

# FORUM

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

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Autumn 1990

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**This issue**  
**ASSESSMENT**

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## The Next FORUM

In January 1991 **Forum** will focus on classroom practice and pedagogy. Mick Norton writes about the characteristics of a good learning environment and Gilroy Brown looks at the implications of the 1988 Act for progressive classroom practice in the junior school. David Tombs follows up his recent **Forum** article on religious education by suggesting a new way forward in that subject's encounter with liberation theology. The National Curriculum Geography Report is analysed by Annabelle Dixon and John Hopkin.

Tony Green evaluates the American experience of magnet schools. David Jewell and Hywel Thomas respond to Caroline Benn's recent article on educational privatization. John Fitz and David Halpin examine the implications of Grant-Maintained Schools.

Don Salter contributes on 'Auditing the Curriculum'; Dave Hill writes about the aims of the new Hillcole Group; and Cecilio Mar Molinero looks at the relationship between poverty and educational provision.

# Summer pragmatics

The present critical state of schooling results from a decade of Thatcher governments, though some contributory factors date back to the previous Callaghan administration when cuts began to undermine the structure. It is worth briefly reviewing the Thatcher era's guilt record as counter rhetoric and yet more gimmicks are brought into play in the long run-up to the general election.

Problems of an acute shortage of teachers for key subjects by the 1990s were forecast in 1984 by the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers, shortly before Sir Keith Joseph stood it down. He embarked on extensive closures of training institutions and restricted the professional components of primary teacher training. Kenneth Baker's arrogant mishandling of teachers' pay and repeated denigration of the profession lowered morale, started an exodus of experienced teachers and ensured a further decline in candidates for training. His own creation, the Interim Advisory Committee, warned that insufficient money was allocated for a satisfactory salary structure that might attract and retain enough teachers. Now there is a panic search for EC and other overseas recruits, schemes for article 6 and licensed teachers and proposals floated for a return to a non-graduate pupil-teacher scenario.

Chronic starvation through underfunding all the while damaged the whole school system with inevitably cumulative effects on the fabric of buildings and on all kinds of teaching and learning resources. HMI annually drew attention to these matters and, particularly, to the divisive disparate effects on those poorest areas where families are least able to compensate either their schools or their own children. Rate and now Poll Tax capping of certain local authorities has further aggravated the parlous situation.

The combination of teacher shortages and underfunding eroded the curriculum. The realities were somewhat disguised as Heads and LEAs contrived to keep schools running. Teachers were deployed to teach subjects and age groups for which they were not specifically trained; increasingly, economies deprived children with learning difficulties of that extra help and support they needed; pupils conveniently dropped just those subjects for which specialist teachers are least available; and at sixteen many further eased the pressure by quitting altogether.

A run down state system was then condemned for failing to serve the economy, to solve various social problems, to set universally high standards.

Fanfare and rhetoric heralded and accompanied the 1988 Education Reform Act as the Thatcher government's response to the plight of education. Two years on, two of its key features are embarrassing John MacGregor as the National Curriculum highlights

hitherto disguised teacher and resource shortages and LMS reveals to parent governors how chronically underfunded their schools are and how difficult it is to find or fund the teachers needed.

John MacGregor, inheritor of a schooling shambles and a blatantly ideological package, whiled away the summer with cosmetic and pragmatic tinkering. To calm infant teachers' and parents' fears he ordered that the 1991 assessments of seven year olds be somehow simplified while combining Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) and Teacher Assessments (ATs). To resolve the science impasse at Key Stage 4 he decided to allow three types of courses — normal and watered down *plus* an élite separate sciences option. This 'concession' was quickly followed by a more significant breach with the promise of a broad and balanced curriculum entitlement: the cinderella arts and humanities, and even PE, may be abandoned at 14-16. In the absurd **Circular 7/90**, governors are urged to tinker with the number of minutes per lesson so as to fit the National Curriculum in, while Alan Howarth advocated 'time management training' for teachers as the solution.

The silly season's other releases included a booklet summary of MacGregor's speeches to teachers sent to all schools and data compiled by anonymous senior education psychologists in nine LEAs alleging that seven year olds' reading standards deteriorated from 1985. This latter caused a stir. It conflicts with an APU report in 1988, but persuaded MacGregor to ask SEAC to survey all available LEA evidence and HMI to investigate the teaching of reading. Apparently he regards as less serious the simultaneous research evidence linking high levels of aluminium and lead in young children with poor reading skills.

As time runs out for making the shambolic 1988 Act an election winner, John MacGregor desparately blames LEAs for LMS problems, especially deficit school budgets, and has launched a threatening Circular at them. Taking every opportunity to highlight Grant-Maintained schools as 'the jewel in the crown of parent power' and City Technology Colleges as 'beacons of excellence', he has allocated an extra £50,000 this year and £98,000 next year for the GMS Trust. The National Curriculum will be 'manageable'.

Margaret Thatcher gave us a pre-taste of her election gimmickry when she put compulsory opting out ballots in *all* schools on her agenda — a ploy from the Adam Smith Institute. Her ministerial reshuffle is intended to toughen up rightist influence for delivering her conceits at the DES.

Everyone concerned about education will need to watch out for electioneering gimmicks from now on. Meanwhile, this number of **Forum** takes a hard look at flawed concepts and trivialisations that pervade assessment levels in the National Curriculum.

# Against the Stream

**Harvey Goldstein and Richard Noss**

Professor Harvey Goldstein and his colleague Richard Noss at the University of London Institute of Education examine the dubious concept of 'levels' and warn of its implications for schools.

The notion of 'levels' or 'stages' of learning has a long history — so long that it seems a natural framework for thinking about the organisation of the school curriculum. Ideas of ordering learning, from simple to complex, or from practical to abstract, seem useful for thinking about curriculum structure. Such ideas can be tested against experience, within different contexts and with different kinds of students. More problematic, however, is any assertion that a particular sequence of learning is necessary or optimum for everybody. Attempts to maintain such a stance have been unsuccessful, whether via an elaborate theoretical structure such as that of Piaget, or the more empirically based studies of graded assessments in mathematics and science (Hart, 1981). One might ask whether learning is like a mountain which has to be scaled, starting at the bottom and finishing at the top; or more like an exhibition which can be viewed in different orders by different people, with only a rather gentle pressure on everyone to walk around in the same direction.

Despite theoretical objections, the attraction of a neatly arranged set of levels through which all students should pass, recently seems to have had considerable attraction for those charged with the task of formulating educational policy. It clearly satisfies several requirements. First, it is simple and easy to describe. Secondly, and despite the research evidence, there are many educationalists who still share the view that the use of levels for an assessment scheme is educationally valid (Brown 1989). Thirdly, it provides a convenient administrative framework. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it legitimates the segregation and streaming of children.

We shall pick up these issues in the following sections, but first we briefly outline the equally brief history of levels in the national curriculum.

## **TGAT and all that**

Undoubtedly the key document in the development of the national curriculum and its assessment is the TGAT report (DES 1988). Set up shortly after the 1987 election, the TGAT committee was charged with fleshing out the existing policy commitment to testing at 7, 11, 14 and 16 years within a national curriculum. It was this report which established the 10 levels in each area of the curriculum to which all subsequent curriculum working parties have referred. While this report has been superseded by the many and varied working party reports that have succeeded it, it remains the only clear statement of the testing strategy which underpins the national curriculum.

The key recommendations concerning levels come in paragraphs 96-117 of the report. There we find the assertion that assessment 'gradings' should reflect a

child's 'progress' rather than just a child's ranking in comparison with other children. We are not told how anyone is to be prevented from using measures of progress in order to rank children. Indeed, almost everything in the report would encourage just such a use. By attaching a level assessment to each child, comparison with other children clearly is invited. Only by making such an assessment *private* between teacher and student can such comparisons be avoided. This is not what national assessment is about, however, with its plans to publish results for schools and the linking of levels to the GCSE grading system. All of which brings us to criterion referencing.

One of the most potent public notions in assessment during the 1980s is that of criterion referencing. Purveyed as an antidote to 'norm referenced' assessment which ranks students, criterion referencing is supposed to tell us what a student has 'mastered' or, in TGAT's words, 'understands, knows and can do'. The discussion of criterion referenced assessment is full of splendid sentiments about the importance of emphasising the 'positive' aspects of each student's achievements. Unfortunately, it is somewhat short on any critical examination of what this really means. In fact, while certain aspects of criterion referenced assessment might be useful, for example in defining reference domains, there is nothing which implies that these assessments have to be used differently from norm referenced assessments. Students can be ranked just as easily on the basis of a large series of 'mastery/non-mastery' judgements as on the basis of a small number of continuous test scores.

Thus criterion referencing will serve the purpose of public assessment just as well as any other system. Despite the rhetoric of the TGAT report and its successors, one must conclude that criterion referencing is used rather as a drunk uses a street lamp; for support rather than illumination!

## **Levels of attainment**

Specifically, TGAT recommended that the 'average' child would move up one level every 2 years, starting from below level 1 up to a maximum of level 10. The higher levels would be equated with GCSE grades, so that there would be the possibility, indeed encouragement, to regard the level progression as part of the formal school-leaving certification system. Since everyone is supposed to start at roughly the same level in each area, the implication is that at any age there will be roughly the same distribution of levels within each area. Naturally, we cannot know whether this will be true until the system has been running for some time. Almost certainly it will not generally be true, and it is difficult to see how it could ever be made to happen

across all attainment targets and all curriculum subjects. Nevertheless, the definition by fiat does have important consequences for what happens in schools.

First, what is laid down as an average expectation is easily transmuted into a minimum requirement. It will often be the case that a student can satisfy some of the requirements for having achieved several levels, but not satisfy enough to be deemed to have arrived at any one of the levels. The danger is that such a student will be forced to concentrate on achieving the lowest level not yet attained in the necessary number of statements of attainment or attainment targets, before being allowed to move on. Hopefully, teachers will become aware of this danger. Whether the pressures will allow them to deal with it sensibly is another matter.

Secondly, if a teacher of seven-year-olds gets an average level of 2.1 in mathematics and an average of 1.7 in English, what is to be concluded? This might well be a common pattern, but will the system be flexible enough to discover this?

Thirdly, there is a danger that teachers will be encouraged to avoid the above situation by teaching to fulfil the TGAT prophecy. Namely to try to ensure that, on average, children do indeed progress at the same rate through every profile component or subject. That could lead to a severe imbalance.

Fourthly, a major omission in the TGAT report and subsequent discussions is any admission that there can be uncertainty or unreliability associated with any grading system. Variability between teachers, between the assessment tasks chosen for use and numerous other contingent factors mean that some uncertainty attaches to any statement of levels. A different task chosen, a different context in which a teacher assesses a child will often mean a different grading. That has to be remembered at the very least, even if the designers of the tests and the coordinators of the teachers' assessments give no guidance. Any numbers which become attached to children should therefore be viewed as approximations rather than precise statements.

Finally there is the whole issue of how schools and teachers will react to a 'high stakes' system in which a great deal hinges on maximising test scores or grades. The overt classification of children into levels, the linking of these to GCSE and the enormous demands on teacher time which is being asked, may well encourage streaming of children. This seems to us a very real danger, and we discuss it in more detail in the following section.

### A return to streaming?

Given that so much depends on them, the proposals to publish school average scores or grades will encourage schools to use whatever devices they can to raise those averages. Already there is some evidence that schools might well perceive that the best way to maximise their overall test scores is to stream by achievement level. Such an approach has attractions for those who take seriously the notion of hierarchies of attainment. Indeed, if one is prepared to accept that there is an invariant sequence of learning attached to a particular topic, it does seem somewhat unlikely that pupils will progress at exactly the same rate and in exactly the

same way. Within such a philosophy, streaming *does* work: it produces hierarchies which reproduce themselves. Children in top streams *do* fare better than those in bottom streams — so streaming provides its own self-justification.

This kind of self-fulfilling prophecy is further compounded by the pedagogical approach which the national curriculum levels are likely to encourage. Since the nineteen-sixties, when 'mixed ability' teaching began to take root, there has been considerable confusion as to what the term might actually mean. While its early proponents argued for a style of teaching which took account of varying rates (and perhaps styles) of learning within a single class, the term 'mixed ability' has most often been used simply to mean the lumping together of children of a range of 'abilities' within a single class. In the extreme, this can involve the same chalk-and-talk methods which so singularly failed all but the top streams before the moves to mixed ability.

To a large extent, the commitment to mixed ability teaching came from below, as a response on the part of classroom teachers to the expectations raised by the introduction of comprehensive schooling in the fifties and sixties. Some of the best practice was and is in primary schools, where the number of pupils in any given year renders it unviable to have more than a single class. Significantly, the abolition of the 11-plus and the accompanying removal of the need to assess pupils competitively gave a boost to this process.

Despite some significant achievements at classroom level, the theory and practice of mixed-ability teaching is very varied, and sometimes confused. In primary classrooms it is not unusual to find children streamed into distinct groupings within a 'mixed ability' framework. In secondary schools it is common to use mixed ability groupings on entry as a mechanism subsequently to generate streams.

Thus there are two distinct aspects of mixed ability which have consistently been blurred. On the one hand there is mixed ability *grouping*: the placing of children of varying attainments within a single class. On the other there is mixed ability *teaching*: the explicit recognition that within a single class, it is possible and even desirable to accommodate different styles and rates of learning. Our concern here is with the latter, and the pressures which the imposition of the national curriculum will bring to bear to eradicate such approaches.

In secondary schools, the readiness of teachers to adopt mixed ability methods has been related to subject specialisms. For example, the teaching of foreign languages has been largely resistant to such methods, while there are plenty of examples of English (and, with regional variations, mathematics) teaching which adopt mixed ability approaches. There are a number of reasons for such diversity, and we do not consider them here. The point we wish to emphasise is that teachers' perceptions of the subject are more important than any intrinsic or psychological ordering of subject matter. The construction of invariant learning hierarchies in foreign language teaching, as much as their abolition in mathematics, reflects *pedagogical* priorities: it bears little relation to any particular property of the subject matter itself.

Whatever else the national curriculum does, it presents subject matter in a hierarchical and codified form, as sets of attainments which pupils are supposed to learn in a particular order. It is inevitable therefore, that this will affect the ways in which teachers are encouraged to think of their subjects, and of course, to teach it. The imposition of levels strongly reinforces the idea of progression through those levels. While in principle it might be argued that such progression is not tied to any particular style of teaching, the realities of the classroom are likely to suggest otherwise. The burden placed on teachers by the national curriculum is considerable (a fact even recently acknowledged by the government), and it is unrealistic to expect any but the most committed teachers to deliberately make their working lives even more burdensome by adopting the time-consuming practices associated with mixed-ability teaching. On the contrary, in subjects like mathematics, where the national curriculum involves a progression through 296 differentiated statements of attainment, the pressure will be to adopt not only organisational forms but also teaching styles which simplify the process of grading (see Dowling and Noss, 1990, for a critical review of the national curriculum in relation to mathematics).

Thus there is a pedagogical imperative associated with the national curriculum levels, to adopt a style of teaching which is at odds with mixed ability teaching. The reification of differences between pupils (objectified by attaching scores to performance) will inevitably lead to methods of teaching which reproduce the existence of those differences, and thus demonstrate the apparent unviability of teaching a wide range of attainment levels within a single class. Worse still, the emphasis on inter-individual differences in the form of public assessments may well lead to the blurring of intra-individual differences — and thus return us to the notion of ability as a quality of an individual which transcends subject boundaries. In this scenario, pupils will be branded as top-stream or bottom-stream at increasingly early ages.

### Fundamental problems

If levels are to be given credibility some assessment system seems required. The oft repeated assertion is that the system allows parents, children, teachers and schools to 'know where they are'. Surely, it is argued, this is highly desirable?

The trouble is, 'knowing where you are' means that you will also know who is 'above' and 'below' you, with the problems we have already referred to. Yet, neither for schools nor for individual children, does the system tell anyone where they really are. As far as schools are concerned, the proposed system of reporting school averages manifestly will not enable schools to compare themselves validly with other schools (see Goldstein, 1990). Nor will the assigning of levels to children allow parents or others to know whether those particular children are receiving an adequate curriculum diet. Children differ in what they bring to school and in their ability to respond to teaching. An apparently 'poor' result does not imply that a child is being poorly taught or missing out on the curriculum. To make such a judgement is both unfair and seriously undermining of

teachers' professionalism. To be sure, the threat of such judgements may encourage teachers to devote themselves to raising test scores, but that is not to be confused with good teaching.

If there is a real concern to make sure that the components of a national curriculum is delivered, then assigning levels to students is not an efficient or an equitable method. Naturally, there is a serious requirement for students to understand their own learning progress and to take as much responsibility for their own learning as possible. A more appropriate vehicle for this however, would be a school based record of achievement scheme such as have now been tried in a number of places, with potential for expansion into primary schools. These would have no need of level assignments, but would be related to the curriculum which was taught, with important roles for different learning sequences, cross curricular work and extra curricular activities. Such schemes are essentially private, being a matter for discussion and compromise between the student, the teacher and the parents. As we have argued in detail elsewhere, the aims and implementation of private and public assessment schemes are fundamentally incompatible (see Noss, Goldstein and Hoyles, 1989).

To ensure that schools maintain overall curriculum standards, a more appropriate model is one where advisors, inspectors and the schools themselves cooperate to evaluate and improve their activities. This would ideally be done in a spirit of mutual concern for benefiting from everybody's experience, within an atmosphere of cooperation rather than one of wasteful, unnecessary and uninformative competition.

Such an approach is, however, entirely at odds with the intentions behind the national curriculum and its associated testing procedures. Indeed, we would argue that the national curriculum is primarily concerned with providing a common currency of test results with which to introduce the ethics and economics of the marketplace into the education system. In our view those who seek to mitigate the worst implementations of the system imposed by the 1988 Act, by striving to provide more 'humane' assessments, are misguided. Their motives often are laudable, but the system itself is so misdirected that such attempts at improvements are counter-productive. The most important task facing those who care about this country's education system is to find ways fundamentally to help teachers to swim against the anti-educational stream of the national curriculum, not to collaborate in its aims.

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# An Ideological Masquerade

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**Keith Morrison**

Now a lecturer in education at the University of Durham, Keith Morrison previously taught for many years in primary and secondary schools and has considerable experience of curriculum development projects. Here he discusses some of the practical implications of the new assessment system and suggests a way forward.

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The proposal that primary teachers should formally assess and record their children's achievement in the national curriculum is a major cause of stress and anxiety. They are exasperated by the perceived lack of support that they are receiving from government, LEAs and support agencies for developing their skills of formal assessment, in spite of the three largely unhelpful documents which have been issued to schools by SEAC. Teachers' initial willingness to participate in the laudable practice of diagnostic teaching — a pillar of the formal procedures for assessing children — has become soured by the realization that enabling them to assess and record children's progress will be inordinately costly in time both in and out of school — even with the abandonment of moderation meetings and procedures and their usefulness if linked to a developing Record of Achievement. In an atmosphere of uncertainty about the extent, status and nature of the part that teachers will play in assessing children's progress in the national curriculum it is hardly surprising that teachers should be unenthusiastic about having to be involved in a system which is unclear and mutable.

Who wants such detailed formal assessment records of children's achievements? Teachers know that the overwhelming majority of parents simply do not want to receive a catalogue of 'has done' and 'can do' statements (which can too easily be the response to the legal requirement for reporting assessments); they want *selective* information on these and wider aspects of their children's attainments, perhaps aspects rarely mentioned in attainment targets (ATs). Go to any parents' evening and you will find that they are concerned about — dare one say — how their child is enjoying school, how they are coping generally, what kind of relationships they are having with their peers and teachers, how enthusiastic they are, what particular areas there are of strength and weakness, what concerns their teachers wish to share. These aspects are barely tapped by the litany of the national curriculum ATs and levels, and yet primary teachers, knowing their children well, are in an ideal position to discuss them with parents.

Teachers are becoming increasingly frustrated as they see themselves unable, because of time constraints, even to contemplate assessing and recording children's progress in areas which fall outside the required elements of the national curriculum. They are becoming increasingly annoyed by the unworkable requirements to assess every child in every AT and level, both during school — through the compilation of direct observational and conferencing data — and away from school — through analysis of children's work. Repeatedly one hears the same question from

teachers: 'Who will look after the other two dozen children whilst I carry out observations and assessments?' It is interesting to note the glib treatment of this crucial issue in the three recent SEAC documents. There is a failure in these documents to recognise that there are very many primary children who simply will not be able to manage without a teacher's frequent attention.

A sense of compromise is being fostered amongst teachers who will have to set 'holding' or 'occupying' tasks for many children whilst they carry out *in situ* assessments. Given shortage of time, teachers are reluctant to complete a long and cosmetic assessment record whose worth or usefulness is at best challengeable and at worst unprofessional in its neglect of important aspects of children's development. We all know of children who will achieve the criteria one day but fail to achieve it the next! The curious notion that learning can ever be pigeon-holed into discrete levels which are either achieved or not achieved reflects a behaviourist mentality which is measurable, comparable but profoundly anti-educational. Learning is continuous, recursive, individualistic and eclectic; not staged, uniform and unidirectional. Will not the quick fix of the tick-sheet mentality be the only option for teachers concerned that children's learning will actually be slowed down whilst formal assessments are taking place? If teachers are pressed for time and are anxious to spend their time on teaching rather than on recording the obvious, then will not the completion of the tick-sheet be the only realistic means they have of reducing time spent on recording children's achievements? One is reminded of the comments on the education service over a century ago — that if it is to be cheap then it will not be efficient, and that if it is to be efficient then it will not be cheap! The requirement to record assessments in detail bears all the hallmarks of a management ideology and strategy where workers are disempowered from exerting their own true voice because they are bowed down with administrative duties. Is there not an irony wherein assessment — the alleged instrument for raising standards — will actually cause children's rates of learning to slacken whilst teachers sacrifice valuable teaching time to assessing and recording time? Will not assessment end in a mire of compromise and expediency?

The crux of the matter is this. Maybe, when the system breaks down, when primary teachers, given a perhaps deliberately impossible task to carry out valid assessments of their children in all the ATs and levels, are seen *not* to be able to do it, we shall have all the legitimacy we need for the role of teachers in formally assessing children to be dropped and external

assessment through SATs alone to ride in as the only workable alternative. Then we shall recognise this assessment, both publicly and privately recorded, for what it really is — a thinly veiled political ideology which places norm-referenced assessment at its heart in dog-eat-dog market competition, and which for too long has been masquerading as educational principle. The concern is that teachers should have had to go through this charade in the first place if the outcome is so predictable. Perhaps, paradoxically, teachers should quietly welcome this as the best outcome of a poor situation as it will release time for them to get on with the real business of teaching and to the sorts of ongoing, informal yet informed assessments that they have been doing perhaps unnoticed for years.

There is of course a positive value in teachers assessing and recording children's progress. It is this. On one hand it has reinforced the value of diagnostic teaching in improving matching. Given the significant evidence that primary teachers regularly overestimate low attainers and underestimate high attainers, there is a clear need for teachers to improve their skills of diagnostically assessing children — with the concomitant requirement that their assessments should be based on evidence rather than on hunch. On the other hand, when teachers have become familiar with ATs and levels and are less worried by them, then they will have clear criteria for children's progress on which to draw *selectively* in completing a formal record. It is this latter point that is noteworthy and can make workable the assessment and recording of children's progress. Teachers should not need to have to assess and record every AT and level in detail, they should be able to exercise their professional judgement in selecting what is important to assess and record. That selection clearly will have to be informed by the ATs and levels though it should not have to record every tiny feature. After all, most of us prefer to be given an

'executive summary' or 'key features' rather than copious documentation; we always remember the edited highlights rather than the whole performance! Teachers would store assessment information in their minds, only committing to paper the necessary minimum.

A record keeping system could evolve which was in three parts. The first part would be a tick-sheet indication of ATs and levels which a child has reached — to fulfil the statutory requirement for an assessment record. The second part would provide a space for teachers — and maybe children as well if a Record of Achievement were being compiled — to write open-ended comments on *particular* areas of strength and weakness, ability, enjoyment, interest or application which were either indicated by the contours or profile of ATs and levels from part one or which fell outside them, and to suggest future steps to be taken. Hence the *selective* reference to ATs and levels would be informed by the particular characteristics and abilities of each individual child's performance. It would not oblige participants to comment on every detail of performance. This has a precedent in the ILEA Primary Language Record. Teachers would draw on their professional working knowledge of ATs and levels and each child to comment *as they thought fit* on children's performance; they would tailor their highlighting to each child. A third part of the record would be more open-ended still, enabling participants in the record to make more general (or indeed more specific) comments, again as they thought fit, on areas of achievement within and without the national curriculum — for example on social or emotional development, motivations, anxieties or sources of pleasure in achievement. The move then would be to have a Record of Achievement which fitted comfortably into the context of the national curriculum but which was not fettered by it.

# Crimes against Learning

**Mary Jane Drummond and Fred Sedgwick**

The School Examination and Assessment Council's **A Guide to Teacher Assessment**, issued as Packs A, B and C, is critically assessed by and condemned by Mary Jane Drummond, tutor in primary education at the Cambridge Institute of Education, and Fred Sedgwick, Headteacher at Downing Primary School in Ipswich.

Eight-year-old Clare has never been confident about writing. Today her teacher is away and the supply teacher talks to her class about rivers — the topic she'd planned in her car as she responded to the eight-thirty phone call that morning.

The teacher talks about the rivers Orwell, Stour and Deben. The children remember sitting by them, fishing and throwing stones into them. They talk, in response to the teacher's questions, about what the light looks like on the water; about the creatures that live there; about rowing boats and weather, bridges and banks and mud walks and ducks... Then they talk about the Thames, which some of them have seen, and which some have sailed on. One child has seen the Shannon. The teacher tells a story about the Liffey.

Eventually Clare writes:

*The river  
Morning has just come  
sunlight lay on the  
water like a blanket  
on a bed a round  
circle appears like  
a Ball. the Ball is  
the Ball is the Sun  
the end  
it is late the children  
set of home the moon  
was bright. it looks like  
a lump cheese.*

How do we assess that?

We need, for a start, to think more about Clare herself, and not just her poem. We will need to consider her character (rather timid in class, most of the time, but becoming more assertive, according to her teachers) and her learning styles. And it would help if we knew what the supply teacher said to Clare when she read the first 'the end', and what Clare replied, and how she felt about the teacher's comments.

When you've got this information, we'll give you leave to make a provisional assessment of Clare's poem. Meanwhile let's look at the SEAC booklets, the official version of how to do assessments. The heart of the matter is on page 22 (Pack C):

'Criterion-referenced assessment is based on comparison: in the National Curriculum this means a comparison of performance with a Statement of Attainment.'

Surprisingly, this statement stands naked on the page. It is not tricked out in a pale green rectangle, like many others, or heralded by a round black blob (technically and appropriately known as a bullet). But despite these omissions, this is the clue to the whole charade. Swallow this, and you swallow the lot. Bite this bullet, and you die.

The key word in this key sentence is *performance*. The concept of performance is introduced on page 5 (Pack C) where it is attributed to the authors of TGAT. The authors of Pack C quote approvingly from paragraph 3 of the TGAT First Supplementary Report, which contrasts the possibility of effectively assessing 'performance' with the difficulty of assessing the problematic notion of underlying 'ability' (TGAT's quotation marks).

In Pack C this distinction appears, and is endorsed, in a section headed 'Ability and Achievement'; an equivalence has been deftly drawn between performance and achievement. In the same section, teachers are recommended to assess 'only that which is observable' and to know about 'the child's response to individual tasks since these (*sic*) are the child's attainments'.

Look briefly at that clause. No-one would like to be condemned as a pedant, but the confusion between the singular ('response') and the plural ('these') speaks volumes about the thinking that has gone on amongst the honourable men who made up the committee that wrote this stuff: unsound grammar reflects unsound thinking. The last sentence of the same section opens with a 'This' that has no reference.

We are meant to skate over such infelicities and, if we notice them, deplore them in passing. But it's more important than that: if you can't, in committee, write coherently, when you haven't got a class to worry about, should you be writing about education at all?

Throughout this short section, the authors conflate 'performance' and 'achievement'. Thus assessment is based on the comparison of performance with a statement of attainment.

Performance = achievement.

Performance is observable.

The child's response to individual tasks is observable.

The child's responses to individual tasks are the child's attainments.

Now we can try to put this into practice and see how the concepts of performance and achievement come together in the classroom.

In the first activity for teachers (Activity A, Pack A) we are instructed, first, to select three SoA and three children 'who have recently demonstrated your three chosen SoA'. Next we must 'think about' our lesson plans and then 'carry through' our lesson plans, ensuring that the three children 'work as normal'. We mustn't let them see we are taking a special interest. Afterwards we must decide 'whether each of the children has achieved the SoA'.

But hold on. We selected these children precisely *because* they had recently demonstrated the SoA. Isn't there a circularity about the argument?

But: to demonstrate a SoA is different from achieving one?

No, only in Activity A. In B we are given less banal but equally baffling instructions. This time we are to assess performance on three different SoA, and we are to think about 'specific features of performance which would indicate that a child had demonstrated the SoA'.

But hang about. We are to select children who have achieved one or more of the SoA. So in Activity B, to demonstrate an achievement *is* the same as achieving it, but not the same as reaching it.

Comparing 'performance with a SoA' is going to be harder than it sounds — especially as here we are not simply looking at performance, but at 'specific features of performance which would indicate... attainment'.

See how the web of words smothers the meaning. It conceals the crudity of what we are being asked to do. Even the inept grammar has a part to play, as it makes the text unreadable and thereby, perversely, acceptable. If you can't read it, you shrug ... and accept it, and get on with something more like life: a soap opera, a novel, a poem, a row, a new jazz record. Anything to avoid ploughing your way through this porridge.

But if you can go on, disentangling the pitifully thin string of argument that runs through the twelve activities of Packs A and B, and the 86 pages of tortuous prose of Pack C, such determination will reveal the unbeating heart of SEAC. The richness of all that children do — and say and dream — in classrooms is reduced to the one word: 'performance'.

Performances are to be distinguished in relation to the criteria given by SoA either before the performance (differentiation by task), or after (differentiation by outcome). (See pp 22-23 Pack C). Teachers carry out lesson plans; children perform; teachers identify the SoA that best describes the performance. That's all there is to it.

The authors of these packs were well-intentioned and did their tasks under extraordinary pressure. Their aspirations are shared by every primary teacher: we all want to be wiser, more skilled, more creative in shaping a curriculum that fits each child's pressing cognitive and affective concerns. But it is impossible that we will do so by carrying out the activities of Packs A & B, or by drinking down the insinuating jargon of Pack C, which

disguises the excitement and unpredictability of classroom events in pompous banalities.

Do the SEAC authors never reflect on how complex their own learning is, as they come to terms with a new report, or attend a production of **Waiting for Godot**, or listen again to Mozart, or sail close to the wind down an estuary; as they watch their children grow, or come to understand something of a country — or county — they've never visited before; as they crack word-processing; as they garden joyfully? Are these activities 'performances'?

An even more serious crime against learning is committed in the way in which the three Packs take for granted dozens of concepts and practices that have never earned the right to be treated uncritically, as inevitable concomitants of teaching and learning. For example, the packs advocate the objectives approach for schools, as though Stenhouse had never demolished this model in 1976. The model is (he pointed out) only suitable for relatively low levels of learning; it doesn't match up to anything that isn't crudely measurable. So it will tend to obliterate the teaching of music or poetry. It is also self-fulfilling and will work against discovery and delight.

There are other dubious underlying assumptions in the SEAC material: that there is a distinction between 'work' done by the children with help and without; that there is such a thing as 'normal teaching'; that schools 'deliver' curriculum; that children progress from one

level to the next.

Most ludicrous of all is the premise that levels of attainment can be numbered. Hence teachers can — and should — select attainment targets thus: 'if the child achieved the SoA at level 2 for a particular AT, try level 3; if the child did not achieve at level 2, try level 1' (Activity E, Pack A).

Critical debate is vital — but the packs rule such a possibility out with the feeble model of questioning offered in the 'self-check lists'. We should be asking: What does the concept of performance *exclude* from our serious consideration? What about experiment, play, trial and error, creation, inspiration, Eureka!? What do 'Levels' exclude? What aspects of human life and love are not represented in those SoA? Don't they matter any more? Can't teachers do more than carry out lesson plans and assess performance? Haven't they always ...?

And most of all: don't numbers demean learning?

Look at Clare's poem. It took a lot out of her. Rivers turned her on one day, but why would anyone want to clap a number on what she wrote? Numbers won't tell us what memories and dreams the lucky lesson of a surprised supply teacher evoked. 'Levels' won't describe the secret parts of Clare that she brought to the piece of paper she scribbled her poem on. Performance is a pitiful epithet for this poem, for any poem, for Clare's learning, for all our pupil's learning — we can — and will — do better.

# Reflecting on the Primary Curriculum

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**Paul Bennett**

The head of a large primary school in Birmingham and previously of a small aided one there, Paul Bennett was seconded in 1988/9 to the National Primary Centre Research Project. He explains how his school endeavours to safeguard what they value despite the pressures associated with the National Curriculum.

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The advent of the National Curriculum heralded images of rigid, subject-specific timetables in the primary school and displays replaced by unending paste-ups of attainment targets and levels of achievement. Children could be envisaged progressing through highly structured work units within their 'level band' while their harassed teacher, fresh from the daily National Curriculum update meeting, ticked off with relief another statement of attainment successfully delivered. The reality can be reassuringly different.

There is no doubt that the National Curriculum and the changes associated with it have increased enormously the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by primary school teachers who have to cope with the full breadth of the curriculum. However, this era of change has brought with it a climate of reflection — both the need and opportunities for teachers to articulate and share practice. Furthermore, this reflection provides real and important opportunities for a reaffirmation of faith. Not a glossing over of

inadequacies but a genuine attempt to identify strengths and to ally them to new demands and practices.

In our large primary school we have experienced the same stress and tensions described above. In our faculty meetings we have probably devoted too much time to considering what the demands of the National Curriculum are in terms of content, assessment and record keeping. We have lately realised that we should have given more time to considering the strengths of our practice — to reaffirming our beliefs in the nature of the activities that the children experience within our classrooms. To this end recent in-service teacher days have been devoted not to the National Curriculum *per se* but to considering the notion of 'what is effective teaching?'. What does this mean in terms of the relationship between the teacher and the learner? What are the appropriate teaching styles? How do we manage our classrooms effectively and how are our resources organised within them to promote effective

learning experiences? What do we mean by group work? What are the criteria for grouping children? (Age, ability, friendship, interest, activity, etc.) What do we expect the children to do in groups? How will they interact? It is when some of these issues have been addressed, when these notions of effective practice have been defined, articulated and shared that we can feel more comfortable about the way in which the National Curriculum can support the learning processes in the primary school.

An important element of these reflections was the reaffirmation of faith in 'topic work'. Topic work has been widely criticised by HMI et al in recent times and yet from topics have come outstanding examples of effective practice. It was reassuring to read an early statement from the National Curriculum Council:

'The National Curriculum Council recognises that in primary schools a range of work takes place which is described as 'thematic', 'topic based' or 'cross curricular' in nature. It would be counter-productive to lose existing good practice and unhelpful for the learner to devise an unnecessarily fragmented curriculum.'

Teachers expected topic work to deliver significant elements of the curriculum. It was the way they worked and wished to carry on working. But in many ways topic work had become too natural. We needed to recognise its strengths and, through more rigorous examination, combat some of its weaknesses in terms of continuity, progression and coherence. In order to do this a policy statement was developed which enabled us to address the following issues.

### Why do Topic Work?

We identified the following purposes:-

- ★ it involves children and parents in interesting work in a meaningful context;
- ★ it promotes interest, enthusiasm and often positive attitudes to work;
- ★ it encourages cross curricular activities and the cross fertilisation of ideas: in dealing with cross curricular skills it represents an efficient means of dealing with the breadth of the primary school curriculum;
- ★ it encourages the practical application of skills;
- ★ it presents opportunities for children to work together cooperatively;
- ★ it provides opportunities to initiate work based on children's own interests and experiences;
- ★ it gives children a greater sense of ownership of their work;
- ★ it encourages the use of research skills.

It is clearly important to keep this policy alive, to ensure that new members of staff share it and to encourage the realisation of the aims in practice.

### What will Topic Work deliver?

This may inevitably vary according to the age of the children but we felt that it was important to have some sense of school expectations. For us topic work must deliver the humanities — history, geography, environmental education, health education, etc. — though we need to recognise that the statutory guidelines that we shall soon receive will be crucial to this process. Language, maths and science will also be

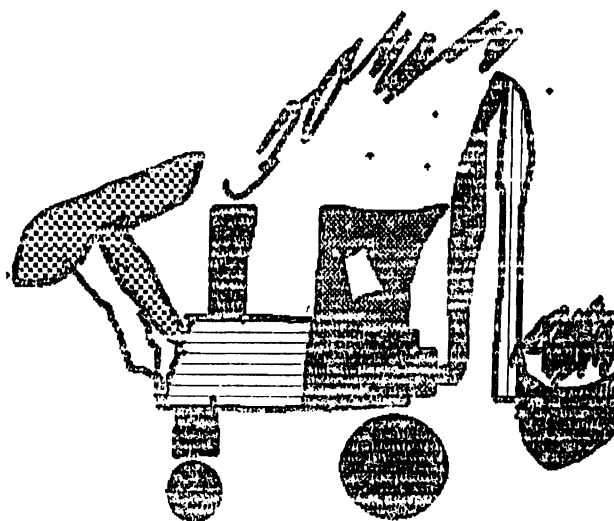
significant components of topic work but there is a danger of impairing our aims if we contrive to pack as many attainment targets as possible into a topic. We aim to produce balanced and relevant topics and accept that there may have to be some 'topping up' in order to deliver those statutory elements which do not fit comfortably into topics.

We have resisted the development of a prescribed framework of topics, although we have identified certain key topics which we expect children to experience during the course of their primary education — these include traditional themes like 'Ourselves', 'Communication' etc. Teachers preferred the freedom of choice which was compatible with our reasons for undertaking topic work. However, in order to address the issues of continuity and progression it is vital that we achieve a clarity of planning and have a framework of expectations to draw on. To this end the National Curriculum may prove to be a tremendous resource, particularly with reference to history and geography where a clear statement of skill and concept development has been lacking.

If our topic is to be effective, it seems that we must achieve a blend of the identified strengths of our classroom practice with the demands of the National Curriculum for more coherence in terms of continuity and progression. We have to combine the flair, imagination and excitement of learning with the rigour of assessment and attainment targets. Surely, not an impossible task if we resist the 'manual-in-hand' approach and take advantage of the climate of reflection to articulate and share effective practice in our primary classrooms.

### References

- National Curriculum Council (1989) **A framework for the Primary Curriculum**  
 National Primary Centre (1990) **Topic Work 3 - 13**



*Computer drawing by Oliver Jackson (age 6½)  
 Leicester*

# Another way of looking

**Michael Armstrong**

This is the text of Michael Armstrong's contribution to **Forum's** May conference, **Owning the National Curriculum**. He is a long-standing member of **Forum's** Editorial Board and head of an Oxfordshire primary school.

Two years ago, at **Forum's** last London conference, I argued that the National Curriculum amounted to a betrayal of children. That, of course, was before we knew the detail; when all was mere outline. Two years on many details are still obscure, but enough is clear to permit a fuller judgement. That judgement must still be that the National Curriculum betrays the children whose intellectual interests it is supposed to serve.

I say this despite the well-intentioned efforts of liberal teachers to play the National Curriculum game in the hope of subverting its rules. It seems to me that any attempt to gentle the National Curriculum is necessarily futile because that curriculum is framed in terms which misconstrue the nature of learning and of teaching. The narrow specification of the curriculum by subject ignores the way in which the course of learning proceeds the imaginative classrooms. The language of targets and levels of attainment reduced achievement to a false hierarchy of technical accomplishments. The unacknowledged metaphor of 'delivery' deprives children of their constructive and reconstructive role in the acquisition of knowledge.

For me, the moment of truth had a very particular location — paragraph 10.19 of the first report of the National Curriculum English Working Group, **English for ages 5 to 11**. This first report is the most progressive to have emerged so far. Over and over again the report insists on the importance of attending to the significance of what children have to say rather than to its apparent form. Teachers are urged to show 'respect for and interest-in the learner's language, culture, thought and intentions'. It is suggested that teachers 'provide the greatest encouragement for children to communicate in writing when they respond more to the content of what is written than to (errors of letter formation, spelling and composition)'. 'Meaning' we are told, 'should always be in the foreground'.

Until, that is, we reach paragraph 10.19. For there we read: 'The best writing is vigorous, committed, honest and interesting. We have not included these qualities in our attainment targets because they cannot be mapped onto levels. Even so, all good classroom practice will be geared to encouraging and for fostering these vital qualities'.

That last sentence reads as a desperate attempt to avoid the implication of what has just been said. For this paragraph can only mean that meaning itself, its quality, its value, is not to be assessed within the National Curriculum and finds no legitimate place among its 'clear objectives'. Look through the attainment targets carefully. You will find among the Working Group's slender descriptions not a single trace of meaning. It is true that Attainment Target No 3 is defined as 'a growing ability to construct and convey

meaning in written language'. But nowhere does the character or quality of a child's meanings feature among the statements of attainment, level on level, that follow this opening definition. Meaning is central but meaning is not to be assessed. Children may be 'makers of meanings in their own texts' but the meanings they make are unexaminable.

It says a good deal for the honesty of the English Working Group that it has so frankly acknowledged the irrelevance of meaning to the language of attainment targets, the language that has determined the National Curriculum. In this, as in much else, it has the advantage over the National Curriculum Council. Indeed it is worth pausing a moment to notice the National Curriculum Council's way with paragraph 10.19. Acknowledging the alarm of many teachers at the implications of the paragraph, the Council claims to have 'undertaken the task of mapping such qualities (as vigour, independence and commitment) on to levels in its recommended statements of attainment'. This specious claim is a choice example of the Council's piecemeal and extempore methods.

It was not until the publication of the English Working Group's *second* report — (by which time paragraph 10.19 had become paragraph 17.31) that the National Curriculum Council took any notice of the notorious paragraph. By that time Levels 1 to 3 of the Attainment Targets for English had already been determined by statutory order, following the recommendations of the Council itself. They could not be revised again. So Levels 1 to 3 still contain no reference to qualities of meaning. It is charitable to attribute this to the Council's oversight. Or is it that the Council considers children below Level 4 to be incapable of significant utterance?

In the end it hardly matters, for when at Level 4 the National Curriculum Council at last proceeds to revise the Working Group's statements of attainment to take account of meaning it does so in a manner that is entirely frivolous. The Working Group had described Level 4 as the level at which children are able to 'write stories which have an opening, a setting, characters, a series of events and a resolution'. To this admittedly banal definition of an average eleven year old's literary artistry the Council adds the words 'and which engage the sympathy and interest of the reader'. Just that — no more. Now it's important, who can doubt it, to engage a reader's interest, especially if that reader happens to be your teacher. But to suppose that this is enough to dispense with the problem of paragraph 10.19 — that reader response is the unique key to meaning — is at best careless.

There is no evidence in either of the National Curriculum Council's Consultation Documents on English in the National Curriculum to suggest that the

Council has in any way understood the dilemma recognised by the Working Group. This is scarcely surprising. For what 10.19 shows us is that the language of the National Curriculum is impervious to the significance of children's thought and affords no access to an understanding of children's understanding, either of how to describe it or of how to promote it.

So what are we to do? How is it possible to rewrite the National Curriculum in language that restores meaning to its place at the centre of learning and teaching? I don't know the answer to this question but I think I know how to begin to find out. I would begin with interpretation. What does it mean to ascribe significance to children's thought and action, and to see that significance as the clue to learning and to teaching — the clue also to content and method in the curriculum? I want to approach this question through one particular instance. The English Working Group has once again provided the opportunity.

Appendix 6 of **English for ages 5 to 11** presents a series of illustrative examples of 'children's developing writing with reference to our attainment targets' as the Report puts it. Here is the fourth example, 'an unaided first draft by a middle infant girl'. (See page 14.)

Here is how the English Working Group describes this wonderful tale, which is said to 'illustrate several Level 2 features of writing':

'This is a simple chronological account with a clear story structure, including a conventional beginning, narrative middle and end. The sentences are almost all demarcated, though via the graphic, comic-strip layout and not via capital letters and punctuation. The spelling is almost entirely meaningful and recognisable. In several cases, it shows that the author has correctly grasped the patterns involved, even though the individual spellings are wrong (eg trooth, eny, owt, sumthing, cubad). The handwriting occasionally mixes upper and lower case letters, though only at beginnings and ends of words, not at random'.

That is all the Working Group has to say about 'When I was naughty'. It's all that the National Curriculum requires it to say. Is that really all a six year old writer can do? Is that all her knowledge, skill and understanding amount to? Is that all that's worth saying about this story? Is it, at any rate, all we need to record, all we need to know, as parents, teachers, storytellers ourselves? Can this really be how to talk about children and their work? For myself, I can't imagine a thinner description of a young child's narrative achievement. At no point is there the smallest recognition of the story's significance, of the relationship between its meaning and its form, of the quality of narrative thought which is seeking expression here. Any teacher who attempted no more than this would have little chance of understanding this child's understanding, let alone of promoting it. If this is really how we are expected to evaluate our pupils we're surely in the wrong trade.

So let's take a closer look at the story.

'When I was naughty' examines the moral order and its relation to experience, as seen from the perspective of six years old. It deals with questions of truth and lying, mutuality and recrimination, guilt and blame. It addresses, at least implicitly, the conflict between a child's and an adult's view of these matters. One of the most striking aspects of the story is the way the

narrative dramatises the interlocking conflicts which make up its subject matter. And the drawings play as important part in this drama as the writing.

'It was a few weeks past my birthday when me and my sister went to the kitchen.' There's a feeling of a formula about this opening, and yet, compared with 'Once upon a time' it's strikingly precise. It marks out what is to come as a reminiscence — fact — rather than a fairy tale. Might it be more than a formula though? 'A few weeks past my birthday .....'. Might that birthday signify the coming of a new age, the age of moral awareness, a new maturity? Part of the business of interpretation is to persuade ourselves that such speculations are appropriate, even to a six year old's story.

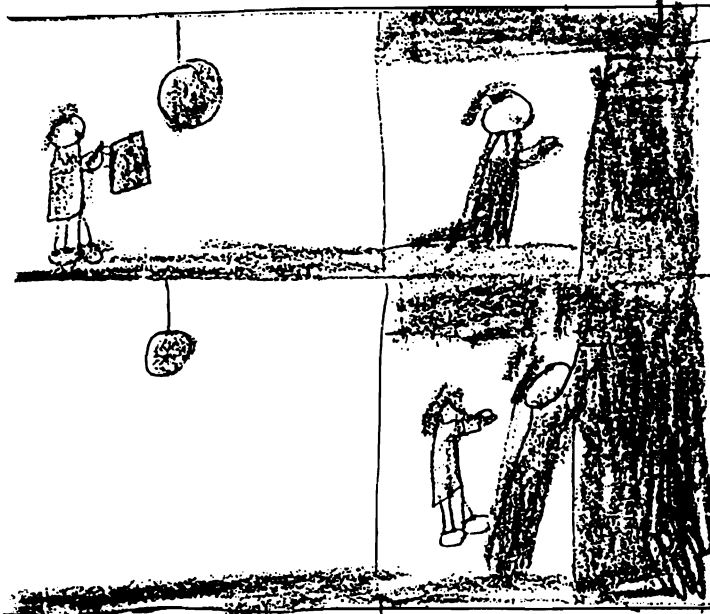
The second frame is all uninhibited action. 'I went to the cupboard and Clare opened the cupboard and we took the crisps and we went upstairs'. The tiny, canonical sentences hurry by, each with its active verb in a simple past tense — 'went', 'opened', 'took', 'went', — each linked to the next by an indispensable 'and'. How beautifully the first three drawings express the impulse of this action. In the first drawing one child is already in the kitchen, approaching the cupboard, while the other crosses the living room with its large round central light. By the second drawing both children have reached the kitchen and Clare is already at the cupboard, stretching up to remove the crisps. The living room is empty. What a way for a six year old to picture movement! The third drawing, which really belongs with the second frame, shows the two children striding upstairs, the leading one in the act of stepping from one stair to the other, caught in the act, as the is just about to be.

So far in the story there's been no trace of the moral order, unless we choose to read the words 'the cupboard' as suggestive of a guarded space, or the words 'the crisps' as hinting at the fatefulness of the object taken. The two children seem to be acting without constraint. Nothing yet has been forbidden them. It's fascinating to see how subtly the storyteller emphasises the mutuality of the sisters at this point in their adventures. 'Me and my sister went' . . . 'I went' . . . 'Clare opened' . . . 'We took' . . . 'We went upstairs. and now a sudden eruption: dad, lies, punishment, recrimination, the world of moral order.

The author is remarkably particular about this shift. At the end of frame two the flow of action is brought sharply to a stop. Could it be significant that the break comes with the last word of frame two rather than with the first word of frame three? Every other frame closes on a full stop. Not this one though. Is the writer trying to highlight the interruption of the action in full flow? In a complementary move the drawing that follows in frame three is still bound up with the interrupted action, as if the momentum of the previous frame has overflowed, so to speak, its own arrest.

'My dad caught me and Clare . . .'. 'Caught': this one word transforms everything that has gone before, turning the children's freedom of action into a transgression, a flouting of the rules. 'Caught' not 'met' or 'saw' or 'came across'. At once the guilty deed is exposed. 'So he said'. That 'so' is significant too. The OED tells us that the particle 'so' denotes both sequence and consequence, sometimes both at once.

# When I Was Naughty

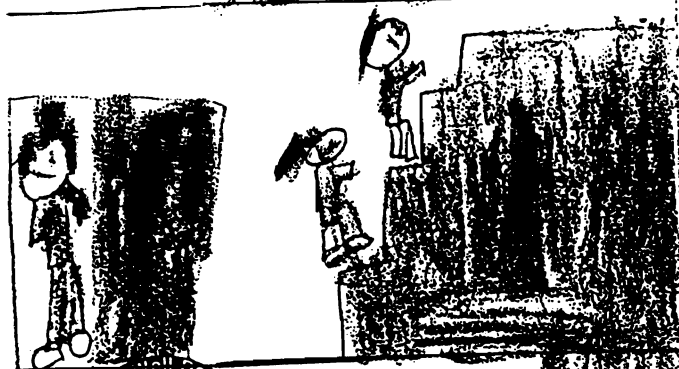


It was a few weeks  
Past my birthday when me  
and my sister went to  
the kitchen

I went to the  
Cubad and Clare opened  
the cubad and we  
took the crisps and we  
went up stairs my



dad caught me and Clare  
so he said have you  
taken something  
from the cubad no  
we said



then my dad said  
have you, no I did  
are you telling us  
no no no I did again  
in the end my dad made  
me tell the truth



then he said you  
naughty girls and  
sent me and Clare  
to bed with out  
any Supa and  
Clare blamed it on  
me.

So it is here. The 'so' of the story — and I think it could be argued that the lack of punctuation here is an advantage, heightening the double significance of 'so' — implies, surely, that dad has already guessed the truth. From here on all that will count is the acknowledgement of what is already recognised as guilt.

See how the drawing to frame four captures the moment of truth. Dad has appeared in a doorway at the foot of the stairs on which the two sisters are suddenly frozen. The leading sister's striding foot has dropped back a step. It's a beautifully observed detail.

I love the confessional scene, the way it escalates. 'So he said, have you took something from the cupboard? No, we said. Then my dad said, have you? No, I lied. Are you telling lies? No, no, no, I lied again.' The rhetoric of this passage is wonderfully artful. It has all the storyteller's flair. But the artfulness is surely born of a certain familiarity, and with more than the single event which the story tells, assuming it's a true story. Observation, memory and art are almost inseparable here, though I suppose we might wonder about that 'have you took'.

This is the moment at which the mutuality of the sisters begins to break down. It is the narrator alone, in the end, who is made to tell the truth. 'No we said . . . no I lied . . . no no no I lied again . . . in the end my dad made *me* tell the truth.' Divide and rule; it's as if our six year old storyteller has seen it all.

'In the end my dad made me tell the truth.' Young writers sometimes have an enviable knack of cutting a long story short. We do not need to know the how of it. The point is that it's impossible to get away with it. A father's authority is sufficient to get at the truth. Or perhaps it's his trickiness, his deviousness. I think it's worth observing that the storyteller offers no comment, either as to the rightness or wrongness of the father's forcing the truth or indeed of the sisters' taking of the crisps in the first place. We may interpret the morality as we will. We are presented only with the outcome. It's characteristic of young children's stories to be open in this way.

Finally, then, retribution. 'Then he said, you naughty girls, and sent me and Clare to bed without any supper and Clare blamed it on me.' In frame two the sisters appeared to be in control of their own destiny — 'we took the crisps and we went upstairs'. Now the tables are turned. Instead of went we find 'sent' — 'sent to bed without any supper'. The girls after all are subject to their father's will. In the final drawing the stairs have grown steeper, almost mountainous. They are no longer the quick, easy passage from kitchen cupboard to children's room. Now they mark the sad, slow ascent to the place of punishment. Clare has disappeared, appropriately enough since the father's intervention has destroyed the sisters' mutuality. 'And Clare blamed it on me'. The narrator, who in acknowledging her guilt gave the game away, is left to face her father's anger alone as he stands at the foot of the stairs, enforcing his order.

So what are we to make of one tiny story, however charming?

The English Working Group chose it to illustrate the meagre account of attainment set out in their statutory targets and levels. It is more appropriately read, first

as an indictment of that account, and second as a clue to an alternative account. For there *is* another way of looking.

'When I was naughty' allows us to glimpse a young child's thought in all its imaginative richness. The artistry of its six year old author is apparent in every aspect of her story. In her exploitation of narrative style, with its formulas, its suspense, its various concealments and revelations, its openness to interpretation. In her acceptance of constraint and her turning of constraint into opportunity; think of her virtuoso treatment of the limited sentence structure available to her at this point in her narrative development, the way she makes use of the conjunction 'and' and the particle 'so'. In her critical judgement, so apparent in her choice of vocabulary. In her concern to express her own sense of life in the ordered medium of written and drawn narrative. In short, in her appropriation of form.

For me the history of learning is the history of the appropriation of form, in this way and in countless other ways, while the history of teaching begins and ends in the *interpretation* of appropriated form. By interpretation I mean the critical scrutiny of children's intellectual enterprise, from moment to moment and from subject matter to subject matter, over the course of children's school careers. The description which I've just attempted of 'When I was naughty' is an example of interpretation, as applied to one particular product of one particular child's intellectual enterprise at one particular moment in time. Multiplied across the curriculum and sustained over the years, a set of descriptions of this kind, accompanied by their objects — the works described and the evidence of the manner of their composition — would amount to an intellectual biography, a kind of documentary history of individual, and therefore incommensurate, achievement. This is what I mean by another way of looking and it is equally another way of speaking, as distant from the language of attainment targets as it is possible to imagine.

The focus of interpretation is a child's thought and action at its most significant. Our interest, in interpretation, is not in simulations of thought — exercises, tests, prescribed tasks, standard procedures — but in the work which is most expressive of each child's struggle with meaning. As far as the study of English is concerned that includes children's stories and poems, diaries and notebooks, arguments and conversations, play acting and make believe, reflections and speculations on language and literature.

One of the most important tasks in interpreting children's work is to describe its patterns of intention: the interests, motifs, orientations, forms of meditation that govern a child's thought and seek expression in her practice. The concerns expressed in a story like 'When I was naughty' are clear enough, some of them at any rate: concerns, for example, with family relationships, with issues of loyalty, deceit and authority, concerns which further examples of the author's work would help us to evaluate more precisely.

A second task is to examine the interplay between form and content in a child's thought, and between technique and expression. The relationship of word to picture in 'When I was naughty' is an example of this

kind of interplay, as is the author's manipulation of a limited range of sentence types to maximum effect.

A third task for interpretation is to trace the circulation of a child's ideas through all the various aspects of the curriculum. See how literature, art, moral thought, personal and social education, are all implicated in our six year old's one story.

A single text has served me as an example of how to interpret children's thought; but this is in a way misleading, for it's characteristic of interpretation to be concerned with the development of a child's ideas from work to work overtime — a week, month, year, career.

This is the moment at which it becomes necessary to talk about intervention as the natural complement of interpretation. Interpretation and intervention are the two faces of teaching, assuming that teaching is seen as a way of sustaining children's critical engagement with thought in all its forms. To interpret a six year old's story is to begin to understand her own understanding, and that in turn is to begin to understand how to promote further understanding. Interpretation sets the agenda for intervention. It suggests to us, in the case of 'When I was naughty', the stories the writer might read to aid her own writing or to develop her sense of literature. It shows us how to help her to address the moral concerns which dominate her narrative. It clarifies for us the interplay of words and pictures in her thought. It helps us to see how we might raise with her, however tentatively, the questions of narrative voice and narrative identity. It illustrates the significance which at this point in her development she attaches to punctuation; we notice the simple large full stop decisively placed at the end of her tale and wonder, maybe, how significant the matter of punctuation might seem to her just now.

It would be nice to imagine that the division of the National Curriculum's statutory orders into attainment targets and programmes of study reflected this distinction between interpretation and intervention. Nice but fanciful. The attainment targets have nothing to do with interpretation and for this reason they afford no purchase on intervention. It is the fatal weakness of the entire enterprise.

Many of the Working Groups, it is true, have sought

to use the programmes of study to emphasise the wealth of learning and teaching that resists the language of targeting, and none more so than the English Working Group. Its two reports are quite adventurous about intervention. They describe the 'diverse roles teachers will have to play in the development of young writers: they will be observers, facilitators, modellers, readers and supporters'. They insist that the 'teacher's response to written work should aim to foster a child's confidence in the exploration of ideas'. They ask teachers to write alongside their pupils in the classroom. They demand well-equipped classrooms full of books, notepads, post boxes, word-processors, play-houses. They suggest that 'opportunities should be provided .... to read and write lists, labels, letters, invitations, leaflets, pamphlets, plans and diagrams' not to mention 'diaries, stories and accounts of things'. They tell us to encourage children 'to share their writing with others, to discuss what they have written and to publish stories, newspapers, magazines, games and guides'.

Useful as these various statements are, they remain incoherent because of the failure to relate them to the interpretive outlook in which they gain their educational justification. It is not possible, for example, to make sense of the demand that teachers write alongside their pupils unless education is perceived as common and collaborative struggle for meaning in which both teachers and taught have much to share and much to learn from each other, whether the pupils be five, or fifteen, or fifty years old.

Inasmuch as it depends on the recognition and promotion of significant utterance, education thrives on conversation. Unfortunately conversation is at odds with the ideology that has inspired the National Curriculum. Laid down from above, expressed in the language of law, obsessed with standardisation, committed to a hierarchical model of achievement, the National Curriculum can only get in the way of the conversation that thrives in resourceful classrooms and sustains the course and the cause of learning. To rewrite that curriculum in a way which supports conversation will take a long time, and great political determination. I have suggested that a promising way to begin is to look at how we interpret children's thought. There are plenty of other ways too. Let the exploration begin.

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## Graham Terrell

Graham Terrell, Ex-President of NASUWT and Deputy Head of Rutlish High School in Merton, was the second speaker at **Forum's** May conference. This is a short summary of his address.

Graham Terrell began by quoting from the 1989 DES publication, *National Curriculum: from Policy to Practice*:

'The commitment of individual teachers will be crucial in making it happen . . . the real and immediate task of putting flesh round the bones of the National Curriculum will, properly, be one for the teachers in the classroom.'

Recalling the united opposition to the Bill, reflected at the 1988 Forum Conference but ignored by the government, he continued:

'The opposition of teachers and their unions was deemed irrelevant — they must learn to do as they were told. The teacher's job was simply to facilitate the safe arrival in the classroom of Government determined ideas about what, when and how children should learn.'

He then argued that it had now become apparent that the National Curriculum is 'actually *undeliverable*'. Anxiety, depression, frustration and stress are driving teachers from the profession and worsening the teacher shortage. He described teachers' reactions to the demands of the National Curriculum:

'It is bad enough having your whole educational philosophy attacked and damaged. It becomes intolerable when you feel that teaching children has degenerated into recording their progress .... when you know that the grading and labelling you're expected to do is aimed at searching for, identifying and then publishing children's failures . . . when you're expected to reject the ideas, ideals and commitments which brought you into the profession.'

But 'despair is fast being replaced by anger'. The government is signalling retreat and indecision on some

aspects as these prove too expensive. Now 'teachers are deciding to teach'. He concluded:

'We reject the instruction from the Government that we should become National Curriculum technicians. We will not be the servants, nor allow children to be the victims of a curriculum stolen from us. The school curriculum is not the property of the Government of the day: it belongs to the British people — past, present and future'.  
(Ed)

### Caroline Gipps

Derek Gillard, head of Marston 9-13 Middle School, Oxford summarises the final contribution to **Forum's** May conference by Caroline Gipps of the University of London Institute of Education.

Caroline Gipps began by suggesting that the proposed scheme of assessment would have important social implications, especially in its effects on social and ethnic minorities: it would, she said, increase social inequality. She dealt with four themes: competition, differentiation, bias and pedagogy.

The 1988 Act requires competition between schools: publication of results is crucial for this. But, as no account will be taken of pupils' backgrounds, it will be inappropriate to use average test results as an indicator of the efficiency of a school. ILEA did some useful work on background variables but the Act permits no adjustment of results. Parents will therefore be able to see the schools in which pupils actually obtain the best results but not the schools which actually make the most difference to their pupils. The trouble is that *one* Performance Indicator (National Curriculum tests) becomes *the* Performance Indicator and then the school's aim. The government sees competition as a way of curing economic problems: it has nothing to do with helping children.

Differentiation is treating children differently according to their ability. The TGAT Report implies possible changes in pupil groupings. The management answer is grouping by Level. Caroline Gipps suggested that this was going back to the Revised Code. One of the problems with this approach was that pupils would be at different levels within one subject, never mind across the whole curriculum.

She referred to Joan Barker-Lunn's research on streaming which had shown that it made no difference to pupils' academic achievement but did have significant effects on pupils of average and poor ability whose self-esteem, self-image and motivation were all damaged by streaming. She suggested that the National Curriculum arrangements for assessment would lead to calls to abandon mixed-ability teaching. She asked us to resist this and said we must be quite clear about the advantages of mixed-ability teaching.

One of the problems of categorising children using tests is that, because of the bias in the tests, the 'lower-ability' groups will inevitably contain a high proportion of ethnic minority and socially-deprived pupils. It was difficult to break out of this type of categorisation.

Interestingly, she suggested that one of the most potentially dangerous areas was teacher assessment: the power of the stereotype was very strong. Valerie Walkerdine's research had shown the clear effects of stereotyping on teacher perception: opinions were

affected by behavioural issues rather than cognitive ones.

TGAT wanted detailed guidelines to reduce the effect of stereotyping on teacher assessment: there is no sign of these yet.

It is very difficult (if not impossible) to construct SATs which are devoid of bias in terms of language and culture. The TGAT Report contained 21 lines on equal opportunities: Caroline Gipps suggested they had 'no conception of the problems involved'.

She acknowledged that continuity and progression should be improved by the National Curriculum and there was the possibility, too, of an improvement in matching tasks to the child's ability.

However, the dangers were also very significant, and in particular the danger of teachers teaching to the test — as seen in the payment-by-results system, the 11+ and in public exams.

Research in the US on the 'high stake test' has demonstrated that the higher the stakes (ie the greater the importance of the result of a test), the more teachers will teach to it. The quality of SATs will therefore be vital. MDI (measurement driven instruction) will affect the education of all pupils but especially poor, handicapped and minority pupils as they are the least able to improve their scores.

To conclude, Caroline Gipps asked whether mandated testing would raise standards.

She suggested that there was no evidence that it would, except that test scores would improve as teachers began to teach to the test. Average standards would therefore *appear* to rise — but at what cost to our poorer pupils?

The effects of national assessment will be:

- i) control of what is taught and how it is taught,
- ii) raising the standard of performance *on the tests*,
- iii) increasing and emphasising social and educational inequalities.

The government has given £8m to three groups to pilot SATs. All the groups are finding it almost impossible to construct suitable tests. If the government is dissatisfied with their results we may still end up with paper-and-pencil tests — or will we, bearing in mind the enormous amount of money which has been invested?

Caroline Gipps felt that assessment by teachers was important and that, for the time being at least, teachers should teach the programmes of study and not assess by attainment targets. Statements of attainment were incompatible, she said, with formative assessments.

# Education, Vocationalism and Competence

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## Terry Hyland

A lecturer in Education at Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education, Dr Hyland has taught in primary and secondary schools. He presents a critique of the new National Vocational Qualifications and warns of the intrusion of behaviourist competency-based assessment into mainstream schooling through the National Curriculum.

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Richard Pring has recently argued for a drastic revision of 'A' level syllabuses to bring them more closely into line with GCSE and technical and vocational educational initiatives. This plea merits some attention for there is clearly a case for breaking down the stultifying academic/vocational dichotomy and trying to offer pupils a broad general education which equips them for all aspects of adult life.

This 'vocationalising' of the curriculum cannot be endorsed without certain crucial qualifications and safeguards. Pring obviously wishes to emphasise the very best elements of current vocational initiatives, not the narrow behaviourist ones typical of what Hartnett and Naish describe as the 'management' view of education. This view accords primacy to the 'requirements of industry and commerce' and regards schooling as a direct preparation for work and the purpose of education as the provision of a service for manufacturing industry and commerce.

Against this, the 'social' view of education sees schooling as the preparation of a society's young 'to enable them to become full members of society . . . and to live valuable and satisfying lives in it'. Many vocational courses simply do not satisfy the requirements of this social perspective. Certain pre-vocational schemes, however, are fully in line with the social criteria and are representative of the good practice recommended by Pring. The recent survey by Triggs of CPVE and TVEI courses highlighted some of the most valuable and popular aspects of pre-vocationalism including greater student involvement in course content and learning processes and a student-centred role in assessment.

As Triggs pointed out in *Forum*, many of these features are at odds with the requirements of the National Curriculum and its assessment system. However, even at this early stage the exigencies of implementation are causing the DES to revise its policy as, first the machinery for implementing Key Stage 4 is delayed, then (an important concession) LEAs are allowed to take charge of assessment testing for 7 and 11 year olds.

There is, however, a more sinister threat to the educational values of pre-vocationalism picked out by Triggs. This comes from the post-compulsory sector in which the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) has been effecting a quiet revolution in the structure and organisation of vocational courses. Since this revolution shows every sign of filtering downwards, not just to TVEI schemes

but to state schooling generally, there is an urgent need to raise professional awareness of the nature and implications of this phenomenon.

## National Vocational Qualifications

Following the publication of the 1986 White Paper **Working Together: Education and Training** the NCVQ was set up with a remit which included the design and implementation of a new national framework for vocational qualifications. The aim of securing national standards of vocational competence can be discerned in the early activity of the MSC (later the Training Agency) and was a prominent feature of the **New Training Initiative** in 1981. The origins of the approach can be traced back (ironically) to research and development in Performance Based Teacher Education in the USA in the 1960s, though its transfer to the British vocational scene has been accompanied by a more circumscribed conception of the central notion of 'competence'.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are concerned with competence in an occupational sense; they 'should reflect competence and be a means of ensuring a more competent workforce'. Standards of competence are based on 'performance criteria' established through consultation with leading employers in the relevant occupational fields. They are independent of any learning process and, insofar as they are concerned solely with the assessment of outcomes, are not necessarily linked to any particular course or programme.

## Educational and Vocational Competence

Since many members of the teaching profession still hold the view that education has something to do with the development of knowledge, skills and values, it is necessary to ask what implications a redescription of the process in terms of outcomes and competences would have for teaching. The behavioural objectives approach has never had much of an impact on the curriculum in this country but, under the banner of competence, the behaviourists may be allowed in by the back door.

One of the attractions of competence is that it has an objective ring to it and carries with it the idea of rigorous adherence to agreed standards. Research by Haffenden and Brown in FE colleges, however, revealed such a 'plethora of opinions about competence and its definition' that, except for low level tasks, the

supposed objectivity might turn out to be spurious. There is, nevertheless, an obvious attraction for 'management' adherents of concentrating on the quantifiable and measurable, and this makes it vital to point out the important distinction between *educational* competence and *vocational* competence.

Educational competence, using GCSE criteria for example, involves satisfying the requirements in history, geography, maths, etc., which determine what counts as appropriate achievement in terms of nationally agreed and moderated levels. Vocational competence, on the other hand, is concerned with matching up to certain performance criteria laid down by employers in their respective occupational fields.

It is possible to accept that educational competence has some role to play in the assessment system of the National Curriculum — competence is specifically mentioned by TGAT. But vocational competence carries with it grave dangers if it is allowed to exert undue influence on schooling.

### Schooling and Competence

Competency-based learning can be criticised on education grounds at both a practical and theoretical level. In practice, it can easily lead to a methodology rigidly tied to the measurement of quantifiable outcomes (still a cause for concern in relation to the National Curriculum assessment targets) thus impoverishing the educational endeavour and turning the learning process into a crude obstacle race. The demise of the Revised Code in the 19th century and the failure of the few attempts to apply behavioural objectives to the curriculum (Kelly) demonstrated that the richness and complexity of the educational task cannot be captured by a slavish adherence to a set of pre-specified learning outcomes.

A theoretical perspective which recognises knowledge and understanding only insofar as these are conceived of as underpinning performance is also wide open to attacks on its epistemological position. Wolf has attempted to salvage the NVQ position in this respect by suggesting that knowledge and understanding are 'not divorced from performance' but are 'constructs which have to be inferred from observable behaviour, just as much as competence itself'. But this only reinforces the fact that competence is separate and *different* from knowledge and understanding and, therefore, even if it did enter the curriculum list it would need to be balanced against objectives in these other areas.

It is a gross mutation of the aims of education to suggest either that knowledge is only important to the extent that it reveals itself in the performance of certain tasks or that the only understanding worth having is that which contributes to vocational competence. Furthermore, if this competence is interpreted in a narrow occupational sense the results will be both educationally and vocationally disastrous for schooling.

In educational terms, competency-based learning clearly does not satisfy the general requirements of the National Curriculum. The range of content to be

covered and assessment tasks to be completed simply defy description in terms of competence. Moreover, in the vocational sphere competence by itself will not provide what employers actually want. Research on employers' preferences indicates that a good general education is the most common demand (Wadd, 1988) and this has recently been confirmed by the CBI proposals for a core curriculum for 16-19 year olds.

### Conclusion

In his foreword to a recent collection of papers on competency-based learning the NCVQ Director of Research and Development anticipated that the new vocational trends would soon have an impact on the mainstream of school education (Jessup). He was quite correct. The National Curriculum Council, which is currently considering the introduction of attainment levels and targets into 'A' and 'AS' levels, has been instructed by Mr Macgregor to consult with the NCVQ.

In the climate engendered by the introduction of Local Management of Schools there may be a temptation to interpret Blaug's bold assertion that 'education can be conceived of as an industry' in literal terms rather than as a metaphor with dubious explanatory power and application. The idea of competence is an attractive one for the input/output efficiency analysts whose utterances carry added weight in a relentlessly materialistic age.

If we allow such a philosophy to flourish it will not only destroy the best practice of vocational schemes outlined by Pring and Triggs, but also deny the National Curriculum promise of a general education for *all* pupils. We will be plunged into that 'modern barbarism' which, as Enoch Powell has eloquently explained, results in the monstrous notion that the only educational goods are those which have economic utility.

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# Deskilling teacher assessment in GCSE?

**David Ayres**

A lecturer at Loughborough University Department of Education who has had experience of developments in 16+ assessment over many years, David Ayres explores the professional impact for teachers of the proposals to reshape GCSE to fit with Key Stage 4 assessment of the National Curriculum.

During the 1960s as a result of the implementation of the Beloe Report (1963) teachers won important gains in representation, participation and control of some forms of external examinations at 16+. In their work with the newly formed CSE boards this meant teacher control of much of the examination process and a built-in majority on most of the important policy and decision-making committees, except those controlling board finances. Equally important was the development of a whole generation of teachers skilled in the range of assessment techniques required in externally examining, assessing and moderating student achievements across the whole ability range at 16+. Twenty-five years later many of those professional gains are rapidly eroding, due to the combined effects of the GCSE Regional Group structures introduced in 1985 and aspects of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) — particularly aspects of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) and the proposed National Curriculum (NC) merger of GCSE Examinations at Key Stage 4 (KS4) in 1994. These changes are seriously threatening to reduce the extent and form of teacher involvement in 16+ assessment.

The political determination of the DES to centrally control the school curriculum and its assessment, plus the overloading of teachers in planning and delivering the many facets of the National Curriculum and LMS, may inadvertently lead to their being progressively deskilled and marginalised in the area of assessment. Unless rapid action is taken to reverse these trends, there is a likelihood in the 1990s that large numbers of highly skilled serving teachers will be squeezed out of both the existing GCSE assessment process and the innovative development of assessment techniques so essential in the run-up to the merger of GCSE and National Curriculum subjects at KS4. Already some examination boards are finding the recruitment of suitably experienced and skilled examiners difficult. The arrival in March 1990 of the draft proposals from the Secondary Examination Council (SEAC), suggesting how the GCSE General and Subject Criteria must change to accommodate the above merger, have only heightened the concerns raised.

The DES has been slow to recognise the central contribution of teachers to the successful introduction of GCSE, perhaps one of the most significant educational changes in the last half century. It could not have taken place without the expertise developed over twenty years by many thousands of classroom teachers, serving as CSE examiners and moderators and ably supported by the professionalism of the permanent staff of old CSE boards. Alongside a few

pioneering GCE boards the former CSE boards had, in partnership with their teachers, already developed modes of assessing almost the whole range of student abilities that paved the way for a single examination system at 16+. Whilst three successive DES Secretaries of State prevaricated over the feasibility of common examinations, the CSE boards continued to refine a rich pattern of assessment forms; reflecting both the curricular and teaching-learning patterns developed by schools and colleges, and the diverse needs of their students. Did the long overdue DES conversion to a belief in assessing and 'differentiating' the 'positive achievements' of all pupils and their eventual acceptance of 'criterion referencing' result from CSE teacher-examiners and moderators showing the DES that the system was workable? Only because there existed in 1985 such a large body of teachers skilled in the assessment field did the cumbersome GCSE machinery survive the impossible timetable it was given. But, will the same numbers of teachers be made available under LMS or their voices heard this time to hold the new NC-GCSE fabric together? Furthermore, will the motivation be there to make work a curriculum which they may not feel their own?

It could be argued that much of the frustration and demoralisation of teachers and the state of curriculum quality prior to ERA was more attributable to the mismanagement and misdirection of educational change within the DES during the 1980s than the fault of the chalkface professionals. To give an instance, no sooner had teachers adjusted to the first successful run of GCSE in 1988 and its powerful impact on their 14-16 curriculum, than they were faced with the frustrating prospect of being 'back to the drawing-board' in reconciling the whole of the GCSE system to a markedly different NC/KS4 subject and assessment legislation! What secondary teachers could see at an instant was almost organisationally impossible and, more importantly, educationally divisive in terms of curriculum and assessment effects, the DES mandarins, advisers and Ministers have taken two years to discover or admit! But, in his acknowledgement of the weaknesses of earlier DES proposals for KS4, Mr MacGregor has in his January 1998 concessions, deferrals, fast track and vocational course proposals further muddled an already murky pool. How can there be any credibility in his platitude that it is 'up to teachers to get the details right' against shifting DES sands?

One ironic twist is that the practices of the former Secondary Examinations Council and now SEAC in placing frustrating barriers and restrictions to teachers,

schools and examination boards that sought assessment approval for the sort of integrated, thematic, modular and Mode 3 course proposals that met their real curriculum needs have now rebounded on both the DES and SEAC. Now such approaches are even being mooted as necessary by some DES officials as an answer to another confused policy. The impossibility of timetabling ten NC foundation subjects and numerous cross-curricular themes within a GCSE framework, which the professional teachers saw immediately, has at last dawned on the DES. However, despite a partial DES conversion the latest SEAC (Jan 1990) proposals for the approval of GCSE/KS4 syllabuses make few provisions and give little precise guidance for assessing modular and cross-curriculum subjects. This seems an incredible omission, because it takes little account of the existing strong NC position of modular approaches to balanced Science (a Core subject) and Humanities. The pressing need in the next decade to develop ways of assessing a large proportion of pupils through combinations of NC Foundation subjects is hardly addressed and at worst made almost impossible to operationalise in the few guidelines for modular type syllabuses provided. But this issue and the implications of LMS for the funding of teachers to participate in GCSE development work are only strands in the case. There are also serious concerns raised by exchanges during 1989 between the DES, SEAC and the Joint Council for GCSE, which must also be faced. They cover three main issues for the whole future of GCSE — the impending rationalisation, regionalisation and a reduction of subjects and syllabus choices available to schools in the next few years. All these will inevitably remove more teachers from close involvement with the assessment process.

Under LMS there is a very real possibility of both an under-representation and unrepresentative numbers of teachers being released, encouraged and financially supported to become fully involved in all stages of these vital new assessment processes. Within DES Curricula 7/88, which covered the LMS statutory framework, it is indicated that the extent of financing of assessment and examination work will be delegated to Governing Bodies within the 10-20 percent of 'variable funds' (ie covering almost everything that are not 'fixed costs' such as salaries and essential services.) In the competition for funding curriculum activities in this part of their budget, Headteachers and Governors will have to make some hard decisions about how many staff, which staff and how often they are going to allow staff to attend examination board meetings or perform external assessment roles in school time. The issue seemed clear in 1989 when the Joint Council of the GCSE Exam Groups decided that the Examining Groups should fund the release of teachers for 'essential examining work' and there was negotiated a fee of £76 per day to be paid to meet the cost of supply cover in 1990. This now means that every Exam Group and constituent Board has to decide which aspects of its examining work, its subject committees and constitutional committee structures it will in future deem to be 'essential' and as a consequence support financially.

The basic principle of teacher participation and constitutional control, on which many of the former CSE boards were founded, may now be fundamentally at risk. It may be difficult in future to recruit sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and experienced teachers to both make the existing constitution and some boards function well or to sustain their high levels of expertise and involvement as examiners, moderators and assessors at all stages of the assessment process. Most boards are already reviewing their constitution to accommodate to the new situation. One trend appears to be a large reduction in the scale of teacher involvement and a concentration on teacher union representation. Whatever the outcome, the means by which Boards will raise revenue to fund supply teacher cover and expenses is an inevitable increase in examination fees by approximately £1-£2 to somewhere between £13.50 and £14.00 per subject entry in 1990-91. But, lower examination entry fees in a highly competitive market for candidates between the Boards can also be attractive to schools hardpressed by LMS. If lower entry costs can be achieved by reducing teacher involvement costs — and it most definitely can, especially when supported by more computerised marking, statistical moderation and a high degree of terminal examinations at the expense of coursework assessments — then the marginalisation of teachers is even more likely.

Although the GCSE/KS4 proposals will eventually provide some guidance as to expected levels of examination entries and fee revenue for the Boards, there can be no guarantee as to what the priorities of school governors or LEAs will be under LMS. Will they want to support their teachers as examiners and representatives? The LEAs could be influential here in their provision of schemes that guide and recommend governing bodies on how to spend their delegated monies in the ways consistent with NC and their own LEA policies. If, as the Audit Commission have already argued, the payment of examination fees is an entitlement of all pupils it seems that LMS powers delegated to date offer widely differing opportunities for students to pursue what ought to be their entitlement to seek external certification, validation and recognition of their achievements. In these contexts the future funding of large scale teacher involvement in external assessment is uncertain and perhaps unlikely. GCSE may not be the only area at 16+ where funding support for teachers and pupils will need reappraising. The extensive curriculum development work towards TVEI, Records of Achievement and CPVE will all have serious cost implications across whole institutions rather than on an individual student basis as in GCSE funding.

School Governors must grasp the importance of releasing teachers, as they struggle with the pressures of delegating a finite budget to the high priority issues of staffing levels, curriculum resourcing and the maintenance of buildings. The clear 'spin-offs' for schools, in having key staff closely involved in developing methods of assessing and monitoring pupils progress and the curriculum itself, must be viewed as a benefit to all school-based INSET programmes and to their own responsibilities in monitoring attainment. One suggestion here is that School Development Plans

could, in their proposals for staff development and INSET coordination, include suggestions that make optimal use of teacher expertise acquired through GCSE examination and moderation roles. It will be too easy for senior management staff and Governors of schools to welcome less release of key teachers by arguing that it will be good for their schools, as less disruption will occur to timetables and pupil progress. However palatable this may seem in the short-term it may have dire long-term effects. Perhaps some of the effects are already with us, as a recent letter to the *Guardian* highlights — written in the context of Mr MacGregor's recent campaign to recruit more teachers to the '... exciting developments of the GCSE and the National Curriculum'.

'Today my colleagues and I returned from our GCSE moderation meeting. We were told there were to be no travelling expenses paid by the GCSE Board, nor was there to be the usual lunch and subsistence allowances. We would not be getting a token from the Board which could be exchanged for a day's supply cover. The final indignity was to have a 'whip round' of 50p per head to pay the Schools Meals Service's bill for the coffee and biscuits. What future will there be for GCSE coursework when moderation has no supply cover, when schools will charge for the loan of premises and when teachers have to find their own travel and subsistence? Is it any wonder that there is a looming crisis in education and the morale is at such a low ebb?'

There are other moves afoot — to dramatically reduce the number of GCSE subjects and syllabuses available to teachers — that will further deskill them in the years ahead. When GCSE and NC coalesce in 1994, it is the intention of SEAC to provide 'an irreducible minimum' of syllabuses; accompanied by such a slogans as there being 'sufficient, but not excessive choice'. There is no agreement as yet as to what constitutes an irreducible minimum, but it is clear that the number of syllabuses

and modes of assessment available to teachers will be very small compared even to recent years. Subject and syllabus choices are already over 50% below pre-GCSE level, but it is not beyond the possibility that in some key subjects only one syllabus will in future exist, only varying in its assessment modes and schedules. The sum effect of what is proposed will again reduce the number of teachers regularly engaged in external examining work and prevent a new generation acquiring such skills. The Joint Council and some GCSE Groups have been exploring the possibility of extending regionalisation and for some rationalisation and standardisation of procedures across all Groups. But are they too late? There is a scepticism amongst more experienced Board Officers that the dissolution of the Joint Council is now quite possible and an era of perhaps three regional boards (or more radically one national examination board regionally administered) is not far away.

As the proposals from SEAC assert that Key Stage 4 of the National Curriculum is best delivered through a GCSE framework for most pupils — with no lesser figures than Mrs Angela Rumbold and Mr Philip Halsey for the two agencies now making complimentary public remarks concerning GCSE examinations — then it is imperative that every effort be made to restructure our examination boards and groups to safeguard the high involvement of serving teachers that has enhanced their current status. It should not have escaped the notice of the DES that the two GCSE Exam Groups with traditionally the highest teacher participation in their workings, namely NEA and MEG, have also been by far the most successful in attracting professional support — attracting over 60% of all examination entries in 1989.

# History in the Primary Curriculum

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**Graham Rogers**

Formerly a lecturer at Lancashire Polytechnic, Graham Rogers has been a member of the History Department at Edge Hill College of Higher Education since 1979 where he teaches on the B.Ed degree. He discusses the Final Report of the Working Group on History in the National Curriculum.

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No-one who seriously values the contribution which history can make to children's education could question the need to build a systematic approach to the teaching of the subject in schools and of the kind which will attract broad support. In many important respects the authors of the Final report have done an impressive job of meeting both of these considerations. Few, I suspect will have envied their task and I would not have relished the prospect of fending off the political overlords with one hand and placating the sensitivities of the education establishment with the other. Teachers in the primary sector are already overburdened and perhaps many will resent further intrusion into the cherished autonomy of the primary school classroom which is sometimes defended as an unassailable virtue in its own

right. Yet it is also clear that the absence of any firm and nationally agreed guidelines had impoverished children's history education for far too long. The thrust of HMI reports from 1978 onwards into the teaching of history in primary schools amounts to a catalogue of disaster with their much quoted references to whimsical topic work in history, the lack of systematic provision for children's learning in the subject and the ubiquitous regime of mindless and mechanical copying or drawing tasks which constitute many children's only contact with the past. If that is the price of curricular freedom and classroom autonomy then, sadly, it is a heavy price which countless children have already paid as far as primary school history is concerned. In terms of current practice the National Curriculum proposals

for history at least have the potential benefit of ensuring that no part of a child's education entitlement should be treated as peripheral and inconsequential.

Yet many of the circulars and directives which have rolled off their press in the run-up to the launch of the National Curriculum have provided alternatives that are no less palatable and shed very little light on the issues which will really matter to teachers. The DES's own **National Curriculum: from Policy to Practice** (1989) is a case in point. It is particularly platitudinous and patronisingly bland in the way it glosses over the overriding question of how the curriculum is to be delivered. Admittedly, no teacher would welcome an overbearing prescription of how to organise children's learning, especially from those who have limited contact with the classroom. But they are entitled to more explicit statements about, for instance, the purpose of primary education and an appropriate pedagogy. It is not entirely satisfactory that the DES, for the most part, has shied away from a debate in which teachers and educators have been engaged over recent years and which was beginning to bear fruit. Instead **Policy and Practice** gives assurances that are at best presumptuous and at worst fallacious. We are told, for instance that 'the requirements (of the National Curriculum) will be far from totally new. Most will be familiar ground to teachers and will build firmly on present practice, which is supported to a great extent by existing materials and books.' Among teachers with an interest in primary school history that should provoke instant disbelief. What is this familiar ground — the patchwork of history topics? How many primary schools would claim to enjoy an existing and adequate stock published resources for history?

For that matter, how many publishers are tearing themselves away from GCSE's 'pot of gold' in order to address the resource needs of primary schools? And — the most crucial question of all — what constitutes 'good' practice? In almost the same breath we are exhorted to make 'sure that (curriculum development) work by teachers can go on and that good practice is picked up and spread.' In view of conspicuous lack of any kind of clarification this pious statement of hope amounts to a self-denying ordinance.

Compared with the gloom and despondency cast by **Policy and Practice** or by **History from 5 to 16: Curriculum Matters Series** (1988) the History Final Report stands out like a beacon in the night. It will inevitably attract criticism, most of it from the wrong quarter; but it will find general acceptance because, first and foremost, it has respect for the intellectual integrity of a subject which sets out to explain the past. 'In the study of history the authors point out, the essential objective must be the acquisition of knowledge as understanding.' They will have no truck with the rote-learning of historical facts. Quite rightly the working party refuses to separate out the body of information we have about the past from history as an intellectual activity concerned with injecting meaning and understanding into the tangle of 'facts' which the past has bequeathed. The group could be no more explicit in its insistence that the programmes of study are rooted in a firm grasp of historical events.

The Final Report is honest and realistic in many other ways. It reflects a considered response to the

advice and criticism, much of it constructive, which followed the publication of the Interim Report. The number of History Study Units in Key Stage 2 has been reduced, though many teachers will argue that the problem of overload has not been cured; and very sensibly, the famous five attainment targets have been trimmed to four and some of the confusing overlap cleared away. There is also a clever sequence to the programmes of study and a few glaring omissions have been rectified. However, there is some way to go and several major hurdles to be overcome before the promise to this report can be turned into effective practice. And time will not be on the teacher's side. In putting this report out to yet another round of consultations there is clearly a reluctance in government circles to endorse the rationale behind it. The Final Report will not have the final word on that score.

In the meantime the ranks of heads, teachers, governors and advisers will have no alternative but to address the thorny problem of delivering the history curriculum in the classroom: and that is where it will either flounder or prosper.

In the first instance there are massive staffing and resource implications which will be felt most acutely in small primary schools, under-resourced, already under pressure coping with the demands of the core subjects and with the added burden in many cases of delivering the curriculum to mixed age ability groups. In offering its 'non-statutory' guidance that has to be a priority for the National Curriculum Council. And, in the limited time that will be available, how do you reach out to the 189,000 primary school teachers many of whom have taught little history and who have a patchy knowledge base?

However, the logistics of putting a sophisticated history curriculum in place, enormous as they are, do not present the most intractable difficulty. Matching the National Curriculum proposals with what we value in education is the most contentious area of all. If in education generally and in history in particular we value understanding with all the attendant attributes of mind such as critical open-mindedness and imaginative creativity, then a curriculum driven by attainment targets has got to complement how we want children to learn and our professional grasp of what children can do. With SATs disappearing over the horizon the dangers begin to recede. Even so, the possibility of content-overload and the PESC formula with its element of 'essential information' could too easily translate into classroom practices which put the learning process into a narrow, restrictive straightjacket. There is much to be said for the reciprocal roles which teacher and pupils can play in that process. In primary education at least, some accommodation has to be found for the common sense, the alternative ideas, perspectives and experiences which children themselves import into the classroom and which often transcend subject boundaries. In that respect teachers' own assessment procedures should have their place. Let us hope that a degree of flexibility, which is beginning to enter Government thinking, will take that on board.

The Final Report makes the vital point that the history curriculum must have intellectual challenge to

it; but it is crucial that this should be linked to what we understand by children's capabilities in the subject, otherwise credibility will become eroded very quickly. This could be the sticking point. Central to the report's philosophy is the view that that it is possible to 'relate the nature of historical study to the intellectual growth and development of pupils'. However, we do not fully understand the extent of children's historical thinking in matters such as their grasp of chronology or their ability to get to grips with such concepts as 'evidence' and 'causation'. Indeed there is a realistic and cautionary note to Peter Knight's recent research into primary children's perceptions of the past. It confirms what many suspect: that children's conceptual grasp does improve over time but not at an even pace and that the range of response and understanding within even a narrow age-range can be perplexingly wide. We need a fuller and wider debate about the most effective classroom practices which will enable children to recognise the uncertainties of historical evidence, to exercise imagination in a disciplined way rather than as a flight of fancy, and to demonstrate 'a greater ability to discriminate and focus on the more significant issues.' There are teachers who are finding the answers to these problems but their success goes largely unreported.

On this basis it may seem difficult to sustain an approach governed by a complex hierarchy of attainment levels, where children are moved with a neatness of progression from one set of targets to the next. The assessment procedures will tend towards bewilderment and confusion because they are built on assumptions that, to an extent, are still unproven.

Nevertheless, this problem sets a challenge to be taken up by teachers and academics and, to their credit, the authors of the History Final report have set us an agenda for action. It should not signal a retreat, otherwise devotees of **1066 and All That** may still carry the day.

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# Secondary School History

**Clyde Chitty**

Co-editor of **Forum** and a lecturer at the University of Birmingham School of Education, Clyde Chitty considers the History Working Group's Final Report in the context of the on-going debate about history teaching in secondary schools.

Few subjects are as important to the Thatcherite hegemonic enterprise as history. For that reason, history is by far the most sensitive part of the new National Curriculum. It was, after all, a key Party slogan in George Orwell's all-too-prophetic vision of life in Thatcherite Britain that: 'who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past'.<sup>1</sup> In **The Country of the Blind**, the One Idea is King<sup>2</sup>; as far as the New Right is concerned, it is the task of the teacher to show how the whole of recorded history has been a glorious prelude to the Implementation of that One Idea. If the Party controls all approaches to the past, it also controls our memories.

When Kenneth Baker published his guidelines for the History Working Group in January 1989, he made it clear that Britain's record as a world power should be 'at the heart of all history teaching'. Progressive history teachers should no longer be allowed to 'belittle

Britain's heritage'; and while you couldn't entirely ignore the background of ethnic minority pupils, 'one had to start with British history as the core'.<sup>3</sup>

History as a time-tabled discipline in all secondary schools had an important role to play in the development of the key right-wing themes of 'identity' and 'nation'; and it became essential to overturn the supposedly Marxist and liberal orthodoxies of the 1960s. Yet, as with other areas of the curriculum, when it came to actually deciding on the composition of the History Working Group, it wasn't easy to find respectable academics who subscribed wholeheartedly to the New Right agenda. While, therefore, the Right can view with a certain grim satisfaction the gradual disintegration of our state system of education, it has been powerless to prevent the detested 'educational establishment' from playing a leading role in formulating the courses of study and assessment targets integral to a national curriculum.

## Empathy

For many years now, a good deal of progressive classroom practice has sought to make a distinction between *knowing the past* and *thinking historically*, with the old-style linear approaches to the subject in retreat to the so-called 'new history', an approach based on the study of themes and issues and using empathy to give pupils a sense of the past. It is this new approach which arouses fierce passions among both disciples and opponents.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate described empathy in 1985 as:

'the ability to enter into some informed appreciation of the predicaments or points of view of other people in the past. It depends on an imaginative interpretation of evidence and, in particular, on an ability to be aware of anachronism and to imagine historical circumstances, the outcome of which could not be known at the time.'<sup>4</sup>

It is clearly not the same as wholly *identifying* with people in the past. Still less are children being asked to *sympathise* with them — an idea which has all sorts of horrendous moral and historical implications. According to John Slater in a recent Professorial Lecture at the Institute of Education in London:

'Empathy seeks to define the limits and the intellectual procedures which enable us to ask questions of current social as well as historical importance, in order to understand and estimate how other people behave.'

It can, in his view, enhance the status of history as a *humanity* and help, if only in a limited sense, towards the creation of a more *humane* society:

'Empathetic thinking may also . . . make us less likely to patronise our fellow human beings . . . It might, just sometimes, help us choke back mockery, give condemnation second thoughts, halt prejudice in its tracks, put a brake on violence, and if not in others, at least in ourselves.'<sup>5</sup>

The empathetic approach has, however, been criticised for its fragmented content, lacking in continuity and apparent focus. For many, the 'new history' is both crude and untenable, with the 20th century pupil transported to a bygone age, but still with the mind-set of the present. Among academics caught up in the controversy, Dr John Roberts, Warden of Merton College, Oxford, and a member of the History Working Group, has made his own opposition very clear:

'Frankly, I think that . . . the use of empathy has been profoundly unhistorical . . . It can give a very crude representation of the past. There has been a tendency among some history teachers to see the Chartists as some modern Trots or members of the TGWU. The notion that you can really give pupils an insight into sophisticated mental processes is wrong. What would be the first thing to strike you if you were to step out of your own front door into the past? It would be the smell. We have got to get the heat out of empathy.'<sup>6</sup>

On another level, the debate has been highly politicized — and particularly where it relates to the fourth and fifth years of the secondary school. Professor Robert Skidelsky, for example, in an article entitled 'History as Social Engineering', has argued that the empathetic approach is 'a good example of how a valid historical idea has been hijacked for a political purpose'. According to Skidelsky, the empathy requirement in the GCSE history curriculum involves little content and a great emphasis on skills. These skills cannot lead to historical knowledge or understanding and in their absence Left teachers are in an ideal position to *impose* their views. Since there are no facts to refute interpretation, the way is open for Marxists and

Socialists to manipulate students' feelings — which is 'the essential purpose of the empathy exercise'.<sup>7</sup>

To this sort of criticism, Raphael Samuel has replied that 'the practice of encouraging children to 'empathise' with the past is liberal rather than socialist in inspiration'.<sup>8</sup> And Keith Jenkins has elaborated on this by pointing out that the way empathy is defined and constructed within the new GCSE deliberately eschews indoctrination, whether of Left or Right, by encouraging the weighing up of the pros and the cons:

'Here we have all those similarities and differences, all those compare and contrasts, all those 'on the one hand, and on the other hands', all those debates and controversies, which live deep within liberal academic discourse.'<sup>9</sup>

The Final Report of the Working Group deals with this controversial issue by neatly side-stepping it:

'Confusion has surrounded some concepts such as 'empathy' and some of the strategies by which history has been taught, for example, in 'humanities' courses . . . We have no wish to take sides in these debates. They seem to an extent contrived, or to rest on thin evidence — or even misapprehension. The distinction between traditional and new forms of history has almost certainly been exaggerated.'

Despite these rather bland sentiments, the debate between the supporters of empathy on the one hand and of straightforward content on the other is an important one and might even, as Raphael Samuel suggests, do something to 'enhance the status of history and teachers' own sense of vocation and worth'. Many on the Left argue that the empathetic approach is 'epistemologically flawed' — but accept that the proponents of the 'new history' can point to many fine examples of excellent classroom practice. At the same time, given that the Working Group was never likely to make a fetish of skills at the expense of knowledge, we must not lose sight of the equally important issue of the type of content that we would want a national history syllabus to embrace.

## Content

Here the most fruitful change in historical attitudes over the last twenty or so years has probably been the emergence of 'history from below' — the realisation that 'ordinary people' do, in fact, have a history worth studying. Christopher Hill has argued that this new emphasis must be related to the emergence of a more self-consciously democratic society.<sup>10</sup> History used to deal, more or less exclusively, with kings and their mistresses, prime ministers and wars, statutes and debates in Parliament. Now the work of Eric Hobsbawm, George Rudé, Keith Thomas, Edward Thompson and Hill himself has changed all that; and there is a new and welcome emphasis on the poor, the family, cultural minorities and women in order to 'rescue them', in Thompson's phrase, 'from the enormous condescension of posterity'.<sup>11</sup> If this change is as deep-seated as I suspect, it will be difficult for the traditionalist to convince us that only political, constitutional and administrative history is *real* history. It will also be difficult to convey to pupils a profound sense of the unimportance of their lives.

## The Working Group report

Given the absurdity of trying to contain all the past within *one* national history syllabus, it has to be conceded that the Working Group has done a better

# Developing Pastoral Teams

**Tony Jeavons**

Deputy Head at Holyrood School in Somerset, Tony Jeavons is researching the process of change in schools for an M.Phil and here suggests how pastoral teams may be made more effective.

In the last few years we have come to speak increasingly in schools of 'teams' and 'teamwork'. This, of course, is not new but perhaps what is new is the variety and complexity of the teams now operating in the larger secondary schools.

Team work has been described as 'playing from the same sheet of music' and certainly if we view teams simply as groups of individuals working together towards some common purpose and, in so doing, achieving more than they could alone, then their justification in any school would seem self evident. Yet the concept of teamwork has until recently received scant recognition or practical support from LEAs. Given the practical difficulties involved in providing Inset for groups of teachers this emphasis was perhaps inevitable and attempts to circumvent problems by 'cascading' Inset were doomed to failure and even derision. Surprisingly, it has been national rather than local initiatives that have now begun to provide at least the opportunity for schools to truly orchestrate change. First came the 'Baker Days' providing the means for whole teams to meet and plan together. Even the National Curriculum provided something of a window of opportunity for the 'team concept', particularly its demand for the delivery of co-ordinated cross-curricular themes. Nor did it take LEAs long to appreciate that the simplest, most cost effective way of fulfilling their statutory obligation to monitor the National Curriculum was to instigate some sort of team review process in schools. All these factors, coupled with the 'school audit' bandwagon now gathering momentum, mean that over the next year or two the

spotlight is likely to be shining with increasing intensity on the teams at work in schools.

The point is that we are busily creating new teams. We are even attempting to monitor and evaluate teams; but we appear to be doing rather less to develop and enhance the teams that we already have, particularly those created to deal with 'pastoral' matters.

In schools it is departmental teams that have the longest pedigree and the greatest experience. They are also often the most successful teams. How do Pastoral teams compare?

## Departmental teams

1. Team membership usually relatively small - involvement is high.
2. Team members are united by a clearly defined purpose for which they have been trained.
3. Team members usually work in close co-operation on a daily basis, often in the same 'home-base'. Communications are good.
4. The team leader has often been involved in recruiting members.

## Pastoral teams

1. Team membership is usually higher - often 2 or 3 times the size of department.
2. Team members often have no clearly defined and agreed purpose for which they have been specifically trained.
3. Team members often work isolated from each other for the bulk of the day. Communications can break down becoming a cause of intense irritation.
4. The team leader is rarely involved in recruitment. Rapid consultation is the best that is normally achieved.

job than many of us dared to hope. The entire national curriculum is divided into 40 history study units, of which there are three types: a core of British, European and world history; optional units to reinforce the core and broaden studies; and school-designed units to draw on individual teachers' specialist skills and local resources. The amount of British history has been raised from 40 to around 50 per cent of curriculum time; but the Working Group has stuck to its guns on assessment. The four attainment targets (which largely govern assessment) will measure pupils' ability to demonstrate their knowledge through historical understanding and skills. It was apparently decided that it would be counter-productive to specify essential knowledge in the attainment targets.

As we contemplate the end of Thatcherism, at least in its pure form, we need approaches to learning that challenge existing values and explore the possibilities for human action. The study of history can blow pupils' minds — and often does in the hands of skillful teachers. If it encourages independent thought and

discussion rather than deference and conformity, it will have justified its place in the National Curriculum.

- 1 George Orwell *Nineteen Eighty-four* (Penguin, 1949) p. 199.
- 2 Rory Bremner's version of a famous quotation from H G Wells's *The Country of the Blind*.
- 3 Celia Weston 'History to Focus on past glories' *The Guardian* 14 January 1989.
- 4 HMI *History in the Primary and Secondary Years: an HMI View* (HMSO), 1985 p. 3
- 5 John Slater *The Politics of History Teaching: a Humanity Dehumanized?* Special Professorial Lecture, Institute of Education, University of London, 1989, pp. 7-8.
- 6 *The Guardian* 13 March 1990.
- 7 Robert Skidelsky 'History and Social Engineering' *The Independent* 1 March 1988.
- 8 Raphael Samuel, 'A bit of conflict is exactly what history needs' *The Independent* 27 March 1990.
- 9 Keith Jenkins 'Empathy and the Flintstones' *The Times Educational Supplement* 13 March 1988.
- 10 Christopher Hill *History and Present*, 65th Conway Memorial Lecture (South Place Ethical Society, 1989) p. 12.
- 11 E P Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin 1968) p. 12.

These inherent weaknesses in the structure of pastoral teams are well known but rarely tackled systemically. Instead, reliance is usually placed on energetic and committed leadership to mitigate the worst effects of such difficulties. The cost of such reliance can be high. Perhaps instead we should be taking the opportunity to tackle head on some of these basic deficiencies in the organisational structure of our pastoral teams.

### Membership and Involvement

Every effort needs to be made to keep team size within manageable limits. This is obviously more easily said than done, though in many cases sub-division may be an effective answer. Meetings must be regular and attendance mandatory. A schedule of regular team meetings timetabled in the school calendar has been the vital starting point for team building in many schools, including my own.

School policy statements and appointments processes also play a fundamental part in enlarging the teacher's view of her role and the expectation of her involvement within the team.

The starting point for developing a collective view of the purposes of the pastoral role is the creation of a school policy statement. This is often (though by no means always) produced as a result of extensive consultation. The problem is that in the majority of schools this is not only the starting point, it is also the stopping point with policy statements everywhere growing dusty on shelves. In reality, what is needed is the provision of regular opportunities for year teams to discuss and agree their aims for each particular year. Year teams differ enormously in composition as do year groups. Students' needs change constantly. The purposes of the 4th Year team should not be identical to those of the 1st Year team though both should support the school's policy on pastoral care. The process of articulating and making explicit these purposes once a year will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to any team's development. If such purposes can be informed by an annual survey of their students' needs and attitudes, then so much the better. If the result of the exercise is the publication of an annual statement of the team's agreed aims for the coming year, better still.

### Co-operation and Communications

Teams need to agree on what they are trying to achieve. They also need to discuss and agree exactly how they are going to attempt to achieve their aims. For example:- a priority one year may be the need to tackle the overt sexism amongst the boys in the year group. This aim is agreed by the team. It is consistent with the school's stated policies. The question is then what specific activities to promote to support this aim. This might involve changes to assembly or PSE themes, visitors, changes to student committee membership rules or negotiations with particular faculties to influence their activities. In becoming specific the team becomes influential, achieving a real sense of purpose. Each team member brings a different perspective and expertise to enrich the debate. An apparent weakness becomes a strength.

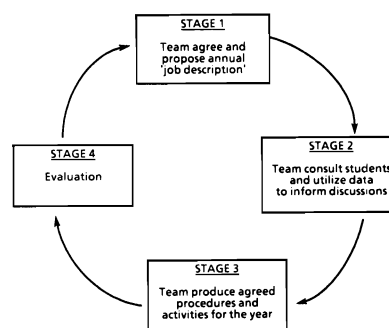
Co-operation can, however, easily break down through poor communication. Here again a great deal can be done if the commitment exists. Tutor groups can be sited together to enable tutors to meet and share more easily. Office and resource facilities can be provided. Even the existence of a coffee machine in a centrally located Year Head's office can make a significant difference! Perhaps more importantly, time needs to be made available at team meetings to discuss and agree procedures. Exactly who is responsible for doing what? Who needs to be informed and how? These all need to be agreed not once but regularly as the composition of the team changes and students' needs develop.

### Recruitment

Whilst schools appear to be recruiting staff solely to membership of one team all other teams will continue to suffer. The concept of multi-team membership needs to be reinforced at every opportunity from the initial recruitment publicity, through the selection and appointment procedures and into the induction process. Senior staff, Governors and LEA officers will need to speak with one voice. The message must be consistent. Perhaps the most persistent offenders here are LEA advisers whose narrow view may at times conflict with that of the forward looking school. If the adviser knows the school well and is a frequent visitor there is usually no problem. An appointments policy statement may be useful for briefing those whose knowledge of the school is less than complete. Your team leaders should be involved in recruitment as a matter of course, probably in co-operation with a member of the senior management team deputed to cover pastoral matters with all applicants. Only then will new teachers be aware of the full range of their new responsibilities.

### Conclusions

Most of what has been said about Year teams can surely be viewed as more widely applicable. The processes outlined might, at first sight, appear rather impracticable. In reality they need take only three meetings each year. Inevitably the first annual cycle is likely to be rather more protracted, but in subsequent years stages 1 and 3 may merit only an agenda item each at the team's routine meetings. At the heart of the process lies the annual cycle of team activities summarized below.



Such a process cannot, of course, succeed in isolation. It must be viewed as an integral part of a wider 'whole school' policy of team support and development.

# The Death of the Dinosaurs

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**John Anderson**

Previously a Vice-Principal at Bosworth College in Leicestershire, John Anderson is Head of Beckfoot Grammar School, a 13-18 comprehensive in one of Bradford's tertiary consortia which were developed ten years ago. He wrote about this scheme in **Forum** vol 23 no 3 and vol 27 no 3 and now argues the case for small secondary schools in today's context.

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We know that the dinosaurs did not become extinct in a reptilian Armageddon. Like most species, they died out with a whimper, as the ecosystem became unsuitable for them. Likewise, big secondary schools, by which I mean those over 1000, and increasingly those over 500, are being overtaken by the evolution of the society around them. Many of these schools have a brain, sometimes located in the Head; but, like the great reptiles, their reaction time is too slow, particularly in the chill winds of the present political and economic climate.

The rationale for such schools was that they introduced economies of scale, legitimised by a much wider choice for pupils within them. Business organisations were similarly gargantuan. Now there are only about 400 businesses in this country with over 1000 people on one site; and their number is being reduced annually. But, according to the DES, there are still 1033 schools of this size. Moreover, their concern is not mass production of objects but people-production — and that in an economic undertaking in which the pupils are part of the process, not a mere product. It has always been suspect to create people in huge organisations. And what is happening in industry? Xerox and many firms are being broken into smaller, self-dynamising groups. Peters and Waterman recommend 'skunk works', which I prefer to call 'beaver-works', of task groups which form, create, act and wither away. Microprocessors and modern telecommunications provide the means for holding small groups together in a common purpose. Alvin Toffler talks of 'corporate dinosaurs': as can be seen, they are well on their way to extinction.

Smaller schools too are now possible for the following reasons. There is no longer any need for a wide choice of subject for pupils. We all remember the schools which boasted that hundreds of different menus were available for pupils 'à la carte'. Now we all have a 'table d'hôte': it is called the National Curriculum. The Maitre d'hôtel is Mr MacGregor. If we need any more evidence of this trend, we only have to look at the spread of Humanities, Integrated Arts and Combined Science in 'the entitlement curriculum' as we, and many other schools, call it. Why do we need many parallel groups in these subjects when one group would do? Differentiated learning materials, individualised resource-based and computer-based learning, coupled with the increasing expertise of teachers in mixed ability teaching, make a single group for a subject perfectly feasible.

Parents have long been suspicious of the large school. They rightly fear its anonymity. Most meetings in

corridors are encounters with strangers. Pupils will do things when they are not known, to people whom they do not know, far more readily than they would to those whom they do know. A large mass of teenagers in a teenage ghetto called a school produces its own adolescent mores: a thousand teenagers are only together at school — and at football matches. But the aim of the school is to inculcate more mature, adult attitudes. Every time a school gets bigger, the ratio of adults to pupils stays the same but the number of teenagers becomes more potent. Yet, if we are to attack the alienation of the young from our schools, they must feel that they belong to them; if we are to tackle the disastrous 'staying-on' rate in education and replace it by a 'drop-out' rate, young people must feel a self-respect in an educational environment engendered by constant positive reinforcement from those they know. Love is a normal feature of families; charity replaces it in larger units. The large school is such a unit and resembles a city; it should be like a village. Otherwise it will continue to mirror our urban failure.

Small schools also reduce stress. I have worked in schools of 300, 600, 1700 and 950. The first was by far the least stressful because it was on a human scale not a factory-scale. I am seriously concerned about the stress in all teachers. Few work to retirement age. The National Association of Head Teachers reports that only a quarter of Heads retire at the normal age. I believe that they need more job-satisfaction through smaller schools, not larger salaries for the same jobs. After all Heads would not be able to retire early if they were not well-paid in the first place!

Moreover, in smaller schools there would be more Heads; more teachers would be able to exercise the powers of leadership of which many are eminently capable. The frustration of careers unable to reach a peak because there are so few Headships of such very large schools would be reduced. Further, study after study demonstrates the crucial role of the Head; other research studies, *pari passu*, show the declining field for Headships. This trend must be reversed.

Mr Baker sought radical solutions. He sent a fact finding group to New York. They did not return saying, 'We have seen the future; it is New York'. On the contrary, one member of the party, Mervyn Flecknoe of Carlton-Bolling School, Bradford, said to me, 'We saw the past'. The **TES** of 25.11.88 reported that the consensus about schools in New York was of cutting them down to size in units where the children of an imperilled generation can be nurtured in family-sized groups. Ernest L Bayer, the influential President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of

Teaching, addressed President Bush, the 'Educational President', with these words: 'If I had one wish for school reform, I'd break up every . . . school into units of no more than 400 students'. In Britain we now have the Human Scale Education Movement, and it is growing. The Movement's members understand an essential point: human beings — and particularly the young of the species — need a strong, supportive milieu in which they can rebel. For that is what the young ought to do; adults in their turn must resist. Adolescents need to protest and question within bounds that are yielding, but not so elastic and unpredictable that they can burst through. In a big school it is extremely difficult, however, to get consonance of standards among all the staff.

Small schools can be more neighbourly. Big schools often have extensive programmes to educate the community. But many of those who attend are car-borne. Very few pupils attend in proportion to their numbers. Because the school is big, many of the pupils often live a long way away. The far-flung community cannot own the school; its size puts people off.

There are emerging solutions. In Bradford we have well-established consortia of schools and colleges. I prefer to call them 'Commonwealths' to show that they are to do with shared riches and the 'commonwealth' or the common good, as the early meaning of the word implied. Our own North Bradford Commonwealth offers an unusual but vital language, Russian, in the late afternoon; joint work for the very able from several schools; a joint careers and opportunities convention; joint recreation programmes for older pupils; and a joint timetable plan for years 12 and 13 in the schools, all of which have flourishing 6th forms. Such an organisation can cater for small schools and provide the enrichment where it is needed. Small schools can provide the basic national curriculum and resort to a local commonwealth centre for provision for a minority for a sports hall, theatre, swimming pool, or any convivial activities where a large number of people is important.

The Local Management of Schools has, it is maintained by some, increased the pressures for schools to become bigger. The formula, however, can and does have weightings for 'smallness'. If LEAs were composed of many small schools, with a sliding scale of a sizeable amount of finance available, increasing as a school's standard number became less, smallness would not be ugly but beautiful. Some LEAs already see schools of 90 as viable while others see 350 as a minimum. Plainly there is no received opinion on this!

Open enrolment and inter-school competition for numbers can be moderated by voluntary cooperation (with great economic and educational advantage to all) as in the North Bradford Commonwealth. The standard number has to be agreed with the DES; schools failing to reach that should not expect extra resources simply because of lack of success in recruiting. Indeed, in our school, we and the DES have just agreed a reduction in our standard number which will keep us permanently below 1000. All parties concerned seem delighted in this. Certainly parents are. Since national policy is to concentrate on the family rather than an 'illusory' society, family-sized schools at all age levels should be facilitated by government policy backed by government money through Educational Support Grants, the one form of funding which does reach schools. There is now no ceiling on the size of ESGs: 10% of the national education budget could be applied to encourage reorganisation into small schools, backed by the combined and unusual combination of the county small schools lobby and the inner cities revival group. In this way living villages could be preserved, and city neighbourhoods could be brought to vibrant life.

Local authorities still have the power to organise schools. Where is one far-sighted enough to see that a reduction in scale for schools could give the element of choice which politicians want and the size parents require, leading to that most unlikely of combinations — a united aim between people and politicians, together with the revival of the flagging energies of teachers?

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## Reviews

### The Scots experience

**Governing Education: a Sociology of Policy Since 1944**, by Andrew McPherson and Charles D Raab, (Edinburgh University Press 1988), pp.555, pb £12.50

There is space only to draw *Forum* readers' attention to this magnificent book, a product of the Centre for Educational Sociology at Edinburgh University. Although (literally) weighty and lengthy, this reviewer found the book a really compelling read — in some ways comparable to a top class detective novel. This is because the authors set out to

unravel what really happened — how policy was in fact made, using a mass of oral material from interviews with leading actors several of which were carried through many years ago. In the transition to comprehensive education Scotland, of course, is and has always been more advanced than England, and the two chapters detailing this transition make very fascinating reading — especially, perhaps, to long-standing readers of *Forum*.

It is impossible to give an overview of this book in a short space. It must suffice to draw attention to what is, in fact, a remarkable production, and one that covers, in one way

or another, the whole history of development north of the border since 1945 (though focussing on secondary education). The volume is marked by a sharply critical approach, and this is all to the good. Edinburgh University Press is surely to be warmly congratulated on producing so lengthy a book at so cheap a price, and the authors for producing so sharp an historical analysis, utilising modern sociological techniques, in so fascinating and readable a way.

BRIAN SIMON  
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## Vocational schooling

**Schooling for Work in Capitalist Britain** by Chris Shilling, Falmer Press (1989), pp.214. £9.95.

There is now a massive literature on vocational education and training in Britain. As a result, it is difficult to know what to read or to imagine what else there is to say. Against fierce competition, Shilling's book must rate as one of the best in this field; and he also recognizes that there may indeed be *much* more to say!

The book is divided into two parts. Part One offers a social history of vocational schooling and Part Two examines vocational schemes in action. The two sections of the book reflect the different, but interrelated questions which he sets out to explore. Firstly, how did vocational schemes come to occupy the prominent position they now hold in the education of certain school students? What are the origins of vocational education; how and why has it developed in recent years? Secondly, he asks 'how is it that a vocational scheme could lead to the alienation of a student from certain jobs, and how can we explain this gap between the intended and actual outcomes of a course?' I found Shilling's explanation of the latter set of questions more persuasive than the former.

In Part One he outlines three phases in the development of vocational schooling. The period from the late nineteenth century to the First World War is labelled the 'entrepreneurial' period when there was little state involvement in the provision of technical and vocational education. The inter-war years are called the 'collective' period. During this period, Shilling suggests, the state did initiate and sponsor programmes of vocationally-relevant education but these were almost exclusively directed at the working class. The period since the Second World War is described as the 'corporate' period which has witnessed both an extension of state involvement in vocational schooling and also the direct involvement of Corporate business and financial institutions.

Shilling correctly rejects any simple explanation of these changes in terms of the technical requirements of employers. Rather, he points to a 'combination of forces from the state, education system, economy and social class' (p.55). Although limited by space, it is unfortunate that he did not address the question of why, until recently, unlike the situation in a number of other capitalist societies, technical and vocational education and training in Britain remained such a neglected area by educationalists, the state and employers.

In the second part of the book Shilling develops an interesting account of how different vocational programmes are organised in the two schools he studied. We are also told that if we want to understand what happens in practice, there are four factors which need to be considered:

'... the aims with which schemes are invested (mandate); the willingness and ability of schools to achieve those aims (capacity); the consequences of the schemes for teachers' work (career implications); and the reactions of student participants (clientele).'

This framework permits Shilling to examine the way educational mandates are assimilated into the school, and often lead to unintended consequences. An example is presented in the form of pupil responses to a school-based course called 'Factories and Industry'. The details of the course presented by Shilling sound more like a programme of indoctrination rather than of education, yet the individual and collective knowledge about working life which pupils obtained outside of school, and which was commonly reinforced by their 'work experience' placements, provided them with a far more sceptical view of factory work and the likely impact of new technology. Moreover, in his conclusion Shilling recognizes, as did Dewey and Marx, that work experience can lead to critical awareness, perhaps more often than to a blind conformity and compliance to the disciplines of the labour market.

In conclusion Shilling also argues that:

'Perhaps the best way to describe contemporary trends with regard to vocational education is as a result of *interaction* between the state in the process of being restructured and a mode of production in crisis' (p.182).

The problem with this kind of explanation, and much of what has been written in this area over the last decade, is that it is *comparatively* weak. The extension of vocational education and training is not restricted to western societies with right-wing governments. It is not even restricted to capitalist societies, *per se*, but has been a worldwide phenomenon through the 1980s. If we are going to develop a progressive programme of education reforms for the 1990s, we also need to develop not only our understanding of the process of school, but also comparatively strong accounts of the relationship between education, economy and society. This book represents a valuable contribution to our existing knowledge and to our thinking about the future direction of vocational education and training.

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## An incomplete reform

**The Changing Secondary School**, edited by Roy Lowe, (The Falmer Press 1989), pp.233, pb £9.95, hb £20.00

This is the companion volume to Roy Lowe's **The Changing Primary School**, reviewed in these columns recently. It maintains the high standards of analysis of that book, as well as its readability and interest. Published at the end of 1989, it is surprisingly up to date, containing several contributions which not only take the 1988 Act into account, but also assess its likely effect in the future. Both Peter Ribbins, on 'Managing Secondary Schools after the Act', and Hywel Thomas, on 'Who will control the secondary school in the 1990's?' tackle what are very much contemporary issues.

The book covers a wide range, the various contributors focussing on specific aspects of developments over the last 40 years, all of which are related to current concerns. Secondary reorganisation — or the rise of the comprehensive school — is dealt with by the editor in his introduction, by Donald Jones in a case study of Leicestershire, and

by Edward Fearn who, in 'The Politics of Local Reorganisation', quarries his own detailed studies to produce a thoughtful and enlightening overview of educational (structural) change. In 'The Impact of Comprehensive Reforms', John Gray and David Jesson evaluate all the major studies that have been carried through relating to the 'success' or otherwise, of comprehensive education. They also indicate, quite rightly, the very partial nature of the change — in reviewing comprehensive education over the last decade, they say, 'we are dealing with a half-completed rather than a completed reform' (p.76). In spite of this, their conclusion is that, if the primary purpose of the reform was to ensure that all pupils had the opportunity to achieve the levels of qualifications of which they were apparently capable, 'then the evidence suggests some modest success' (p.95). One problem here, of course, is that this transformation of the secondary system has met with every kind of difficulty, political and economic, especially since the late 1970s. This aspect of the movement is not, however, directly dealt with in this volume, although some of the contributions relate to it.

These include an outstanding chapter by Clive Griggs on 'the New Right and English Secondary Education'. It is not only that this is well-written; at least equally important, it is very sharply researched, and includes a mass of material specifically on the large number of mushrooming and interlocked rightist groupings which sprouted ('like dragons' teeth', as Gamble has put it) in the mid-late 1970s. Several more (eg the Campaign for Real Education) came into being in the 1980s, and it was through top level political (Thatcher) and mass media (**Daily Mail**, **Sun**) support that these made their break-through, leaving their imprint very clearly on the 1988 Education Act. Griggs analyses this process in detail and in a scholarly manner. The book is worth buying for this chapter alone.

There is also a sympathetic and knowledgeable evaluation of the work of the Schools Council (by Peter Gordon), and four highly relevant chapters by practising teachers — all well-written and researched. The editor is to be warmly congratulated in bringing these together dealing, as they all do, with major issues. Patricia Cox writes well and clearly on gender; Ian Grosvenor on race — these two contributions are especially welcome. But in addition David Cattell's chapter on TVEI and Ian Brown's assessment of 'Problems of the Urban Comprehensive Today' are both down-to-earth contributions on topics which are certainly best tackled by practising teachers.

Generally, then, this is an extremely useful compilation relating to the current scene; and of special value for anyone who wishes to probe a little more deeply than usual for the origins of our present discontents. The book is very much a West Midlands production, focussed (in terms of authors) on Birmingham. Maybe similar initiatives could be taken up elsewhere. What is needed now is a continuing critical analysis not only of ideologies competing for hegemony, but also of practical developments on the ground. Any such initiative could well take this book as a model.

BRIAN SIMON  
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## Another LMS Manual

**Financial Delegation and the Local Management of Schools: Preparing for Practice**, by Hywel Thomas with Gordon Kirkpatrick and Elizabeth Nicholson, Cassell Educational Ltd. (1989), pp.181, £16.95

This A4-size spiral-bound book is not one to sit down and read from cover to cover: it is essentially a training manual, containing pages which may be photocopied or reproduced for use on an overhead projector.

It is in two parts. Part I, 'Context and Cases', provides background information on financial delegation to schools together with two very enlightening case-studies demonstrating experience in both primary and secondary schools in Solihull. Part II (the majority of the book) is headed 'Preparing for Practice' and covers financial delegation, formula funding, open enrolment, staffing delegation and performance indicators. Finally, there is a very useful bibliography and an index of subjects.

In their introduction to the book, the authors suggest that the 1988 Education Act 'redefines the distribution of power and authority within the government of education', in particular the delegation to school governors and head teachers of many of the powers and responsibilities which traditionally rested with the Local Education Authorities. The purpose of the book is to enable all those working within the education service to learn 'new roles, responsibilities and skills'.

I found the case studies in Part I particularly instructive. During the first year of financial autonomy, for example, the head of the primary school set four ground rules: to be financially cautious, not to disrupt or increase the staff workload, to involve the governors and to look for improving 'pupil opportunity'. I was also pleased to note that 'the head's involvement in the budget now takes less than two hours a week'!

The bulk of the book, Part II, provides a huge amount of training material which will be invaluable for use with staff and governors. In fact, the authors suggest that the book is for advisers and inspectors, governors of schools, LEA elected members and their officers, parents, teachers at all levels of seniority and the non-teaching staff with whom they work, as well as for those with training responsibilities in this area. It is interesting to note, too, that there are tasks which ask participants to consider pupil involvement.

The five chapters each consist of a number of themes. Chapter 3, Financial Delegation, for example, includes Resourcing the Schools, Understanding the Budgetary System, Resource Management and Resource Decisions. Each of these is then divided into Units. For each Unit there are information pages and/or task pages. Almost all these pages may be photocopied or reproduced for use on an overhead projector and they are excellent. All the pages are clearly set out, the information pages taking the form of tables, graphs, charts or pre-task reading material. The task pages in each Unit are preceded by a Task Title Page which lists the theme, the aims, the time likely to be needed, the objectives, method, materials and possible outcomes of the task.

I am particularly glad that the last chapter deals with Performance Indicators. Much has been said and written about these of late: this book presents the subject in a clear and logical way which should enable the staff and governors of schools to understand the issues and offers practical help in implementing appropriate measures.

I wonder how many teachers have yet begun to grasp the huge range or responsibilities which Local Management of Schools implies? The authors make it quite clear that LMS is very much more than just managing a budget. Their book opens up the discussion and alerts us all to the issues in an informed and structured manner.

As Head Teacher of a school taking over control of its own budget this year, I find this book absolutely invaluable. It is a fund of useful information and a ready-made training manual. It covers an enormous diversity of subjects, ranging from the appointment and dismissal of staff to the opportunities for and implications of letting school buildings; from drawing up a school policy on the use of supply cover to the development of methods of presenting performance information to parents.

I have no doubt that this book will prove immensely useful for teachers and governors and I commend it to anyone with responsibility for implementing Local management or for training others to do so.

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## An element missing?

**IT-INSET : Partnership in Training: The Leicestershire Experience**, edited by Tim Everton & Graham Impey, (David Fulton Publishers 1989), pp.188, pb: £10.95

After being given an initial explanation of what IT-INSET involves, 'a process through which teachers, student-teachers, and tutors can work together at improving the quality of childrens' learning', I could see that it might offer a good deal to the student-teacher and to the tutor, but I was sceptical about the possible benefits to school teachers who would be accompanied in a series of lessons by two or more people who have had little recent experience of classroom teaching. Maybe because of a recognition that this reservation might be widespread the first chapter gives the teacher's perspective. My fears were allayed to a degree when I discovered that all the teachers involved in the programme gave positive support to the programme, believing that when well-planned and correctly approached IT-INSET can be beneficial to the pupils, a valuable tool of curriculum development and an aid to the teacher's own professional development. Headteachers also voiced an appreciation of the programme in their schools for similar reasons, as did tutors. Student teachers expressed some misgivings about the timescale and pace of the programme, the group dynamics, and the perceived value of all members of the group. Most students, however, recognised that being part of the programme enabled them to develop and practise skills which would

not normally be part of teaching practice, ie group dynamics, planning, observation, analysis and evaluation, in a supportive group.

The title of the book points to the central concern and underlying foundation of the programme. Throughout the book the need is stressed for there to be equality amongst the three parties involved, the teacher, tutor and the student-teacher. It becomes somewhat apparent that this is a rather ambitious objective when it is discovered that, because of the nature of the three parties concerned and the relevant egos and traditional hierarchy, many teams found that equality was not established. In some teams the tutor was obviously steering the group, in others the teacher had the dominate role, and in both situations the student-teacher was in a subordinate position.

This point is addressed in the chapter which outlines a survey of IT-INSET by HMI in some Leicestershire schools when they refer to 'an undue emphasis on the concept of equality. It would have been more helpful if the concept of equality had been understood as according respect to each others knowledge and experience whilst ensuring that critical insights remained undiminished'.

The swapping of roles helped some groups with this potential problem, i.e. teaching, observing, analysing, chairing of the meeting, taking the minutes, preparing materials, and this practice allowed for greater communication, collaboration and, hence, success.

It is made clear in the book that each institution concerned in the partnership must be familiar with the premises, practices, objectives, and implications of IT-INSET before proceeding with the programme if any real progress is to be made. The amount of time necessary to organise, plan, meet as a team and evaluate illustrates the commitment required from all members of the team and their respective institutions and the LEA in providing cover/supply and other resources to help with its success.

The book deals comprehensively with the IT-INSET initiative and its implications and gives an honest evaluation of it. There are a number of suggestions and reservations from all parties concerned which if taken 'on-board' will help those willing to pursue a programme and ensure some form of success.

One reservation about the book is that it contains no adequate research in terms of the children's learning, improved or otherwise, as the result of the programme which is expensive in time and resources. This point is made by Dr Alan Peacock in his 'evaluative overview'. The inclusion of such research might give the whole process of IT-INSET greater authority and credibility, and would perhaps, ensure its take-up in other LEAs.

The book leaves you very much aware of the pitfalls involved, and also of the hard work, planning and organising to make IT-INSET work but also with the belief that it is a programme worth pursuing as an aid to curriculum development and as a component of a professional development programme for teacher, tutor and student.

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