Sussex, Head of Quintin Kynaston School, Visiting Professor and Senior Tutor at the University of London Institute of Education.

'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 invention, their mathematical speculations, their historical researches, and of the work on which they have lavished the greatest care and enthusiasm'.

This quotation from Michael Armstrong (**Forum** Summer 88) presents a view of education as critical enquiry pursued both by teachers and children in classrooms. It encapsulates the excitement of learning as exploration and reinforces the complexity of life in classrooms. It is part of an inspiring article which rages against those who wish to reduce education to certainties in the interest of achieving crude evidence of comparability between the performances of children in different classes, schools and LEAs.

The purpose of this article is to continue this debate by exploring the professional teacher's role in assessment. It will be broadly divided into two parts; part one will look at the nature of a teacher's professionalism and part two will relate current developments in assessment to this professionalism.

In the recently published **School Matters** (1988) Mortimore et al pointed out that

'teachers' judgements of pupil ability were found to be strongly positively correlated with children's performance in each of the reading, writing and mathematics assessments made in the second and third years'.

The accuracy of these assessments is despite the fact that classroom assessments are usually primarily concerned with relative performance rather than absolute performance. In teacher education there has been growing confirmation that it is teachers who hold

the important knowledge about how students learn. The call for teacher trainers to have recent and relevant experience of teaching in classrooms acknowledges that they must ground their ideas in practical experience. This is a fundamental change in thinking from that which prevailed throughout much of the 60s and 70s. In those days teachers in training were given lectures in psychology, philosophy and sociology which aimed to provide the knowledge required to make sense of life in classrooms.

If it is the teachers' practical knowledge about pedagogy which is important how do teachers refine their knowledge? The pace with which events happen in classrooms, added to the complexity of the context, make it difficult for teachers to move from tacit understanding of events to a more principled one. Stenhouse developed the idea of the teacher as researcher; Ashton et al the idea of IT/INSET where teachers, students and lecturers share dialogue on ways of introducing innovations within the classroom. Both see the classroom as a centre for enquiry where observations lead to reflection and the development of practical theories. Being able to look critically at classroom experiences requires the support of a whole school approach to professional development explicitly supported by an atmosphere which encourages open debate. Professional knowledge which is refined through reflection, on deliberation with colleagues, and

difference between levels is clear and unambiguous; another is that a subject or syllabus divided up in such a detailed way, with linked assessments, can become too unwieldy, as the Scots have found (Gipps, 1986).

The TGAT report gives the impression that the proposed structure is unproblematic, and the development exercise simply a matter of paying a suitable test development agency. That is, perhaps, the biggest trick of all.

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evaluative judgements about the worthwhileness of classroom activities, needs to be set alongside the results of more conventional research undertaken in higher education. The problems which result from the lack of any clearly articulated relationship between these two sources of knowledge can be exemplified by current developments in in-service training. As local education authorities devolve more INSET funds into schools pressure is placed on institutions of higher education to seek out ways of demonstrating the relevance of their courses and the ways in which they can be integrated into the classroom practice of teachers. In the current debate on standards there has been little or no reference to how teachers' working conditions might be improved to facilitate the development of their knowledge about children's learning.

In essence pedagogical knowledge is concerned with planning, assessing and evaluating students' learning. It involves interpreting aims into practice and having ways of assessing students' achievements which grow out of the purposes behind the classroom experience. These assessments will assist teachers in their planning of future programmes of study; they will be part of the monitoring process and will guide teachers when they make judgements about the worthwhileness of courses. The strength of the teachers' position lies in their ability to set assessments firmly in the context of each student's particular experience of the curriculum. The need to recognise and respond to the unique way in which each student learns has been one of the main contributions of popular (comprehensive) education to professional knowledge. It exemplifies also teachers and researchers (eg Barnes and Britten, 1969) working collaboratively in the 60s and early 70s to extend their jointly held knowledge.

The current public debate on education confuses the status of teachers' professional knowledge. The increased involvement of parents, Governors and employers in the management of education necessitates more, not less, clarity on the role of the teacher. The aims of education which inform and give direction to work in schools ought to be identified by the broad spectrum of professional and non-professional people who have an interest in the outcomes of education. Making judgements about the worthwhileness of outcomes ought to involve the same mixture of people. In between aims and outcomes it is the teacher's professional responsibility to organise students' learning experiences and to assess the outcomes. The more that those outside the teaching profession involve themselves in the learning processes the more teachers will feel constrained to plan for predictable outcomes. This situation is the antithesis of the classroom where critical enquiry aims to generate learnings as an exciting productive experience for individuals and groups. It is the professional responsibility of teachers to maintain the centrality of their pedagogical knowledge to the planning, organisation and management of education at all levels. There is equally a need for a closer partnership with higher education and an acceptance of the role of non-professionals in work on aims and evaluation.

Current developments in education add a sense of urgency to the need for teachers to clarify their

professional role, particularly in relationship to assessment. This is an aspect of professional knowledge which has been neglected both during initial teacher training and in subsequent professional development. Although mode 3 examinations have involved some teachers in the whole course planning process the dominance of mode 1 examinations has restricted the involvement of the majority of teachers in the nuances of assessment by examination.

GCSE, Graded assessment, modular developments and Records of Achievement all present opportunities for teachers to integrate assessment into their professional knowledge. The assessments share in common a focus on criterion referenced assessment as opposed to norm referenced. Assessing students against pre-determined criteria appears a significant advance on comparing their performance with the norm for their group. It is also encouraging to think of students being given positive statements on what they can do. There are, however, aspects of these assessments which need careful scrutiny if they are to genuinely serve, rather than lead, the curriculum and organisation of classroom learning. Criterion referenced assessment has its origins in the behavioural objectives movement of the 60s. At that time there was extensive criticism (eg Stenhouse, 1975) of the way in which precise definitions of changes in behaviour, made prior to learning taking place, could inhibit teaching and lead to a failure to recognise the variety of unpredicted learning. Furthermore, when criteria have been developed in a language which teachers find obscure they are unlikely to be used with confidence.

It is essential that teachers develop the knowledge and confidence to create criteria which develop out of their course aims. Within the Oxford Record of Achievement there are curriculum elements for which criterion referenced assessments have been created. Teachers were seconded to undertake the task of producing the criteria. Classroom teachers have found it necessary to express these criteria in a language that they can understand. They have also engaged in dialogue with students in the interest of further refining the language to facilitate students being able to grasp the purpose of pieces of work. These discussions exemplify how assessment issues can enrich professional dialogue, producing cross curriculum debate and greater student involvement in the management of their own learning.

In taking an enlarged role in formulating criteria for assessment teachers should see that emphasis is given to aspects of learning which least lend themselves to being described in terms of precise criteria. The learning processes, for example, should be subject to planning as much as the knowledge and concepts to be covered. So far work on processes has tended to be concerned with the mastery of single skills (back to behavioural influences). Assessing the mastery of broad based curricula processes is essential if we are to move beyond the rhetoric of active learning, enquiry learning and problem solving. This will involve assessing the quality of student interaction with the 'subjects' they are studying.

There is clearly a tension between the development of assessments which are harmoniously part of the whole curriculum experience managed by teachers and

the desire for comparability between assessments and the use of these assessments for selection purposes. The new GCSE examination has acknowledged that certain types of assessment will only be valid if they are undertaken by teachers. This particularly applies to practical work which cannot be assessed in a final examination. The assessment of coursework by teachers presents the opportunity to assess understanding and the application of knowledge in a sustained study. What looks, on the surface, to be a move towards greater acknowledgement of the teacher's role in assessment could be inhibited by the weight of bureaucracy designed to ensure effective moderation and comparability of standards. There is also an important distinction between teachers acting as examiners for an externally designed course and acting as teachers who are involved in the design and assessment of courses. In the former the teacher and learner become formal assessor and candidate; how are these roles reconciled in the classroom? Records of Achievement have demonstrated how teachers and students can share in the management of assessment. They have enabled teachers to open up the assessment of affective learning, and to bring together the curriculum and personal development of students in statements which aim to do justice to a wide range of student achievements.

The National curriculum could present a threat to even this involvement of teachers in GCSE. (Unfortunately the amount of work teachers have to put into GCSE is not in proportion to the amount of their involvement in GCSE course design). The introduction of testing at 7, 11 and 14 will probably lead to a reappraisal of GCSE and a move away from coursework assessment. Professor Black's 'Task Group on Assessment and Testing Report' acknowledges the importance of teachers' assessment. The TGAT Report states:

'Promoting children's learning is a principal aim of schools. Assessment lies at the heart of this process. It can provide a framework in which educational objectives can be set, and pupils' progress charted and expressed . . . The assessment process itself should not determine what is to be taught and learned. It should be the servant not the master of the curriculum . . . it should be an integral part of the education process'.

So far, so good: The Report then recognises three essential elements in assessment: the teacher's own informal assessments, externally provided standard tasks or tests, and further diagnostic assessments of students with special needs. The teacher is seen to be at the heart of this process so long as there is comparability achieved through moderation. How will the Task Group ensure that the external tests don't dominate the public's judgement of teachers, schools and the LEAs? If this happens, teachers will be under pressure to teach to the tests.

We should all be concerned with educational standards and there is certainly nothing intrinsically wrong with a Government expressing its concern to the electorate. I have attempted in this paper to argue that teachers, as professionals, should expect, and be expected, to look critically into students' achievements. It is through critical reflection that teachers refine their pedagogical knowledge. Standards will be raised by acknowledging the complexity of classrooms and giving teachers the working conditions and in-service training which will enable them to improve their knowledge about assessment. To return to OCEA: in-service training on criterion referenced assessment has been regarded as some of the most stimulating INSET experienced by teachers in Leicestershire. Teachers want to improve student motivation and achievement. If this had been acknowledged by the Government, and they had professional development their priority, external tests would not be necessary. In Germany, so often used as an example of good testing, the teachers set the tests; why do they work? Because the teachers are trusted!

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# The Way Forward: Teachers and the Reform Act

**David Winkley**

The Head of Grove Junior School in Handsworth, Birmingham, David Winkley was recently on secondment to Westminster College, Oxford, where he set up a Centre for the Study of Primary Education.

It is hard to see any event as radical as the Reform Act and its accompanying package in any kind of perspective. At best we can try to see the historical moment for what it probably is — a reaction against modernism, and against a mode of cultural pluralism

seen as undermining a traditionalist view of shared national identity.

The Government's efforts have been to simplify the educational business, establish common standards, identify common Christian values, make for more

efficient delivery, sharpen and simplify management structures. This is a coherent policy, in accord with a fashionable cross-Atlantic kind of cultural conservatism, expressed in the language of business efficiency.<sup>1</sup> But the Government has the massive problem of delivery on the ground, facing the undermining reality that the world out there is, like Lady Bracknell's truth, rarely pure and never simple. We do not know how a centralised curriculum will survive the decentralised elements of governing body and 'consumer' power. Nor do we know how an authoritarian message from the centre will consort with the slow decline of traditional authorities on the ground. Nor do we know whether the simple messages will survive the interpretations of the paternalists at Elizabeth House who will at every opportunity take the simple messages and 'professionalise' them. The Black and Kingman Reports are both impressive examples of deft complications of a simple brief. And the new Curriculum Council will undoubtedly act as another filter of the simpler messages.

The teacher is caught in the midstream of these conflicting currents, having little evident influence over any of them. One possible response is to react like Apemantus in *Timon of Athens* by opting out philosophically, waiting for the storm to blow its course.

This is a not unreasonable response: the invitation to work only 1265 hours has successfully alienated the committed and encouraged workers-to-rule, pressing us all simply to keep our heads down and to look to personal survival in an ill-tempered world.

Having nothing to do with as much as possible of the Reform Act remains an option for the troops at the end of the day.

Reactive behaviour and indifference, however, do nothing for our sense of our own value, and negativity will in the end touch the children in our care. How strongly should we react to the vacuum on offer? The fact is we cannot anticipate many of the developments of the Bill. We do not know what will become of the Grant Maintained School. There may, indeed, be considerable virtues in local financial management. And the National Curriculum itself is a smiling mask behind which is (for the moment) a fairly empty head.

We might begin to pick ourselves up by looking for positive features. One issue the Reform Act lays clearly on the table is the need for equity of provision. As the Government itself put it:

'Pupils should be entitled to the same opportunities wherever they go to school'.<sup>2</sup>

Teachers might follow such concerns along by highlighting obvious inequities:

*Resource inequities.* There should be pressure on the government to define national resource entitlement under the banner of 'national standards'; and we need a variety of inventive and constructive approaches to arguing the professional side of the debate, involving parents at every stage.

*Professional inequities.* Teachers have long been patronised by local authorities, excluded from public conferences on the educational debate generally, given virtually no space to develop their own thinking, have had little control over their own in-service training and

have been far more limited in their freedoms than they often imagine. The Teacher Associations have merely cemented the Great Wall between teacher and management. Only advisors and educational administrators at their best, deliberately trying to build up the self-confidence of their teachers, have succeeded in resisting a historical trend.

*Educational inequities.* It is simply not the case that schools and teachers offer a reasonably comparative quality of provision to pupils. Some differences between schools are inevitable and desirable, but some are unacceptable.

Schools have further to go in understanding the power of imaginative learning methods, the importance of coherence, the need for planned curriculum, of close involvement of parents in a convincing way in the development of their child's education, of how to create purposes and intentions in schools that encourage children to take their learning forward for themselves.

There is, moreover, still a great deal to be learnt not only about effective teaching but about how to implement the best of what we know so that all schools are touched at the heart, and not merely casually on the periphery. This requires identifying and analysing the great variety of valuable practice, making reference to the most perceptive research, changing our own practices where necessary, and then effecting a public relations job that is more unified and better orchestrated than anything currently attempted. To achieve this teachers and advisers, LEAs and researchers must work in a consortium of interest quite different from anything we have hitherto known: and practising teachers have got to be helped to become senior partners in this renaissance of activity. The emphasis needs to be on getting the best of our knowledge and practice into all our schools.

There are, of course, a great many things that primary schools do well, probably best seen in the subtlety of interactive practice between teachers and learners, and in advanced forms of group co-operative thinking: activities too complex, often, to describe in easy ways. How are these to face up to the particular challenge of the National Curriculum?

It would be a mistake to assume that the National Curriculum will necessarily be an inhibition to thinking in forward-looking ways. One imaginative response might be to take some of the Government's key-words — such as 'values', 'standards', 'consumer concern' — and to sharpen their meanings in relation to the best we have on offer. We should remind ourselves that anyone who wants to change the world must first steal the language.

*Values* There is accumulating evidence that the most effective schools begin with a sense of shared values based on sensitivity to others, a sense of pupil rights, agreed management and curriculum policies and a willingness to be mutually self-critical as a school. Parents and children are conjoined in the shaping of these values, and the outcome will be expressed in those of the school, in the openness and enthusiasm of the pupils, in the ability of the staff to work together in groups without mutual distrust, authoritarian dominance or destructive behaviour. Such a sense of values is much deeper than 'aims and objectives': it



penetrates the life, feelings and relationships of the entire learning enterprise.

A common and developing sense of values leads to the forming of intentions for the learner. The Government in its National Curriculum has intentions, but these need to be powerfully scrutinised at school and community level. They must be prevented from becoming strait-jackets. They must be tested against local values, and where they facilitate the development of learning strategies they need to be shaped up in detail through staff planning — ready for transmission in the classroom.

*Standards.* Standards depend on delivery. There is a difference between the exposition of intentions, and the actual delivery-in-action by the teacher with the children. Years ago I worked at a school which in its day was seen as having an exemplary curriculum. This turned out to be in practice a library of syllabuses, written expositions of best intentions. There was a maths syllabus, an English syllabus, an environmental studies syllabus and so on. But the distinctive feature of the beautifully typed syllabus (available to visitors) was the marginality of its relationship to what actually happened in the classroom. Now the prospective National Curriculum looks to me suspiciously like a National Syllabus. Not until it is shaped into specific tasks for children, and transmitted through the minds of the teachers in the classroom, does it become the curriculum — what the pupils experience.

And it is, of course, in delivery that the teacher, like the footsoldier, has the most power. The way forward is to understand the importance of throwing all available support behind the proposition that the class teacher practitioner matters most, and the job of the rest of the educational service is to facilitate the improvement in the quality of his/her understanding. This requires an ability to help understand the nature of practice. Teachers require space to think and develop. They require scrutiny and critical analysis of kind and quality that acts as support. They need time to work with colleagues with skills and qualities different from their own. It is most important that teachers don't see their future as defending an outmoded kind of castle wall autonomy.<sup>5</sup> The war of the future is in the open, involving other participants, including parents. There are a number of salient issues for us to examine for the future here and I would highlight five in particular.

First, the need to resolve in our own minds the tension between teacher intention and allowing the learner the freedom to explore the learning-potential of the tasks we set. Learning requires structure and purpose. Learning appears, as a first principle, to benefit from elegance of design and sequence. Schools without curriculum plans are constantly in danger of retreating to the ad hoc and the routine. Planning may well make the learning more potentially imaginative. But planning can be taken over by the energy of the learning engagement. There is still too much evidence of routinised learning in schools, set-piece tasks formulated by the teacher with a view to controlling the learning. The teachers mustn't control everything. The learners also need space to develop tasks for themselves, to have some responsibility for their own learning — and this needs to be understood by the

teacher as not obviating the need to have planned intentions. There is accumulating evidence that the effective teacher is able to involve the learner in a variety of learning experiences which both reinforce and habitualise knowledge and skills, but also develop thinking and imagination to the limit of his/her ability.

Second there is the question of teaching style. There is some evidence, here, that the more effective teacher tends to make more use of a *variety* of different teaching styles and strategies, ranging from teaching large groups in fairly formal ways, to small-group teaching which incorporates problem-solving and resonant and experiential learning, to individualised task-setting. Particularly skilled teachers are able to switch from one strategy to another in organised and purposeful ways. Underpinning the variety of approaches teachers use is the importance of what Halpin<sup>3</sup> calls 'authenticity' or inner conviction and enthusiasm. To this we may add the impact the quality of the teacher's own thinking (and view of learning) has on the learner. In Bruner's words,

'It is not so much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become part of the student's internal dialogue.'<sup>4</sup>

Third there is the question of improving quality of delivery through knowledge. This may lead us to recognise that teachers are not masters of all they survey. It seems to me likely that in fifty years we might look back with wonderment at the relatively low levels of achievement we were prepared to accept from children. We need to tackle one of the central issues for the primary school — how to move children rapidly to higher levels of progress across a range of activities in a class teaching arrangement that emphasises generalist and cross-curriculum teaching. How do we equate this with the awareness that some teachers elevate the achievement of all children to astonishing levels in, say, dance, or drama, or music, or ceramics or science? How do we make such authoritative and knowledgeable teaching available for all children? Do we need, for example, to make much more use of community resources? My own school's art teaching, for example, has benefited enormously from involvement of specialist art students. Do we need to make more flexible use of the resources within our own LEAs, and our own staff? Is the current one-teacher one-class arrangement the most effective for all our children? These are questions of profound and radical significance — maybe of much more consequence in the long run than the National Syllabus, because these are questions that touch more profoundly on *delivery* to the learner.

The fifth question is how do we best demonstrate achievement? Achievements are important. They need demonstrating to parents as well as to pupils. We need to be far more sophisticated and engaging in devising methods of defining, describing and celebrating what children do. This requires clear headedness and energy and a preparedness to open debate and evidence to the clients. As a component in this we need a radical reassessment of our understanding of how most effectively to use advice and consultancy. We need access to information about teacher and pupil achievement in other schools — not for reasons of cross

comparison but to learn something about ways in which we, too, might learn. Teaching is about learning: and learning is never ended. And why not, if necessary, set up our own achievement records, assessment criteria, published results, and the like? The RSA and the Royal College of Music have managed it for years. We must stop behaving as though the Government was the only fount and source of good ideas.

And it goes without saying, of course, that parents have a crucial part to play in all this, and must be taken along with us at every stage. It's not just in teaching that the 'expert' is under scrutiny as Donald Schon convincingly argues.<sup>6</sup> Clients of all kinds need to be taken along with us in dialogue and partnership: if the Government's consumerism encourages this, all to the good.

*Concern.* My final reference word is also the Government's. Much of syllabus design and the quest for 'standards' is predicated on a sense of the academic, the visibly, empirically demonstrable. As with the Government's vague espousal of behaviourist principles, its concern with the narrower empirical forms of assessment looks faintly faded and old fashioned. The intellectual world is moving on beyond the simpler conceptions of behaviourism and the purer theories of scientific empiricism.

The thought must occur to us that limited short-term tested objectives may not be the most important criteria of successful learning in the long-term. And it's long-term that we really ought to be concerned about. There has long been a tendency to underestimate the personal and emotional lives of children and families and the massive contribution emotional health and personal stability make to successful learning. A sense of self-worth and the enthusiasm and self-determination that come from self-confidence, are of critical importance. We still have, for instance, only the vaguest understanding of the significance of self-motivation. Primary education (if sometimes a bit naively and a bit inconsequentially) has from Susan Isaacs onwards held to a counter-tradition of intelligent concern for people's feelings as a foundation for successful learning. I am not signalling some kind of post-Plowdenist sentimentality. I am flagging a general philosophical principle that the state of the mind and feelings of the learner is a crucial component in

learning, creating an attitude that sees learning as something that evolves over long periods of time and is allied to personal growth.

I am also concerned that one of the most alarming prospects over the next few years is not touched at all by the Reform Act. The Government in other quarters is rightly beginning to show concern, too. And this is about the potential division of children into two worlds. On the one hand, the secure and content, living and working in well resourced parentally supported environments; on the other the insecure, mostly found in cities and poorer communities. This divergence will be shown in schools in all kinds of ways — through differences in stress, tension, quality of delivery and interaction, and instability. The outcomes can be seen in devastating ways in the cities of the USA. The issue opens up the debate about special needs expertise and sense of professional caring for all our children.

The conclusion underlying this analysis, however, is that we should respond to the Reform Act at the level of ideas, energising our attention to our own practices, having the confidence to tackle weaknesses, and to make the most of opportunities. The Act is a bird with large wings, but it's still out of sight, with a long way to fly. Indeed there are some who privately wonder if it can ever get far off the ground without a great deal of teacher support. Even if it does, and gets ominously close, it can't hope to eclipse the whole educational world. In the end teachers must retain their integrity, a sense of proportion and an awareness that there are other long-term issues of greater importance than the posturing of syllabuses and the rejigging of structures in a system that has never been as satisfactory as it ought to be.

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1. For an interesting discussion of these issues, cf *Dialogue* 2. 1988 'The predicament of Liberalism.'
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3. Halpin A (1966) *Theory and Research in Administration*, London: Macmillan.
4. Bruner J S *Towards a Theory of Instruction*, 1968, p.124.
5. For a discussion of the implications of such new-style 'openness' for the profession, cf. Winckley D R (1985) *Diplomats and Detectives*, London: Robert Royce, pp 222-226.
6. Schon D (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Temple Smith.

# Whose Achievement, How Recorded?

## John Blanchard

An experienced teacher of English in comprehensive schools, John Blanchard went to Dorset in 1985 where he is Language Co-ordinator for the Dorset Records of Achievement Project, one of the DES-funded pilot projects now extended to 1990. he is author of *Out in the Open: a Secondary English Curriculum*.

At neither national nor local level is there any quarrel with the idea that records of pupils' achievement should become pupils' property. But *when*? Prompting me to explore this question are new policies for assessment

and reporting now taking shape. These take for granted that pupils perform tasks in order to show what they know, understand and can do, and that schools are responsible for compiling records of pupils'



achievements. It cannot be too late to think carefully about the issues involved:

- Why should pupils pursue the activities they pursue?
- What reference-points should be used to evaluate pupils' achievements?
- What account should be given of pupils' achievements?

### **Why should pupils pursue the activities they pursue?**

The prime reasons for pupils doing *x* rather than *y* have to do with the advantage *x* is thought to have in enabling pupils to develop physically, emotionally and intellectually. And beyond that, teachers intend pupils to realise a concept of themselves as learners — who affect the world and, in so doing, are themselves affected. Hence the cyclical nature of the educative process, which entails conceiving purposes and plans, pursuing activity, reviewing, considering alternatives, conceiving fresh intentions . . . Though one might learn from doing anything, the learning that constitutes education consists in the repeated and progressively refined experience of deliberation, experiment and reflection regarding activities whose meaning is, in part at least, self-determined, not imposed.

Actually, pupils' pursuits have various sources and impulses. Pupils might do *x* in order to find something out, to make something or to affect someone — for its own sake — their activity arising from their own needs, talents or aspirations. Pupils might do *x* in order to carry out an agreement entered into, say, with their teacher — for the sake of meeting both the intrinsic demands of voluntary activity and the extrinsic specifications of a syllabus — combining what they choose to do with what they are led to do. Pupils might do *x* in order to provide evidence of knowledge, intelligence or skill — for the sake of being assessed — their activity being instigated and governed by a local or national curriculum. So autonomy, negotiation and compulsion are all possible, but only the first two allow pupils to attribute their own personal meaning to their activity and to do so as part of the activity itself. In the third case, meaning is attached to activity in a disintegrated fashion by authorities other than the pupils before the activity's inception — in the stipulation of task or target — and after it is finished — in the assessment of performance. Educative activity is of the autonomous and negotiated kinds.

When pupils are required to perform tasks for the purpose of assessment, the justification cannot be in terms of benefits to pupils' education. Assessment of performance robs pupils' activity of its deliberative and reflective power. Producing behaviour on request, and receiving dislocated information about it, can be no more than superficially instructive; it might, for example, point out what should be done next in terms of 'go back and try again' or 'do more' or 'do the harder task now', given that progressive attainment is seen as a linear or hierarchical sequence of operations. Only when pupils themselves conduct or share in the evaluation of their work can results help them find improved ways of carrying it out. Externally derived results cannot be counted as having diagnostic or formative effects. Diagnosis provides information

about what is going wrong, how and why; assessment is concerned with singular, measured attainment, not interpretations of processes. Formative practices provide information about how to proceed in the work and about why one course of action might be better than another. Such practices imply diversity and individuality in ways of working and learning, and involve pupils in the complete cycle of deliberation, experiment and reflection.

### **What reference-points should be used to evaluate pupils' achievements?**

When pupils engage in activity for its own sake, achievement lies in the pursuit itself and in the outcome, if there is one. Was the dance-drama satisfying? Did the bridge take the load? Did everyone have opportunities to make suggestions? Did the survey reveal any surprises about land-use? The questions refer to the activity itself. The answers belong to those who are involved — the pupils themselves, their teachers inasmuch as they take part, and others acting as 'audience', 'market', supervisors or observers. The criteria by which one might evaluate activities depend on the purposes, values and context of those involved. What is more, the criteria themselves become the object of attention, manipulation and development. The pupils do not merely pursue activities; they evaluate their activities and develop their own criteria. In this way pupils have opportunities to learn how to learn by controlling their own projects and judging their success.

When pupils try, through making a kind of contract, to match their own choice of activity with what is required of them, achievement lies in fulfilling the agreed plan. Was the anticipated process followed? What unforeseen factors emerged? Were voluntary and prescribed elements tested equally, with equal success? Was everything accomplished? These are relevant questions, and the answers belong to those who made the agreement — principally the pupils, between themselves, with their teachers and others too perhaps. The criteria by which one might evaluate activities depend on the terms of the agreement that launched them. The pupils not only pursue activities: they also evaluate their performance and develop processes by which they agree to accomplish things. In this way pupils have opportunities to learn how to learn and how to negotiate activities by having a share in the setting up of projects and in judging their success.

When pupils do something because they have to be assessed, achievement is measured without reference to the activity's intrinsic value. Does the behaviour cover the prescribed assessment objectives? Are the given criteria met in scope and degree? What level, grade or score should be awarded? These questions are asked from outside the performance. The answers belong to assessors and moderators. Criteria may be modified, but not by pupils, and not during the activity. In this way pupils learn that it is not for them to set up projects and judge their success. This is not educative, though educational systems seem always to have permitted assessment of this kind. Achievements are replaced by attainment categories, expressed as quantitative data.

Data about attainments measured on isolated occasions misrepresent what pupils have achieved if they achieved more than performing for assessment. Where pupils have met challenges inherent in the activities they have independently pursued, and where they have met challenges in the courses of action they have undertaken by agreement with others such as their teachers, achievement should be seen in those terms. The best evaluation criteria are educative: the ones pupils use in evaluating their autonomous and negotiated activities.

Attainment assessment feeds comparisons between pupils and between schools. Comparisons occur in educative evaluation between the different reference-points that have been used over the course in evaluating the individual's achievements. Asking 'Am I getting better at these activities?' leads to the questions 'Am I getting better at interpreting and evaluating what I do?'

### **What account should be given of pupils' achievements?**

Pupils should have opportunities to become aware that their activities have causes and effects. The work leaves traces: directly, in the shape of artefacts and tangible outcomes — pictures, models, sculptures, buildings, tape-recordings, photos, diagrams, manufactured objects, compositions, publications, notebooks, plans prototypes, drafts, revisions, and so on — and indirectly, in the shape of commentaries or reflections — diaries, letters, critiques, reviews, observations, interpretations, advice, conclusions, resolutions, and so on. Such primary and secondary, retainable evidence of progress and accomplishment needs conscientious attention, principally because individuals' charting of their own experience substantiates their achievement, also because it provides a store to be ransacked when occasions for informing third parties arise.

The purpose is not to compare pupil with pupil, or teacher with teacher, but to portray what has been done, how and why. Diversity in content and form is to be accepted and encouraged. Standard can only be the fact of every pupils' being entitled and enabled to monitor, record and report their own activities.

There is no doubt about pupils' capabilities in this respect. Six-year-olds and sixteen-year-olds alike, helped by peers, teachers and others, are adept at all of these:

- making constructive criticisms of and responses to classmates' work;
- receiving praise and suggestions from people who receive the work as a product or who observe it as a process;
- defining the qualities one might value in certain kinds of work; trying to fulfil specifications; testing out criteria; amending criteria in the light of experience;
- keeping a log of experiences and assignments;
- maintaining written 'dialogue' about work undertaken.

Some teachers are now highly skilled in facilitating these processes. Far less widespread is for these practices to be seen through to reporting. Reporting needs to be seen as pupils' opportunity to survey and sum up their learning. It should be their responsibility. Where such approaches have been tried, for example, within the Dorset Records of Achievement project, the results and responses have been heartening. These need urgently to be developed if they are not to be vulnerable to externally imposed, competitive assessments.

The traditional curriculum did not belong to pupils, and it has been possible within it to see records of achievement as schools' responsibility — to be awarded to pupils when they leave. This alternative, educative curriculum, involving pupils in autonomous and negotiated activities, makes the recording of achievement pupils' own work from the very beginning. The teachers' views take their place alongside the pupils' and others'. The educators' task is to help pupils manage the material accruing from their work, so that they can make their own representations of their achievements — both as part of their learning, and for the benefit of those who are interested.

(The views expressed are the author's and not necessarily those of Dorset LEA).

# **Guaranteed Curriculum, Locally Grown**

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## **Peter Cornall**

Previously head of Carisbrooke High School, with twenty-three years experience of comprehensive school teaching and three years as an assistant education officer, Peter Cornall has been Senior Inspector in Cornwall for the past seven years. He is a trustee of the Centre for the Study of Comprehensive Schools.

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'A foolish consistency', wrote Emerson, 'is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statemen . . .'; about which provocative remark I can only observe — looking around at recent educational policy-making — that it appears to require neither

intellectual stature nor magnanimity to produce *inconsistency*! In times like these, three months between writing an article and its appearance is a dangerously long time; assumptions are risky, when the present Government is concerned, and I propose to

walk carefully. We certainly will not *start* with Local Education Authorities, although we may come round to them, carefully, later on!

It is a fair assumption, I believe, that the SCHOOL is not dead; and if that is correct, TEACHERS are still a basic resource. If teachers are to present the statutory curriculum to their students, they will need skills, well-maintained and up-to-date. Readers of *Forum* will share my conviction that teachers need much more than merely pedagogic skills: they require insight into the nature of the activity in which they and their colleagues are engaged; and it is their right and duty to share in the creation and development of the courses to which they contribute.

Most of these courses will be components in the statutory curriculum of core and foundation subjects: others will be contributing to its expansion into the 'entitlement' curriculum which seeks to empower young people. In the immediate future, before the detailed expectations of the statutory curriculum are known, there is the intriguing work of aligning the criteria of the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative with the core and foundation subjects. Equally urgent for primary teachers, and perhaps others, is the need to become expert in the methods of assessment which are to be applied to much of the statutory curriculum.

All over the country, policies for the professional development of teachers are being devised and put into effect. In very many areas, the staffs of schools have seized, with enthusiasm, novel opportunities to plan training activities based in their own schools, or in collaboration with their neighbours. Almost all of them have recognised their need for help in the direction and conduct of school-focussed training, and they have drawn upon the expertise of locally-based advisers and — with circumspection — upon higher education. In my own experience, this exciting growth of institutional in-service training has not in the least diminished the demand for a whole range of county-based activities, which can bring together those who share phase or subject specialisms, and those planning, and for continuity between phases.

Schools and teachers have also to accept an intensified concern with 'quality control', applied, in spite of the very obvious problems, to the process of education. The search for valid and significant performance indicators may still be taking place, but the notion that they must exist is probably established beyond challenge in the public mind, at least for a period; and teachers may sensibly agree to play an important part in the process, both through school self-evaluation and through schemes for individual appraisal. They will also recognize that scrutiny from outside will, in most areas, become more apparent, reflecting nationally-expressed demands for accountability, and for demonstrable improvement. They may also note the interesting ambiguity, or confusion, in Government policy, which seems to depend on market forces to secure the elimination of the least fit, and yet is apparently still interested in schemes of universal improvement based on monitoring and appraisal. I have for some time believed that a well-resourced, and therefore genuine, Government commitment to Teacher Appraisal would be a very welcome sign that the cause of a good quality

education *for every child* has not altogether been abandoned, even in right-wing circles. We shall see; lip-service to appraisal, without full resourcing, will only confirm our fears. As for external monitoring on its own, especially that which results in published reports, it can easily be seen as no more than a publicly provided 'Which School?' service, once Local School Management and the poll-tax have combined to restrict the Local Education Authority's scope for special intervention.

For the inspection of schools, central government employs only the highly-qualified but numerically limited force of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Well-placed to express national expectations, through their reports and other publications, HMI cannot possibly, on a ratio or approximately one Inspector to a thousand teachers, and encumbered by their protective protocol, provide an adequate monitoring system, let alone offer any perceptible support to individual members of the teaching force. It is inherent in the independent role of HMI, in relation to schools and those who maintain them, that they should carry no direct responsibility for the standards which they observe: one wonders whether this traditional distinction between reporting and responsibility will be easily maintained, as the progress of centralization renders the theory of local control of schools increasingly spurious.

Very different is the position of locally-based inspectors and advisers; as officers of the bodies which maintain the schools, they clearly share in their employers' responsibility for the well-being of the schools. This means that for them the processes of monitoring and of offering support are complementary and almost everywhere seen as inseparable. 'Almost everywhere'? In theory there is no reason why inspection, on the one hand, and support, on the other, need be carried out by the same people; but as yet very few examples of this separation can be found. In the short term there are powerful practical reasons why such a division of function will not become widespread, the most important being the undoubted fact that most of today's advisers and inspectors would not wish to draw a strong distinction between the processes of perceiving deficiencies and attempting to make them good. In time, without doubt, the country could be moved towards a separation between, let us say, inspectors to report, and advisers or advisory teachers to offer support in the schools: it is certain that few of the present cadre of advisers and inspectors would take kindly to such a change.

Would the innovation be wise? The answer is closely linked to the view taken of teachers, and of their professional status. Those who see teachers as technicians, whose skills are solely directed towards excellence in the 'delivery' (significant word!) of a curriculum not merely planned in outline, but devised in detail by others; such people may well favour the subjection of teachers to inspection dissociated from advice and support. Those of us, on the other hand, who desire for all teachers that status of professional managers which involves a major share in decisions about what is taught, as well as about methods of teaching, will give highest priority to collaboration between teachers and all those who are in a position to support them. For us, the sacrifice of this close

relationship on the altar of quality control, is pointless and self-defeating. This position is by no means a feeble refusal to admit that standards can be unacceptably low, and that low standards must be criticised, and raised: it simply recognizes that attitudes and practice are more effectively changed, outside a police state, through friendliness and co-operation than through processes less unmistakably supportive. The only lasting improvements in practice will be those which come about through personal conviction, on the part of the teacher, and the path to this conviction lies through human encounters which do not separate the process of judgement from the processes of encouragement and support.

We have now established and examined, I believe, four secure features of the present educational scene: SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, LOCAL SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS, LOCAL MONITORING OF SCHOOLS. None of these is likely to disappear suddenly; and each is closely concerned with the future of the curriculum. What of the LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY? While its span of life cannot possibly be predicted — for these are radical times indeed — the LEA is, for the time being, a sufficiently convenient means of providing the administrative framework for an education service, and also for employing the people needed to provide it. To what extent is the LEA to be anything more than this? Has it, in particular, any continuing role in relation to the curriculum? Is it necessary for the processes we have already considered, or monitoring and supporting the work of teachers? I am reminded of words used a decade ago by Dudley Fiske, when he declared that he was a local government man, 'but not at any price'. If Local Education Authorities want to be thought *necessary*, rather than merely convenient for the time being, they must demonstrate, whatever the difficulties, that they are committed not just to honest and efficient administration, but to the highest quality of educational provision.

If an Authority is shown to be failing to offer such a service, it can so easily be held to public blame for whatever inadequacies are supposed to exist in its schools, and it will often lack the means of effective self-defence. What is more, unless schools are able to feel confident about the support and training available to their staffs, as a whole, they may discount altogether the value of their link with the Authority. It is a sad truth that in these days no LEA can shrug off either of these consequences — public criticism or internal disparagement — as irrelevant to its future. Even so, some of them have begun only recently, with the advent of TRIST followed by GRIST and ESG, and accompanied by TVEI, to respond with any vigour to the in-service training needs of their teachers. A few, and alas I know one well, have still been unable to find their way to employing the number and range of professional staff needed for an adequate support of the curriculum across and beyond the compulsory years of education. Such Authorities are least able to redress the imbalance in support to teachers which is created by the now established system of DES educational grants and 'national priority' areas for training.

Such failure, however easy to explain in local terms, and under the nationwide shadow of poll-tax

uncertainties, works against the self-interest of the LEAs who are guilty of it. A corporate body which appears to perform a service adequately (in this case in-service training) only when it has become the channel for external funds rather than the initiator, will continue to lose its scope for initiative! Its competence will continue to be judged from its performance in the areas over which, for the moment, it retains some scope for improvement and innovation. The support of teachers, through first-class advisory services, is one such area; the monitoring of its service, especially with the arrival of Local School Management, is rapidly emerging as a second, associated, priority. Those Authorities which have been able to take these duties seriously for a long time, are being let down by those who lag behind. If all are not to become merely the administrative channels for central government decisions, every LEA must come to see that its future usefulness *to education* depends on how it is meeting the *educational* needs perceived *locally*, school by school. It is in the schools that we must prevent education from being reduced to the exact performance of ritually prescribed duties, according to nationally sanctioned formulae: given a fair measure of true professionalism among teachers, we may never reach so disastrous a conclusion — but we may still lose LEAs on the way!

The Local Education Authority which wishes, during the introductory years of the statutory curriculum, to use this time (which may already be borrowed time, for all we know), to demonstrate that education is still best provided through local government, will apply itself to several objectives:-

1. It will maintain an Advisory Service, or Inspectorate, (the name need not mean much in terms of practice; in Cornwall we have both!) which is able, through its size, range and quality, to command the respect of all teachers by its capacity to appraise, advise and support them.
2. The Authority will operate the best possible Staff Development Policy, throughout all its schools and colleges, using to the full all sources of help locally available, financial and professional. It will find ways to extend development opportunities to all those who work in schools to support the teachers.
3. Its scheme for Local School Management, to be submitted in 1989, will have benefitted from a very careful scrutiny of Pilot schemes. In particular, the Authority will have assessed the cost in staff time of making sure that from those to whom much is given, much will be expected, and in the currency which really matters — education of quality.
4. The Authority will also accept the interesting duty of helping its teachers, and indeed others, to 'make sense' of the intensely bewildering educational scene, and to relieve them of some of the intellectual and emotional pressure which is to a degree inescapable today. It can reconcile the demands of the statutory curriculum and TVEI Extension; it can bring together teachers from different phases; it can produce its ideas for those parts of the curriculum which the statutory curriculum does not reach; it can encourage a patience which is not sterile, among

# Further and Adult Education after the Act

**John Field**

With a personal background of experience as a mature student, John Field worked in adult education for eight years in South Yorkshire and Derbyshire. He now lectures in continuing education at the University of Warwick.

Further, adult and community education have for decades been seen as the Cinderellas of public education. Look at almost any commentary upon the Bill, and you will hardly find them mentioned, other than in fears over the future of the much-praised inner London adult education service. The great issues for debate — opting out, the national curriculum, 'open' enrolment, academic freedom — have been those which most affect the traditional centres of educational gravity: schools, universities, LEAs and the DES.

This is odd. The Act will substantially change the basis upon which further education is financed and governed; it will certainly affect adult education, if largely by implication or neglect; and it raises new hoops through which community education must now jump. The numbers affected — over 3 million adult and further education students, according to HMI<sup>1</sup> — are large. Why the silence<sup>2</sup>? Is it simply that the relevant lobbies are weak?

One simple answer is that the post-initial education service — FE in particular — has already been so dramatically transformed that it is still reeling. A brief list of investigations and policy proposals since 1981 would include **New Training Initiative** (1981), **Training for Jobs** (1984), **Competence and Competition** (1984), **Education and Training for Young People** (1985), **Working Together: Education and Training** (1986), **NAFE in Practice** (1987) and **Managing Colleges Effectively** (1987)<sup>3</sup>. Then add the partial transfer of powers to MSC, the incentive to privatisation through college company activities of the 1985 Further Education Act, the review of vocational qualifications, fears of competition from MSC's hapless Open College, an ever more vibrant private sector, the widespread use of selective funding to promote favoured initiatives, and the uncertain planning environment brought about by changes in local government financing — all this for a service which is still seen as 'non-statutory' and even non-essential.

The Act brings new dimensions of change, possibly the risk of serious destabilisation, to a part of the public education service already in flux. What it says about post-initial education is simple enough. It requires

LEAs 'to secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities for further education', including opportunities for adult education. College governing bodies will be packed with representatives of 'business, industry or any profession or any other field of employment relevant to the activities of the institution'. In FE, financial management is delegated to the governors, who will also hire and fire staff as they judge fit (the LEA, though, will remain the employer). The Act says nothing in particular about adult education, and is similarly silent about tertiary structures and community education policies.

So it does look as though post-initial education — 'further education', in DES' terminology — came in as an afterthought. The rather murky law on further education was clarified (most existing provision may have been technically ultra vires). DES had barely thought about the Act's impact upon adult education: when the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education complained that 'opting out' jeopardised adult classes on school premises, this shocking news persuaded Baker to introduce a rather cumbersome amendment allowing grant-maintained schools to run adult classes — if they and the LEA so agree.

Broadly, the Act will *centralise* control over a number of key features of the system in the hands of the Secretary of State — including all regulations and guidelines controlling delegation schemes and governing bodies — and *fragment* responsibilities for planning and delivery of services. Vastly increasing the power of business representatives to determine local policy and practice, the Act may jeopardise existing opportunities for lifelong learning, while fostering new ones which are primarily employer-led; delegation schemes will encourage colleges to overcome decline in the 16-19 clientele through self-financed programmes (in principle for local business, in practice often for the lucrative overseas student market); and it will uncouple existing mechanisms for ensuring coherence, access and progression through a range of local opportunities. It strengthens the likelihood that schools' governors will decide to freeze out adult users, especially in popular schools.

those who feel threatened by unimaginable things; it can fight off, vigorously, the notion of teachers as models of efficiency, purged of enterprise. Most important of all, perhaps, the Authorities, severally and in association, can insist — through their own various initiatives — on the maintenance, locally, regionally and nationally, of an open dialogue on educational matters. For such a dialogue, there is

no more critical an opportunity than that provided by the induction and training of school governors — a natural field for Authority action, through which it can develop a largely new constituency for education, which actively supports the maintained system and endorses the principle of equal value, at a time when less generous ideas openly stalk the land, as in nobler days they do not dare to do.

Less noticed is that the Act also introduces formalised and mechanistic performance measurement into further education. As foreshadowed in the **Joint Efficiency Study** conducted by DES and the local authority associations, college performance will largely be judged — and rewarded — on two principal indicators of 'efficiency': student-staff ratios and unit costs (or total cost per successful student outcome). Schedule 7 lays down recommended full-time equivalents which mean that 156 evening class students will count for the 12 that you need to meet the recommended SSR!

A crude and simple rule for success for the ambitious college principal would thus be to run down part-time provision in unpopular subjects where costs, failure and drop-out rates are high (ironically, this may kill off much science provision in FE, where HMI found that half the classes had ten or less students). Meanwhile, LEAs and DES are seeking to extend lecturers' class contact hours — with some local success.

Where does this leave hopes for a comprehensive education service which meets local needs throughout life? Potentially, the impact might be crippling for LEAs such as Wolverhampton, where moves towards a tertiary system have been accompanied by community involvement in curriculum development and programme design, by attempts to meet the needs of black and working class adult learners, and by coherent programmes of access and second chance education. Nor will it assist authorities who have sought to foster schools-based community education, or who have tried to shift their adult education service, from following what Tawney called 'the line of least resistance', towards a needs-driven curriculum involving those who have benefited least from the education system in the past. It is an immensely depressing prospect.

It is probably also too pessimistic. Whether consciously or by oversight, LEAs have been left residual but significant powers in further and adult education which might be used at worst to limit the damage and at best to continue exploring some of the options that have opened up in the past fifteen years. No one has yet explained what 'adequate facilities for further education' might mean, and it is open to LEAs to lay down both policies and strategic plans for their area which meet their own criteria of adequacy.<sup>4</sup> Why should LEAs not introduce their own measure of performance, including specific targets - say for access — and use these as a basis for resource allocation? LEAs and other local government departments and agencies, such as economic development units and enterprise boards, can contract with colleges to deliver specified programmes of work. LEAs have been given the job of training the new governors — an opportunity that adult educators should seize. Finally, LEAs interested in preventing domination over governing bodies by Tories under another name should ensure divide and rule, seeking nominations from a spread of representative bodies: black business groups, voluntary bodies and community organisations, of course, but also a range of mainstream employers' and professional bodies rather than just a chamber of commerce.

Similarly, the teaching force has a range of options open to it. Collectively, its voice is far from negligible; while NATFHE has been unable to resist sustained, hardline onslaughts (eg the Hereford and Worcester

redundancies), it does have some standing and influence within most colleges and at authority-wide level, and it does represent a force for unity. Senior college managers, by contrast, will increasingly compete with one another for status, work and resources even within each LEA; business governors will also be wary of helping the competition — nor, on past evidence, are they likely to be the most active and effective governing body members. Will lecturers, in a context of tension over salaries and conditions of employment, be able to forge selective alliances with the LEA against college managers and governors?

It may not come to that. At college level, there may be much sympathy for the view that part of any cash surplus generated by self-financed activity should be passed to areas which are valued for educational reasons but whose students are unemployed or low-paid. After all, even progressive business is able to draw up 'mission statements' whose objectives include community service, environmental protection and employee participation. Why not demand that the rhetoric be cashed in?

Similarly in schools. There is no evidence that a commitment to community education damages the performance of younger pupils. Far from it: Paul Collins of Woodway Park Community College, Coventry, has shown in a fascinating local study that many sixth-formers and teachers value the stabilising influence and intellectual stimulus of adults in the class room.<sup>5</sup>

Part of the struggle now is to win LEAs and governing bodies over to involvement in and support for lifelong learning. Forceful, unified and sustained lobbying and campaigning bodies are required as never before, operating at local and regional as well as national level, to maintain and broaden support for the principles of comprehensive education throughout life, organising for the present and preparing for the future.

This is both an ambitious and an ambiguous path. At its worst, it implies that education professionals and business interests might condescend to assuage their consciences with a bit of PR on the side, while the rest of the institution gets on with the real work — but doesn't that already often happen now? At best it means mobilising teachers and learners in a constant struggle to push back the frontiers of control from business interests, the DES, and managers anxious about their own careers — isn't that also a familiar pattern? Since the Bill has now become an Act, we have to live with the contradictions, put Baker and the business governors on the defensive, and plan for the day when the Education Reform (Repeal) Act receives the Royal Assent.

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# Special Educational needs and the Education Reform Act

**Klaus Wedell**

A Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of London Institute of Education, Klaus Wedell has been concerned with research on the implementation of the 1981 Act and on curriculum for children with moderate learning difficulties. He has recently been consulting with special educational needs bodies on the formulation of amendments to the Education Reform Bill and has written this article before the final text of the Act is known.

The Educational Reform Bill (ERB) appears to have been drafted within a conceptual framework which is different from that adopted by the Warnock Report (1978), the 1981 Act on Special Educational Needs, the House of Commons Select Committee Report (1987), and subsequent developments in this area of education. Indeed, the original Government Consultative Document on the National Curriculum (1987) made only one reference to special educational needs, and that was to pupils with Statements. In its original form, the ERB itself made similar sparse reference to Special Educational Needs (SENs). At the time of writing, the Bill has been considerably amended following the Commons and Lords' Committee stages, but many of the amendments have only been necessitated by the discordance between the terms of the Bill and current thinking and practice relating to the education of children and young people with special educational needs.

I would like, in this brief paper, to focus on two main aspects of thinking and practice concerning SENs and their implication for the implementation of the Act;

1. Basic considerations about the nature of SENs and about the rights of those with SENs.
2. The matching of needs and provision, in the context of the proposed National Curriculum (NC) and the proposed organisation of education services for children.

## SEN defined

The definition of SEN in the 1981 Act marked the change from a 'within-child' to an 'interactive' view of SEN — 'a child has SENs if he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him'. 'Special educational provision . . . means provision made generally'. In other words, SEN is the outcome of interaction between the resources and deficiencies within a child, and the resources and deficiencies within the environment (Wedell et al 1987). The Warnock Committee concluded that no clear demarcation could therefore be drawn between individuals who were, or were not 'handicapped'. It was argued that SENs occurred in a continuum of severity, and that up to 20% of the school population might have a SEN at some time in their school career.

The ERB in its original version did not indicate a recognition of this continuum of SEN among the school population, and of the estimate that nationally, around 18% of children in ordinary schools might have SENs.

Both the Warnock Report and the 1981 Act promoted the right of children with SENs to be educated in ordinary schools. The 1981 Act laid a duty on the governors of schools to ensure that 'teachers . . . are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for . . . pupils who have SENs.' The Warnock Committee asserted that the aims of education were the same for all children, while acknowledging that these aims would be met to different degrees. The ERB in Clause 1 formulated the aims of education, but there has been resistance to an amendment which added the word 'all' to the sentence 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of (all) pupils at a school . . .'. Similarly amendments have not yet been accepted, which propose that arrangements for establishing schools' local financial management, their admission numbers, and plans for schools to opt out, should include criteria about the *adequacy* of provision for pupils with SEN and the furtherance of their integration. For example, the draft circular on financial delegation only requires LEAs to allow for the number of pupils with SENs in arriving at a school's allocation.

There is no explicit recognition of the continuum of SENs written into the Act, nor a commitment to the promotion of integration, either within the compulsory school age range, or in further and higher education.

## Matching SENs with provision

The Act allows for the National Curriculum to be modified or 'disapplied' according to the needs of a pupil. This may occur in a 'collective' context, through regulations and orders or with respect to individual pupils, through temporary measures or statements.

It is as yet unclear how 'collective' modification is to be conceived or applied but it appears to have been added to the Bill when it became evident that no account had been taken of the continuum of SEN. After an initial unfortunate government amendment which proposed that modifications might be designed for 'categories' of pupils (thus reversing the anti-categorical stance of the 1981 Act), a further amendment was put forward which referred to 'cases and circumstances' in which modification or 'disapplication' of a particular part of the curriculum should occur. It is apparent that the need for such a formulation depends on the rigidity with which a curriculum is required to be delivered. Under normal circumstances, one would expect that a

teacher would modify the curriculum according to the perceived learning needs of a pupil. However, since it could also be argued that the Act promotes the national curriculum as an entitlement for pupils, modifications — and even more ‘disapplications’ — of the curriculum for a particular pupil, could both be seen as an infringement of a pupils’ right of access to the national curriculum. Promotion of the pupils’ right may thus paradoxically be given as a reason for providing an inappropriate curriculum content by an inappropriate pedagogy.

It is evident that one needs to return to the real world of the classroom, if one wants to consider how children and young people’s SENs may be met in relation to the requirements of the ERB, and particularly how this might occur in ordinary schools.

The Warnock Report, while asserting that the aims of education were the same for all children, proposed that the curriculum might need to be modified in three types of ways — modification in access to the curriculum, modifications in the curriculum itself, and modifications in the ‘social structure and emotional climate in which education took place’. It is worth taking the middle one of these modifications first. If the aims of education are the same for all pupils, and some pupils have difficulty in learning, then at the very least it will take teachers longer to enable these pupils to proceed through the progression of the curriculum. Even if one accepts that these pupils should be given the opportunity for education beyond the age of sixteen, the teacher will still have to select only the most essential components of each aspect of the curriculum to present to the pupils. The teacher is thus involved in a prioritising of elements of the curriculum, rather than a ‘disapplication’ of one or more major components. Similarly, the teacher may, for example, choose to use an oral rather than a written presentation of the curriculum or demands for pupil response, in order to enable a pupil who has literacy difficulties to maintain progress within a particular content area. Furthermore, given the availability of special needs support staff, the teacher may arrange for an individual pupil to have individual help in preparing for a lesson and in following it up. Considering such a picture of the flexibility with which a teacher might respond to a pupil’s SENs, one is led to ask how this might be expressed in formulations about curricular ‘modifications’ and ‘disapplications’ which the Bill appears to promise — formulations which, unless further amendments are accepted, will be mandatory rather than permissive in the ‘cases and circumstances’ yet to be specified.

The types of good pedagogic practice mentioned above will become more essential, as formulations of curricular progression become more specific in the National Curriculum. The Report of the Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT 1988) proposed ten levels of curriculum progression. It is evident that within the normal practices of class teaching, there is a limit to the spread of attainment with which a teacher can cope. The question thus immediately arises as to what range of curricular progress rates among pupils can be accommodated within classes in ordinary schools. In one of its briefing papers, the government significantly stated that it was not proposing to bring

in the practice of having pupils ‘repeat’ a year. The likely outcome seems to be, that schools will revert to streaming, and that pupils with more severe learning difficulties will be relegated to separate special schools. The first indication of this potential trend has already occurred in the reported policy change by the Surrey LEA, that pupils over the age of 8 with moderate learning difficulties will be placed in special schools (TES 1988). It seems clear that the unequivocal promotion of integration in the 1981 Act may come to be reversed, if the scope for good pedagogical practice is curtailed by the way in which the requirements of the national curriculum and its modification are formulated.

The formative approaches to the assessment of individual pupils put forward in the TGAT Report is certainly compatible with good pedagogical practice. These approaches can provide the teacher with an ongoing means of choosing both the methods and the content of teaching which enable the pupil to make progress. They also provide the teacher, and the staff of a school, with information on the basis of which they evaluate, and if necessary, and permitted, modify the curriculum of the school as a whole. In this way, the curriculum offered could be gauged to meet the needs of pupils and so enable the teacher to ensure that pupils might experience success. Current research on curriculum for children with moderate learning difficulties (Evans, 1988; Ireson et al, 1988) is indicating that this kind of approach is being adopted successfully by a number of schools, but one wonders whether this will be acceptable when the Bill becomes law.

Paying attention to the ‘social structure and emotional climate’ in which education takes place is another of the three approaches to modification mentioned by the Warnock Committee. It was intended to refer particularly to the support needed by children and young people with emotional and behaviour difficulties. As is well known, however, one has first to consider whether the ‘structure’ and ‘climate’ of a school are such that pupils feel themselves to be valued and supported or whether these factors are themselves inducing behaviour and emotional problems. This is a well researched area of education and as Peters (1988) has mentioned, the way in which the national curriculum is formulated will determine whether schools are encouraged to offer appropriate ‘structure’ and ‘climate’. Many of the ministerial statements during the parliamentary debates have stressed that the national curriculum should not be applied in a rigid way. For example, TVEI has been quoted as providing an example of the way in which relevance and flexibility can be offered, in a curriculum, and also how cross-curricular linking can be promoted. It remains to be seen how the various curriculum working parties will be able to encourage this type of approach to ensure that the pupils are engaged by the curriculum offered. The TGAT report also indicates implicitly that the way in which assessment procedures are adopted in schools will have a direct effect on how pupils develop their self-image.

The third type of modification listed in the Warnock Report refers to modification of access to the curriculum. This is the type of modification which



probably comes most commonly to mind when people think about the implication of SENs. In their most familiar form, these modifications refer to changes in communication such as signing for the hearing impaired, Braille for the visually impaired and the use of microprocessors for the physically impaired. Pupils with these impairments represent a minority of those with SENs, although they themselves may of course also have additional learning, behaviour, and emotional problems. Modified forms of communication almost always are more time-consuming, and so teachers are often faced with the same issues of prioritising curriculum content, in addition to teaching the communication system itself. Consequently, these curricular modifications also have to be individualised, if they are to match a pupil's need.

This examination of the practical implications of the needs for curricular modification shows that if provision is to match need, it has to be individualised to varying degrees. In other words, the continuum of SEN has to be matched with a continuum of provision, which will vary from one individual pupil to another, and from time to time. This variation is itself on a continuum with the good practice of the teacher in an ordinary class. However, the teacher has to be encouraged to make the time and effort to achieve this good practice. Doubts have been expressed whether the Bill's requirements will lead to an educational climate which promotes this, or to a form of management which will enable it to take place.

One aspect of the Government's assessment proposals deal with the use of achievement statistics to compare schools. There is little disagreement that an individual school will wish to know how the distribution of its pupils' achievement relates to local or national norms, or that an LEA requires this information to decide how to distribute its resources to ensure that all pupils obtain an optimal education. Some might even agree with the Secretary of State, that competition between schools might be a good thing. However, those concerned for pupils who have SENs are probably justified in expressing doubts as to whether the Act will lead to competition between schools in terms, for example, of the adequacy of their support for these pupils. It has already been maintained above that the clauses referring to open enrolment, financial delegation and grant maintained status do not require that any of these arrangements should be evaluated in terms of such criteria. Ministerial replies have pointed out that Grant-maintained schools will be required to observe the 1981 Act, and the draft Circular on local financial management includes reference to provision for pupils with SENs. However, if teachers feel constrained to give priority to pupils' achievement within the national curriculum component of their school's curriculum, and furthermore to those parts of the national curriculum where achievement can be more explicitly assessed, it is only realistic to suppose that this will direct their efforts away from supporting pupils with SENs, however much this goes against their own better judgement and intentions. Clearly, one could hope that Governing bodies of schools might stand by their commitment to the educational progress of all the children in their schools; but even such an advocate of parental partnership as Lady Warnock was

quoted as saying at a recent conference that it could not be left to parents in a school to ensure the rights of all children to a proper education. There is no unequivocal requirement to ensure the implementation of these rights in the Act.

Finally, it is evident that schools themselves depend on the support of LEAs to enable them to meet pupils' SENs. LEA support ranges from in-service education and advisory service support to the provision of specialist units and schools. Recent research on developments on the implementation of the 1981 Act (Goacher et al 1988; Moses et al 1988) have shown how LEAs organise their support through a complex network of school based, school attached and outreach services. To be effective and economical, such services have to be coordinated at several levels with in an LEA, depending on its size. As Wedell (1986) has pointed out, the initiative for such a network can also come in part from schools themselves, but this depends on a common commitment to meeting pupils' SENs. The Act requires LEAs to provide services to all schools, including Grant-maintained ones, but again one is forced to question whether the provisions as a whole promote the necessary commitment, or even the allocation of the necessary financial resources.

The Government's purpose in presenting the Bill was quoted as 'a better education, relevant to the late 20th Century and beyond, for all our children, whatever their ability, wherever they live, whatever type of school their parents choose for them' (DES 1987). Those involved in the education of children with SENs would share these intentions without reservation. However, the Bill as originally put forward, and the responses to calls for its amendment, have raised serious doubts as to whether the aims will be achievable by the means proposed from the point of view of those concerned for children and young people with SENs. The 1981 Act was seen as a commitment to progress. In spite of its name, it is difficult to see the Education Reform Act in this light.

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# Illusions of Progress

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**Liz Thomson**

Previously warden of a Teachers' Centre, Liz Thomson is a member of the Kent Inspectorate and serves on the Editorial Board of *Forum*. Here she considers implications of the Education Reform Bill on the developmental approaches to INSET fostered first by ACSET and since by TRIST and GRIST, and raises questions about the limitations and constraints the Act will impose on teachers' ability to develop their own learning.

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'We trained very hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form into teams, we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising; and a wonderful method it can be for creating illusions of progress, whilst producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation'.  
(Caius Petronius, AD 66)

There is a sense in which the current state of the art in INSET reflects the paranoia which grips the rest of the education service. Each time we feel that we understand the new rules that have been presented, the goal posts are shifted and we have to again reassess, review and accommodate new structures, without regard for process and, in the long term, for product.

Those of us involved with INSET at LEA level have, for some time, been trying to explain, mediate and look optimistically towards a future which promised more of an entitlement to INSET for all teachers. In August 1984, we welcomed the implications of the ACSET Paper<sup>1</sup> presented to the then Secretary of State, Sir Keith Joseph. From 1985 to 1987, we seized the opportunities presented by the Technical and Vocational Related In-Service Training Scheme (TRIST) to involve more schools, colleges and teachers in the process of becoming active agents in the development of their own learning.

Words like 'ownership' became part of the jargon associated with a new look to INSET which placed value on both the identification and articulation of individual and corporate needs. Such needs were seen to be part of a structure, often referred to as the INSET cycle, where an initial review led to the identification of needs resulting in the planning and implementation of the INSET activity. Monitoring and evaluation strategies were built into the process, with a view to informing subsequent developments arising out of the INSET experience itself and the longer term relationship to change and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. The model has since been refined to include establishment of priorities after the needs identification stage and monitoring and evaluation as a continuous process built into the planning and implementation stages, nevertheless the principle of a developmental approach has been maintained.

This principle is an important one when we look at the way a number of LEAs have responded to DES requests for 'planned and managed approaches to the In-service training of teachers'<sup>2</sup> The Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme, more commonly referred to as GRIST (Grant Related In-service Training), was introduced in 1986 and became operational on 1st April 1987. It signalled a change in the way that INSET is supported and funded by Central Government. For the first time all local education

authorities had not only to bid for grant aid, but were also required to relate their bid to a three year development plan.

In Kent, many of us believed that despite the constraints of entering into an annual round of bids, the new scheme would allow us to build on the best practice emerging from TRIST and would support moves towards school-focussed INSET. We also felt that, for this to be effective, it would need to operate within the context of a coherent approach to staff development for all schools and colleges.

The Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme has, from the outset, clearly indicated what Central Government deemed as priorities. These have come under the guise of national priorities which attract a higher rate of grant aid (70%) compared to local priorities, which are only matched at a level of 50%. Also, as indicated above, the maximum amount for national priority areas and for the total of local priorities is determined each year by the DES. Local Education Authorities are of course able to enhance INSET funds from their own education budgets; but this tends not to occur in authorities who wish to stay within Government set expenditure limits. The result is a divisive system across LEAs where teachers in one authority can receive more support for their INSET needs than those in another. And, even more significant, enhanced grant aid from Central Government (whether through GRIST or ESG) can result in an imbalance of support across the curriculum. Certain curriculum areas such as the arts have tended to lose out at all levels. This has occurred through a shortage of INSET funds; through minimum advisory support and back-up; and through lack of funding to support creative approaches to curriculum innovation and development. The knock-on effect of all this is an instrumental approach, which sits uneasily alongside the vocationally oriented view promoted by such initiatives as CPVE and TVEI.

At its best, GRIST has offered an entitlement to INSET to more teachers. It has acted as a catalyst for the introduction of developmental approaches to the planning and management of INSET, based on a view that in-service education was concerned with offering a range of learning opportunities to teachers. Through the cyclic process, referred to earlier, teachers have been able to negotiate their own INSET curriculum. For many, the move from directed to negotiated

learning has resulted in rigorous self appraisal and has highlighted the need for continuing support for change and growth within the education service.

At the present time, secondary teachers are crying out for a period of consolidation following the introduction of the General Certificate of Secondary Education. When the GCSE cascade training model was introduced in September 1985 it was designed to equip all teachers to teach the new exam system. In reality the cascade ended as a trickle because the model was flawed from the start. It relied heavily on an input-output approach to training with little recognition of process in between. It is only now, two years after the introduction of new syllabuses into secondary schools, that the deeper questions of need are emerging from classroom practice. Added to this is the phased introduction of TVEI extension in many authorities which again is expected to have far reaching effects on teaching styles and approaches to learning.

The Education Reform Bill proposes changes which are going to significantly affect the practice of teachers in schools within the next few years. The main vehicle for change for most teachers will be through the assessment of the national curriculum. The INSET requirements to support this will be enormous. Local authorities already know that a significant proportion of future INSET funds will be required to support both the introduction of the national curriculum and other changes which will follow the enactment of the Education Reform Bill. In a letter to LEAs, dated 31st May 1988, the DES made the following statement:

'Within the proposed national priority areas associated with the introduction of the national curriculum . . . the Secretary of State hopes that particular attention will be given to the training of those Teachers, Inspectors and Advisers, whose work will be affected by the introduction of attainment targets and programmes of study from September 1989. As a guide when planning In-service training, LEAs should bear in mind that the Secretary of State has proposed that from September 1989, primary schools should be required to provide teaching for all pupils in the core and other foundation subjects for a reasonable time and to adopt, for five year olds, attainment targets and programmes of study for mathematics, science (including technology) and English. Similar requirements may apply regarding mathematics and science for twelve year olds and possibly for eight years olds.'<sup>3</sup>

The statement goes on to describe the incremental procedure for future years, following the establishment of and reports from working groups for the remaining foundation subjects within the national curriculum. It also states that 'assessment arrangements are likely to be introduced for each age group a year later than attainment targets and programmes of study.'<sup>4</sup>

The implications of this statement for the forthcoming year are that teachers of five year olds, twelve year olds and eight year olds will require specific training in assessment techniques and procedures in order to meet the assessment arrangements which will come into effect from September 1990. As the incremental process moves on, the need for further training will increase; so that by 1995 we may well be looking at programmes of training for INSET which are dominated by the requirements of the assessment and delivery of the national curriculum in all its forms.

It seems ironic that one ray of hope emerging from the new list of national priority areas, namely the

introduction of a category to support training in the teaching of four year olds in primary classes, could be seen to conflict with the constraints of adopting attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment procedures for five year olds.

Other changes which will require INSET support, once the Bill becomes an Act, are those concerned with the local management of schools; the introduction of appraisal systems for teachers; and the need to provide training for governors. Although the latter group qualifies for support through Educational Support Grants, it does not feature as an eligible category within the training grants scheme. Local authorities will, nevertheless, need to provide training for both new and experienced governors, because of impending changes in their roles and responsibilities.

The local management of schools and appraisal are now included as part of national priority area 1, the category which is specifically concerned with the management training of Head Teachers and Senior Teachers in schools. The changes to this category are in line with various statements made by the Secretary of State about the increased executive role of Head Teachers. In a speech to the NAHT conference on 3rd June 1988, Kenneth Baker announced the establishment of a task force for management training, to be operational from September 1988. He described its remit in the following way:

'The task force will need to take into account the different needs of primary and secondary Heads. It must aim to build up *general* managerial skills in personnel work and appraisal, leadership, team building and target setting, as well as the *specific* skills to handle financial delegation, the national curriculum and assessment and testing . . .

Its first tasks will be to review existing provision and to publicize and disseminate examples of good practice. It will then need to consider with LEAs and existing training providers how best to deal with the deficiencies in what is being done now . . .

I shall want the task force to consider what is good and what is not good, to set some targets for all LEAs to aim at and to measure progress towards them. The task force will have a clear remit from me to promote change and development . . .'<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that the above measures will further strengthen the direct line between Heads of schools and Central Government. The whole area of local financial management could have implications for the future of INSET. For, whilst some LEAs' pilot schemes do not yet include INSET, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that this could occur in future. Whilst there are those who would welcome such a move, it may not be in the best interests of all teachers.

Concern has already been expressed about the effects of the training grants scheme on long course provision by Higher Education.<sup>6</sup> One-year secondments have dropped from 2,112 teachers in 1986-87 to 673 for 1987-88. This has been influenced by two factors: inappropriate higher education provision in the past; and the desire to offer more opportunities to a wider range of teachers through school focused INSET. LEAs now have to account for the total cost of secondments within their INSET budgets and are very conscious that one full-time secondment is the equivalent of supporting 3 teachers on a one-term courses and 32 teachers on part-time courses. The devolution of INSET funds to schools may exacerbate this situation.

# Pupils' Experience of the Curriculum

**Maxine Jackson**

Now in charge of chemistry at Babington Community College in Leicester, Maxine Jackson undertook this study with the first cohort of GCSE students at Robert Smyth Upper School, Market Harborough, where she was a Head of House and had held a post of responsibility for administration of examinations. She identifies some of the pressures GCSE assessment has put on students.

Just what does the curriculum of the school consist in when broken down into individual lessons? This was a question that I had been pondering for some time and had discussed with the Deputy Head responsible for the Curriculum amongst others.

The reasons for needing to know what the pupils were up to during the school day will be familiar to all colleagues: the arrival of TVEI-funded computers, and the impact they might be having on children through their use in many areas of the curriculum; the possibility of an unrelieved diet of lesson after lesson sitting in front of a tv or vdu; the financial constraints which had effectively stopped us being able to give each pupil a text-book where material was presented to them in a standard and professional way; the alternative home-produced work-sheets and workbooks which could not hope to rival the high quality magazines and books that teenagers have available to them; the hurried introduction of the GCSE, coming as it did immediately after the longest period of disruption the teaching profession had ever been involved in. All of these presented a serious challenge to those schools like ours whose pupils are all on examination courses from the moment they enter the establishment.

The temporary promotion of a Scale Four teacher to cover the secondment of that Deputy Head released three points, which were offered as Staff Development posts and suggestions were sought during the first Staff Meeting of the academic year of useful tasks which could be 'paid for' with points. Two suggestions were immediate in the context of the school at that time: one appointment to set up Modular Courses, and one to investigate Profiling/Records of Achievement.

The third post was advertised as an opportunity to evaluate pupils' experience of the curriculum. It

seemed like a good time to institute an enquiry into the exact nature of the experience offered to our pupils during their time at the school; the pupils in the fourth year were the first to be on GCSE courses and, incidentally, the first on our new curriculum of 80% core, 20% options. Having discussed with the interviewing panel the points mentioned above, I was appointed to carry out a survey of the pupils' workload.

The final report, which was published during the autumn of 1987, did not exactly match the brief I was originally given because issues other than those in the job specification emerged as being of immediate importance. The original brief was 1) to liaise with faculty heads to investigate how the present curriculum was organised and how pupils were assigned to sets, 2) to identify areas of curriculum overlap and duplication and, 3) to investigate the total workload of pupils under the present system. In fact the report was concerned almost exclusively with the last point.

The first task I undertook was to try to find out from the faculties exactly how much coursework assessment would be demanded from the pupils and when the major pieces of work would be in hand. From this information, a rough timetable was prepared and sent home to the parents who naturally enough had some worries about their children being the first through the new system of examining. It might have been a comfort to them but for the purposes of my study it was so vague as to be useless.

There were in that year an unprecedentedly large number of children whose parents were on the staff, and it was not long into the year before colleagues with a child in the school were beginning to give indications that their child was having to work much harder than they had expected to.

Earlier in this article I referred to the opportunities created through TRIST and GRIST to involve teachers as active agents in the development of their own learning. The limitations and constraints imposed by the Education Reform Bill will, I believe, make it more difficult for this to occur. It is timely to return to the remarks of Caius Petronius and consider how we can best counter the 'confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation' caused by constant change and uncertainty and presented to us under the guise of reform and progress.

(The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent those of Kent County Council).

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1. Report of the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers (ACSET) on the In-service Education, Training and Professional Development of School Teachers August 1984.
2. DES Circular 6/86 — Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme.
3. Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme 1989-90. Letter from the DES to LEAs informing them of the proposed arrangements for the Scheme in the financial year 1989-90.
4. *ibid.*
5. Extract from Kenneth Baker's speech to the NAHT Conference at Eastbourne on 3rd June 1988.
6. Times Education Supplement June 1988 — 'No Break for Refreshment' by Linda Blackburne.

The next thing to do was to find out exactly how the pupils were using their lesson time. Various methods of doing this were discussed but eventually two classes were briefed about taking note of the activities they participated in over a whole school day and then they were asked to fill in a questionnaire in which they were offered a list of 19 possible activities grouped under Writing, Watching/Listening, Talking and Doing. The analysis of this piece of work gave the percentages of each type of activity roughly as one might have expected, but was not useful for anything more specific. The results however clearly suggested that to find out exactly what the pupils were up to, I needed to go and watch for myself.

So that is what I did. In the end, because of time constraints (I was given no time allowance for this job), the amount of shadowing was less than I would have liked. It was nevertheless extremely interesting if only for the fact that I was able to experience the teaching styles of my colleagues. There were other benefits too though, which I had not anticipated, but which led me to the major theme of my study. One of the pupils I shadowed was an extremely able and conscientious pupil whose parents, I subsequently discovered, had expressed some anxiety at a Parents' Evening about the inordinately large amount of homework their son was expected to do. This was surprising in itself; the majority of communication about homework is confined to complaints that we don't set enough!

It emerged during the time spent shadowing this pupil and talking to his teachers, that his problem arose at least partly because he chose to take work home rather than to do it in class. Towards the end of the day I spent following this pupil around, I was approached by some of his class-mates who demanded to know just what I was doing, and why. When I told them they were very pleased, but told me I ought to be asking about homework because they all felt very strongly that their load was too heavy. One girl told me that she had had to give up her dancing classes because she had not enough time to go to them and rather plaintively said that there should be more to life than homework. I must say that I agreed with her!

I then embarked upon a systematic survey of homework over a period of five weeks. I advertised in the School Bulletin for volunteers for this and had a reasonable response, mainly of course from those in the upper ability range who tend to do more homework anyway. But for these students, there did seem to be some justice in the claim that there was too much homework. As in other parts of the study, the 'asides' were in some ways more revealing than the statistics collected. Briefly, the pupils thought that their homework burden was too variable from week to week, and that there should be more structure about the way tasks are set.

A very useful, but unofficial part of the study was the discussions I had with colleagues, and doubtless that

they had with each other, about the findings of the different surveys and responses to them. I deliberately followed a policy of talking about my work whilst it was going on in the hope that any positive responses would not then have to wait until the publication of the report. Quite a lot of the positive outcome from the study was the raised awareness of the staff that pupils were failing to come to terms with organising themselves for things like long deadlines for handing in work. The view expressed in several places, and instances such as the boy mentioned above having a lot of work to do at home — that it was impossible to concentrate in class — brought me to a consideration of the working environment, and to formulating a (successful) bid for TVEI assistance to have a detailed look at and attempt to remedy this problem. When I first mentioned this, it was seen by the 'old guard' as justification for a return to having pupils sitting in rows and listening to the teacher, instead of having informally arranged rooms and the pupils engaged in Active Learning; but this view was soon dispelled by the advocates of the new learning styles, and in any case precluded by the demands of the GCSE syllabuses.

Drawing all the strands of the study together, it seemed to me that pupils were ill-equipped to deal with the amount of work demanded of them and the kinds of learning involved in the new courses, both of which factors were exacerbated by the working environment not having been adapted to respond to these changes. There were other factors in this which I considered but did not have the resources to investigate, such as the effects of variation in home circumstances on the pupils' ability to deal with coursework demands, or the potential for more equal distribution of teacher-time between girls and boys since traditional classroom practices tended to favour the (more demanding) boys.

On the staff side, I found that we have been unable to offer adequate guidance on the amount of work required in assessment pieces or on the appropriate levels for success and this has led to a significant amount of stress amongst our pupils. Neither have we been able so far to adapt our classroom practices and organisation to cope with the different demands placed on pupils by the new criteria. It seemed that the development of a Whole School Policy towards assessment and coursework would be beneficial to all concerned and would complement our commitment to TVEI and alleviate some of the organisational problems experienced by pupils.

#### Footnote:

Since the publication of this study there have been media rumblings on the same subject. For examples the TES in its 'Talkback' column has published views similar to my conclusions from a Head of Fifth year in a Corby school and the views of a Norwich school pupil. Most recently, the SHA and PAT have separately issued warnings about the pressure the GCSE is putting on pupils.

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## National Curriculum Consultation

The working party reports, **Science for ages 5-16** and **Mathematics for ages 5-16**, are available free from the National Curriculum Council, Room G1, Newcombe House, 45 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3JB.

Responses must be received by 26 October 1988. *Eds.*

# Girls and Mathematics at Beauchamp College

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## Alan Eales

Currently TVEI Co-ordinator at Beauchamp College, a Leicestershire Upper School and Community College, where he was recently Head of Mathematics and Senior Teacher responsible for co-ordinating Equal Opportunities, Alan Eales has also been seconded to the OCEA Project in Oxford and to the Leicestershire GCSE Support Group. He is doing part-time research into styles of effective heads of mathematics for a Ph.D.

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In the early 1980s Beauchamp College was involved in the Schools Council Programme 3, 'Reducing Sex-differentiation in Schools'. About a third of the eighty or so staff attended the first after-school meeting and very soon working groups were established. Most of the groups were subject based but there was also a group looking into the careers advice offered to pupils and another one finding out the distribution of women employed by the local education authority. There was soon the need to co-ordinate all the Equal Opportunity work and an appointment was made at Senior Teacher level to do this.

The mathematics department was keen to explore whether there was prejudice against girls in mathematics teaching at Beauchamp, although until then we felt that prejudice existed elsewhere but not in our department. Prejudice was an attitude to be described in others but not to be expected in ourselves. This article describes the programme developed by the mathematics department.

## Classroom Practice

Every element of classroom life contributes to the sexism shown by a teacher and, by implication, by the department and the school as a whole. The simplest administrative or organisational procedures can demonstrate to pupils the values we place on the different sexes. We changed from listing students first by gender and then by alphabet to simple alphabetical lists. We tried to share classroom chores equally and tried to treat each pupil equally. Girls are perhaps more nervous than boys about the public display of test results and so this was virtually eliminated. Instead, a quiet word during the lesson was used to inform pupils of their progress. 'Pupil-friendly' practices are rarely sexist.

Monitoring our own behaviour in the classroom was more difficult. Only so much can be achieved by increasing self-awareness; there is no better alternative to aid reflection on our classroom behaviour than a separate observer in our classroom to report how we respond to the pupils. The use of senior pupils in the school to carry out this observation was another opportunity to involve the pupils. Discussion should not be confined to the staff-only areas of the school.

Pupils can also be involved when results are analysed. Very early in our work at Beauchamp we decided to search our test and examination results for bias. We knew what to expect from the literature but there is

no substitute for collecting and analysing data from your own school. Also the sixth and seventh year statistics students are much more involved in their course if the data they use is part of school-based research.

Whereas it was common at that time to search texts for sexist references, the department never warmed to this task and soon abandoned it in favour of a resolve to eliminate sexism from our own materials when we next revised them, and to use our influence to reduce sexism in public examination papers.

## Questionnaires and Discussion with Students

We realised that despite all staff efforts the major resource of the school was not being used. The pupils might still be largely unaware of what was being done. Discussing the issues with groups can be difficult and questionnaires were used to ease both pupils and teachers into consideration of sexism in the mathematics classroom. In particular it was necessary to help the boys to realise that their behaviour is often unfair and for the girls to appreciate that they may be simply being too patient and accepting for their own good.

One surprising feature was that for a number of students the written form of communication, not necessarily anonymous, allowed them to say things that they had not felt free to say in class discussion.

*... but some topics I did not understand and it would not sink in at all, and that's when I give up and dread each lesson. (girl)*

*My test results are not bad and any bad marks are because of careless mistakes. (boy)*

*When I get a good test result it builds up my confidence and for the next few lessons I really try and work hard. (girl)*

It is not that these comments are particularly surprising, but, as with the effect of carrying out statistical tests for oneself, the impact when one's own pupils say these things is far greater than when read in a journal.

## Single-sex Groups

Even though all the strategies described so far had some effect it was the introduction of single-sex mathematics groups which made the greatest impact.

It was also the clearest illustration of the liberal dilemma associated with any interventionist strategies. If I believe that discrimination exists against girls, then should I intervene to destroy it? It seems fine until the intervention itself is blatantly sexist. The separation of girls and boys into different sets is just such a situation.

The single-sex groups confirmed that girls did gain confidence and ability in these groups but there was a pressure (from inside us as much as from elsewhere) to end what was felt to be an artificial system. The groups were established during November in the Fourth Year and were recast into mixed sets during the following Summer Term. In the years since there have been other single-sex groups, but only on an occasional basis and at present there are no single-sex groups.

Ironically, it may have been the mere existence of these groups, rather than what the separation of the sexes achieved, that was of most use. Here was a very public statement to the pupils and to the parents that we were concerned for the provision of equal opportunity with respect to gender.

### Reflections

No matter how long one works in the field there is always the odd occasion when deep rooted sexism shows. Just recently I remarked to two girls that they were not working very hard but 'gossiping'. One of them retorted:

*Just because we're girls you say it's gossip.*

I apologised and noted that they were probably right!

Similarly I may notice that *yet again* the boys have taken more than their fair share of my time, that the girls have been patient and understanding of *my* problems. Often when doing this the girls lose out on the help I could be giving them. Of course I appreciate this, and may say so, but nevertheless *yet again* the girls will have lost out in the melee of the classroom.

Before anyone can start a programme of anti-sexist action it is probably necessary to talk through the underlying ideas with others. Anyone can of course

take unilateral action and this may be a good way of dipping one's toe in the water, but concerted action by a number of staff is more effective. The discussion with others also serves to clarify exactly what it is that you want to achieve. Co-ordinated efforts of a modest nature are more likely to be successful than extreme, fragmented ones.

If possible an overall school programme is desirable, and this in turn may fit in with LEA policy. A public declaration of support by the Headteacher is of great value, since without this it can seem to other staff that your efforts are an irrelevant side-show . . . not an important, integral part of the school's development.

The mathematics department must make its concern public. The pupils should be involved as much as possible. They are by far the most valuable resource and it is in discussion with them and between them that most change will occur. This work is not just with the girls. Naturally counselling the girls will help them to recognise prejudice when they meet it and to work out what to do, but the boys also need help to realise how much they manipulate the school environment to get what they want. Some sessions can be with single-sex groups, but the confrontation between those who exert the prejudice and those who are prejudiced against should not be avoided.

If possible try to institutionalise some of the changes. It is all too easy to make a dynamic but transient impact; a flourish of dramatic activity which then tails off and everyone forgets. Far better to have moderate, even merely organisational changes, that will establish a new pattern for that department or for the school.

If anyone is reading this and feeling that positive discrimination is unfair, and that all that is necessary is to be totally unbiased, then reflect on what little harm will be done if after at least two millennia of prejudice against women there is some redress.

Finally, we need to be clear what we are trying to achieve, how we are trying to achieve it, and to evaluate, or at least monitor, what happens.

This article derives from a chapter by the same author in *Girls into Maths can Go*, edited by Leone Burton (Holt Educational, 1986).

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## Discussion

I am grateful to Mr Thorley for his, relatively, kind review of my book 'The Tertiary College: Assuring our Future'

(*Forum* vol 30 no 3). But I must confess to being somewhat baffled by why he should feel that confidence in my arguments is undermined by the two statements he quotes. In the first, he, inadvertently I imagine, omits the word 'not', so that his strictures seem doubly baffling to your readers. What I wrote, and he presumably meant to quote, was that I *do* actually believe

in change for the sake of change! In other words, I think that to stand still is to stagnate. This is a view I should be happy to defend in debate.

The other quotation, which he got right, is that I use the term 'education' and 'training' 'fairly interchangeably'. My defence of this usage is a thread which runs right through my book. I believe that the

attempt to separate out training from education is a dangerous trend that should be resisted, and that, at most, education and training are at opposite ends of what should be a continuous spectrum. This is why I use them 'fairly interchangeably'.

DAVID TERRY  
Halesowen College  
West Midlands



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### Apology

The National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) was inadvertently omitted from the list of organisations that co-sponsored our 'Unite for Education' Conference in March as printed on page 73 of *Forum* Vol. 30 No. 3. *Eds.*



# Reviews

## Democratic Evaluation

**Getting to Know Schools in a Democracy: The Politics and Process of Evaluation**, by Dr Helen Simons, (Falmer Press, 1987), pp.296, hb: £19.50; pb: £11.50.

Evaluation is the inevitable child of the growth of political intervention in the affairs of professional educators in schools. That intervention began over twenty-five years ago with the Curriculum Reform movement promoted by the Nuffield Foundation and Schools Council. Helen Simons, an educational psychologist, stepped off a plane from New Zealand into an evaluation enterprise which was at the fore-front of the winds of change these two agencies were blowing across the face of the school curriculum. For four years she participated in the evaluation of one of the most controversial curriculum reforms Nuffield and the Schools Council had sponsored: Stenhouse's Humanities Project. As she records in this book, the project generated issues which could not be addressed by the mechanistic input-output models which were dominating curriculum evaluation in the States.

Stenhouse had rejected rational planning as a basis for curriculum development. The Humanities Curriculum Project had an aim but no objectives or targets. It specified educational principles for selecting and handling curriculum content but refused to prescribe either content or methods in details. Moreover, its aims and principles were to be treated as problematic. Even where teachers failed to realise them, as they inevitably did, the whole enterprise could still be regarded as worthwhile if it had stimulated professional reflection and dialogue about what it means to teach human values in a pluralistic democracy. No crude measures of impact or uptake, such as the Schools Council later employed to measure the effectiveness of its projects, were sufficient to measure the success and failure of this innovation. 'Numbers-crunching' was not an option available to the evaluation team.

The evaluation team evolved an approach which attempted to describe how the innovation shaped up as it was disseminated from the Council to the classroom. Evaluation became the study of the process by which the innovation was constructed in particular institutional and LEA contexts through the complex transactions and negotiations which occurred in those contexts between the various interested parties: the project team, LEA officials and advisers, headteachers, teachers and parents. The study of innovation-in-context highlighted differences of perspective, interpretation, and judgement about the nature and purpose of the innovation. Evaluation became a matter of clarifying the issues at stake and reporting them to all the interested parties on an equal access basis.

The aspiration was to promote an informed public dialogue about the educational potential and value of the innovation, rather than a set of definitive judgements. It was the task of the evaluator to clarify issues and promote public discussion about them rather than to judge the merits of the innovation and thereby pre-empt any need for wuch discussion. Helen Simons points out that this is a very political task because it embodies a political theory of how policy ought to be constructed in our society.

What evolved from the evaluation of the Humanities Curriculum Project was a new evaluation paradigm, described by Barry MacDonald, its director, as Democratic Evaluation. Its methodology emphasised the naturalistic description of events in context (a form of case study) in contrast to the use of theoretical models as a basis for data collection and analysis.

Helen Simons' book is faithful to the method it focuses on. It is a painstaking and detailed account of democratic evaluation as she has experienced it as a practitioner and continuously reinterpreted it as the context of educational evaluation has itself changed over the last twenty years. The book contains a number of case studies of evaluations in which she has been involved, from the days of national projects to evaluations sponsored by LEAs, as they became the locus of innovations framed by national policy priorities and accountable to central government for the management of scarce resources. In between, she explores the relevance of democratic evaluation to the kind of institutional self-review which emerged as one of the first symptoms of the accountability squeeze on local government by central government. As the context changes, so the old method is re-examined, critiqued and reconstructed by the author.

This book is no success story. Indeed it is a story of apparent failure, of continuous acts of bureaucratic sabotage on her and her co-workers' attempts to implement procedures which promote equal access to information while giving those who provide it a measure of control over its release. Since the careers of those in evaluation roles — whether they are 'insiders' like teachers, heads, and advisers or 'outsiders' like higher education lecturers — are increasingly dependent on those who sponsor evaluations, it is unlikely that this book will encourage aspiring evaluators to take on democratic evaluations as a way of enhancing their career prospects. Nor will this book enable someone plunged into an evaluation role to get themselves rapidly 'tooled up' for the enterprise. There are plenty of techniques books appearing on the market.

The book won't appear to all budding evaluation theorists in academe either. The theoretical issues are all raised here, but few resolved: not because the author lacks the intellectual power, but because she recognises that successful methodologies emerge from successful practices, and these have yet to be found. She, unlike many American evaluation theorists, has too much practical experience to ignore the messy and

complex social realities in which democratic evaluators pursue their aspiration to promote an educative public dialogue about educational reform.

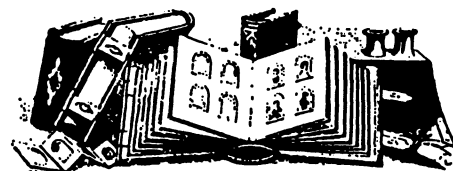
What this book will do, is to demonstrate that the so-called naturalistic paradigm of educational inquiry is itself full of internal conflicts and controversies between its advocates. Having read it, research students and their supervisors will no longer be able to legitimate their ignorance of the evaluation literature or their fear of numbers, by claiming to undertake 'illuminative', 'ethnographic', 'democratic', or 'case study' evaluations as if these were simply alternative labels for a single alternative to 'numbers crunching'. Helen Simons carefully delineates the very different perspectives and assumptions these labels presuppose as well as their commonalities. For her, democratic evaluation is a distinctive type of naturalistic inquiry whose methodology essentially flows from the democratic political theory which underpins it.

What this book will do is to make everyone aware that every form of evaluation serves a political interest. It will disabuse the reader of the idea that evaluation is simply a matter of acquiring a few technical skills. Having read it, those who manage to sleep at night by pretending they are engaged in or even sponsoring a technical activity, should have a few sleepless nights. At least they will have cause to reflect about the relationship between their political convictions and professional practices.

As Helen Simons points out, the practice of evaluation not only presupposes political values, but educational ones as well. For it is a means of educating society about education. This is where political and educational theory become closely intertwined. If democracy is based on the assumption that ordinary citizens are in the best position to judge the value of the policies by which it is governed, then education becomes a matter of creating a form of public discourse which enhances their natural powers of judgement, rather than replacing them with specialist powers possessed by experts: whether these are the possession of evaluators or the professional politicians and administrators which sponsor their activities.

The vision of the policy-making process which underpins democratic evaluation is very similar to the one proposed in David Marquand's new book *The Unprincipled Society*. If his political analysis is sound, then the kind of 'club government' which has so successfully sabotaged democratic evaluation is in disarray. It is time, he argues, for the reconstruction of political life as an educational public discourse. In my view, Helen Simons' book should be read alongside this seminal work in political theory. If Marquand's vision describes an emergent trend, then democratic evaluators may soon be rewarded for their patience, courage, and sheer obstinacy in refusing to surrender to the 'club mentality' which





governs contemporary educational policy-making.

If at central and local government levels the political domain is to be transformed into a publicly accessible realm of discourse then, as Marquand argues, 'the citizen must be a reflective and open-minded being, capable of rising above his particular interests in order to make a disinterested judgement of the general interest, and willing to revise his judgements in the light of the arguments advanced by his fellow citizens'. This is precisely the kind of being democratic evaluation attempts to education us into becoming. If it fails, then it is not simply a tragedy for this style of evaluation. It is a tragedy for our society, and bodes ill for the future health of its educational institutions.

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## The power of YTS

**YTS: the impact of FE** — Sheila M Stoney and Anne Lines (NFER-Nelson, 1987), pp.160, £8.95.

When YTS was launched in 1983/4, it placed the organisation of training principally in the hands of managing agents, rather than of the educational providers like colleges. Most of the trainee places have been in private, with Mode A schemes accounting for nearly 300,000 of 389,000 places taken up in 1985.

Such funding and training arrangements were bound to affect FE as the traditional provider of vocational education and training. This study of the impact of YTS on 21 colleges spread across England and Wales attempts to examine the effects of YTS in relation to the internal organisation and management of colleges, the role and status of YTS tutors, approaches to staff development and relations with managing agents.

The emergence of YTS has seen shifts in the provision of vocational education and training on several fronts: the movement of funding support and organisational responsibility to employers, competition from private training organisations and more 16-year-olds entering training with learning difficulties. In times of lower unemployment, these trainees would have moved in and out of low-grade jobs.

So how has FE adapted to the cold winds of competition and lessened control over the training process? The general conclusion of the study is that in terms of levels of participation in YTS, the 21 colleges in the survey appeared to have fared quite well. When all the different modes of operation of YTS were taken into account, the number of training places in the colleges during the transition between one and two year YTS,

remained relatively stable with the vast majority of places being mode A off-the-job training. There was not a significant loss of trainees to private managing agents.

The authors argue, however, that other criteria are needed to judge the responsiveness of colleges. These include the degree to which there was cross-college curriculum change and interdisciplinary co-ordination to meet both the wishes of employers and the need to cope with more student-centred learning and mixed ability groups. Another important factor was flexibility of working arrangements both in terms of working outside normal term times and being prepared to teach on an outreach basis in the company.

The study therefore concentrates on three areas: changes in college organisation, development of the role of tutors and relationships with industry and business.

In relation to the first of these, the study concludes that organisational change has occurred more slowly than curriculum change. While there has been a move towards matrix arrangements and course teams, departments are still the main form of organisation. There are, nevertheless, other pressures for organisational change in addition to YTS and more likely to be influential. These are to be found in curricular changes in full-time provision with more integrated BTEC courses, CPVE and prospects for change in the academic field.

The role of the YTS tutor on the other hand appears to have undergone more fundamental changes. Involvement with YTS has meant curriculum development, particularly in the area of counselling and new learning/assessment methods. More diverse responsibilities have been given to L1s and L2s involving liaison with employers and other external agencies. The study detected, however, a division of opinion among college staff with regards to staff development. The YTS tutors felt that they had not been adequately prepared for these new roles, whereas college management were more concerned with securing the role of the college in the launch of YTS than with supporting its ongoing development.

The section on relationships with employers indirectly confirms the view that YTS has, since its launch in 1983, shifted the power-relationships between employers and training providers significantly towards the former. In spite of this shift, employers were critical about the restrictiveness of the qualifications offered to accredit off-the-job training.

The study, while informative about changes in the areas of college management, staff development and tutor roles, surprisingly gives less room to a discussion of curriculum development and the relationship between on- and off-the-job training. The yardstick of curriculum change is seen as the introduction of pre-vocational learning methods, but there is little discussion of

college and employer views of the content of vocational education and training. The study does not therefore really illuminate the Government's new emphasis on the reform of vocational qualifications. In view of the employer experience with YTS, the National Council for Vocational Qualification (NCVQ) sees its role as moving the role of accreditation more towards the workplace and therefore increasing the influence of employers in the area of qualifications.

The study is essentially descriptive and as such will be useful for those in FE who would want to measure their responses against those of the 21 colleges in the case sample. But it is limited by its empiricism and has, in fact, a tacit theoretical position which is not openly discussed. The authors in concentrating largely on organisational criteria for judging FE responsiveness, conclude that the key factor has been college tutors and employers working together, 'thus sharing the ownership of schemes'. But there is no substantive discussion of what constitutes this sharing of ownership because there is little actual discussion of differing views of the curriculum and attitudes of both parties towards training practice.

This rather bland concluding comment takes us away from more interesting political and theoretical issues raised indirectly in the book. The overriding and yet implicit message is that YTS has helped to 'modernise' FE colleges and as such was accepted by college management and a dedicated section of tutors. The study does not support the assertion that colleges simply did it for the money. Principals may have had this view but YTS co-ordinators and tutors have been more interested in what they see as positive effects upon the curriculum. In terms of working technique, parallels can be made with the introduction of Japanese working methods into British car factories with allegedly outmoded practices being replaced with 'rational solutions' of greater flexibility, teamwork and meeting the needs of the consumer.

Descriptive studies like this are useful but no substitute for trying to come to grips with the paradox of YTS. Educational debate has been polarised by either the straight-forward critiques of YTS or uncritical empiricism as in this case. The missing dimension is a framework for understanding how programmes like YTS can rightly be characterised as an inadequate and barely basic form of training and yet at the same time be seen as a curriculum innovation and as a process of modernisation. Both empiricism and criticism have so far avoided the challenge of explaining why although, YTS sells short young people, its curricular effect can still be seen as a 'good thing' by many dedicated FE staff.

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# Reviews

## Mixed Infants

**Starting school: an evaluation of the experience** by Dr Gill Barrett, (AMMA, 1988) pp.226. £5.00.

Damon is standing by the door waiting to go outside for playtime; a girl standing next to him tries to open the door first, so Damon gives her a hefty bite. This scene, recorded in Gill Barrett's excellent study, **Starting School**, is familiar to many infant teachers who could all point to this year's biter, thumper or kicker. The concern of this report, however, is the degree to which such responses should be considered out of the ordinary and on the increase.

Starting regular schooling, as Gill Barrett demonstrates, is fraught with misconceptions, misunderstanding and unrealistic expectations. Much of the strength and merit of this report rest on its sympathetic but uncompromising view that this applies as much to the teachers as to the children. Who could not but feel for the hapless Peter, who knowing himself to be a disaster at drawing people and being required, along with the rest of the class, to undertake such a task, makes a courageous gesture on behalf of all no-hopers, scribbles wildly on his paper and rolls it into a trumpet with appropriate hootings? Not surprisingly, he is told to stop making horrible noises, get a new piece of paper and get on with a *nice* drawing of a person like everyone else. Later, it is discovered that Peter can draw tractors and machines in a very skilful manner for his years.

It is not the only place in this research to ask the extent to which the Peters and Sarahs of this world get real opportunities to explore their talents, ask questions and follow their interests in a reception class. Much of the report addresses itself to the fundamental importance of what it is to learn to be a learner and whether schools deny this right by the kinds of pedagogic practices that are generally thought appropriate to this age group. Is school the place where they take away the privilege of personally learning what and how to learn, putting in its place 'learning activities that are not necessarily addressing the questions (the children) are asking' or indeed, according any intellectual relevance or importance to the children's way of asking questions about the world?

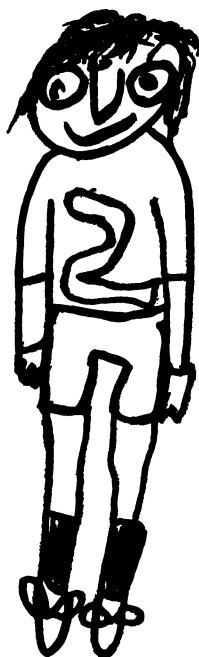
This study was commissioned by AMMA following a survey amongst its primary members who reported an apparent and disturbing increase in difficult and aggressive behaviour in the youngest children in school. While not denying what must have been their interest in attracting more members to itself in the primary sector, it is to their credit that the preferred answers to such concerns about children's behaviour usually lie in apportioning blame somewhere in the social system, this research set out to avoid such an approach and addressed itself to what seemed to be a fundamental mismatch of

expectations. Given the time scale of ten months, Gill Barrett has managed to produce a fascinating and accessible study that depends on a deceptively simple naturalistic research design. It must have presented considerable problems, not the least of which being that teachers and children had entirely idiosyncratic definitions of key concepts such as work, play, etc.

In attempting to 'identify the significant issues and practices which might help teachers initiate reception children to learning in schools' she has managed to tease out the reasons for the mismatch and their origins; she is constructive in her analysis, and her suggestions for in-service training for teachers are highly practical. They could well use this work as a basis. Heads, advisers and other educationalists unfamiliar with the age group should find the clear suggestions and recommendations for policy-making worthy of serious study.

She recognises and reports the need for a far higher level of resourcing, and one of the recommendations is that 'children's early school experience needs to be resourced (staff and capital) at levels we are accustomed to seeing at secondary schools — perhaps at the level of sixth form resourcing.' The value of the 'major cognitive benefits of early school education' permeates the report but nowhere does she equate this with a sterile uniform curriculum devoted to the 3 Rs which is seen as inimical to true intellectual development. Her report is particularly timely and important with increasing numbers of four year olds being given substitute nursery education by entering mainstream schooling with all the dubious delights it proffers such young children.

ANNABELLE DIXON  
Herts



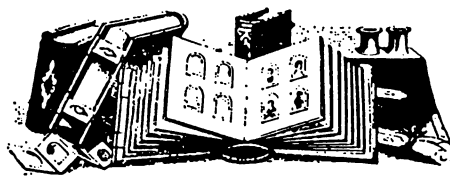
## The Politics of Education

**Bending the Rules: The Baker 'Reform' of Education**, by Brian Simon (Lawrence and Wishart, 1988) 186pp, pb£4.95.

This book is dedicated to 'the memory of those who fought, over the last century, for a full and effective system of public education, now at risk'. It makes no pretence to be a balanced review of Baker's performance as Secretary of State for Education; it is an unashamedly partisan attack on the Education Reform Bill. It is a book intended to expose rather than to persuade.

Brian Simon's position is quite clear: he sees the Education Reform Bill as a 'overtly political measure', and he puts forward enough evidence to convince us (or at least to convince the readers of *Forum*). But is the Bill only an overtly political measure? Clearly, Thatcher and Baker have used popular prejudices about educational issues to considerable political advantage, but are there genuinely educational issues in the debate as well? If Brian Simon believes there are, he does not explore them in this short polemic. I find little to disagree with on the evidence presented, but I am perhaps even more worried *educationally* than Brian Simon is *politically*: I am inclined to think that Margaret Thatcher and some of her colleagues actually believe their own educational propaganda! And if we are talking about an educational debate, rather than simply making the most of short-term political advantage, the worry is that the right-wing of the Conservative Party appears to be winning some of the educational arguments. For example, the educational and social merits of comprehensive schools have never become part of popular consciousness: most parents turned to comprehensive schooling because they disliked the unfairness of 11+ selection, not because they had been converted to the comprehensive ideal which has tended to be taken for granted by the left. And Sir Keith Joseph did have a point when he talked of the neglected 40% in our system. This is mentioned by Brian Simon (p.24) but not developed and analysed.

Choice in education is more than a right-wing populist slogan and a potential vote winner. It is more than possible that the Tory right actually believes that the market *can* operate effectively as a means of providing education, and that it is a more efficient way of distributing educational services than planning a coherent system. We need to demonstrate that the Tories are educationally wrong on this question. This short book could not be expected to undertake the whole of this task, and the author has had to be satisfied with merely restating the opinions of those who are disturbed by such aspects of the Bill as open enrolment, opting out and other aspects of creeping privatisation. The book does a



magnificent job at this descriptive level but does not make a satisfying contribution to the intellectual debate about education: it does not provide an educational answer to Thatcherite policies. Nor does it explain the differences within Tory ranks — minor squabbles between Baker and Thatcher are touched upon, but not analysed, and Ted Heath's heretical statements are recalled and enjoyed for their own sake rather than used as exemplars of contradictions within Conservative ideology. It is always unfair to criticise a writer for not producing a different kind of book, but whilst enjoying every page, I could not avoid the nagging thought that this task of political exposure was not really worthy of one of our best writers on the history of education.

Even so the book is much more than good journalism: there are some excellent examples of contemporary history at its best. For example, Brian Simon sets the record straight on the performance of Sir Keith Joseph as Secretary of State: since his departure to the Lords, it has almost become fashionable to praise his achievements and to play down his shortcomings. Professor Simon will have none of this:

There is no doubt whatsoever that, during his period of office which lasted four years, Keith Joseph (now ennobled) inflicted enormous damage on the educational service of the country. In particular he succeeded, through singleminded pursuit of doctrinaire monetary policies, in alienating not only the great bulk of the teaching profession, but also the local authorities ... During his period of office the schools and colleges were systematically allowed to deteriorate in terms of buildings, maintenance and equipment to levels not previously known.' (p.25)

In other ways, too, the book will serve well as contemporary history. Although there is no new evidence here and no new line of argument, the lively account of the Bill will remind us later of some of the events and utterances which might otherwise fade from the memory: for example, the deliberate political objective of weakening or destroying LEA power is brilliantly described. But we may still need another book from Simon to complete the story by exposing the fallacies in the Conservative education policy.

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**Education — The Wasted Years? 1973-1986**  
ed. by Max Morris and Clive Griggs, (Falmer Press 1988), pp.254, hb:£19.95; pb:£10.95.

The title of this book is well-justified. We *have* been living through the wasted years since 1973 — and particularly where education is concerned. Indeed, one could probably go back even further in time, and view the whole period of the last twenty-five years, since the election of the first Wilson Government in 1964 (albeit with a very small majority), as one of wasted opportunities and broken promises.

The editors of this collection choose to regard 1973 as a major turning-point for a number of good reasons. At first, things still seemed to be going very well for education. The then Secretary of State for Education, Margaret Thatcher, had just published her 1972 White Paper entitled **A Framework for Expansion**; and in 1972 and 1973 expenditure on education actually exceeded that on defence: £3559m compared with £3493m in 1972 and £4068m compared with £4004m in 1973. Yet by the end of the year, we had witnessed: the quadrupling of oil prices, a balance of payments crisis, the first major cutbacks in public expenditure, and the beginning of falling rolls. At the same time, education began to receive a very bad press — with critics suggesting that the system was not only failing to meet the needs of the economy, but might actually be *responsible* for the country's economic collapse. James Callaghan's Ruskin College Speech was an uneasy attempt to respond to this mood and to show that the Labour Party cared about standards and achievement. Labour was on the defensive, and has remained stuck in that position ever since — allowing the Right successfully to take the initiative on such issues as school standards, parental choice and quality of provision.

The fourteen contributors to this volume bring their expertise to bear on various aspects of the period under review, and are united in the belief that the education service deserved greater support than it received from either government or the public. The editors rightly point out that educational issues are now the subject of the sharpest controversy in living memory.

There are excellent chapters by John Coe, Robert Spooner, Frank Griffiths and Peter Scott dealing with primary, secondary, further and higher education respectively. Maurice Plaskow gives us a fascinating insider's account of the abolition of the Schools Council by Sir Keith Joseph which finally took effect in March 1984. And of particular interest is a perceptive and revealing piece by George Low on the expanding influence of the Manpower Services Commission. Low shows how, under David (now Lord) Young's chairmanship, the MSC became the Government's chosen instrument for making the education system more responsive to industry's needs. It could act ruthlessly and without hindrance. 'Act first, consult afterwards' was Young's avowed motto,

which he was fond of comparing with the education service's penchant for endless consultations. 'Now that Keith Joseph is at the DES and David Young is at the MSC, I think you will soon find the Vandals stabling their horses in the temples'. Employment Secretary Noman Tebbit told the education correspondent of **The Financial Times** one day in October 1982.

All this makes for very interesting reading. Yet a tone of barely-suppressed hysteria is set by the opening contribution from the editors themselves, a chapter which tells us more about Max Morris and Clive Griggs than it does about the events they are describing. Words like 'notorious', 'malevolent' and 'disgraceful' are much in evidence, and the text is remarkable for its wild misleading statements and curiously emotive language. It is a contribution which does much to undermine the considered nature of the chapters which follow.

The DES, we are told, operates from its 'esoteric and remote eyrie above Waterloo Station'; a key contributor to the **Black Papers** was Cyril Burt, 'grand panjandrum of selection ... the giant academic theoretician, soon destined to be seen with his feet in a mire of fraudulent research, a totally discredited, indeed crooked, propagandist'; the MSC has been trying to colonize areas such as school education where 'its pedagogical ignorance was only equalled by its ideological arrogance'. All very true, but, couched in such terms, hardly calculated to convince the uncommitted.

We learn that after 1976 there followed 'a flow of papers from the DES and HMI on curricular matters'. Yet no attempt is made to explain how those written by DES civil servants differed from those emanating from the Inspectorate. Radical right politicians and ultra-left teachers come in for a good deal of abuse, but their arguments are rarely subjected to critical scrutiny. Perhaps, in Morris's case, the chapter is simply a means of settling old scores. Certainly, the label 'ultra-left' figures prominently as a term of denigration. We are told, for example, that multiculturalism has been opposed by 'a minority on the ultra-left and some Black politicians and sociologists'. Yet I know many who question the adequacy of multicultural approaches in schools who fit into none of those categories. Who might, indeed, find that particular sentence rather offensive.

It is easy to understand why Morris and Griggs should feel so angry about the glaring inadequacies of the system that has evolved over the past fifteen years. Yet polemical hyperbole can never be an effective substitute for reasoned argument and a sound grasp of the facts.

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#### ERRATUM

Paperback price of **Training Without Jobs** by Dean Finn (Macmillan) reviewed in Vol. 30, No. 3, is £8.50.

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