

FORUM

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This issue

**Local Authorities and Opting Out
City Technology Colleges
The National Curriculum
Science and Mathematics**

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The Next Forum

Aspects of the Education Reform Act form the focus of a group of articles in the next **Forum**. Keith Foreman, Principal of a Leicestershire Upper School, writes in the impact of local management of schools on the role of the head as professional and pedagogic leader. Henrietta Dombey submits the primary report of the Working Party on English to a critical analysis. Further articles are in preparation. In addition, Mike Golby and Stephen Brighthouse contribute a second article on their research into parent governors in the South West, while Robin Yeomans also contributes a second article on the Cambridge Institute's research into adult relations in primary schools.

Other contributions include a critique of Robert Key's recent CPC pamphlet on 'Reforming Our Schools' (by Andrew Fletcher), and an evaluation of the Select Committee's expected report on under-fives (Annabelle Dixon).

Destabilising the System

Is the government, having successfully piloted the 1988 Education Act on to the Statute book, now deliberately setting out to destabilise the system? And if so, with what objective?

All the signs are there that this is the intention. The two most important measures in the Act affecting schools are certainly the group of sections relating to Grant Maintained Schools (opting out), and the single section concerning City Technology Colleges. On both of these issues the government is showing a steely purpose — in the full exploitation of these sections with the utmost rapidity.

Already before the passage of the Act the semi-official Grant Maintained School Trust was set up, apparently with unlimited funds subscribed by industry. This body flooded the schools, (and chairs of governing bodies) with glossy pamphlets extolling the merits of opting out already in the early Autumn. It was, therefore, very quickly off the mark. Local Authorities were deliberately by-passed in this publicity drive. The aim was clear — to seize the initiative, and to exploit to the full the sections of the Act permitting opting out.

Not only this. Immediately after the passage of the Act a fully official unit, funded by the taxpayer, was established at the DES having as its sole purpose the furthering of the (faltering) cause of the City Technology Colleges. This unit apparently employs 16 full-time DES officials at a cost to the public purse of £25,000 a month. Its sole aim is to get the CTC initiative effectively off the ground. Sudden (and covert) raids are made into distant territories in the hope of persuading this or that firm, or individual, to cough up the required money — or sell the required plot required for a new building. This behaviour, as has been suggested, is more appropriate to the coasts of Barbary 200 years ago than to England's green and pleasant land.

Nor is this all. As we commented in our last issue, perhaps the acme of 'statesmanship' was reached with the ban on all local authority reorganisation schemes imposed immediately after the Act was passed last August, and extending until the end of November (with the probability of a further extension in many cases). As Kenneth Baker belatedly admitted in October, this 'planning blight' was imposed precisely to allow schools threatened (if that is the right word) with reorganisation to apply for grant maintained status in order to remain as they are. Hence, incidentally, the undignified rush and pressure for the reconstitution of governing bodies last autumn, since some kind of time limit for this blight clearly had to be set. In his response to Jack Straw's letter on this issue, the Secretary of State confirmed that current school closure and reorganisation proposals were suspended 'to allow newly constituted governing bodies time to consider whether the new opportunity offered by grant-maintained status is one they wish to pursue', as the DES press release put it.

This action is sharp and exceptionally aggressive — indeed it could almost be described in terms of sabotage of local systems. It seems an extraordinary act for a

Secretary of State to take, since the state, or government, has overall responsibility for the health and effective functioning of the system as a whole. This indeed is written into the first section of the 1944 Education Act, which still obtains. Here the duty of the Minister is 'to promote the education of the people of England and Wales and the progressive development of institutions devoted to that purpose'. In what possible sense could the standstill on all planning by local authorities be described in the terms of that section? The net effect of these actions is more likely to be to maintain things exactly as they are — to crystallise the existing situation, in spite of demographic change and other imperatives. Such behaviour seems irresponsible in the extreme.

Is the aim destabilisation, and if so for what purpose? The Act has been passed and is now on the Statute book, in spite of near unanimous opposition from informed opinion during its passage.

Of the first 21 schools reported as wanting to opt out, 15 at least are attempting to utilise the Act to escape reorganisation in one form or another. The inherent conservatism of the measure now becomes abundantly clear; as well as its contradictory nature. Reorganisation is a demographic and economic necessity. The government of course recognises this, but yet seeks political advantage from the opting out clauses. Hence Baker's dilemma.

Opting out, and the City Technology College initiative have both been evaluated by **FORUM** as measures designed primarily to circumvent and so disrupt local systems of comprehensive education. Both also are directed specifically at weakening local education authorities, which are a prime target of the 1988 Education Act. **FORUM** has consistently pointed to the need to maintain and strengthen local authorities as the essential administrative and social base for systems of comprehensive primary and secondary education. It is these systems that the Education Act sets out to destabilise. That, as we have pointed out, was and is a major aim of this legislation.

But the success of the government's battle for destabilisation is by no means assured. The first lot of schools considering opting out are nearly all 'lame ducks' (in Judith Judd's words). In spite of an exorbitant tranche of public money, CTC's are not flourishing at all. Local determination to support and maintain existing systems, and to develop them creatively, is increasingly evident in campaigns up and down the country.

How local authorities and parents may fight back is very clearly outlined in James Hammond's important article in this issue. The conflicts opened up by this Act are only now becoming apparent. Positive outcomes may be assured if those supporting and defending local systems carry through effective local popular campaigns — and if the local authorities themselves are prepared to lead local campaigns in defence of their schools, as they have every right to do.

Beating Opting-out

James Hammond

Opting out clearly represents a major threat to comprehensive education. For that reason, FORUM totally opposes this section of the so-called 'Reform' Act, as we made abundantly clear in our response to the initial consultation paper last year. All the main parents' organisations also oppose opting out. We are glad, here, to include a major article on this topic by James Hammond, the highly energetic General Secretary of the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations. Mr Hammond spoke on this issue at the FORUM conference last year. Here he focusses on what local education authorities must do in the fight to retain local democratic control of local systems. Mr Hammond is District General Manager of the Cheltenham and District Health Authority. He is also President of the Parent-Teacher Association of Wales which he helped to found several years ago. He has served as a parent governor and on several educational bodies including the CBI Education and Training Committee.

We must learn to live with opting-out, for it will be with us until that section of the 1988 Education Reform Act is repealed and there is no guarantee that it will be. Laws are repealed because they are never used and therefore redundant or are generally thought to be poor legislation. It follows that rapid repeal will be ensured if it becomes apparent that no governors or parents are interested in using the provisions. Such is the vigour with which we are told the idea is being pursued that nothing less than a root and branch campaign will prevent a rash of opted-out schools when it first becomes possible in 1989. It is no longer enough to put up a rational, well-argued counter that standards have never been higher and the system therefore does not need this extension of choice. The public have been overwhelmed with propaganda in the year long debate over the Reform Bill proposals, and there is strong conviction in most quarters that something needs to be done. It does not matter that this may be less than well-founded. There will be schools which will opt-out simply because governors and parents will convince themselves that things will be better if they dispense with the Local Education Authority (LEA) influence. Accordingly, the continued existence of LEAs can only be assured if they move onto the attack. They must launch an aggressive marketing offensive which explodes some of the myths surrounding opting-out and also tells the public why education is safe in their hands. They have, like Neptune, three pronged weaponry.

The first prong of the LEA campaign should spell out the lack of extra independence opting-out will bring. It is wrong to suppose that opting-out endows the same kind of independence that schools in the private sector enjoy. Opted-out schools are not 'independent' for at least three reasons. Firstly they cannot charge fees. They may be able to extract financial support from parents in other forms but overt fee-charging is at present ruled out. This means that they cannot control their finances. The LEA will determine how much money the opted-out school has using its formula for local financial management, and the Department of Education and Science (DES) simply removes this from the LEA and passes it to the school. Secondly, such schools are not controlled solely by their governing bodies. They are accountable directly to the DES. The bureaucratic difficulties that this is likely to cause defy description. Headteachers

who have struggled to make headway against an LEA administration in which they know most of the people will get totally bogged down as they attempt to extract decisions on relatively minor issues. Thirdly, the opted-out school must deliver the national curriculum while independent schools need not. This has a number of resource problems not yet fully identified and the extra teachers, books and equipment will have to be found from the existing budget.

The second prong should emphasise the difficulties such schools will find in making ends meet. We have just seen that the budget will be the same as that the school would have enjoyed had it remained in LEA control. However, there are a large number of services which will no longer be available to those who opt-out. For example, access will be cut off to educational psychology and welfare workers, resource centres of all descriptions, in-service training provision, the advisory service, central buying power, careers service and many more. All these will have to be purchased from that fixed amount of money and some will be much more expensive than the LEA-run service. The opted-out school will have a responsibility to both train and appraise its teachers and a considerable sum will be needed to satisfy a DES which, if it follows recent form, will publish guidelines before long on the way such appraisal must be carried out. No LEA should have any real difficulty convincing all governors and parents that the financial disadvantages potentially outweigh the advantages.

The third prong of the trident should be the longest and sharpest. This provides the opportunity for the LEA to show how it has managed education successfully in the past and what plans it has to continue that success in the future. Real conviction in this area will have the greatest effect on the governing body which is considering placing opting-out on its agenda for the next meeting. What is needed is careful research into how the LEA provision has helped children of all abilities in the past. A few examples of problems identified and overcome will be very helpful.

The LEA will want to consolidate its position by developing a clear strategy for the future and explaining what it is, to governors and parents in readily understood language. This strategy must concentrate on the individual child and must include various milestones across the whole curriculum. There are

examples of good practice in some LEAs and these must be embodied in the plans each LEA has for the future. The thrust of the strategy has to be to convince those who might think opting-out will solve all their problems that it is not necessary to pursue this course because the LEA has something more attractive to offer which is more likely to produce success. Such lateral thinking will provide an opportunity to introduce the way attainment targets will be used as part of a complete plan which covers the achievements of each child in every aspect of school life.

Inevitably, the new framework will require changes in approach. The LEA will have to accept that schools need more control over their own affairs, not only because they will be managing their own finances up to a point but because the LEA genuinely sees a need to free schools from some of the pettifogging bureaucracy with which they have had to contend over the years. The strategy will need to include the intentions of the LEA in respect of responding to public complaints as this is an area where many parents have found it impossible to make progress in the past. Overall, education policy, if it is to be locally delivered in the future, must show itself to have much greater flexibility and user friendliness.

Having assembled its publicity material, the LEA will have it expertly developed into a marketable commodity and will distribute it through mailings to homes, press, radio and television, public libraries and a whole host of other outlets. A local 'hotline' will be very useful for parents and governors to obtain advice locally.

In a situation where all the cards are stacked against the LEA, it will not succeed without help. Schools must play their full part. It is the individual school after all which is the target of DES publications like 'How to Achieve Grant Maintained Status' and information about the Grant Maintained Trust. The school itself must expand the information it makes available to

parents. The design must be eye catching to avoid immediate filing in the bin and like the LEA the school must demonstrate what success it has achieved (whilst being within LEA control) over the whole range of activity. There should be a projection of the school's policy and an encouragement of the activities of the home-school association (HSA). Headteachers need to understand that they must have the support of parents if they wish to avoid change and a key element in greater understanding and co-operation is the active support of all the staff for a home-school association.

Governors will want to know whether parents are interested in opting-out at an early stage and one of the ways they may use is a meeting of the HSA. Many parents will attend because the proposed change is a radical one. Those HSAs which are members of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA) may well have been in touch with the national office seeking information, or will now do so. As an organisation which provides a service to its members NCPTA is bound to give factual advice on how to opt-out and to put its members in touch with organisations which can help. Any member home-school association who wants to know the pros and cons will have them explained and be offered a video which illustrates a governing body meeting discussing opting-out. But in the final analysis, it is the governors and parents who will decide and it is the LEA and the school which can head off an unwelcome outcome.

So I stress finally that opting-out will not be beaten without a titanic effort by the LEAs and schools. The time to begin has already passed. New Governing bodies are being elected as I write and will be considering opting-out actively by the time this is published. I hope by then to have seen unprecedented activity as LEAs launch counter campaigns aimed at telling us all how good they are and how unnecessary opting-out is!

City Technology Colleges A Strategy for Elitism

Clyde Chitty

In 'The Commodification of Education' (Vol.29, No.3) Clyde Chitty subjected the government's proposals relating to City Technology Colleges to a sharply critical appraisal. FORUM sees this initiative as yet another attempt to subvert local comprehensive systems by establishing new types of school re-introducing selection, and independent from any form of local, or democratic control. In this article, Clyde Chitty updates this criticism, and draws attention to procedures and costs which, in relation to current funding for normal schools, seem outrageous.

The opening of Britain's first City Technology College in September 1988, this first one housed in a dis-used school building in Solihull in the West Midlands, signified the launch of a costly gimmick fostered by an opportunistic Secretary of State. The whole

CTC concept is an attack on the comprehensive principle and one likely to do immeasurable harm to the vast majority of children, some 93 per cent, who are at present educated in the state secondary system.

The Background to the CTC Initiative

The introduction of the City Technology Colleges was one of the earliest initiatives to be announced by Kenneth Baker after he replaced Sir Keith Joseph as Education Secretary in May 1986. It has been suggested¹ that the whole thing was the brainchild of Professor Brian Griffiths, an academic economist who took over as Head of The Downing Street Policy Unit in 1985. Certainly, this is a view that Griffiths himself has been anxious to promote.² A former Dean of the City University Business School, he has reached eminence or notoriety (depending on your point of view) as a committed monetarist and privatizer. As the head of the Downing Street Policy Unit, a body originally created by Harold Wilson in March 1974³, Griffiths plays many roles and is undeniably one of the most influential men in Thatcher's Britain. He certainly had a major hand in drafting the 1987 Conservative Party Manifesto, notably — despite being only distantly connected with education — in drafting its education paragraphs.

Yet it could be argued that it was the scheme which eventually became the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative at the end of 1982 that was the CTC concept in embryonic form. It was originally intended that there should, in the words of the Prime Minister's House of Commons statement of 12th November 1982, be 'new institutional arrangements for technical and vocational education for fourteen to eighteen-year-olds, within existing financial resources, and, where possible, in association with local education authorities'.⁴ The full implications of this statement have tended to be overlooked in all the discussion surrounding the Initiative which eventually emerged. Yet David Young, the then Chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, made it quite clear in the days that followed that, in the absence of wholehearted LEA support, the MSC would be quite prepared to open its own technical establishments. He even suggests that it would be a nice idea to get financial backing from industry and call them 'Young Schools'.⁵

In the event, the more 'radical' aspects of the original TVEI proposal were shelved, and this was probably largely because the Thatcher Government simply did not feel strong enough in 1982 to alienate both the civil servants of the DES and the local education authorities.⁶ By the end of November, it had been decided that the local authorities should, in fact, be involved in the implementation of the scheme, even though the debate continued a little longer as to whether the schools selected for participation should be 'transformed' into 'technical high schools' or whether instead (as eventually happened) the scheme would simply involve support for additional technical and vocational options *within* existing comprehensive schools. It was, in any case, an impressive example of the speed with which the Government could act in pursuit of its objectives. All those most closely affected were clearly taken by surprise. As **Education** pointed out at the time:

The Department of Education and Science [had been] caught in a rather ambivalent position by the rapid turn of events. On the one hand, they were urging the local authorities to take part in the initiative; on the other, they let it be known that they entirely

understood and sympathized with the doubts the LEAs expressed about the constitutional propriety of the MSC administering and funding part of the service for which local authorities were responsible under the 1944 Act.⁷

The Launching of the CTC Initiative

By 1986-87 the Conservative Government felt strong enough to put forward its plans for the education system without worrying about any adverse reaction from established interests. Having had some success in bringing down the rate of inflation (at the risk of sustaining very high levels of unemployment) and having curbed the power and influence of such extra-parliamentary institutions as the big trade unions, it was now time for the Government to embark on the third and most glorious phase of its hegemonic enterprise. This would involve an attack on the dependency culture, the privatization of education and the destruction of the comprehensive school.

It is, of course clear from what has already been said that, in collecting material for his 1987 Education 'Reform' Bill, Kenneth Baker was able to draw on ideas which had been in circulation within the DES and the Downing Street Policy Unit in the time of his predecessor. The idea of a new system of technical schools for children just below the top ability band refused to lie down even after it was discreetly dropped at the end of 1982. There was, for example, reference to a revival of the original TVEI idea and, therefore, to an early version of the CTC concept in *The Sunday Times* at the end of 1985. In a short article headed 'Technology School Plan For the Young Elite', plans were given for the setting up of '16 — 20 technology schools in main urban areas'. The article revealed that:

Each would take 1000 pupils, who would be specially selected and would not pay fees... The LEAs would not be responsible for the new schools... They would be funded directly by the taxpayer via a National Education Trust.⁸

Paradoxically, it is not Sir Keith Joseph, one of the founding intellects of Thatcherism, who was able to bring all the new ideas together on to the statute book. In fact, Sir Keith proved a great disappointment to Mrs Thatcher's right wing advisers in the Hillgate Group and the Institute of Economic Affairs. He failed to promote the cause of the education voucher and he seemed more concerned with the needs of the less able than with devising ways of privatizing the system. It may be that he was defeated by his own civil servants; or it may be, as Peter Wilby, has suggested⁹, that he came to realise that 'a "market" in compulsory education was a logical impossibility'.

No such intellectual consideration disturbed the supreme pragmatist who succeeded him. Kenneth Baker has shown no desire to place his ideas within a coherent political framework. Within a few months of taking office, he had announced his CTC plans to a Conservative Party Conference, and the scheme featured prominently in the 1987 Conservative Party Manifesto.

The Original CTC Concept

The original concept of the City Technology College is to be found in **A New Choice of School** the glossy CTC

brochure published by the DES in October 1986. Here it was clearly stated that the CTCs would be *new* schools for 11 — 18 year olds established in urban areas alongside existing secondary schools. The new schools would be registered independent schools and therefore independent of local authority control but would charge no fees. Each CTC would serve a substantial catchment area, the composition of the intake being representative of the local community. The main principle of funding would be that individual promoters would meet all or a substantial part of the initial capital costs, with the Secretary of State paying the running costs at a level of assistance per pupil comparable with that provided by LEAs for maintained schools serving similar catchment areas. As far as the curriculum was concerned, there would be a large technical and practical element within a broad and balanced diet.

The brochure announced that the Government was prepared to fund up to 20 CTCs. It made reference to 27 possible locations, including Hackney and Notting Hill in London, the St. Paul's area of Bristol, Handsworth in Birmingham, Chapletown in Leeds, Knowsley on Merseyside and Highfields in Leicester. A number of the areas listed were suffering acute social deprivation and receiving attention in other ways through the Inner City Initiative.

The CTC trust

The job of getting the first CTCs established was given to Cyril Taylor who became special CTC adviser to Kenneth Baker in February 1987. He is a director of the Centre for Policy Studies, the right wing 'think tank' set up by Mrs Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph in 1974, and chairman of the American Institute for Foreign Study. He is also chairman of the council set up to administer the City Technology Colleges Trust.

The Trust's brief is to raise funds, locate sites for potential schools, carry out research into curriculum development, provide in-service teacher training, and build a centralized team of expertise in the teaching of technology. The administering council has been described as 'not so much a line-up of the great and the good but of the rich and the right'.¹⁰ It includes: Sir Randolph Quirk, President of the British Academy; Mrs Heather Brigstocke, 'High Mistress' of St Paul's Girls' school; Sir Ronald Halstead, Deputy Chairman of British Steel; Sir Gordon White, Chairman of the Board of Hanson Industries; Stanley Kalms, Chairman and Chief Executive of Dixons; Professor Sir Bryan Thwaites, former Principal of Westfield College; and Joseph Harmatz, Director General of the Organization for Rehabilitation Through Training (ORT). It is noteworthy that the only teacher on the eleven-member council has spent her entire teaching career in the private sector.

The CTC Concept Transformed

There are four important areas where the original CTC concept has been changed dramatically in the course of the last two years:

- 1) the location of the Colleges;
- 2) the provision of suitable sites within the locations chosen;
- 3) the funding of the Colleges;

4) the construction of the curriculum.

It is important to look at each of these in turn. Together, they lead us to the inescapable conclusion that the original concept has been a total failure. Baker's gimmick has proved a costly disaster, and it will, of course, be the taxpayer who has to foot the bill.

The Location of the Colleges

It was Solihull on the outskirts of Birmingham, an area not specifically mentioned in the CTC brochure, which won the race to be the first local authority to choose a site for a CTC. Mr Baker originally set a target of 20 colleges running by 1990. In fact, it will be pretty remarkable if five are in operation by 1991. Colleges are planned in Nottingham and Middlesbrough, while Dixons, the electrical stores group, is still willing to sponsor a CTC in the North East if it can find a suitable site. In the meantime, and in a spirit of desperation, it no longer seems to matter if future plans bear any relation to the 27 locations listed in the 1986 brochure. If proposals are accepted to turn the Riverside School in Bexley, the Downs School in Dartford and the two Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham Schools in Lewisham into CTCs, then we will face the ludicrous situation of having three new colleges within an area of fifteen miles in South London.

The Provision of Sites

Cyril Taylor has been quite open about the Government's difficulties in finding suitable sites for its cherished colleges. He admitted in June 1988 that the original plans were doomed to fail. Costs of refurbishing and equipping redundant schools and green-field sites were, he said, 'woefully underestimated by the Department of Education and Science'.¹¹ The aim now was to buy up schools in use and 'phase in' the CTCs over a period of up to six years. Mr Taylor seemed to think that this would help Government to rescue its project while at the same time 'broadening' the CTC concept:

We are approaching councils like Croydon, Bexley and Kent and asking them to sell us the most deprived or failing school. Instead of creating a new school which threatens others, we will try to make the existing school better ... The CTCs are no longer a pilot scheme. I predict that eventually one in four secondary schools will become CTCs. (11)

All this explains why the Haberdashers' Aske's Schools in Lewisham have been offered £4 million for refurbishment and resources if parents agree to turn them into CTCs.¹² It is also why great efforts have been made to destroy the comprehensive school which serves Thamesmead in Bexley despite the fact that it can in no way be described as a 'failing school' and regardless of a massive vote by parents (89 per cent to 11 per cent) in favour of keeping it as a thriving state school.¹³

The Funding of the Colleges

Probably the Government's biggest defeat has been over the issue of funding. All major firms (apart from British American Tobacco) have boycotted the scheme anxious, in many cases, not to harm their good relations with schools in the state sector. Various forms of pressure have been used on top industrialists, with

suggestions of honours for those who hand over the money, and veiled threats of disfavour for those who do not. Yet of 1,800 firms approached, only 17 have responded positively.

The result is that the Exchequer is having to bear most of the capital costs. In the case of the Nottingham CTC, for example, due to open in September 1989, the Government is donating £9.05 million from the Treasury to augment the £1.4 million which has been subscribed by public companies. As **The Times Education Supplement** commented with uncharacteristic bitterness in May 1988:

Just what sort of a public education initiative is it which puts up £9 million from public funds for a private school? And just what sort of priorities are being pursued when one, as yet unbuilt, private school gets £9.05 million, while the county of Nottinghamshire's entire capital allocation is less than £2.5 million?¹⁴

The details of the diversion of valuable resources and of crucial manpower which the CTC project has entailed, make truly awe-inspiring reading. Since only £28 million has been forthcoming from industry, the State has been forced to set aside £86 million between now and 1991. The Government will spend £33 million on two or three CTCs in 1989 — some £3 million more than has been set aside for the introduction of the National Curriculum into all 30,000 schools in the country. More officers within the DES have been set aside to deal with the CTCs than have been delegated to work out the consequences of abolishing the Inner London Education Authority with its 1,000 schools and 250,000 pupils.¹⁵

Curriculum Proposals

The curriculum outlined in the CTC brochure with its technology bias has not stood the test of time, with major modifications being suggested throughout 1987 and 1988.

As early as February 1987, Cyril Taylor was arguing that the curriculum of the CTCs should have a stronger vocational bent with sponsoring firms having a leading role to play in general curriculum development.¹⁶ And it was later emphasized that local employers, and not just the sponsors, would be asked to help design the curriculum framework, with ORT playing a central role in both curriculum planning and in-service teacher training.¹⁷ As **The Times Educational Supplement** pointed out in May 1987, this represented a major revision of earlier curriculum ideals and carried with it many worrying implications:

ORT's technical secondary schools have long been admired by Sir Keith Joseph and Lord Young, so it is not altogether surprising to see their influence reappear under Mr Baker, but, all the same, the original CTC blue-print did seem to offer a broader curriculum base. Still more disturbing is the new promise to employers. Local employers and chambers of commerce may well take a limited view of the skills they need at any moment of time from school-leavers. It has to be the job of real schools — even CTCs — to prepare students for something beyond immediate demands and horizons foreshortened in job terms.¹⁸

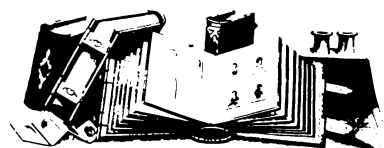
Conclusion

What a squalid mess it all is. It certainly calls into question Kenneth Baker's fitness as the Minister

responsible for the education system of this country. It also makes it abundantly clear that Thatcherite education policy is concerned with the well-being of a few at the expense of the needs of the majority. Yet, as with so much else in the Baker Education Act, one is struck most forcibly by the ill-thought-out nature of the CTC proposal. The unworkability of so many of the Government's schemes will surely make itself felt in the 1990s. By which time, presumably, Mr Baker himself will have moved on and upwards.

References

1. See, for example, the report in **The Sunday Times**, 26th July 1987.
2. See the profile of Brian Griffiths in **The Illustrated London News**, June 1988, p.46.
3. For the influential role of the Policy Unit under successive prime ministers, see: Peter Hennessy **Cabinet**, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, particularly pages 82, 194, 221. At the time this book was being written, the Unit was thinking up all sorts of wild educational 'reforms' to impose upon Sir Keith Joseph or his successor. The education, employment and local government portfolio in the Unit was held by Oliver Letwin.
4. **Hansard**, H. of C., Vol. 31, Cols. 271-2, written answers to questions, 12 November 1982.
5. Interview with **Education**, 19 November 1982, pp. 385-6.
6. For further discussion of this point, see: Clyde Chitty and John Worgan, 'TVEI: Origins and Transformation' in Clyde Chitty (ed) **Aspects of Vocationalism**, Occasional Paper No. 2, Post-Sixteen Education Centre, Institute of Education, University of London, December 1987, pp. 19-36.
7. **Education**, 26 November 1982, p. 410.
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12. Jeremy Sutcliffe, '£4 m offer to become CTCs', **The Times Educational Supplement**, 5th August 1988.
13. Ian Nash, 'Campaign to stop Bexley city tech', **The Times Educational Supplement**, 24th June 1988.
14. **The Times Educational Supplement**, 27th May 1988.
15. In answer to a Parliamentary question by Jack Straw Labour's education spokesman, in June 1988, the Education Secretary said that 16.7 DES personnel were employed in the CTC Unit at a monthly salary cost of £25,000.
16. Barry Hugill, 'Baker Enterprises plc'. **The Times Educational Supplement**, 20th February 1987.
17. Ian Nash, 'Trust may force sale of sites for CTCs', **The Times Educational Supplement**, 22nd May 1987.
18. **The Times Educational Supplement**, 22nd May 1987.



Robin Pedley: an appreciation

Robin Pedley, who died last November, was undoubtedly the most prominent figure in the early battles for comprehensive education back in the 1950s and 60s. Indeed already in the late 1940s he had begun to work towards the two-tier solution with which he is particularly associated — a solution which opened the way to comprehensive reorganisation, including the abolition of the 11 plus, without the need to erect large, all-through 11 to 18 schools which was then seen (by many) as the only acceptable pattern. By bringing in a break at 14 or 15 (or even 16), Robin realised that the transition to comprehensive education could be brought about in existing buildings, though perhaps needing additions. Further, this solution allowed both a more mature treatment for older students, and for adopting a 'county college', community based system for the resulting Upper Schools. Robin's carefully worked out educational arguments for this solution made a big impact on local authorities throughout the country; something like it was, of course, developed in Leicestershire after 1958.

Robin's first articles on this issue were published in 1949 (in the local authority journal **Education**). In 1954 the Councils and Education Press (Association of Education Committee) published **Comprehensive Schools Today**, where Robin's ideas were put forward accompanied by commentaries from leading figures including Harold Dent, Eric James, and, from the local authority world, Harold Shearman and W.P. Alexander. At this time (1954) Robin was in strong demand from local authorities to lecture on his approach — a job he undertook willingly and with zest.

At this time there were very few comprehensive schools in existence. Indeed in 1954 Robin and I (both at Leicester University College) set out to visit all those actually in existence. Most were in off-shore islands — four in Anglesey, four more in the Isle of Man, two in Middlesex, one in Walsall, one at Windermere, and one other — though we visited also several of London's 'interim' comprehensives established in the late 40s.

Comprehensive Schools Today had a big impact in the right place — among professionals and particularly local authorities, now increasingly searching for a solution to the divided system. But it was not read widely outside these groups. However in 1956 Robin published a major book, **Comprehensive Education, a new approach** which received very wide publicity indeed. Here Robin set out his total approach to the existing 'crisis in education', as he put it, and to the solution as he saw it, setting out a 'practical policy' to make the change. Although the government at that time continued fully to support the selective system, the grass roots movement for change was now having a considerable impact. Robin's book put comprehensive education well and truly on the map.

This is the background to the foundation of **FORUM** in the autumn of 1958 — still seven full years before the issue of Circular 10/65. Naturally, as a colleague of Robin's at Leicester I had worked closely with him and, in a smaller way, was engaged also on making the

case for comprehensive education. We felt that what was needed was a journal devoted specifically to encouraging the movement both towards comprehensive secondary education and to modifying the rigid techniques of streaming then general in all primary schools large enough to use this procedure. Jack Walton, then teaching at Leicestershire (now Professor of Education at Armidale, NSW) joined us to launch **FORUM** and form the partnership (PSW Educational Publications) which forms its legal base (PSW=Pedley/Simon/Walton). Robin and I acted as joint editors of the journal until, in 1963, he moved to Exeter as Director of the Institute of Education there.

The journal flourished. Although never attaining a mass circulation (such was never the intention) it immediately gained a solid readership and subscription list, and has maintained these ever since. Partnership with Robin was a delight. There were never any differences on the basic educational issues the journal dealt with and, from the first, we had the support of many others in an Editorial Board which met regularly for planning and discussion (as it still does). Those involved in **FORUM** were a group of like-minded people covering primary and secondary education (and administration) who sought to reflect the movement as it developed and to contribute to clarification of emerging issues and problems. Robin was prominent, as might be expected, in every aspect of this development.

In 1963, as is very well known, Robin published his Pelican Original **The Comprehensive School** which went through five reprints and new editions by 1969, and which is certainly the book that brought the idea of comprehensive education most effectively before the general public. This was certainly the most influential book on comprehensive education ever written. The movement as a whole owes a great debt to Robin for its production at such a crucial moment (1963), and for his keeping it up to date through later editions in the 60s and early 70s.

Later, Robin turned his attention to higher education, publishing **Towards the Comprehensive University** in 1978. This was also a pioneering book, but circumstances had changed — the decade of contraction that hit the Universities after 1979 hardly allowed for forward thinking as presented there.

Robin was the leading figure in what might be called the heroic period of comprehensive education — the 1950s and the early 60s. Future historians will have to take his contribution into account. During this whole period Robin was at Leicester and I was privileged to be his colleague. In 1963 Robin moved to Exeter, where he was later joined by Jack Walton who himself had moved to Beaminster as a comprehensive head. Later Robin was appointed to a Chair in Education at Southampton University where he acted as Dean and Head of the Education Department. His was certainly a life for education.

Brian Simon

Mathematics for ages 5 to 16

Leone Burton

The 'National Curriculum' looms closer. The Working Group on Mathematics, after a shaky start, was infused with new blood by the Secretary of State and produced an acceptable set of proposals. The statutory consultation process is still in train as we go to press; its outcome remains to be seen. In this article, Leone Burton, Professor of Mathematics Education at Thames Polytechnic, submits the Group's final report, together with the Secretary of State's comments, to a critical analysis. Leone Burton is author of **Girls into Maths Can Go**, the first collection in the UK of articles dealing with the interaction of gender and mathematics learning.

The document setting out the proposals to the Secretaries of State of the Mathematics Working Group on the National Curriculum was published almost exactly one year after the group was constituted and its terms of reference clarified. It sets out the suggested attainment targets and programmes of study of mathematics for ages 5 to 16 which were the focus of its terms of reference. In addition, it makes recommendations on assessment and testing, on the implementation of its proposals and on the in-service training needs that will be created.

The Working Group is to be congratulated for the coherence and range of their document in what must be acknowledged as an absurdly telescoped period of time. They were required to produce an approach to the mathematics curriculum and its assessment which would provide the government with the possibility of claiming higher standards and more effective learning and teaching of mathematics in the face of a large body of academic and practitioner opinion which did not support the venture and underlined the lack of data to substantiate the claims that were being, and are likely to be made, for it. Little wonder, then, if the exercise has resulted in a somewhat patchwork document, aspects of which will find approval, aspects of which will be criticised. Each critic will be able to find idiosyncracies which are hard to justify. It is to be hoped that, where these remain after the consultation exercise, they do not become absurd ropes with which to tie up both teachers and children. Yet again, one is left remarking that substantive changes in the education system are being implemented with inadequate consultation, participation and, especially, time.

The document does re-present acknowledged current thinking on the learning and teaching of mathematics which was first substantiated in the Cockcroft Report (1982) and then updated in the interim report of the Working Group. Where this thinking is being described or discussed, the report is at its best.

'Outside the classroom mathematics does not stand in isolation: the ability to count something for some purpose; knowledge of measurement, shape and estimating is used to calculate the volume of something for some reason; probability calculations are used to estimate the chances of a particular event happening. Learning to use mathematical knowledge and skills must therefore be a vital part of mathematics education at school' (Para 3.22).

In Chapter 3, there is also a discussion of the interpretation of data suggesting that standards in

mathematical performance in England and Wales have fallen between 1964 and 1981. It is pointed out that accepting this data at face value can be dangerous. A number of reasons for questioning the interpretation of the data are advanced while, at the same time, a warning is issued against complacency. The discussion, in addition, is an extremely useful one in demonstrating the value and dangers of a statistical approach to qualitative data.

When it comes to the proposed curriculum in mathematics, the working group has opted for assessment by profile components of which there are three. Profile Component 1 assesses knowledge, skills and understanding in number, algebra and measures; Profile Component 2 deals with shape and space, and handling data. Profile Component 3 focusses on practical applications of mathematics 'to reflect the fact that it is concerned with putting mathematics into practice in a wide variety of contexts. When confronted with a task pupils need to select and use whatever mathematics is appropriate and draw from a range of techniques to implement it' (Para 4.7). Dividing the assessment in this way, has inevitably led to a fragmentation of the curriculum and hence the necessity to add the practical applications of using and communicating mathematics and the personal qualities which support these as a third component.

Most mathematics educators would agree with the Secretaries of State that 'the development of pupils' capacity to use mathematics should go hand in hand with the development of their knowledge of mathematics' (Point 8 page iii). However, experience suggests mathematics has not been taught in this integral way and that, unless these important processes are independently identified and their importance acknowledged, they will once again be allowed to slip away by default. Of course their assessment can, and should be made integrally with assessing other profile components in the content area. That means that teachers will need to be ready to identify the achievement of targets which are both content and process based when reviewing a pupil's work.

I am not as sanguine as the Secretaries of State that attainment targets can be assessed 'unambiguously' (Point 8, page iii). An inability, therefore, to assess personal qualities unambiguously does not seem to me to pose a greater problem than that posed already in the identification of content targets. Those who have researched, for example, the acquisition of number understanding in young children have demonstrated

very clearly that, for example, number target 2, level 2, 'solve multiplication and division problems involving numbers up to 30' is by no means an unproblematic procedure for a large number of 7 year olds and that *performance* does not necessarily provide robust data on a pupil's understanding. The Secretaries of State do not seem to appreciate just how problematic an exercise they are proposing.

For me, one of the least comprehensible aspects of the report is that the attainment targets appear to decrease in difficulty when compared with the age and expected performance level of the pupil. For example, Number Target 2, Level 2 was quoted above; at Level 2 of Shape and Space Target 2 seven year old children must 'recognise different types of movement; straight movement (translation); turning movement (rotation); flip movement (reflection)'; and at Level 2 of Handling Data Target 2 they 'construct, read and interpret block graphs and frequency tables'. Without wanting to suggest that the average seven year old is unable to demonstrate such satisfactory performance, I do feel that there are very few schools with teachers who currently expect their seven year olds to do so and *are themselves prepared* to implement the kind of learning/teaching patterns which will ensure that their children can do so. Without extensive and expensive in-service support particularly of primary teachers therefore, the report will be implemented using drill and practice techniques which, for over a hundred years, have been demonstrated as inefficient.

At the other end of the scale, where the secondary teachers are more likely to have the mathematical knowledge to support the attainment targets, Level 6 of Number Target 3 expects the average 16 year old to 'make use of estimations and approximations to check the validity of multiplication and division problems involving whole numbers', Level 5 of Algebra Target 1 requires that the pupil to 'follow simple sets of instructions to generate sequences, and be able to predict the next few numbers in a given sequence', Level 6 of Measures states 'convert from one metric unit to another' and Level 6 of Handling Data Target 1 states 'specify an issue for which data is needed; design and use an appropriate observation sheet to collect data; collate and analyse results.' Many primary teachers would be able to show evidence that children towards the top of the primary school are meeting similar expectations to these.

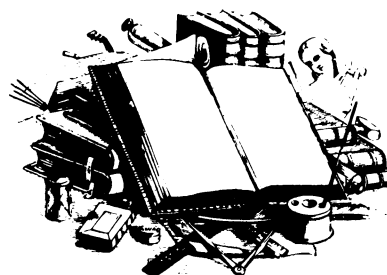
Very evident behind the report is the influence of the data collected by the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) in mathematics and the very useful summaries that they have produced for schools showing what 11 and 16 year old pupils can and cannot do when faced with decontextualised examples. Of course unacceptably poor performance at 16 has been one result of formalised teaching of mathematics with its associated loss of motivation and involvement. Using APU data to institutionalise low expectations does not raise standards. It merely institutionalises them! Unfortunately, the strong plea in the report to ensure that all pupils engage in mathematics in real contexts in particular by inserting profile component 3 appears to have fallen on deaf ears and this aspect of the proposal is the most seriously at risk.

Equal opportunities gets short shrift in the report. Reference is made (Para 10,13-17) to recent reports and APU results relevant to gender with the rather pious conclusion that the issue is responsive to good teaching rather than aspects of the curriculum. Paras 10,18-23 deal with ethnic and cultural diversity in a way which seems to me to be very ethno-centric. The statements can be put to the test by looking at Appendix 5 in which standard assessment tasks are illustrated at each reporting age. For example, children of 7 are encouraged to do an extended task called 'Ourselves' which they compare themselves one with another and also with 'monsters real and imaginary'.

Other curiosities remain. The working group were careful to avoid stipulating programmes of study which would become straightjackets on teachers and pupils. Their programmes of study 'give guidance as to how attainment targets should be achieved within a framework of profile components. They build on best classroom practice and they indicate the vital importance of improving standards in mathematics. They do not restrict the right of teachers to organise and implement their own schemes of work in their own way,' (Para 8.3). However, this chapter concludes with a 'Map of Mathematics Curriculum' which does not fit with the rest of the chapter, is an incomplete listing of the attainment targets in the preceding sections and its inclusion contradicts the style and content of the chapter.

There are other aspects of the report which are hard to justify or explain. For example, all average 9 year olds must be able to 'understand eight points of the compass', all 11 year olds 'understand and use the probability scale from 0 to 1 or 100%' and so on. As stated above, I expect that everyone will have their own personal set of lunacies which I hope they will make known during the consultation exercise.

Yet again, one is left with the one overwhelming regret that a curriculum which is described and driven by assessment will result in a return to categorisation and labelling of pupils and will reinforce norm referencing (the average, below average, above average already used as descriptors in the report) just at a time when attempts at implementing criterion referencing, judgment of what pupils can do, have started. Teachers deserve a better acknowledgement of the high quality of professionalism which their job entails.



National Curriculum — the Science Proposals

Michael Clarke

A longstanding member of the Editorial Board and head of a Leicestershire primary school, Michael Clarke is well qualified to assess the final report of the science working group, concerning science teaching in the 'National Curriculum.' As in the case of the equivalent maths report, this is now subject to consultation before the Secretary of State makes the final Order which will establish the programme of study, attainment targets, and etc., as part of the actual law of the land. The Education 'Reform' Act gave full power to the Secretary of State to accept or reject the Working Group's proposals, and those of bodies consulted, (as submitted to him by the Curriculum Council), or to modify them in whatever way he personally determines.

The views of the working group have been published in its final report but the Secretary of State has proposed that further consideration be given to some aspects of it. The National Curriculum Council has to make its recommendations and a brief period of consultation has been allowed for other organisations to make their observations. Eventually Parliamentary Orders will be made — perhaps by February 1989 — so we do not know the final details of the National Curriculum for Science.

But, however the Secretary of State eventually manages to tie down the teaching profession to fit his vision of an education system which is subjected to precise quality control and motivated by the pressures of market forces, the report of the working group will remain an acceptable model for the enlightened teaching of science. It might be that the chapters giving the principles on which its suggested curriculum is based will take second place to the curriculum itself, but if that happens the teaching of science would be poorer for it. We must try to retain sufficient scope for teacher initiative to effect child centred teaching.

The group 'have been conscious of the need to build on the good work which is already going on in many of our schools' and what they are recommending is not a 'radical new departure . . . but rather a clearer and firmer framework' for the teaching of science. The group 'believe that the proposals will only be effective if the traditional freedom which teachers have enjoyed to plan and organise the curriculum can be protected'. As guidance to teachers in doing that planning and organising, the report lists criteria for selecting experiences e.g. 'to stimulate curiosity; give opportunity to develop attitudes relating to scientific/technological activities including co-operative working; relate to the interests of children at a particular age and to their everyday experiences; help children to understand the world around them through their own mental and physical interaction with it'. Those views present a picture which is consistent with current best practice.

With these considerations in mind the group has produced programmes of study which are sufficiently general to allow teachers to follow those principles. The work to be covered is appropriate for the relevant age groups and, in primary schools, I see no reason

why most teachers should not be competent to teach the curriculum. Specialist teachers ought not to be necessary. If one considers the cross curricular nature of teaching in primary schools today the recommended 12.5% of school time is probably devoted to science already. Schools could well create an imbalance in the curriculum by devoting that 12.5% of time to science in isolation whilst forgetting what is probably already being learnt in the course of art, craft, P.E., geography and home economics.

The map of science which the programmes cover is sufficiently comprehensive for teachers to select any area of science which they might wish their pupils to study. The subdivision of the subject into Variety of Life, Processes of Life etc. will be more meaningful to pupils and parents than the traditional labels.

To this extent the report can only be seen as helpful.

However, the statements of attainment give no indication of the detail or depth of understanding required. The actual standard at which teachers should pitch their teaching will depend on the level which is set by standard attainment tasks. It will be some considerable time before primary teachers have national standards communicated to them and have assimilated those standards into their teaching. The profession will need all of the one year 'dry run' to adjust.

Controls on teaching will be imposed by the pressures of the testing programme and the subsequent reporting. The statements of attainment, which will form the basis of the assessment procedure, start a process of narrowing down the curriculum to what I believe children will actually do for the science curriculum. Taken at their face value the amount of study required to achieve them is minimal. Traditional examinations, with their *unseen questions*, at least encourage teachers to cover the full curriculum. But in this case the target is known and the testing procedure is largely in the hands of teachers. With so much at stake in the form of individual teacher and schools' reputations there will be a tendency to play safe and cover enough specifically planned subject matter to meet known requirements. The use of current class interests spontaneously developed, which has been the basis of the best science that I have seen in primary schools,

Plan for the National Curriculum for Science						
Profile Components	Attainment Targets	Prog. of study	Statements of Att.	5-11	Marks 11-14	14-16
Knowledge and understanding	1. The variety of life 2. Processes of Life 3. Genetics and Evolution 4. Human Influences on the Earth 5. Types and Uses of Materials 6. Making new materials 7. Explaining how Materials behave 8. Earth and Atmosphere 9. Forces 10. Electricity and Magnetism 11. Information Transfer 12. Energy Transfers 13. Energy Resources 14. Sound and Music 15. Using Light 16. The Earth in space	Not 5-11 Not 5-11	Basis for Assessment	35%	40%	40%
		Not 5-11				
Exploration & Investigations	17. Doing 18. Working in Groups			50%	30%	25%
Communication	19. Reporting and Responding 20. Using Secondary Sources			15%	15%	15%
Science in Action	21. Tech. Aspects 22. The Nature of Science	Not 5-11 Not 5-11		---	15%	20%
Marks will	be allocated to the age groups by teacher assessment by standard assessment tasks	— 5-11 — 70% — 30%	11-14 70% 30%	14-16 50% 50%		
It is suggested that the curriculum occupies approx. 12.5% of time in primary schools 16%-20% of time in secondary schools						

will tend to be by-passed in favour of set themes leading to tried and tested assessment procedures.

The report states 'Because of the way we have drawn up the statements of Attainment we recommended that pupils should have had to satisfy all of the elements before they can be said to have reached that particular level of attainment in that attainment target'. If the amount of work to be covered in all the subject areas of the National Curriculum becomes too great a burden then again there will be a tendency to take short cuts and substitute practical work with pencil and paper exercises.

The threat to enlightened child centred learning, then, obviously comes from the assessment procedure. The focus of attention is going to be on the statistics which will be said to reflect the quality of teaching in particular schools and on the basis of which parents might select a school for their children. The focus of attention is all important in determining what actually happens in any organisation. For a L.E.A. that focus

can be on administrators or inspectors or children. For schools it can be on a public image (which can be created in many ways) or administrative efficiency or children. I believe that the National Curriculum plus testing and reporting will turn the spotlight on inspectors and public images and whatever the stated underlying intentions of the Education Reform Act, if that happens, it will not serve the best interests of children.

The Secretary of State's proposals, stemming from the report, support this fear. Although lip-service is paid to that part of the report which sets the scene for the science curriculum, ie. 'We share the group's view of the importance of developing scientific skills through appropriate practical and investigative work', the proposals as a whole point to concern that pupils should be taught what is most easily and precisely tested rather than what might most liberally educate them. 'We are also concerned that some of the statements of attainment in the six attainment targets for exploration

Pre-vocationalism — a threatened species?

Eric Triggs

Here again the 'National Curriculum' appears as a threat to what some see as positive developments within the pre-vocational field. This is the issue with which Eric Triggs tangles in this article. Mr Triggs, who has 20 years teaching experience in primary and secondary schools, is now Researcher in the School of Business and Service Teaching at the Thames Polytechnic.

Pre-vocationalism is a comparatively recent arrival on the curriculum scene. The MSC launched the first of its TVEI pilot projects for 14 — 18 year olds in September, 1983. CPVE, for the 16+ age group appeared in September, 1985 followed in September 1986 by BTEC First Certificate (16+) and BTEC Foundation 14 — 16 in September, 1987.

Thus within four years, a variety of course frameworks for the 14+ age group were established, aiming (in the words of CGLI) at the development of 'general education through a range of occupational and other relevant focuses' (CGLI, 1986). Two year YTS (April, 1986) provided the more vocational route to the future for the 16+ group though it incorporated, in some cases, some pre-vocational procedures (namely CPVE and BTEC First) into its first year on the way. Up to the present, then, a lot of time, a lot of money (well over a billion pounds) and a degree of vocational cachet have been accorded to the development of these pre-vocational 'shocks to the system' (TES 3rd June).

The National Curriculum Consultation document appeared in July, 1987 (DES, 1987). It lists, for the 5 — 16 year age group 8 subject areas, planned to occupy 90% of the teaching time available. Although the document states that:-

'The Government intends that legislation should leave full scope for professional judgement and for

schools to organise how the curriculum is delivered in the best way suited to the ages, circumstances, needs and abilities of the children in each classroom', and goes on blandly to affirm that 'This will . . . allow curriculum development programmes such as TVEI to build on the framework offered by the National Curriculum and to take forward its objectives'. There is also the clear statement that ' . . . programmes of study will also be based on the recommendations from the subject working groups' and that ' . . . the attainment targets will provide standards against which pupils progress and performance can be assessed.' More pertinently from the point of view of pre-vocationalism, it goes on to suggest that ' . . . the main purpose of such assessment will be to show what a pupil has learnt and mastered.' The Mathematics and the Science Working Groups' interim reports (DES 1987a, 1987b) have already outlined what will be the probable pattern for the rest in this regard.

What is then at issue is whether and in what form the tenets of pre-vocationalism can be taken forward within the framework proposed.

The general principles of pre-vocational education are by now widely known, and several comparative listings of the aims of each scheme are extant (see, for example, FEU's 'Relevance, Flexibility and Competence', 1987). The most reductive summary of

(continued from page 45)

and investigation, communication and science in action lack the precision which is needed if they are to form a clear basis for assessment, particularly those relating to personal qualities . . . We therefore propose that the attainment targets suggested by the group for exploration and investigation, communication and science in action should be re-examined and, where possible should be combined with attainment targets for knowledge and understanding'. The relative weighting of knowledge and understanding, where precise pencil and paper tests can be easily introduced, must therefore be increased at the expense of practical activities.

The working group hope that testing will be an integral part of the teaching process and identify individual children's needs, giving the basis for further planning. But what the testing is to lead to is a level of attainment (graded from 1 to 10 for all pupils aged 5 -16). It will be difficult to keep one's mind on grading criteria with moderation meetings to follow, as well as

looking for the underlying causes of a child's performance so that one can identify that child's needs, as we do now.

When a report is given to parents, what they will find most significant will be the recorded level of attainment. It is naive to assume that if individual results are not published then children and parents will not know what others have achieved. So whilst the assessment procedure isn't planned to give a pass/fail outcome, that is the way parents will undoubtedly see it.

Eric Bolton (senior chief H.M.I.) is reported (T.E.S. 16.9.88) to have said 'To confuse the description of a curriculum and its design with its delivery is a fatal error.' But what pupils actually experience depends on delivery and many factors influence that. By now teachers must know what is at stake. Let them look to the sections of this report which will help them to retain their professional integrity and not be thrown off course by the market forces. (STOP PRESS, see page 55)

the aims of all schemes would suggest that pre-vocational curricula are student centred, negotiated, profiled and work related (but not work dominated) developments which can incorporate some of the better elements of the liberal education tradition whilst avoiding the worst excesses of the 'train not brain' school. Not only that, they seemed to encapsulate in the least draconian way, central thinking about the need to counter the dreadful 'irrelevance' of the scholastic school curriculum. To what extent are their practices compatible with what seems to be the 'new old think' coming from the centre?

It has been difficult until recently to gauge with any degree of certainty how staff engaged in teaching pre-vocational courses viewed the curricula they were interpreting. Did they, for example, see them in exactly the same way as the course documents set them out? Or did they see some course elements as relatively insignificant whilst others acquired considerable importance? Or were they hostile to the courses in general, seeing them as eroding the sacred values of the academic curriculum in the name of a thinly disguised vocationalism?

A recent survey of CPVE and TVEI course coordinators based in schools and colleges, has thrown some light on these issues (Triggs, 1988). 398 postal questionnaires consisting partly of Likert-type (5 choice) items were analysed in order to identify the most frequently occurring grouping of statements brought together by the sample. The dominant motif in respondents' picture of pre-vocationalism consisted of the following item cluster (in descending order of significance):-

- i) Students must be involved in negotiating their own curriculum content.
- ii) Students must be involved in negotiating their own learning processes.
- iii) Pre-vocational curricula are an excellent preparation for adult life.
- iv) The process adopted by pre-vocational curricula could usefully be adopted across the 14 — 19 curriculum.
- v) Profiling is the focus round which student centred learning should be organised.
- vi) Pre-vocational curricula are not too concerned with behavioural skills.
- vii) The use of clear objectives rather than general aims is an especially attractive feature of pre-vocational education.
- viii) Comment banks are an important development in profiling procedure.
- ix) Computerisation will considerably help teachers to manage profiling.

Apart from presenting solid support for many of the key ideas promulgated by prevocational curricula, this group of items suggests strongest affirmation for the negotiation of curriculum content and process, along with a concern for the development of profiling as a formative activity — assisted by the development of external support systems.

It is difficult to see how the features of the pre-vocational frameworks highlighted here as of major significance, could survive the National Curriculum as proposed. The National Curriculum places yet another constraint in the way of those seeking to develop the

skills and procedures of negotiation in pupils and teachers. The scope for negotiation — already circumscribed by the requirements of many institutions — is reduced by the temporal framework adopted for achieving balance. The key features which make pre-vocational curricula an excellent preparation for adult life — an acquaintance with work practices, the development of responsible choice on the basis of personal awareness, the acquisition of transferable skills etc. - will be harder rather than easier to achieve. There will be little impetus to extend the processes developed within pre-vocationalism across the curriculum since 'programmes of study' will be laid down by the independently operating working groups, each primarily committed to their own knowledge areas and their own identification rather than to the ways of developing personal and social skills. This feature will be reinforced if the recommendations of the Black Report (DES, 1988) are followed and profiles are made up of '. . . attainment targets . . . combined to form profile components'. Furthermore, '. . . when subject working groups provide guidance on the aggregation of targets into a small number of profile components, they should have regard to the need for each component to lead to a report in which reasonable confidence is possible'. This is a far cry from the kind of formative, personally referenced, student involved kind of developments which have characterised pre-vocational profiling up to now — one which fully justifies James and Stierers' fear that 'what is recorded will be limited to test scores and assessments on narrowly conceived, content based attainment targets in core subjects' (Forum, 1988). Perhaps the only item in the teachers' list which could conceivably be adopted within the confines of the National Curriculum would be that relating to the approval of clear objectives rather than general aims which pre-vocational curricula have encouraged. But it is difficult to interpret this as a plea for more knowledge centred attainment tests.

There does therefore seem to be a fundamental split between pre-vocational curricula as conceived by their developers and practitioners and the concerns of the National Curriculum. It is particularly unfortunate that this is occurring at a time when pre-vocational curricula seemed to be developing in a more liberal direction than their opponents of a few years ago would have envisaged. It seems that the imposition of a National Curriculum as suggested will vitiate attempts to generate awareness (of self, of the adult world) from the age of 14 and will leave 16+ pre-vocational schemes with an almost unbridgeable gap between the approaches they wish to adopt and the experiences with which students enter.

It is simply not the case that anything can be 'delivered' through anything, that all things are possible within any framework one cares to name. Some (maybe valuable) things can go to the wall, some (maybe useful) progressions can be hampered and some (maybe vital) opportunities can be permanently lost. Those recognising the importance of the developments which have taken place within pre-vocationalism in the last few years should fear for their future welfare under the National Curriculum. Their survival no longer seems to be guaranteed.

Implementing The Modular Curriculum

Benjamin Collins

Leicestershire is well-known for several innovations — among them, more recently, the modular approach to the curriculum. In this article, Benjamin Collins, recently Senior Teacher (Curriculum) at Countesthorpe College, describes this new approach, and reports teacher and student satisfaction. The author taught at Stantonbury Campus and was head of science at Beauchamp College (Leics) before moving to Countesthorpe. He is currently Deputy Head of Melton Mowbray Upper School. The modular curriculum at Countesthorpe was introduced as part of the introduction of a core entitlement curriculum for all.

The debate regarding the proposals for the National Curriculum and the other major provisions of the Education Reform Act has overshadowed almost everything else in the past year. At this same time, however, teachers in several areas, and in particular in Leicestershire schools, have introduced a new approach to curriculum organisation which could have wide ranging consequences, both for the way in which the National Curriculum is interpreted and for the way learning is experienced in schools.

This article is an account of how one school, Countesthorpe College, a 14-19 Comprehensive Community School, implemented a menu of modular courses to cover several areas of its curriculum and how it tackled some of the practical issues associated with this innovation. It then goes on to look at teacher and student reactions after their first full year of experience with modules.

Conceived at the time when many schools were looking for ways of introducing breadth and vitality to their educational provision, a number of Leicestershire schools came together in 84-85 to develop the Leicestershire Modular Framework in association with the Midlands Examination Group. This assessment framework provided teachers with clear guidelines and structures for drafting short 10-12 week modular courses. Teachers were able to write their 'Modules' each with a specific content capable of standing on its own or being combined with others to make up a five term course for GCSE certification. Modules were seen to add flexibility to the Fourth and Fifth year subject based curriculum to allow the students to plan their courses in the upper school without the two year commitment to a final subject specific exam, and to help motivation by providing short term objectives. At Countesthorpe Modules were also seen as a practical

means to broaden the curriculum and implement the College's Equal Opportunities policy. Modules were thus introduced into the Design, Performing Arts, Business Education and Technology areas. It was felt that Modules would make it easier for students to overcome traditional gender-related barriers and would encourage both girls and boys to risk choosing non-traditional subjects.

From the teachers' point of view the process of planning and writing modules was in itself an exercise in professional development. Furthermore, through involvement in the early stages of the 'Modular Framework,' College staff were able to create modules that reflected their pedagogic beliefs and subject interests. As is so often the case with teacher led initiatives, the creative process helped to bring together teachers from different backgrounds. Areas of study that previously had little to unify them were now able to sit together underwritten by a new rationale.

In September 1987, as the first modules made their debut, the administrative task of managing all the incoming Fourth Year students, each with a set of choices, became the first challenge. The school's newly acquired computers were to become more immediately useful than had been anticipated. At the same time other practical and philosophical questions began to emerge: How would students be encouraged to follow a balanced set of modular options? Were compulsory modules needed? What kind of classroom relationships would emerge if students kept moving on to new teachers every ten weeks? How would parents and employers be informed about the type of course a student had followed to GCSE certification? Whilst these issues had been discussed earlier, there was clearly going to be an element of learning and adaptation as the year went on.

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[The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Thames Polytechnic].

New assessment procedures were central to both teaching and learning within the modular curriculum. The end of Module deadline for the final submission of work put students and teachers under unfamiliar early pressure. Many teachers, however, reported work of a much higher standard than would be expected early in the Fourth Year. By November, when allocations for the second Module were to be made, students could already see the returns of their early efforts, and also had a broader understanding of the choices available to them. Systems were evolved in which students' prioritised choices, having been discussed with their tutor, were again fed into a computer so that they could be sorted into teaching groups.

At this time, a preliminary informal survey of the success of the modular work was undertaken. The following recorded comments give an impression of teacher sentiment at the time. Some felt that 'less able students found the deadlines difficult to meet.' Several agreed that 'many students have done as much practical work in a term as they would have done in a full year' while others, used to teaching students with a demonstrated ability in their area, felt that 'it was good to work with students of different abilities.' However several felt that the ten week period 'didn't allow them to get to know their group,' and one teacher was concerned 'about those who had missed too much work to be able to pass their first assessment.' The overall view was very positive, not least because of the enhanced sense of purpose the short courses had engendered in the students. Teachers in the Performing Arts area were keen to move on to the second Modules: 'I've always wanted to integrate the arts, now I feel we're doing it.' Comments from students were similarly positive with many enthusiastic about the new Module, although a minority wanted to stay on to continue work that they had started.

Some of the students did not obtain their preferred choices, but this did not become the dominant issue as teachers feared it might. Responsive tutoring and guidance helped to satisfy students and there was a promise of improved choice over the longer term. At the end of the first full academic year, after the first three modules had run their course, a more comprehensive survey of teacher and student attitudes was carried out. By this time a large proportion of student had had experience of modules in several subject areas. A questionnaire based on previously written statements and opinions of students was distributed to over a hundred students. The results are produced opposite:

Significantly these responses show that those aspects of a modular curriculum which teachers thought would cause greatest concern proved not to be problematic. Students were happy, despite the disappointment of some in not obtaining the module they first wanted.

There was some concern about the credibility of the qualifications associated with modular courses when they were first introduced to students, and a small number of parents wanted their child to obtain a two year traditional qualification in some areas (most notably in Domestic Science). Clearly what the students liked most was the fact that they were able to make a fresh start with different specialist studies. Although the questionnaire does not reveal it, a

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree	No resp
The idea of Modules is good because it allows you to learn in all areas of Design.	26%	50%	16%	2%	0%	6%
Modules are not good because they introduce to you too many different teachers.	0%	4%	28%	58%	6%	4%
Modules are not good because there is too much assessment. I would prefer one exam or assessment at the end of the 5th year.	10%	12%	28%	32%	12%	6%
Modules are good because if you make a mistake in choosing a topic, you have a second chance later.	14%	42%	12%	22%	0%	10%
Modules are not good because you never have time to finish off a project.	2%	34%	30%	28%	2%	4%
Modules are not good because they won't give me a qualification that employers or colleges want.	4%	16%	48%	28%	2%	2%
I am pleased with the way I have been allowed to choose my modules.	12%	42%	22%	8%	6%	10%

considerable number of students enjoyed working in Design subjects they would not have considered choosing when making decisions from the distance of their High Schools.

A fuller evaluation of modular organisation of the curriculum will have to be carried out after the first full cohort gain their qualifications. Early experience seems to indicate that several of the educational benefits that modules were intended to introduce have been noted. At Countesthorpe, cooperation between specialist areas within departments has been enhanced, teachers and students are experiencing more control over their courses.

The National Curriculum with its emphasis on subject related teaching could appear to undermine some of the aspirations of those teaching a modular curriculum. However, interestingly, many schools have in fact, used the flexibility of modules to structure packages within, rather than across subjects. At a time when schools are moving towards the comprehensive ideal of a common entitlement curriculum for all, modular curricula not only provide a practical basis for unifying some of those well tied knots, but give back to the teachers some of the professionalism and control they look like losing under the encroaching centralism of the 90's.

Encouraging the spirit of enquiry in initial teacher training

Jean Rudduck and Jerry Wellington

Jean Rudduck worked closely with the late Lawrence Stenhouse at the Centre for Applied Research in Education at the University of East Anglia for many years. She was one of the original team involved in the Humanities Curriculum project (HCP), and has done much other innovatory work. Now Professor of Education at the University of Sheffield, she, and her colleague Jerry Wellington, have turned their attention to initial training, with, it seems, a new, creative approach to the formation of the reflective teacher.

Courses of initial teacher training have recently been under fire from various quarters (Warnock; Jeffcoates and Sofer in the T.E.S.). The critics generally favour the alternative of school-based apprenticeships (irreverently referred to as the 'sitting at Nellie's knee' model). No one denies the value of school-based observation and teaching experience in school classrooms in initial training but in our view this is not enough. A course with an independent base (be it in a university, polytechnic or college) can offer an additional dimension which would be lacking in a fully school-based model of teacher training. Aside from the danger of Nellie's knee belonging to a cynic, a performer whom no one but Olivier could emulate, a confirmed stick-in-the-mud, or a child-hater (they do exist, though fortunately not in great numbers) the apprenticeship model does not readily provide space and support for a sustained and reflective appraisal of classroom practice. It is this capacity for analysis of and reflection on practice that can be offered by tutors in higher education institutions and it is this, in our view, that is the foundation of self-respect and self-confidence among teachers as well as a pre-condition of commitment to continued professional learning.

Training is, properly, a partnership, and we must recognise the distinctive contributions made by teachers in schools and tutors in higher education. What teachers in schools offer is the strength of rich, local, in-depth knowledge. What tutors in H.E. offer is a view of the classroom that is built up out of a wide variety of school experiences and that is informed by a research perspective.

One opportunity for allowing *students* the space and safety to appraise school and classroom practice is provided by the 'School-based Collaborative Inquiry', which is part of the third term of the Sheffield University P.G.C.E. course. For the student, the periods of teaching practice in schools are undeniably the core of their training experience, and one year teacher training courses (P.G.C.E.) which locate teaching practice in terms one and two have to find educationally justifiable ways of ensuring continuity of engagement and of learning in the third term of the course. We have avoided the 'summer term slump' by introducing Collaborative Enquiries. In these, students

work together in small groups of three or four to examine, over an intensive four or five week period, an issue which is of interest to them and to a local school — usually a school that one member of the enquiry team worked in for his or her teaching practice.

Concrete examples will be useful here, before discussing the value of the activity. Two Mathematics students joined two English-as-a-Second-Language students to examine multi-cultural approaches to Mathematics teaching in an inner-city comprehensive. In collaboration with their tutor and members of the school staff they were able to analyse critically but constructively the school's approach and go on to produce new teaching materials of value to the teachers and themselves. In another school a group of English students studied the ways in which information technology could support language development for pupils with special needs. Three P.E. students, following up a concern which had proved controversial in the early part of their course, decided to examine the rationale for and the differences between mixed and single sex groupings for P.E. in two comprehensive schools. Four science students decided to examine the interpretation and use of problem-solving in three different school science departments. In another science based enquiry, students compared the approach to scientific observation in process-led and traditional, content-led courses in two schools. They were able to pinpoint the practical difficulties in teaching and assessing 'observational skills' in both approaches.

Successive groups of Modern Languages students have, over three years since the Collaborative Enquiries were introduced, worked on a cumulative evaluation of one school's option scheme focusing on different aspects affecting choices each year. Another project looked at an 11-18 school's curriculum in modern languages, with a particular slant on their provision for the less academically able, and piloted materials for use with the fourth and fifth year pupils who, if the national curriculum is fully implemented, will be the new customers for modern languages departments. The school found the students' findings to be of considerable value in formulating their plans for the future. A group of four Geography students were invited by a local school to investigate exactly

what pupils learn from fieldwork. They observed and interviewed pupils from third and fourth year groups doing work in urban and rural areas and were impressed with the wide range of skills developed, both practical and social.

Students found the experience of standing back, observing and reflecting extremely valuable. They felt they had learned more about fieldwork and the way pupils work than if all their attention had been taken up, in a teaching role, with managing the situation. One History team's task was to design an accreditation unit for low achieving fourth year pupils in history, and to test some of the ideas and materials produced. Another's was to investigate teachers' use of cooperative small-group work. Two other groups working in the same school, analysed the history resources used by one department, re-designed them and did some testing to determine the effectiveness of the improvements. More contentious issues have also been studied, including the problem of truancy in one school, the links and gaps between a school Maths department and its science, and pupils' attitudes to a new and intensive programme of anti-racist teaching in a largely white suburban school.

This type of enquiry in a pre-service teacher education course is probably not unique and similar activities are certainly followed in other P.G.C.E. courses. However, their value is worth discussing especially as they offer a valuable dimension to teacher training which would be impossible in a traditional apprenticeship model.

We have evaluated the Collaborative Enquiry scheme, modified it, and decided to continue with it. It seems to have several strengths. First, we think it important to try to instil a habit of curiosity in new teachers which will prepare them to cope with and respond to the problems that they find in everyday practice. The Collaborative Enquiries seem to contribute to such a goal. Second, they offer students

an opportunity to work collaboratively and to understand the problems and possibilities of group structures for learning. Third, they create an ideal opportunity for partnership with schools where both parties have a stake in the enquiry and both regard the outcomes as valuable. The Collaborative Enquiry is also important because it has the power to change the attitudes of students and teachers towards 'educational theory' and 'research': they are seen as more relevant and accessible, and students are encouraged to relate their enquiries to other published studies. Students build, through the enquiries, a confidence that many more experienced teachers do not have — it is the confidence to discuss problems and successes openly with colleagues, to use observation and interviewing as a way of gaining evidence about the processes of teaching and learning, and to use that evidence as a basis for improving daily practice.

At first we failed to give students enough support in the task of defining a suitable problem for enquiry and we did not give enough attention to the task of introducing them to methods of enquiry that they could appropriately use in classrooms. We also failed to give them enough support in the critical task of analysing and presenting data. The student's final report is now presented in written form with one copy going to the school; there is also an oral presentation to fellow students, tutors and to teachers from schools where the enquiries have been located. Collections of useful texts have been built up to help students with the process of enquiry, and this year we arranged consultation sessions with colleagues and with doctoral students who were willing to discuss their research experience with PGCE students.

Student teachers are notorious for the rough and ready criterion of 'relevance' which they use to judge all aspects of their training course. The Collaborative Enquiry, as it turns out, is seen as challenging, enjoyable and relevant!

Socrates in the classroom

Terry Hyland

The move to bring philosophy into the schools (at all levels) has gained and is gaining support, though how it fits into the 'National Curriculum' is anyone's guess. Here Terry Hyland touches on this development and explains its significance. Dr Hyland trained as a primary teacher and has taught at all levels from school to university. He is now Lecturer in Education at Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education at Chatham.

An educational climate dominated by talk of skills, vocational training, benchmark testing and the National Curriculum does not, on the face of it, seem to be conducive to attempts to introduce philosophy into schools. Yet, against all these odds, a movement inspired by just such an aim is currently gaining ground in this country.

With an impetus provided by the introduction of 'A' level Philosophy (Butler, 1984) the initial interest is filtering downwards, and the J.M.B. is currently looking at proposals for a Philosophy AS syllabus whilst

the Association of Teachers of Philosophy is encouraging teachers to submit Mode 3 syllabus plans to the G.C.S.E boards (Greenberg, 1987).

Having gained access to the secondary school curriculum, philosophical initiatives in the form of thinking skills and problem-solving programmes (Fisher, 1987) are being introduced into primary schools under a 'transferable skills' umbrella which promotes the idea that philosophy can foster 'flexible thinking for a technological age' (Greenberg, *op.cit.*). In this sphere, the most ambitious programme by far

is the 'Philosophy for Children' scheme constructed by American philosopher Matthew Lipman (1980, 1987) which has spawned a vast range of curriculum modules and materials for use in primary and secondary schools. All this activity fits so awkwardly with current educational trends that it merits, at the very least, a second glance.

Origins and Motives

A social-psychological explanation of the attempts to introduce philosophy into schools might point to considerations such as the drastic reductions in philosophy departments in recent years and their struggles to win students in a fiercely competitive climate of economic realism. On this account, a philosophy in schools movement might hope both to reinstate the importance of the discipline and also ensure a plentiful supply of students.

Moreover, this kind of sociology of academic professionalism is by no means an unimportant or trivial consideration. Tomlinson (1982), for instance, has offered an account of the development of special education provision which gives more weight to the vested interests of professionals and economic expediency than to the benevolent humanitarianism which Warnock made so much of. In a similar fashion British scientists have reacted to cutbacks with the launching of a Save British Science campaign designed to communicate to the public and government a 'proper appreciation of the economic and cultural benefits of scientific benefits of scientific and technological research and development' (Theocharis and Psimopoulos, 1987). Within philosophy the ambitious project to establish an Institute for Philosophy in Education - which would aim to 'co-ordinate initiatives around the country, assess projects here and abroad, develop materials, training, and interdisciplinary work, and give advice to bodies such as the D.E.S and the M.S.C.' (Greenberg, *op.cit.*) — can be regarded as being motivated by such familiar territorially protective concerns. It would appear that the triumphalist phase of both science and philosophy is well and truly at an end.

However, notwithstanding all this, we can still legitimately ask (as in the case of special education) whether these developments have anything to recommend them, whether they have any intrinsic non-instrumental merit, and what impact they are likely to have on schooling.

Philosophy in Schools

The existing 'A' level Philosophy syllabuses (though welcomed by some schools like Manchester Grammar School which are already committed to work of this kind) have in fact been slow to attract candidates, with current registrations for the A.E.B. and J.M.B. examinations numbering just under 500 (Robinson, 1987). Both syllabuses have been criticised for being content-bound and relying too much on historical *rather than philosophical knowledge*. The marking of examinations has also raised controversial questions causing professional philosophers to protest at the use of inflexible and unimaginative marking schemes (Kirkman, 1986).

Much more promising and exciting (perhaps because free of examination constraints) are the various thinking skills programme designed for schools and, in this area, the Lipman materials deserve a special mention. Making use of stories, role-play situations and illustrations designed for children of all ages (which, frankly, need to be 'de-Americanised' for British use) these materials are intended to raise genuine philosophical questions about language, meaning, knowledge and value in a context which encourages open-ended dialogue between teachers and pupils. Michael Whalley, who is the chief exponent and representative of the Lipman programme in this country, makes out a cogent case for the promotion of this dialogue in schools, suggesting that it allows 'children to learn reasoning by actually using it in the setting in which it naturally occurs' (1987, p.279).

Other suggested merits of the scheme are that it gives pupils the opportunity to discuss important issues not covered in other areas of the curriculum, it fosters an awareness of the existence of problems that are not necessarily susceptible to pat, ready made solutions and by discussing matters related to truth and knowledge, it deals with issues fundamental to the learning of all subjects. Add to this list the considerable value of encouraging co-operative inquiry amongst children and the development of the confidence in their own ability to think for themselves, and the programme begins to look impressive indeed.

In answer to the typical charge that philosophy is far too difficult for children, Whalley (*op.cit.*, p.261) rightly points out that, if we are talking about 'A' level or degree study, then so are mathematics, science, history and many other subjects that are currently taught in primary schools. But the sort of reasoning and thinking characteristic of philosophy is done by all of us some of the time. The question asked by young children — What is time?, Do animals have laws?, Can thoughts last forever? — are symptomatic of their innate curiosity which is often and all too early destroyed by dismissive or incomplete answers. As a basic minimum a philosophy for children programme would seek to nourish this natural inquisitiveness and search for meaning, as well as making a contribution to the general intellectual development of pupils.

Questions of Implementation

In spite of the declaration by the former higher education minister, George Walden, that an 'awareness of philosophy, at some stage in some form, is indispensable in an educated society' (Greenberg, *op.cit.*), the prospects for the growth of the philosophy in schools movement do not seem to be particularly promising. Having to fight for around 15% of curriculum time with other cross-curricular themes under the National Curriculum arrangements, philosophy might be thought to offer fewer attractions than health education, life skills or environmental studies. However, unlike other candidates, the *reasoning and thinking programmes* lend themselves to a wide variety of applications. Thinking is used in all subjects, thus a suitably constructed philosophy programme could provide a foundation or dimension supporting the whole curriculum at either primary or

secondary level. In addition, the Lipman materials in particular are ideally suited to use in the core subjects of Mathematics, Science and English.

More problematic, however, are issues concerning the method or process of implementing such initiatives. Macdonald and Walker (1976) have demonstrated that movements that start at grass roots level in the schools are much more likely to succeed than imposed top-down or centre-periphery models of curriculum change, and the recent research by Gipps (1988) concerned with special needs provision in primary schools provides vivid confirmation of this thesis.

The philosophy in schools programmes are clearly based on top-down models with committed and enthusiastic philosophers eagerly seeking to interest teachers in their wares. Consequently, what is being offered really must satisfy felt needs and meet the actual requirements of teachers if it is to stand any chance of becoming established. Given the undoubted (though mistaken) esoteric connotations of philosophy, this is a tall order and I suppose the eagerness of Lipman's supporters who are keen to get into schools to explain their objectives and give model lessons is an indication that they are well aware that they are engaged in an uphill struggle. The emphasis on 'flexible thinking' skills and the attempt to forge links with vocational initiatives do seem to be eminently pragmatic ways of proceeding but, as I hope for the

success of this movement, I am not sure that this is sufficient to overcome the difficulties. Pleading ignorance, Socrates, of course, would have known how to do it.

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In defence of G.C.S.E: a critique of the New Right's Philosophy of Education

David Scott

GCSE is under attack, in particular from a group of right wing academics and teachers. Their critique is made on philosophical (or 'epistemological') grounds. But the educational implications are stark. In this article, David Scott takes up the cudgels, and develops a penetrating critique of their approach. Mr Scott is now Research Fellow at the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research at the University of Warwick. He was earlier Head of Humanities at Halyard High School in Luton.

Joanna North's recent book called **GCSE: An Examination**¹ is an attempt by a group of right-wing academics and teachers to discredit the theoretical basis of the GCSE. The critique they mount is coherent and needs to be treated seriously. The accusation is that the GCSE examination technology simplifies and distorts by accepting a knowledge framework which is skill based. North's polemic against the GCSE takes as its theme the idea that real understanding has to be embedded within a framework of knowledge — and that this framework has historical roots. GCSE fails because it is more concerned with relevance than real

understanding. Thus Mathematics, it is argued, cannot be understood or justified in terms of its empirical application. To emphasize its relevance is to distort its meaning. The philosopher, O'Hear², in this book, argues that the GCSE 'is a more or less wholesale abandonment of the idea of education as an initiation into existing forms of knowledge and understanding' and 'such skills are bound to be empty and ill-informed if not based in any real immersion in existing forms of knowledge.' His intention is therefore 'Hirstean'; though he does have, as is clear from his previous writings, many doubts about the precise nature of the

liberal education edifice that Paul Hirst³ constructed. Multi-culturalism and anti-racist policies are treated as false dogma in that a real attack on racism is educational (in a liberal sense) rather than political, social or vocational; that is, the solution lies in the proper education of the mind. It is a familiar idea. Williams⁴, another contributor, takes up the same theme and directly attacks the idea of an examination based round skills and says, 'the continued efficacy of a skill depends upon the maintained vitality of its relationship to a larger body of knowledge.' Finally it is suggested by Joanna North⁵ herself that the GCSE is politically biased. Such criticism needs an answer.

North's critique rests on three foundational principles. Firstly that our descriptions of the world correspond in some fairly crude way to what actually is — that the world exists in some sense as a separate entity from our experiencing of it. Thus it is possible to establish descriptive categories which are 'true' in that any other form of categorization would be unreal — would be literally fantastical. Facts can therefore be established about the world; and ultimately these facts apply not just to the natural world, but the social world as well. The subjects that we teach in schools are therefore absolute manifestations of human knowledge. Secondly the idea of Political Bias can be construed as the slanting of content and method in a particular subject to serve particular ideological ends — when that bias is in contra-distinction to 'a truthful version of events'. Thirdly it becomes possible therefore to categorize human nature as a fixed immutable 'thing' which we need to describe and uncover; but which does not depend in any way on either our political and ideological position, nor on the norms and values of the society which our categories are rooted in. Thus the problem of ethnocentric description — that is describing another culture using a set of concepts that other culture does not accept — is brushed aside by arguing that a real understanding of the mind, a mature understanding, can aspire to some form of rationality which would allow ethical decisions to be made about other cultures because those ethical decisions are in some sense truly rational. The Kantian⁶ enterprise resurrected without its subtlety.

If one attempts to develop a more sophisticated epistemology — that is to acknowledge the rootedness of all discourse in a tradition of meaning — to accept that we provide the conceptual apparatus, the category system, through which reality is filtered, then we have to face up to limits on our notions of objectivity and absoluteness. Our knowledge of the world is therefore relative to the particular social, economic and cultural conditions that we find ourselves in. The subjects that we are taught in school — their boundaries and their content — reflect not a never changing reality, but a particular historical and social conjunction of relationships. In other words they could be different. Thus the child is created in terms of a set of historical and social practices, and thus could be created in a different mode. Psychology cannot provide us with absolute definitions of human nature. Those social arrangements connote different possible ways by which reality is structured; by which that structured reality defines what is. Knowledge thus serves particular arrangements of power relations.

But there are problems with this extreme form of relativism. Any statement or truths about the world, including those expressed as negative ones, imply some form of certain knowledge. The idea of what a fact is maybe non-relativistic, but the fact certainly itself is. In other words the criteria which determine what a fact may be is not determined by particular social and historical conditions, but these criteria will include relativistic conditions for fact describing. A sociological interpretation of the world implies a methodology which aspires to provide an absolute version of truth. That all truths may be social does not immediately exclude the acceptance of certain basic rules of intelligibility. Accepting the idea of a contradiction being intelligible would make a nonsense of everything. The problem is in the locating of these rules of intelligibility. Jerome Bruner⁷ sets the limits of absolute knowledge as very close to the whole infrastructure of knowledge, when he argues that the Wolof tribe have no conceptual understanding of the notion of the individual. Everything, every truth, is seen in collectivist terms. It has been argued that such a convention cannot be described as a unique way of life, but can be described as an example of inadequate language development. But to judge the Wolof linguistic apparatus as inadequate, we would have to make ethical judgements based on our own ethical criteria, about a culture which has adopted a form of life which we readily acknowledge does not share the criteria which underpin our way of life. The problem of building bridges between different 'forms'⁸ remains. For Joanna North and her fellow writers, it doesn't seem to be a problem. But despite this, by accepting the rules of intelligibility, one is acknowledging a logical challenge to a pure relativist theory of knowledge.

The second way that a relativist theory of reality needs to be modified is in terms of how our conceptual understanding relates to the empirical world. Wittgenstein⁹, for instance, uses the notion of measuring an object. The system that we choose — metric or otherwise — to measure the object is conventional; but the object has measurable features which exist antecedently to our choice or a form of life's choice of a unit of measurement. But grammar — and here Wittgenstein parts company with analytic philosophers such as Hirst¹⁰ — though rule bound, though not arbitrary, cannot be made sense of in terms of a set of pre-existing rules which define it, and which therefore define what reality is. Reality can only be known through the existing patterns of language that we have immersed ourselves in since birth. Wittgenstein says, 'What has to be accepted, the given, is — so one could say, — forms of life'¹¹. There is therefore on two counts a logical necessity to accept modifications to a pure relativist view of the world. But such modifications structure our sense of reality, they do not constitute its meaning.

History provides us with another example, and Alan Beattie's pamphlet called 'History in Peril'¹² sets out the argument from the right wing perspective that this article is criticising. In History an event which has a particular meaning for one of its participants cannot be said to have the same meaning for someone who is looking back, sifting evidence, making decisions. The

debate concerns historical method. The suggestion by Beattie, for instance, is that when you come down to it, all historians — Marxist or otherwise, use the same method, accept the same canons of truthfulness. Beattie cites E.P Thompson, whose Marxism is of a very idiosyncratic kind anyway; but who argues that we can understand the past without the recourse to any theoretical sieve. The argument in this article is in opposition to this. A colonial version of History or a patriotic version of History are legitimate devices. The debate can only be conducted at the level of theory. What piece of evidence is relevant, how relevant it is, how biased it is, what its meaning is are matters which can only be decided upon at a theoretical level. Thus History cannot of itself be a-theoretical. It is imbued with particular human meanings. In other words the criteria used to judge evidence, and this is not just logical but conceptual as well, is dependent upon the ideological stance one adopts. A Marxist Historian, for instance, adopts a framework of economic determinism through which he describes and analyses historical events. Thus E.H. Carr's *History of Soviet Russia*¹³ would be a very different history if it was ever attempted by a different type of historian. Respect for and understanding of our national institutions such as the Houses of Parliament is dependent upon our conceptual framework, our ideological position. A Marxist would see parliament as a sham which preserves the outward form of representative democracy but covers up the real relations in society. Suggesting that a particular historical interpretation is above ideological and theoretical slanting is to give one's own version pride of place by disingenuous means.

Adopting the epistemological framework that the 'right' seem determined to adopt leads them to deify objective fact. They argue that children need to have their understanding rooted in such a factual framework. So children are encouraged to learn poems, recite mathematical tables, learn the capitals of the world in Geography and so forth. There are a number of problems with this. Firstly mechanical devices such as computers, calculators and of course books can do such tasks many times better than the human mind. Secondly identifying such facts, and then separating those facts from one's own ideological interpretation of them is always going to be problematic. Are those islands on the South Atlantic, 'The Malvinas or the Falklands'? Thirdly mechanical learning of this sort becomes a distraction from the real purposes of education which I would suggest are to deepen those personal structures of knowledge which all of us bring to the learning situation. Fourthly systems of facts or ideas are always directed towards to some end — they are essentially political. So for years in British schools, we were taught facts about the British Empire from a viewpoint of the civilizing influences that the British brought to places like India and parts of Africa. The accusation now from the 'Right' is of course that the ideological message from schools is anti-colonial, anti-imperial, egalitarian and as a consequence biased. They can't have it both ways. It cannot be called biased when it is slanted one way and truthful when it is slanted the other way.

On empirical level, the suggestion that the GCSE is politically biased can be seen to be absurd. For every

GCSE Integrated Humanities or Modern History syllabus, there are a number of syllabuses which adopt value positions in celebration of free market economic values. Business Studies GCSE courses are a class example. Economic syllabuses represent a heavy investment in the theory of the market; and ignore in many cases the equally coherent economic theories of those who incline to a more corporatist attitude. I have tried to suggest in this article that the right wing critique expounded in Joanna North's book has adopted a simple but ultimately incoherent epistemological stance, and that as a consequence of this, it becomes possible to adopt a theory of political bias which allows you to claim that one particular political position is biased, but that another — the one you hold yourself — is truthful.

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National Curriculum: the Science Proposals

Postscript by Michael Clarke (December 1988)

The National Curriculum has duly done as Mr Baker suggested and reduced the science curriculum profiles to two, exploration and knowledge and understanding. Exploration now has one target, knowledge and understanding has 16, thereby reducing the targets from 22 to 17. Whilst the NCC can say it hasn't really reduced the scope of the curriculum, merely rationalising the elements, the new arrangement of profiles will ensure that the emphasis is changed by testing the targets mainly for knowledge and understanding. In this way the emphasis on investigative work, which the teaching profession wants, will be lost.

By removing the suggested requirement for sex education and preferring a less comprehensive curriculum in the secondary school, Mr Baker has again demonstrated a contempt for the voice of the teaching profession. We now await his statutory Orders with even more trepidation.

Scottish update

Aileen Fisher

Now acting as the eyes and ears of **Forum** in Scotland, Aileen Fisher is headteacher of Applecross school, Applecross, Ross-shire.

The winds of change are blowing strong in Scottish education. Almost none of this change, if in fact any, is welcomed by those at what is skittishly called the chalkface, who may in fact feel that 'the firing line' would be a more apt term.

Can it really be only a year since Michael Forsyth, Minister for Education in Scotland, (*and Health*, in which field he is toiling no less assiduously) dropped his School Boards consultation paper on a battle-weary Scottish teaching force?¹ The paper attracted almost universal condemnation, not least from parents themselves, who saw it as both inappropriate and undesirable that they should have such powers as were proposed, conferred upon them.

Although some of the more radical 'ceiling' proposals were dropped or modified, in response to this massive adverse reaction, school boards are here to stay, whether we like it or not. The School Boards (Scotland) Bill is expected to have become law by the time this issue goes to press. It has survived its passage through Parliament more or less intact, having over-riden most of the proposed Opposition and Conservative backbench amendments, and attack in the House of Lords. The first boards will have been elected and 'ready to carry out their duties at the beginning of the school year in August, 1989'.

The Secretary of State's next consultation exercise, which appeared in November 1987,² was aimed perhaps less directly at parents, but undoubtedly was written with a parental audience very much in mind, and has been described as 'populist' and 'simplistic'.

It proposes detailed guidelines for all areas of the curriculum, and testing in English and mathematics

at P4 and P7. Predictably, there has been universal adverse professional reaction to the paper. Teachers are worried about the possible sacrifice of breadth and balance in the curriculum and the effects of teaching to tests. There is disquiet about the requirement to be placed on primary headteachers to report to their school boards on 'levels of attainment' in schools, and the likelihood of 'league tables'.

Parents, however, are likely to be baffled by teachers' objections to this paper. They, rightly, feel the need for information on curriculum and assessment, and teachers who, equally rightly, are alarmed by its implications, should not be surprised if many parents do not share this alarm. It has to be said that improved communication in recent years between schools and parents has not been developed quickly or thoroughly enough, a degree of mystique has been guarded, and the teaching profession must accept some of the blame for the climate which provided the conditions in which this paper must seem to many parents the answer to their anxieties — much of which have been exacerbated by the alarmist presentations of the popular press.

The principal anxiety of the Scottish teaching profession, from the General Teaching Council down (and indeed of many parents), derives from the growing certainty that the imposition of school boards and the proposals for curriculum and assessment are preparations for 'opting out' proposals, which it is widely believed will appear in a Bill in the next Parliament.

Many in Scottish education are becoming increasingly alarmed at what is perceived as an inexorable Anglicisation of the Scottish system. At the recent annual conference of the Scottish National Party, an educational spokesman described school boards as 'an alien

concept' and 'the Thatcherite Trojan horse,' and appealed to parents to speak out to prevent the 'rapid Anglicisation' of the system. If such expressed fears seem chauvinism immoderately expressed, it should be noted that they are representative of the feelings of more and more Scots, who perceive themselves as having government imposed upon them without a mandate, and not only in the area of education. The experiences of the past year have indicated that protest, whether emotional or in the form of reasoned argument, will almost certainly be countered with governmental implacability.

* * *

The subject of school closures has been very much in the news, and most local authorities have been obliged to close schools where falling rolls demanded that rationalisation was necessary.

Among those which were scheduled for the 'chop' in Strathclyde region was the prestigious Paisley Grammar. There was universal shock — among all but Paisley Grammar parents — when the Prime Minister personally intervened to prevent its closure. Her knowledge of, and interest in a Scottish local authority secondary school (comprehensive despite its name) was the occasion of much wonder, until it was revealed that among prominent old boys of the school was none other than Andrew Neil, editor of the **Sunday Times**.

* * *

'PAT' is being discussed with venom in staffrooms the length and breadth of the country. No, not the union that all other unions love to castigate, but 'planned activity time,' an imposition on Scottish teachers of up to fifty hours per

school session of extra in-school work. This is in addition to up to six compulsory attendances at parents' evenings. Both of these impositions are within the terms of the pay and conditions settlement achieved by Scottish teachers in January last year.

Teachers are increasingly irked by this prescription on their time, which in the interpretation of some authorities, has to be accounted for to the last minute. The teaching unions are pressing for more flexibility in the operation of planned activity time.

If PAT was one of the strings attached to the pay and conditions settlement, the 'carrot' was the promise of a staffing review.

This long and eagerly awaited staffing review has now been presented by the Secretary of State for Scotland in the form of a draft Circular,³ and has scarcely been the occasion for Universal rejoicing. There has been talk of industrial action if its terms are not improved.

The following sentence from the Circular itself would seem to sum it up:

'It will remain the responsibility of authorities to determine their own staffing policies *within the resources available to them*' (my underlining).

And the Government has apparently reneged on its promise to limit composite class sizes to twenty-five.

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The tribulations of the Scots, it appears, are by no means over. In the Queen's speech in November it was announced that the government intends to introduce legislation this session to enable Scottish schools to opt out, as in England and Wales. It remains to be seen how the Scots will react to this further proposal (previously denied) for 'Anglicisation'.
Ed.

Reviews

Rebels?

Rebels without a Cause: middle class youth and the transition from school to work, by Peter Aggleton. Falmer Press. p.159. £7.45, £14.95, 1987.

It was a pleasure to read this study of middle-class youth at a college of further education; it is a good piece of qualitative research, well documented, and a welcome addition to the small number of case-studies of its kind. **Rebels without a Cause** is firmly located in the 'new' urban ethnographic tradition of the Sociology of Education and, building upon the theoretical style of Paul Willis, reflects a concern with the making of a culture rather than with its mere reproduction.

The central theme of the book is an investigation into the reason for middle-class educational underachievement — why do privileged youth, possessing extensive resources of cultural capital, fail to gain certificates of competence?

The book's format and the research itself have a structural appearance. The study takes place in three sites: home, college and subculture. Peter Aggleton proceeds through each stage offering selections from the interview material and occasional notes from the field diary. However, this framework to the data collection and presentation was at times dangerously hypnotic; everything seemed to fit together so neatly!

At each level of analysis, Aggleton applies three Bernsteinian theories: cultural processes, which deal with classification and framing (1971); socialisation through an invisible pedagogy (1975); and cultural acceptability, focusing upon the arbitrariness of cultural distinction (1982). Whilst this is a rigorous and insightful application of Bernstein's theories, it does create a certain degree of theoretical reliance, at the expense of a full development of Aggleton's own theoretical grammar of the modes of challenge, which only begins to emerge at the end of the book. When it did appear, it seemed at times unnecessarily complex and probably difficult to apply.

The grammar itself seems to offer a plausible and detailed grid for interpretation of the study group. The abstraction is a neat formulation, but those under study are a long way from its theoretical expectations or logical conclusion. Aggleton argues that the potential of a radical theory is in its power to identify forms of active resistance against oppression; this is a worthy and respectable project. But it appears that this group goes only a very short distance along the road of transformation. Indeed it is difficult to feel very much sympathy with the majority of these privileged students, for the most part self-satisfied, and deriving pleasure from a cult of cultural elitism. Ironically, they embody values which lie uneasily alongside possibilities of equality. In the face of such student opinion, it is worth noting that Aggleton produces an objective analysis



which avoids either criticism or praise of the informants' views.

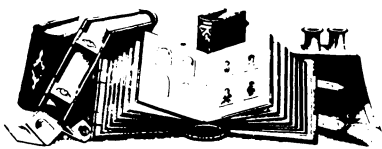
One of the strengths of the book is its detailed elaboration of a small section of the middle class, those involved in the arts, education and media. Conversely, the singular case-study takes place at the expense of a broader understanding of middle-class values. Aggleton provides insight into a world of class privilege, but I feel a comparative analysis including other groups of students with strong classification and framing would have brought the work into sharper relief.

The study of deviance in education has tended towards a preoccupation with so-called modes of working resistance or 'delinquent' behaviour. At times this fascination has lapsed into a 'romanticised' theory lacking detailed empirical reference. Where, then, does radical theory stand when we look at middle-class deviance in education? Is working-class and middle-class resistance the same thing? Surely not. 'Resistance' by working-class youth is supposedly concerned to avoid an imposition of an alien middle-class culture. 'Resistance' by middle-class youth would seem to be about a rejection of certain features of the parent culture whilst blindly accepting its cultural advantage.

Finally, Aggleton's explanation of his fieldwork relations shows a subtle and skilful use of language. He comes over very much as a receptive and trustworthy researcher. Yet this softly-softly approach may seem a little too perfect for potential urban field workers; it may have been more instructive to reveal a number of his ethnographic blemishes or gaffs.

However, the sum of the book is greater than its parts; it can be recommended as an original account and for being eminently readable.

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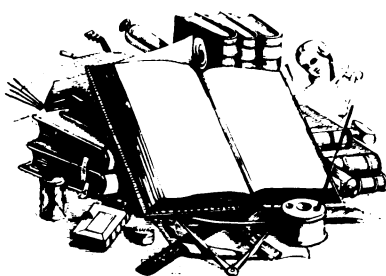
Dimensions of Sexism

Boys Don't Cry: boys and sexism in education, by Sue Askew and Carol Ross. Open University Press Gender and Education series, Milton Keynes, 1988, pp. 114, £7.95.

This useful volume builds on the practical experiences of the writers as women teachers in boys' schools who have worked to develop anti-sexist strategies and materials both for their own use and in assisting other practitioners towards similar ends. Four chapters offer a readable, accessible account of dimensions of sexism particularly relevant to boys and boys' schools. Two summarise research findings about early socialisation and the question of male aggression, and then consider classroom dynamics in the contexts both of (mooted and actual) sex differences in cognitive/social development and of interaction patterns. This information is available in greater scope and detail elsewhere, but here the main points are neatly condensed and highlighted for practitioners. The chapters on the ways sexism is particularly manifested in the typical structures and organisation of boys' schools and in the experiences of women teachers in such schools are valuable contributions to a scarce literature in this area. They only draw upon the experiences of the writers and the evidence assembled from their wide-ranging school and teacher contacts. The two final chapters offer directly practical advice and examples for those interested in developing similar work in their own schools, looking first at curriculum action and then at INSET activities. The task sheets suggested for the latter are very useful; we are still at an early stage of development in this area. The ideas offered for the former will provide inspiration and warnings about obvious pitfalls; those with some experience are likely to want to consult a wider range of sources, but this text does offer a focussed starting-point.

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A Teaching Revolution

Lightfoot, M and Martin, N. (eds) 1988. **The Word for Teaching is Learning, Essays for James Britton** pp 300. Heinemann Educational Books, £9.95. Paper. 435 10090 4

'The current leadership of our two countries — ever tender, ever alert — rightly regard the empowering of teachers as a political threat. Any anti-hierarchical action is profoundly threatening to groups with their own agendas for controlling education which means of course controlling access by certain portions of the population to language and literacy in their fullest dimensions. Happily, the international community of enquiry into language learning and teaching, which James Britton so helped form, is now a banyan tree, with too many roots to be deracinated. Indeed this community of enquiry may well become one of the most powerful forms of democratic action in the education world.'

These words come from the contribution to this book of Professor Janet Emig, of Rutgers University, New Jersey, the present chair of the US National Council of Teachers of English. She was invited to write the section on Britton's contribution to educational research, and rightly concludes by observing the extent to which the impact of the most significant research in language and learning of our generation is being deliberately undermined in the interests of those who want to channel, restrict and control the curriculum and to deny access to learning to those who don't conform in the market economy.

Britton celebrated his eightieth birthday in May 1988. To honour this event, the editors, in association with the National Association for the Teaching of English (Britton was one of those who started NATE) invited twenty-six people who have worked with him, or who have been strongly influenced by him, to contribute. Seven of these are American, three Canadian, three Australian, the rest British. Many reported their own current research; others wrote powerful essays on questions of language theory and learning through language in the harsh educational climate of the present time. Kenneth Baker is hardly likely to read this book; almost everything in it is in some way a criticism of his ideas, his philosophy and his determination to inflict them on unwilling teachers and their students.

Britton's research, his books, his years at the London Institute of Education and at Goldsmith's College, and since his retirement, the hundreds of lectures and seminars and workshops he has undertaken in Britain, Canada, USA and Australia, have provided much of the impetus for a profound shift in our understanding of the role of language in learning. It is commonplace now to assume that children learn more by talking than by listening, that informal talking with friends as well as with teachers may often provide a more effective way of learning than anything that could be comprehended under that **Hard Times** concept, so beloved of Mr Baker, that thinks of teaching as instruction, and knowledge as something that can be taken on like a cargo of oil from the North Sea. There are probably thousands of

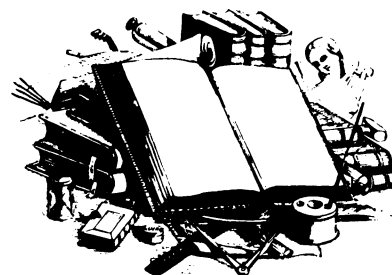


teachers who have been influenced by Britton's ideas but may never have read his books or heard his name. His vision of education is a profoundly democratic one. The book's title emphasizes that. It is by no means a simple child-centred approach, because it insists that language, learning, consciousness and understanding are all socially constructed. That necessarily implies that social inequalities are inextricably involved in every educational policy and every educational practice.

Inequalities of gender, class and ethnicity imply differences in the social functions of language. Understanding the interactions of home language and school language, and understanding the ways which children learn through language, have been a major concern of the past fifty years. Has anyone contributed more than Britton? Is anyone more determined to destroy the best practices than Baker?

Britton was one of the first people outside the Soviet Union to recognize that L. S. Vygotsky, who died, in 1933, and whose major work, **Thought and Language**, was not published in English until 1962, had produced a theory relating language and thought which was far more powerful than those of even Piaget or Bruner. Vygotsky's **Mind in Society** appeared in English in 1978 and provided for Britton, and for those who have learned from him and with him, a further underpinning of their insistence on the social and cultural relationships of language. The implication of such a theory, of course, is that knowledge gives power, that access to education is a commodity very unevenly distributed. And educational 'reforms' which set up attainment targets, impose arbitrary testing at frequent intervals and a curriculum designed to further the interests of those who already hold most of the power, are essentially anti-democratic and likely, for many people in school, to destroy what they aim to achieve.

Many readers who are entering the arena of language, class and education might not at first recognise the political implications of this book. That could be one of its strengths,



because every issue is argued from evidence, and the radical message emerges from that evidence.

Nancy Martin in her introduction observes that:

'an aim to develop the autonomy of young persons and ethnic minority groups posits a threat to established institutions; yet we also claim to want to develop independence and creativity.'

Martin Lightfoot, as well as being co-editor, contributes a chapter called 'Teaching English as a Rehearsal of Politics' which ends:

'In deciding to appoint a single member of NATE to the Kingman Committee, the government has declared its sympathies and its determination to uncover or weld an alternative paradigm to that developed by James Britton and his collaborators in the seventies and eighties. It will not be easy'.

Courtney Cazden writing from Harvard School of Education takes the well-known metaphor of 'scaffolding' in learning processes, and points out that the metaphor has severe limitations because it suggests that teachers are needed to prop up children's learning. She sees interaction as the core and ends by quoting Searle: 'Who's building whose building?' Surely an apt question for any educational practice.

Douglas Barnes shows that control of the curriculum is attempting to proceed in two incompatible directions — *back* to the 'traditional' academic curriculum, and *forward* to a new concern with technology and 'practical' knowledge and skills. He concludes:

'There is cause for fear that either of the official policies ... would lead to an uncritical curriculum, one by promoting an unthinking pursuit of 'technique', skills and methods treated merely as means, and the other by a return to a curriculum which avoids controversy by transmitting pictures of the world which are so simplistic as to be finally untruthful.'

Gordon Pradl from New York University, argues that to teach, as well as to learn, you have to be a thoughtful and critical listener. If only Mr Baker could understand that . . .

Part Two looks closely at aspects of learning to read and write. Myra Barrs draws on recent work in London schools to explore the importance of young children's drawings in learning to write. They often draw stories before they can write them, but it's easy for test-hungry writing instruction to disregard drawing, or think of it as illustration, to be done afterwards. Henrietta Dombey, Chair of NATE, in 'Stories at Home and at School' shows that children should not be kept silent when parents and teachers read to them. They gain most from stories when they talk, even if that means interrupting the flow. Margaret Meek, in 'How Texts Teach What Readers Learn', observes that there are some stories that have such a wonderful power to involve the reader that they, in effect, teach children to read, and:

'What we have to realize is that the young have powerful allies in a host of gifted artists and writers to help them subvert the world of their elders.'

Amanda Branscombe and Janet Taylor, writing in Alabama about kindergarten children, show how, in shared talk and

journal writing:

'They functioned as equal collaborators who were listeners, writers, readers, talkers, evaluators and builders. They focussed on the meaningfulness of their lives and the lives of their fellow community members.'

Britton must be delighted that so many of the contributors are breaking new ground. Peter Medway in 'Reality, Play and Pleasure in English,' takes up one of Britton's central concerns; the experience of literature as a way of knowing. He doesn't disagree with the distinction Britton makes between *participant* and *spectator* roles, but he does insist that there are other roles to be taken.

'We want then to have the pleasure while retaining the capacity to resist the power. Literacy should not just mean that you are available to be worked on by a text.'

'I see access as being at the same time access to understanding, to pleasure and to control over the texts one produces and is exposed to.'

Pleasure *and* control. But he also argues for building on students' implicit social knowledge:

'If language were treated in the course of our practice as a means to social learning rather than as an end, I believe it would actually be more, not less, effectively developed.'

Harold Rosen's 'Stories of Stories: Footnotes on Sly Gossipy Practices,' insist that we do a lot more things with stories that tell them; and when we retell them, we might be retelling our lives, and the lives of others; and probably changing them:

'The role of the teacher emerges clearly. It is first to emancipate students from the incessant demand for recall and then to set them free to take over the story and bend it to their purposes.'

Part Four, *Implementing Change*, includes a piece by Garth Boomer, Chair of the Commonwealth Schools Commission in Canberra. In that position he has had more experience than anyone of using a national administration to influence schools and teachers towards what he calls 'the learning revolution.' He is fully aware of the difficulties but sees much to keep our courage up:

'Life in the classroom is hard, perhaps harder than it has ever been. It is not just a matter of reconciling teachers' intentions with students' intentions. Society and systems have 'intentions', often unstated, often contradictory. These, as always, are given effect in promotion structures, examinations, textbooks, syllabuses, tertiary requirements, the media and popular opinion. Finding constructive compromises between these intentions is a precarious business . . .

. . . you would be well pleased with what teachers and schools are achieving in Australia. Powerful ideas have permeated the system across subject disciplines and levels, and, indeed, have found their way into the rhetoric and practice of national and state system policy makers. This is not to say they are secure, but they are respectable.'

There are plenty more powerful — and witty — pieces in this book. One is quite different. Merlyn Rees, who was taught by Britton at Harrow Weald County School,

later taught in the same school and later became a Labour Home Secretary, notes this:

'Jimmy Britton played a major part in pointing the direction which the new county school should go... It added to creating the spirit of a questioning community; it was forged in the beginning and it lasts.'

We should amend Rees's words slightly:

'Jimmy Britton played a major part in pointing the direction which the country's schools should go.'

If his efforts, all our efforts, were successfully obliterated by what now passes for educational reform, we would just have to start all over again. But that won't happen. The ideas are too powerful, and have too many followers. We'll succeed.

ALEX MCLEOD

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Sex Education

School Sex Education: Why, What and How? by Doreen Massey, £5.95. From FPA Education Unit, 27-35 Mortimer Street, London WIN 7RJ

This handbook is a particular guide to getting sex education into the classroom. It includes sections on aims, content and methods for sex education, plus workshops for teachers and governors. This handbook is published by the Family Planning Association Education Unit. A review will appear in the next number of FORUM.

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