

FORUM

for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education

Autumn 1991

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FORUM 100

This issue

**The past, the present
and the future**

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The next FORUM

In January 1992 **Forum** hopes to carry a number of articles on the implications for our education system of our growing association with the rest of Europe.

Nanette Whitbread writes about Teachers and Parents as Management Partners; and Clyde Chitty analyses the reasons for the virtual abandonment of the National Curriculum at Key Stage Four. Kevin Sheldrick, leader of a Curriculum Advisory Team in Birmingham, discusses what appears to be mutually contradictory guidance from HMI and SEAC on Key Stage Three Assessment.

Among the other contributions, Bernard Kavanagh writes about links between English/Leicestershire and French primary schools; and a special feature on Bullying includes a major article by Derek Gillard on steps that have been taken to face the problem at Marston School in Oxford.

FORUM 100

Publication of this number is cause for celebration. It is the hundredth **Forum**: we have regularly published three numbers a year for a third of the century. With this hundredth number, **Forum** is relaunched under a new sub-title to highlight its commitment to the principles of comprehensive education.

The previous 99 numbers of **Forum for the discussion of new trends in education** strove to foster educational debate based on exchange of experience in pioneering strategies at classroom, school and LEA levels which aimed to transform schooling for all in ways suited to a democratic society committed to opening up opportunities for all to develop their interests and potential. To this end, we supported the evolution of local comprehensive primary and secondary schools and the consequent abolition of eleven-plus selection, the emancipation of pupils and teachers from the mischievous constraints of streaming with its falsely prognostic labelling, the liberation of GCE and CSE through such innovations as Mode 3 and recognition of students' coursework, and other trends which encourage self-confidence and autonomous learning.

Those new trends that **Forum** set out to encourage, and those that logically developed from them over thirty years, largely arose from creative teachers and heads and could be characterised as generally liberating. They demanded much from teachers and were not easy to carry through with immediate or obvious success. They undoubtedly raised expectations and began to transform schooling in Britain, despite persistent under-resourcing of education by successive governments.

The attack promoted by the 1988 Education Act, in the guise of 'reform', has set in train a series of reactionary measures intended not only to curb the previous trends but actually to change direction and undermine the evolving more equitable, locally planned provisions of better education for all. These new trends are generally elitist: they may benefit a minority but will reduce opportunity for the majority. They in no way originate from the experience of teachers working in schools, but have been devised by right-wing pressure groups whose key personnel always opposed what **Forum** has stood for. The editorial Board therefore decided that now is the time to change our title to **Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education**.

In this number we celebrate the achievements of **Forum** and the comprehensive education movement and begin to chart the key issues with which the journal will be concerned in the foreseeable future. Brian Simon, co-editor for the first 30 years, reviews the journal's evolving stance from its launch in 1958 to today, and two pioneers of comprehensive schooling, Pat Daunt and Margaret Miles, present their personal reflections. A series of articles examine such related matters as pre-school, primary, secondary and post-16 education entitlement, aspects of equal opportunities

within education and the significance of strategic planning by LEAs. Ways of tackling present dangers are considered in an exposure of SATs and — a **Forum** first — a case study of a successful grass roots campaign against opting out.

We believe that **Forum** still reflects what most parents and teachers want an education service to achieve in a democratic society. A Gallup Poll in June revealed that only 22% approve of the present Government's education policies and the changes currently being brought in.

Since then, a summer spate of ill-conceived and potentially damaging proposals has poured forth as John Major falls further under the spell of right-wing pressure groups and seeks to reverse every positive educational development that he can trace to an imagined 'canker ... which spread from the sixties on'. A self-confessed drop-out has now emerged, as Prime Minister, as personal champion of pencil-and-paper tests from the age of seven and as an ardent opponent of 'coursework, project work and teacher assessment in GCSE'. Kenneth Clarke has passed on his premier's pronouncements verbatim to SEAC. The post-Thatcher regime, in a frantic bid to recapture populism, is committing itself to ever more absurdities which are clearly out of tune with reality and with what most people want from education.

Now there are promising signs that acquiescence is changing to widespread alarm, outright hostility and determination to resist mindless destruction of previous achievements. In June and July conferences of the Society of Education Officers and leading elected LEA Councillors from all political parties made this crystal clear; the Catholic bishops condemned opting out; the National Federation of Women's Institutes condemned the recent White Paper proposals to destroy adult education; and Gallup found two to one among its public opinion sample opposing the current changes as a whole.

Forum is determined to play its role in helping to rally this growing resistance and to articulate sane alternatives whereby education can be restored as a planned properly resourced local public service and its quality developed for the better benefit of all.

We hope this hundredth number will give readers the same confidence in the important role for **Forum** in today's unfavourable political climate as did the first number over three decades ago. Again we appeal to readers to send in written contributions so that **Forum** can continue to fulfill its function as a journal **by** and **for** teachers, administrators, advisers, parents, governors and councillors concerned to encourage the development of sound education of high quality for all.

We have met our original target of sustaining subscriptions at or above 2000 to remain viable over the years. We know our regular readership is far greater. As at the start, we ask our readers to help us to make the journal more widely known and to win more subscriptions to ensure that its future remains secure. We invite every subscriber to win another and casual readers to take out a subscription now.

Forum: the Past and the Future

Brian Simon

For regular readers of this journal, Brian Simon really needs no introduction. He was a founding editor of the journal in 1958 and continued to be co-editor until 1989. In this article, he describes Forum's role in promoting the progressive trends of the 1950's and 1960's and in analysing and opposing the retrograde steps of the last two decades.

Our hundreth number! That's quite something. I well remember the day in the summer of 1958 when Robin Pedley, Jack Walton and I, together with about fifteen willing helpers, prepared our first mail shot launching the journal. The response was fine. Even before publication of the first number in September that year, we had close on 1000 subscribers. We soon built this up to the 2000 we needed to ensure that the project was viable. The journal was launched.

I also remember one of our first subscribers, a well-known professor of education, warning me that the surest way of losing money was to start an educational journal. And indeed over the last 30 years many have been started, and many have foundered. **Forum**, however, has remained consistently available. It has not made any money (that was never the intention) but, more important, it has not lost any. It has always been financially viable. Long may it remain so. In the present situation, it is needed more than ever.

Forum was founded in 1958 — just at the point when what C P Snow described as 'the rigid and crystallized pattern' of the school system was beginning to break open. The first number identified the 'New Trends' it was founded to discuss: 'the new types of school developing in different parts of the country (basically comprehensive schools, B S); the steps taken by secondary modern schools to transcend their earlier limitations; re-appraisal of such features of internal school organization as streaming; new approaches to the content of education' (Vol 1 No 1). This may not today sound very radical, but the central thrust of the journal from its early days was certainly twofold: first, to support and strengthen the movement towards comprehensive secondary education, and second, to work for the modification of the rigid system of streaming which, at that time, dominated primary schools in particular (but also secondary). **Forum** stood for a genuine transformation of the whole system of schooling; for breaking down artificial divisions between groups of children, for opening up opportunities equally for all, and against any kind of fore-ordained segregation which inevitably limited children's opportunities. Hence the support for comprehensive education and non-streaming.

We now take these things for granted, but in 1958 the situation was very different. There were only 86 comprehensive schools in England and Wales, educating between 2 and 3 per cent of children of secondary age (within maintained schools). Nearly all primary schools large enough were streamed; indeed, a few years later (in 1962) the NFER still had great difficulty in finding enough unstreamed schools to

match the streamed schools in their official research study on this issue. It happened, however (by chance?), that three pioneering unstreamed junior schools already existed in the city of Leicester, and the head of one of them, George Freeland, joined our Editorial Board. Others, based elsewhere, did the same, so **Forum** was well-placed from the start to monitor and discuss these issues. 1958 also was the year when the county of Leicestershire launched its famous 'Experiment and Plan', developing the two-tier secondary system and abolishing the 11-plus in two areas of the county. So crucial pioneering developments were taking place on our very doorstep.

In these years, **Forum** was working with the grain (although against official policies). Although (Conservative) governments continued to resist the swing to comprehensive education, at the grass roots, and especially in the towns and cities of the North, determination to get rid of the 11-plus and establish comprehensive education mounted. All this was monitored in the journal. A series of reports from different areas of the country in the late 50's and early 60's identified the centres of change, and charted increasingly sharp local battles for the transformation of the system. At the same time **Forum** devoted a lot of attention to questions of the curriculum and to pedagogy, or teaching within the new secondary schools and in the unstreamed situation in primary schools. Our aim was to publish articles by practising teachers who were able to draw on their own experiences and so point the way forward. It has since been argued that not enough attention was given to the curriculum in the transition to comprehensive education. From its foundation **Forum** however, deliberately carried many articles on this issue.

Forum's Editorial Board, consisting largely of practising teachers and heads, has met three times a year throughout these 33 years — a total, I suppose of 100 meetings. I think I have attended all of these except for perhaps two or three. These meetings have been an education in themselves. Here we have hammered out policy, decided on the thrust of particular numbers, pooled our knowledge and wisdom. For many years, Raymond King, head of the well-known Wandsworth Comprehensive School in the LCC and ILEA, was our chair — a job he maintained until his death when aged over 80. Michael Armstrong, Edward Blishen, Annabelle Dixon, Sam Fisher, Nanette Whitbread and very many others have been long-standing members. **Forum** Board members tend to be very articulate; but in one way or another the business of each meeting is and has been successfully accomplished. These Board

discussions have been central to the success of the journal. **Forum** started as a collective project. It has always retained that characteristic. Board meetings are normally attended by 90 to 100 per cent of members. It is largely to this aspect of its functioning that I would attribute **Forum's** success.

There have been some high spots. The first was, perhaps, **Forum's** 'Evidence' to the Plowden Committee arguing very fully the case for non-streaming in the junior school. This was published in the journal (Vol 7 No 1) and a reprint was necessary; it was also reprinted in a separate publication entitled **Non-Streaming in the Junior School**, of which the first printing of 2,000 copies sold out before publication. It was reprinted three times. Eric Linfield, George Freeland (both junior school heads) and I were invited to give oral evidence to the Committee. This was marked by a severe interrogation by A J Ayer, Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford University. We withstood this, and clearly had the support of the Committee. The Plowden Committee finally came out unanimously against the practice of streaming in primary schools. This, I think, was something of a victory. Schools voted with their feet on this issue during the 60's. Streaming, by and large, was extirpated from the system. Under recent legislation it may return. If so, these battles will have to be fought again, but in the new context. So **Forum's** job is not done.

We ran several successful conferences on this and related issues during the 1960's. Indeed this whole movement reached a climax in the summer of 1966, when **Forum** and the Comprehensive Schools Committee together organized a massively successful, over-subscribed conference with 400 teachers on the question of non-streaming in the comprehensive school. The atmosphere at this conference, held shortly after Labour's electoral victory in March, was exceptionally positive — almost electric. To many, non-streaming seemed the logical extension of the transition to comprehensive education. As I have written elsewhere, 'it seemed, at this particular moment in time, that a basic transformation of the whole system of secondary education was a real possibility'.¹

That this response reflected what was becoming a nation-wide movement was evident from its immediate follow-up in a number of areas. Well-attended day conferences were held in many centres organized by universities and local authorities. **Forum** continued to focus on this question, publishing many articles on the theory and pedagogy of teaching non-streamed classes in succeeding years. By this means, the basis was laid for new practices and new approaches in the schools — practices and approaches which still predominate, whatever the current obstacles.

In spite of the (unexpected) return of a Tory Government in the 1970 election, the swing to comprehensive education, encouraged by the issue of Circular 10/65 by the 1964-70 Labour Government in July 1965, took off with extraordinary rapidity from precisely that moment, even though the new Government itself immediately issued a new Circular in effect withdrawing 10/65. This was because many authorities, both Labour and Tory, had been planning for the transition and these plans were now ready. That is why Margaret Thatcher, the Secretary of State

for Education and Science, has recently described the swing to comprehensive education at the time as a 'roller coaster'. The number of comprehensive schools (and pupils) doubled during the four years of the Thatcher regime (1970-74). But Thatcher herself concentrated on throwing precisely-directed spanners into the works — refusing to agree to key grammar schools being reorganized. In so acting, many believed at the time, she 'bent the rules'. The situation became very fraught, with threats of legal action by some local authorities. At this point, **Forum** published **Indictment of Margaret Thatcher** (1973), an extended pamphlet exposing the full meaning of the Minister's actions. The idea came from the contemporary 'Indictment' of Richard Nixon for illegal and unconstitutional actions in the USA.

This pamphlet — anonymous but actually written by Joan Simon — was based on a detailed analysis of the legal situation and DES and Thatcher actions. It concluded that the Minister was clearly 'bending the rules' in pursuit of her political objectives. It was described in **The Times** as 'one of the most carefully documented attacks on Mrs Thatcher' (12 October 1973). By this action, **Forum** continued the job of close monitoring of proceedings.

Forum's existence has covered two distinct periods in the recent history of education. Following the tight control and financial freeze after the war, things began to open up around the years 1956/7 when David Eccles, a strong Tory Minister was in office. This is just the point when the journal was founded (1958). It seems clear that what might be called 'the heroic period' of English (and Welsh and Scottish) education was between 1956/7 and 1972/3, when the oil crisis heralded an economic down-turn, the effects of which are still with us. This period saw massive advances right across the board, from higher education to primary schools, which now came out of the cold. There is no doubt whatever that the advances made in these years have been and are *irreversible*. Within the schools, this was the crucial period for the transformation of the secondary system to comprehensive forms; for the parallel transformation of the primary schools from the rigid streaming and didacticism that went with it to what became known as 'the informal classroom'. The importance of nursery education for the under-fives was recognized from Plowden onwards as a vital foundation for equalizing opportunity, though it remains largely neglected in practice. During this whole period **Forum** reflected, monitored and encouraged these movements. The journal was working with the grain.

The second period was very different, perhaps best characterized by the phrase 'Downhill All the Way'. The struggle for comprehensive education continued of course, and won successes. But, partly because of the clear lack of political will on the part of the Labour Government in the later 70's, the reform was never allowed to achieve its full potential. Further, the atmosphere induced by the Black Papers; by constant, unprincipled and wounding attacks on the schools and their teachers; and finally by increasing centralization leading to the passage of the Education 'Reform' Act have together engendered a cold climate for the principles and practice **Forum** has stood for over three

decades. But, the journal is all the more important in the present climate. The struggle to realise these principles is by no means over.

In issue after issue, **Forum** has fought against the current thrust towards centralization. We strongly believe in vibrant local, democratic control over local school systems, and have countered, and will continue to counter, policies which down-grade local authorities and deprive them of their responsibility to provide 'excellent schools for all' (in Andrew Collier's words). Of course there are defects which need remedying; but the current insistence on all power to the Centre spells death to local authority and teacher initiatives through which all serious advances (like comprehensive education) have come in the past.

In line with this policy, **Forum** came out in total opposition to the measures announced in the so-called 'consultation papers' in June 1987, preparatory to publication of the Education Reform Bill in November that year. We formulated, printed and published our alternative policies, as did many other organizations. In March 1988, **Forum** organized one of the biggest and most successful conferences against these proposals (a 'demonstrative conference'), gaining support officially from *all* the major teacher organizations, *all* the main parents' organizations, and TUC and several trade unions and many educational organizations at Friend's House in London (see **Forum** Vol 30 No 3 for Edward Blishen's full report, and the Declaration of Intent unanimously accepted). As just mentioned, we also responded to every one of the consultation papers focused on schools and further education — with what effect everyone knows.

The Education 'Reform' Act has now been in place for three years. We have continued to monitor developments, and have made no bones about our total and implacable opposition to several of its measures — for instance City Technology Colleges, opting out and Grant Maintained Schools. We see such measures as designed to undermine comprehensive education by creating new types of schools accountable to no one — schools which will inevitable lead to a reintroduction of selection at the secondary stage.

We also see the constant and ruthless attack on local government as part of this whole endeavour — to break up local comprehensive systems and bend these to enhance differentiation both between and within schools. We oppose the whole thrust towards the imposition of market forces in determining educational development. In this situation the weak will go to the wall — and such is evidently the overt intention. In our view education is, and should be seen as, a co-operative enterprise. Mutual assistance and solidarity should be its watchwords, as they have been in the past. These values, and practices based on them, need to be substituted for the internecine strife and confrontation now officially encouraged and seen as the norm. Above all, we aim to return a fully professional role and status to the teachers, upon whom everything depends. They must not be seen as 'agents' for the 'delivery' of the curriculum, in Keith Joseph's memorable words. They should be seen as 'allies' (as Jackson Hall put it in **Forum**) having a real degree of autonomy and encouraged to exercise their initiative and creative energy in enhancing teaching and learning in the

schools and classrooms. The pages of every issue of **Forum** over the last 33 years, largely contributed by practising teachers themselves, testify to the high level of commitment and creative thinking which is embedded in the teaching profession. It is this, above all, that needs encouragement.

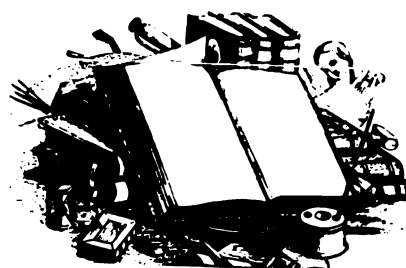
In a real sense, then, our original agenda remains in force and still acts as our guidelines. **Forum**, I feel certain, will continue the fight for genuine comprehensive education for all through the whole period 5 to 18 — and, especially now, focussing on the 16 to 18 age group. It will continue the unceasing battle for equal opportunities in the fight against racial, gender and class discrimination. There is much to be done. In education, one lesson of history is that the battles are never over.

Forum now enters its second century. There are now many 'New Trends' which we cannot support. Hence the appropriate change in our title to 'Forum for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education'. Producing these 100 numbers has been hard work, but also pleasurable — so many contacts with so many people all working to the same end: the construction of a more generous educational system than that inherited from the past. The effort throughout has been a collective one; Robin Pedley at first, then David Grugeon, Nanette Whitbread (for twenty-five years) and now Clyde Chitty have all shared the editorial work. We owe a great debt to Doreen Richardson, Judy Hunt, Anne Warwick and, more lately, Lesley Yorke, all of whom have looked after and processed our subscriptions with great efficiency and commitment to the objectives of the journal. Also to the Russell Press in Nottingham who have successfully and efficiently produced the majority of our hundred numbers, again with a sense of involvement and commitment. There are many others who might be mentioned, among them Joan Simon who has helped in very many ways (including contributing many articles) and put up with many frenzied (usually weekend) activities in preparing **Forum** for the press.

As we face what might be called **Forum's** second phase, the journal is both viable and in good hands. The editorial team of Nanette Whitbread and Clyde Chitty is experienced and highly competent. The Editorial Board, with Roger Seckington as chair, is fully supportive, representative of a very wide range of educational endeavour, and as committed as ever. There is much to be done.

Reference

1. Brian Simon. **Education and the Social Order, 1940-1990** (1991) p 309.



Birth of a Comprehensive School

Margaret Miles

Appointed to the headship of Putney County Secondary School in 1951, it became Margaret Miles' task to transform it into one of London's first comprehensive schools. In this article, she describes some of the challenges that she and her colleagues had to face.

The Beginnings

When I was appointed to the headship of Putney County Secondary School in 1951, I did not know that it was soon to become a comprehensive girls-only school, but I discovered shortly afterwards that this was so and that plans had been made for it to open in 1955.

The first two years (1951-3) were largely taken up with calming the fears and doubts of other people because, as an established grammar school, Putney County Secondary had acquired a considerable reputation among parents and in the district. However, I had been disappointed by the size of the Sixth Form and the related fact that many 'able' girls did not stay on at school after the age of 16. That was, in fact, one of the reasons why I decided to apply for the headship of the new school.

The following two years (1953-1955) were very busy and quite exciting because we had to plan the structure of the new school and also the structure of the staff. Of course we had to find teachers with experience of teaching in schools other than the traditional grammar schools.

People were saying at the time that, of course, secondary modern girls 'would not wear uniform' and would not do homework, and that sort of thing. However, we were determined that everybody should have the same uniform and that homework should be set for everybody. Also we were determined to interview all the parents who wanted their children to come to the school, just as we had done in the days of the grammar school.

We had heard that the architects had been commissioned to design a building which would accommodate 1500 additional pupils and in fact that was what they did. Of course we did not grow from 500 to 2000 immediately; we went from 500 to 1250, and then from 1250 to 1500 and eventually to 2000. When we did open in September 1955, we had a first year of 15 forms and that was quite a problem. The difficulties of breaking the first year up into groups are discussed later on.

The question of name was important and we decided to drop the old Putney County Secondary School and call ourselves Mayfield School after the name of the building which had been bought originally by the London County Council (LCC) from an industrial chemist called Mayfield and because he and his wife had left a large sum of money to found scholarships for

girls in women's colleges in London and Cambridge Universities.

It was a good idea on the part of the LCC to change from 'multilateral' to 'comprehensive' as the adjective to describe their new kind of secondary school. The trouble about multilateral is that it came to mean trilateral rather than multilateral because people thought simply in terms of secondary modern, technical and grammar schools existing together on the same site. Of course, one has to remember that the proportion of post-war pupils who went to each type of school was very uneven. For example, from about 5 per cent to 20 per cent went to grammar schools, roughly 5 per cent to technical schools and the rest to secondary modern schools. The secondary modern schools included the average, above average and all the below average children: it was hardly a type of school for a type of child. One has to remember also that a comprehensive school is not a secondary modern school with a grammar stream. It is a school in which each child has the opportunity to develop to his or her fullest extent. It must therefore have a philosophy which is outward-going and optimistic, based on the experience of success, rather than on failure to reach unattainable targets. After all, the experience of the interim comprehensive schools in London, which were made up of secondary modern and central schools, showed that, although none of their pupils had passed the 11 plus examination, many of these pupils could go on to O level and A level examinations, and to higher education.

It is commonplace to argue that mid-20th society is materially better off than any previously known society in our islands. It is also possibly more united than any society has been before because of its means of physical communication; but educationally and culturally it has been divided because an educational system designed to serve a very different society has lasted too long.

The fears that the establishment of comprehensive schools would impose on the neighbourhood a single authoritarian pattern seem to be quite dispelled by the experience of recent years during which a great many comprehensive schools have been opened. There are listed in Circular 10/65 six different forms of acceptable comprehensive organization. Experience has shown that within these six forms, there is an enormous variety of practice.

Parents, it was said, would not have a choice if there were only comprehensive schools, but here it must be recognized that most parents did not have any choice

as it was! Those children who passed a grammar-school entrance examination — whatever it was called — had the chance of going to a grammar school, but the remaining 80 per cent, or whatever the proportion was, did not normally have any choice and had to go to their local secondary modern school.

There is no blue print for a successful comprehensive school as such, and each school has worked out its own way of implementing the comprehensive idea in providing genuine secondary education for all by putting at every child's disposal the full resources of the school.

It may well prove to have been a mistake to have so many interpretations of the comprehensive idea, because of the variety of systems throughout the country. Nevertheless, it is clear that some sort of comprehensive organization is essential if the educational needs of society are to be met, especially in view of the increasing mobility of the population.

The question of size

Another big anxiety of the 1950s and 1960s was the question of size. How big is too big? But *do* comprehensive schools have to be big? There were about 2000 pupils in many of the early comprehensive schools in the Midlands and in London, and many of them were planned for this number. The reason seems to have been that comprehensive schools were seen as an extension of the existing secondary schools rather than as a *new* kind of school. The secondary grammar schools in London at the time of the first plan in the mid-1940s usually had a three-form entry, and the Sixth Forms contained anything between 20 and 60 pupils. It was felt that if the selected 20-25 per cent of the population produced Sixth Forms of this size, and if the Sixth Forms of the enlarged schools were to be truly viable, the new schools must necessarily be three or four times as big as the three-form-entry secondary grammar schools, hence the number of 2000. Where this calculation went wrong was that it ignored the fact that there were many potential sixth-formers outside the 20-25 per cent of boys and girls who were normally selected for admission to grammar school. Indeed all comprehensive schools, even those starting with a very limited range of ability, were able to produce Sixth Forms. Later planning was usually for 1250-1500 pupils and this does seem to have been enough to provide the amenities a comprehensive school demands.

However, a school of 1250-1500 is still a big school. Were there reasons for this size and are they still justified? First, it is often said that it is more economical to run one school than three or four schools, and this must surely be so when the capital cost of building and equipment is considered. For example, it is expected that secondary schools should have libraries, swimming baths, language laboratories, pottery kilns and other expensive equipment. Obviously, it is much more economical to provide these for one large school than to provide one of each in three or four schools, which would put up the costs of local provision enormously. It is also considered necessary to have the staff to provide a sufficient choice of subjects for the wide range of aptitude and ability represented in a school.

But are there positive advantages in a large school?

It has always seemed to me that size does bestow a certain dignity upon an institution. It is not necessarily frightening and it can be impressive and dignified. Children and staff do feel a certain pride in belonging to a big school. It also provides a very lively and varied social group which is an interesting though demanding background against which to work. The number of hobbies and interests represented in the community of the staff in a very big school is also remarkable. Also, a large group of parents provides interesting and varied links with society and other professional groups. The big school also seems able to avoid the petty jealousies and strains in relationships which sometimes arise in a small group thrown together and continuously together. When everybody does not know everybody's business, there seems to be a more mature and relaxed atmosphere. This is one of those generalizations which are difficult to support and which are based mainly on impression. Explained in another way, it has certainly been my experience that a large school does have a more outward-going and perhaps more mature atmosphere than a smaller one.

The greatest difficulty arising from size is organizational, given the traditional techniques of school organization in this country. In the United States, for example, where large schools are usual, the administrative staff is enormous and the administrative work is simply not done by the teachers. In this country we used to pride ourselves that the Heads of our schools were teachers, and were administrators only incidentally to their main job. Only the Head and Deputy Head were excluded from the teaching staff quota in London for a school of 2000, and this meant that, theoretically, a full teaching load had to be carried by every other member of staff, with no time allowed for administration. This meant that the administration in the school was in a sense amateur, in that it was done by administrators trained as teachers, and done in an *ad hoc* way to meet each individual school's needs. It thus depended enormously on the administrative ability of the people who were appointed to the headships and the senior teaching posts of the school. Such amateur administration worked very well in a school of ordinary size, but in a very large school where the administration was necessarily very complicated and sophisticated, it placed an enormous burden on the Head, Deputy Head and other senior members of staff. Some large authorities, particularly London, appointed administrative officers to their schools, but these were people trained in the administration of local government rather than in the educational administration of a school.

There are, then, many organizational difficulties which arise from having very big schools. The disadvantages are not so much inherent in the size of the institution as in the assumptions on which the working of the institution is based. We still have a great deal to learn about how to plan for very large schools, both in building and staffing.

It is also important to remember that many people in the 1950s held a very traditional view of the Sixth Form. I remember talking to Dr Hughes, then the Senior Chief Inspector in London, at the very beginning of Mayfield's period as a comprehensive, and when I asked why we could not develop sixth-form courses in

catering and commerce, which were two technical subjects which we needed to develop, I was told that this was the business of technical schools, not ours, and it remained for us to continue with traditional grammar-school courses for A levels, and little else.

Another of the problems of size was the need for grouping: to house or not to house, to stream or not to stream. Many secondary schools had a house system, but this was based on the public school idea of small groups of people living in the same house; it was thought that re-creating this pattern in the comprehensive school would give pupils a sense of belonging.

It seems to me that unless there is a physical place, a recognizable home for your house, it does not really help community spirit, particularly when the form master or mistress is the key person looking after the welfare of the individual. The housemaster or mistress can clash with the form master or mistress.

We decided in any case to dispense with houses because with our numbers, which were over 2000, we felt that the houses would have to be too big. Therefore we developed a Year System in which somebody looked after the year group, and the form masters and mistresses kept their same forms (unless there were any particular reasons why they should not) up to the Fifth Form. It could be argued that the people who wanted to look after eleven-year-olds were not the same people who wanted to look after sixteen-year-olds, but in practice we found that staff 'grew up' with their forms and this meant that pupils did have somebody who knew them well as they went through the School, and the job of the Year Master/Mistress became a very important one.

We relied on the Year Heads for assemblies. After all, everybody used to say you must have the whole

school together but we found having the whole school together in a hall which was really much too big was a useless exercise and was not worth the effort and hassle involved in getting the pupils there at the same time in the morning. In the end we devised a system by which everyone had assemblies only three days a week and had the other days in their form room or year room with their year or form master/mistress. For example, the seniors, that is to say the fifths and sixths, met in the old school hall three times a week, and they alone filled a hall which used to be filled by the whole of the former secondary school. The thirds and fourths met three times a week in the large hall, and the firsts and seconds had separate assemblies, one in the new hall and one in the old hall. It was a very important function for the Year Heads to take their year assemblies. We also developed a system by which one year assembly was organized by the girls with their choice of topic, and one year assembly included music rather than reading so that they learnt to know classical music either by records, or by particular girls playing instruments.

Sadly the school has moved from the Putney site, which was a combination of the old secondary 'grammar' school and the new building designed by Powell and Moya. The school has now joined up with Garratt Green School which was, in fact, a sort of daughter school; the first head was our first deputy head at Mayfield who had formerly been head of a secondary modern school. I don't know what is happening now but it is a very sad thing that all those developments which we saw in Mayfield from 1955 to the 1970s have been abandoned, and the horror of horrors is that a City Technology College is planned on the site of Mayfield.

Farewell Paideia, see you one day

Pat Daunt

Pat Daunt was Headteacher of the Thomas Bennett Comprehensive School in Crawley from 1965 to 1973 and Chairperson of the Campaign for Comprehensive Education (CCE) from 1971 to 1973. In this article he looks to our growing association with Europe for signs of a better future.

At the London Conference of TANEA this April, I was lucky enough to meet Harry Rée and so to be vividly reminded, so shortly before his death, of the precious help he gave me when (some twenty years ago) I was in doubt about the way we should aim to go ahead at Thomas Bennett. I mentioned to him that I was preparing a centenary article for **Forum**, and expecting to be able to communicate nothing other than a sense of being surrounded by inspissated, ubiquitous,

miasmal gloom. He told me I had to do better than that. So I shall try to, although at a time when it is possible for people to talk about Cambridge Village Colleges opting out, and when the Secretary of State believes that child-centred education is a form of wickedness (as if aardvark-centred or mutton-pie centred approaches were to be preferred), finding silver linings to the clouds is not going to be easy.

The clouds themselves are evident enough. Coming

home not long ago after a longish spell abroad, some of the things I hear said without contradiction are almost beyond belief. Richard North, writing in the **Independent**, complains of the low standard of spoken English; one of his remedies is to 'get the children to sit up straight and face the front, *in silence*'. His italics, of course, are no doubt designed to stress the ingenuity of a didactic whereby children learn to talk by not talking. Rubbish like this is commonplace whenever education is discussed. All data, of reading skills or whatever, are assumed to be evidence of decline; rarely if ever is there even the ghost of a thought that, without comparable evidence from the past, it is impossible to know whether what we are confronted with represents a falling off or actually an improvement. Quite as curious is the tendency among those most inclined to relish the notion of a wholesale decadence to refer, almost in the same breath, to our education as 'the envy of the rest of the world'. Alas, the degree to which we are envied can be accurately measured by the extent to which our specialized sixth form has been imitated.

Old campaigners for comprehensive education cannot, admittedly, complain merely because Paideia has been politicized: if anyone is to be blamed for having started that it might just as well be us. But the escalation has been punitive: there is a big difference between what we certainly did in the sixties, which was to bring education openly on to the political agenda, and the present drive to recruit education to the service of an objective which is not even economic, let alone social or educational, but starkly political in the narrow sense — the determination, I mean, to emasculate local institutions elected by universal suffrage.

For these reasons, it is difficult to write about present realities without resorting to political invective. Fortunately the main points can be made briefly, since they are well enough known to **Forum** readers. Twenty five years ago we were working all-out to devise and promote a common curriculum for the fourth and fifth secondary years, following Hirstian principles, in order to protect children from opting out of whole areas of fundamental learning and from being subjected to the curricular equivalent of Fast Food. Marsden in the 1969 issue of **Comprehensive Education** associated with the egalitarian approach 'a common curriculum with individual learning and delayed specialization' and considered 'very varied individual timetables of specialization' to be characteristically meritocratic. What we are offered now is what Ted Wragg calls 'Mad Curriculum Disease', an alien mass of prescriptions, one at least of whose aims is the promotion of a philistine ideology.

Local Management of Schools, another smack in the eye of LEAs, promised to be an irrelevance, but is turning out to be something worse than that in practice; however competent (it seems) headteachers may be as financial managers, there are more important ways of spending their time. The immediate impact of national testing procedures, bad as it is, will prove to be insignificant compared to the long-term effects, once the media have got their hands on some figures. As I write today, the NAHT has voted not for the modification of testing at 7-plus but for its abolition: good for them. As for opting out, the worst element of all in the 'reform', none of us could have failed to

predict its evolution as a grand strategy for the renaissance of selection and so for the systematic restoration of inequality of opportunity. All that has happened is that our cynicism has been proved to be well-founded sooner rather than later.

Where did we go wrong?

What, it may be asked, did we do wrong to deserve all this? Evidently, the 80's backlash has not been educationally-based in a direct way: the schools have been swept up in the revulsion against persistent economic failure, resulting (in my view) from an unbroken record of calamitous policy, visible as overmanning, undertraining, underinvesting, underpaying and underproducing.

Even if this is so, however, all those who worked in education in the post-war period — as academics, teachers, trainers, advisers, administrators, whatever — must share with the politicians some of the responsibility, above all for the abysmal training record, but not only for that. Looking back, and with no pretence to have had more than an untargeted and ineffectual anxiety about it at the time, I feel sure that one of our biggest failures was at 16-plus. Certainly, delay in the raising of the school-leaving age discouraged us, but this is not a sufficient excuse, since there was no compelling need to wait for that before devising a strategy that could have produced such diverse yet patent records of success at 18 that comprehensive education would have won unassailable esteem among the public at large.

Still in the light of hindsight, I should like to add to the common curriculum up to 16 and reform of 16-plus provision two other programmes which I wish we had carried through by the end of the seventies — major progress in both the professionalization of teachers and in the integration of children with special needs into ordinary schools. I should like briefly to explore these four ideas, in the hope they may be useful the next time — supposing there is a next time — it's our turn to call the tune. Underlying much of what I have to say is what seems to me an essential question: 'What should be the main features and the limits of specifically central government responsibilities in the system?'. Of all the issues, this overarching one seems to me to cry out most loudly for public debate.

As for the common curriculum up to 16, there is no need to go into details over something which so many teachers have understood and been working for since the seventies. Expressed in terms of broad subject areas, it is exactly the sort of thing which central government should long since have prescribed, as a guarantee on behalf of all children — including of course the most talented and those with severe learning difficulties — both from damaging early specializations and pseudosyllabuses cobbled up without form or purpose.

Coming to 16-plus, we need to recognise that among the main factors inhibiting reform have been the disastrous effects of Plowden, encouraging chaos in the matter of age ranges in a way that no responsible central government should ever have permitted. By truncating secondary schools at the lower end of the age-range, middle schools have made the development

of sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges effectively impossible in many areas; yet such a development was essential if the barriers between 'general' and 'technical' education were to be broken down, the right balance between common core and options struck, sufficient quality of teaching and facilities assured and a society of teachers and students created appropriate to the needs and capacities of the age group, a society designed to promote personal responsibility, foster maturity and encourage enjoyment of life.

As well as offering the theoretical base for the training of part-time students — such training being, as in Germany, the compulsory minimum up to the age of 18 — we should have long since abandoned our over-specialized patterns in favour of equally rated general, technical and commercial courses deriving their basic conception and structure from the International (not the European) Baccalaureate, though offering passes in individual subjects as well as an overall certificate. Even for students on the general course, some modification from the original IB pattern would in my view have been desirable. The basic structure of six subjects (three major, three minor, according to the student's individual choice) should stay, but in addition to 'mother tongue' mathematics, natural science and a foreign language, the provision of two options rather than a human science and one option would give far greater flexibility, quite as important (for example) for those with artistic or musical talents as for those needing more time for scientific or technical studies.

This would be balanced by replacing the IB's original obligatory theory of knowledge course by an entirely new programme of contemporary studies, also compulsory for all full-time students over 18. Based on the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, sociology and politics, this would naturally aim to develop skills as well as knowledge. That central government should prescribe it would be entirely natural in a rational world, one in which it were understood that democracy is something which needs to be actively fostered and delivered, and that one of the means for that must be the education of young people in a way that will enable them to play their part as citizens. In our country, it must be admitted, where there is virtually no vision of these things, and the idea that government should be the watchdog of democracy is perceived as unfamiliar if not actually ridiculous, any acceptance of the educational implication is, as we know, almost impossible to win. Yet the case for trying would appear to be overwhelmingly strong. If we look at the British record since the War on all the issues which have any kind of constitutional content — relations with International Organizations, the role of the Commonwealth, the significance of accession to the European Community, reform of the House of Lords, the electoral system, devolution within the United Kingdom, the democratic implications of local government reorganizations — we find not merely a decline in political genius, nor merely political indifference, but a consistency of political incompetence which is simply bizarre.

On the mainland of Europe, secondary teachers are typically 'professors', closer in status and remuneration to University lecturers than to primary teachers. In our

different situation, given the strains and vulnerabilities which comprehensive reorganization has inevitably entailed, there was need for much more rapid and purposeful progress in promoting the professional image of secondary teachers in the 70's. A new design of the secondary teacher's working year, with a significant provision for structured preparation and training (whether in the school or elsewhere) during school holidays would have advanced this cause more than anything else could have done, as well as breaking the back of opposition to a major initiative on career salary scales.

My last point of regret is that we failed to establish and make substantial headway in implementing a national plan for the mainstreaming of children with special needs, specifically children with motor, sensory or intellectual disabilities. Of course national plans were not in fashion in those days; they had generally been felt to conflict with a cultural preference for pragmatic and opportunistic approaches to life in general, and in particular they contradicted the tradition of devolution in the running of schools. The European experience everywhere, however, would seem to show that without national plans (which include, naturally, the provision of training and resources), progress in integration is at best spasmodic. Evidently, there is a fundamental point of principle here: that children with special needs should be denied access to the full range of educational opportunities available to other children is a direct breach of what comprehensive education is at heart about. But in practice, too, we have lost out badly, by being denied the contribution which the children with disabilities would have made to the whole life of the school, something not only unique but essential if the school as a society is to be an authentic exemplification of our human reality. The severity of the consequences of our failure here has only recently become apparent: the 1988 'reform' confronts the children with special needs with a choice between two evils, that of exemption (and therefore exclusion) or specific failure — the latter, moreover, with implications for the aggregation of a school's achievement which can hardly encourage headteachers and others in the direction of mainstreaming.

At the heart of all these retrospective regrets is the perception of something that central government should and could have done. Without going back on what I have said about a general professional responsibility for what was not achieved, it follows therefore that the main problem has been that of a malfunction of our democracy — something which is hardly surprising in view of the ambiguous attitude we as a people have generally adopted towards it.

Signs of encouragement

Having reviewed both current misfortunes and past failures, it is high time now for me to look for any signs of encouragement I can. I have two sources for this, both of which are European. The first is, I am afraid, overtly political.

Like it or not, the social and educational 'competence' of the European institutions is certain to become stronger over the next twenty years. That

means the heyday of the British New Right in these fields has not got a long life ahead of it. This, in spite of what has been said about socialism and the back door, is not so much because there are socialist governments in some member states, and because the socialist group is the largest in the European Parliament — though these facts are naturally important. More significant still is the reality of the character of many of the *non-socialist* ruling parties. That these are Christian Democratic means that on the mainland the heart of conservatism is incorrigibly 'wet' I have the feeling that this reality is not widely recognised here. Intelligent sixth-formers in Cambridge have no idea of the character of the senior partner in government in Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, let alone of the existence of such things as Christian trade unions, universities and social security institutions. Commentators (Martin Jacques, for example) tend to ignore all this in their analyses of the European scene; it is a part of our insularity that many of our intellectuals cannot tolerate the notion of institutions unfamiliar in Britain. The European Parliament, on the other hand, for all its faults, is an excellent learning environment for islanders, and Conservative members there are having to come to terms with organized Christian power. There is here a persistent force in support of moderation, so-called 'liberal' values and social conscience, an environment in which trendy views as to the meaninglessness of social justice would be unthinkable. This not only explains why only one country could be found in opposition to the European Commission's Social Charter, but also the fact that on the mainland educational reform is still generally conceived as needing to go in the opposite direction from the one we took in 1988.

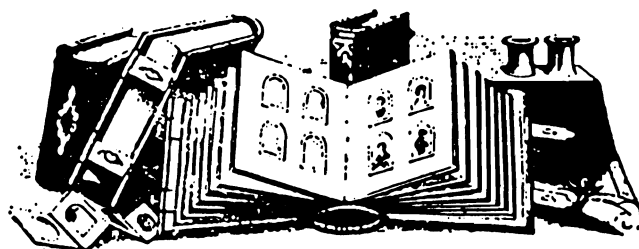
My second source of encouragement comes from my experience when responsible, between 1982 and 1987, for the European Community's programme in support of the social, economic and (later) educational integration of disabled people. This brought me into many contacts with disabled adults, young people and children, with their family members, and with professionals working with them in the social, health, employment and educational fields in all the Community countries. What emerged most forcibly

was clear evidence that, for all the differences of cultures, institutional structures and economic possibilities, there exists throughout the Community an ineradicable unity of purpose in defence of individual rights and in search of solutions to individual needs, based on values whose foundations are much deeper than those of any political programme and which indeed make all the organized ideologies look relatively grubby.

For me personally this has meant an irresistible reaffirmation of the equal-value principle which I formulated in **Comprehensive Values** in 1975. On reflection, it may be that opponents of a 'child-centred' approach are right according to their lights; respect for individual needs and aspirations leads us inevitably to a recognition of the equal value of all children, and so to a rejection of all the schemes of social engineering at present in vogue.

I believe, too, that during this period I have come to understand better two important concomitants of the equal-value principle. The first is the relationship between equal value and equal opportunity: I now see the promotion of equal opportunity as one of the two main strategies by means of which equal value expresses itself, the other being the establishment of *fair systems* and the two being virtually interdependent. The second is our duty to acknowledge that children have the same right as everyone else to live primarily in the present and only secondarily for the future; what happens in schools should be both experienced and evaluated as a *thing-in-itself* rather than as a preparation for something else.

At all events my perception is that the 'equal-value' principle is alive and well in Europe, though rather more healthy in some countries of the mainland than it is here. If this is right, European integration is, on balance, good news. While, however, European liberalism will provide a friendly climate in which to prepare and launch our counter-attack against 1988, that does not at all mean that it should set the limits of our agendas. On the contrary, I hope that future issues of **Forum** will be able to record a British revival of child-centred programmes based on more morally radical positions than we have ever dared to adopt before.



The Case for a National System Locally Administered

Josie Farrington

Writing as Chair of Education for Lancashire County Council since 1981 and as the leader of the Labour Group on the Association of County Councils, Josie Farrington here makes the case for education to remain under local control.

The Labour administration in Lancashire was voted into office in 1981 against a background of rising unemployment, deepening recession and cuts in funding for services in Lancashire. I will use this Lancashire experience to put forward a case for education to remain in the hands of local government, not because we are unique but to demonstrate that local accountability is more responsive to peoples' needs and local circumstances.

Local people appointed to quangos, on the health service model, denies people the right to local and regional democratic self-government. Our Government will not accept the European Charter guaranteeing people that right. The current debate on the functions, structure and funding of local government must recognise the principle of local democratic accountability.

The level of spending on and philosophy behind the provision of a vital service like education is a political issue whether determined by a majority of councillors elected as independents or by councillors elected by people voting for candidates put forward by a party. The right of people to choose the level and range of services they want for their community has been poisoned by the imposition of the Poll-Tax. This was done regardless of the early Scottish experience that it was doomed to failure. It was a policy watched with total incredulity by the rest of the world.

The savagely regressive nature of Poll-Tax has strained and soured relationships between the natural partners in service provision at local level. LEAs trying to work with their partners in the education service provision, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, governors and church representatives have balanced unjust taxation against under-funded services. Our experience in Lancashire is that hardly any of our improvements in service provision have been opposed in principle by other councillors, including the Conservative group; but years of reducing rate support grant, rate-capping and Poll-Tax have over-shadowed and sometimes swamped and distorted widely-recognised education service needs. The new system of revenue raising after Poll-Tax must be based on equity and local accountability. Local and national identification of the cost of providing good quality services, such as education, should provide the basis for government grant distribution towards meeting every pupils' entitlement.

Local government through LEAs must then be free to raise additional revenue locally and be

democratically accountable for judgements made. I would contend that government pressure since 1979 to control the locally raised level of spending on education has been due to political dogma, not economic need. The amount spent on a child's education in the private sector has not been seen as worthy of scrutiny for the economic good of the country, but similar community choices made democratically for public sector schools have been judged a matter for central-government control.

The relationship between local and central government powers and duties in education should not be seen as set in concrete. Since 1981 Lancashire people have indicated their support for education policies which have included expansion of nursery education for all children whose parents want them to have it, even though our major achievements in expanding provision still fall short of that target. The time has now come for central government to make that entitlement available to all children. The meeting of that need through new and adapted buildings, training for teaching and non-teaching staff and phasing in the best method of delivering that service must be based on local knowledge and judgement.

A decade chairing Lancashire Education Committee has confirmed for me that the over-whelming majority of parents want their local nursery, primary or secondary school and college to be in good-quality buildings and properly resourced. Parental choice and open enrolment have been offered as an alternative to a mythical era of denial of freedom of choice. A massive percentage of parents have always had their preferences met. Our policy was to seek to meet parents' wishes — constrained only by trying to ensure that all children could be educated in viable schools. The strategic planning role of an LEA should plan for a pattern of school and college places to meet the needs of all pupils and students for the foreseeable future. Children's educational needs cannot be met properly by unleashing crude market-forces and ever-heightened competition.

The role of the LEA is to plan for, and allocate resources to schools and colleges. Constant and ever-growing government pressure to allocate the same unit-of-resource for each child fails to recognise the value of services provided collectively at LEA level, such as music tuition, and fails to recognise that equality of opportunity entails meeting individual needs and local circumstances.

The decision that school budgets should be based on

average teacher costs and yet have to pay actual salary costs can be justified only if the real aim is to achieve a formula that could be paid by computer from Whitehall. It is not appropriate for central government to seek to lay down such rigid constraints, but a valid task would be to recognise the value of national agreement on maximum class size per teacher. I have yet to meet a parent who sees no link between the quality of education and class size. Pupil teacher ratios mean little if necessary provision in small rural schools has to be balanced by large classes in urban areas.

Ironically, the biggest outcry following formula funding of schools has come because of increased awareness of the small rural schools costs in predominantly Conservative heartland areas. Such schools also rely heavily on centrally-provided services such as school library provision. Local need and circumstances such as higher than national demand for denominational education needs to be evaluated, publicly-debated and strategically planned for at local level. Local democratic accountability should determine judgements about levels of spending and allocation of resources.

Ten years ago the people of Lancashire voted for increased spending on building maintenance, improvements and replacement. The old and deteriorating building stock was a scandal matched only by the impact of the recession on the building industry. Without central government constraints we could have invested far more in our buildings. Tragically we would have achieved far more high quality training through apprenticeships than successive generations of short-term government training schemes. No one told the small number of Lancashire parents who could, and did choose private schools that increased investment there was against the national interest. The local and regional effects in Lancashire of the recession in the early 1980's were greater than in the South of England, whereas the current recession is affecting those areas too. Ironically we may get a more considered hearing in this recession.

The role of the LEA is not one apart from other local government services. We have sought to tackle problems such as increased vandalism. The double-bind of government exhortation to tackle the effects of vandalism combined with financial constraints to stop that happening can be seen very clearly in the area of building security. Many years ago Lancashire recognised the problem and set up a risk management group — education, police, property services, fire and insurers met using local knowledge. Unfortunately, year after year, low priority is given to permission to spend money on the proposals made by this group. We have, however, had a succession of government ministers, accompanied by glossy brochures and TV and Radio coverage, advising us to set up such a group. LEAs are best-placed to assess needs such as this, but must be allowed freedom to carry out the right local policies.

The area of local economic development is a vital function of local government. We have a good, internationally-recognised record here with Lancashire Enterprises. The strategic role of the LEA must be to work with such agencies, and the private sector, to meet local economic and training needs. We have a very wide range of post-16 further and higher education

institutions in the country. We recognised that further development of Tertiary Colleges would encourage more young people to stay on in Education and Training. We recognised the local factors of high unemployment and many low-income families and increased income support for students. We also provide unique opportunities for adults to return to full-time study. We pioneered the LINC project which recognises the geography and travel difficulties of many people in the county. This range of post-school strategies has been extremely successful in terms of individual opportunities to maximize potential and recognise future skill-shortages. Our colleges are committed to maximizing opportunities but all we have achieved has been against a background of severe government constraint and criticism. The forward planning needed for the economic well-being of Lancashire and the North-West must be within a democratically-accountable structure at local and regional level.

The proposed Local Government Commission could give people the opportunity to re-define and evaluate the role of LEAs in the future. Genuine local government would allow local communities the right to determine what services are provided and how they are provided. The LEA of the future must be allowed to plan to meet the needs of all pupils and potential students. Local government has a vital role to play — innovating and pioneering. If there is real partnership, future national policy can be firmly based on such experience.

The enabling process in local government should be one of allowing local people the greatest possible voice in decisions affecting their lives and services. If people vote for their local council to provide services they should not have that over-ruled by a central-government preference for contracted-out provision of services. The last decade has seen ever-increasing centralization of decision-making in the UK. Our sixth-form college in Blackpool voted recently to stay within the LEA, a choice the Government are proposing to over-rule. We need to keep the status-quo while the people tell the Local Government Commission how they wish to be governed in future.

If central government are impatient for change they should address the issue of regional needs in the UK. We need a regional development strategy here in the North West. We already have regional government but it is quango-ridden and democratically unaccountable. Good government is not imposed from above; it grows most strongly from below. Ten years' experience in Lancashire is that people want good quality services and recognition that all sections of the community, especially the most vulnerable, should have their needs met. Neither personal need nor regional or local economic needs can be left to market-forces alone. A service such as education will be best able to meet future need if we rebuild partnership and local democratic accountability.

Alternative Currents

Richard Noss and Harvey Goldstein

In this important article, Richard Noss and his colleague Professor Harvey Goldstein at the University of London Institute of Education follow up their recent critique of the concept of 'levels' by arguing that there has to be a reasoned resistance to the worst aspects of the Government's curriculum and assessment proposals.

Recapitulation

In an earlier article (**Forum** Vol 33 No 1), we discussed the theme of 'levels' in the National Curriculum and indicated that this could be seen as a precursor to a return to streaming and external grading throughout a child's school career. We also suggested that the concern with levels in the National Curriculum and associated testing was part of a general concern to introduce the ethics and economics of the marketplace into schooling (for a thoroughgoing analysis of the social and educational rationales and effects of the National Curriculum and its associated testing in relation to mathematics, see Dowling and Noss 1990).

Since writing that article the Conservative Government's actions have revealed more clearly than ever that their real concern is to pursue these structural aims. The elaborate assessments at key stage 1 have been emasculated, so that the Standard Attainment Tasks will no longer cover all attainment targets. The Education Secretary has also suggested that simple written tasks will suffice at key stage 3, ignoring not only the recommendations of the TGAT Report but also the advice of SEAC itself (we should clarify that we were and remain highly critical of the TGAT Report, but for rather different reasons than those of the Secretary of State).

The early phase of the National Curriculum debate involved discussions about 'good' educational practice, and those involved in testing have consistently voiced their opinion that carefully-constructed tests could and would bring about positive educational reforms. This view has become increasingly marginal and it is more than ever clear that these arguments have helped to apply an educational veneer to the Government's real intentions, namely to carry through a programme of centralized testing in order to provide (maintained) schools with a common currency with which to compete for pupils and resources. It is instructive to reflect briefly on how this has occurred.

In the months up to the passing of the 1988 Education 'Reform' Act, there was a very intensive period of activity which saw the publication of the TGAT Report and the start of the National Curriculum working party activities. By cleverly using the language of educators and stressing its concern for the well-being of all children, as well as employing the more familiar rhetoric of educational 'standards' the Government was able to persuade most of the 'educational establishment' to collaborate with its plans. This not only lent an initial legitimacy to what was being done; it also, crucially, allowed a very tight timetable to be

implemented without any serious overt or covert attempts to resist. It is only in 1991 that any real signs of large-scale opposition to the whole curriculum and assessment programme have become apparent through voices within teacher unions, and more significantly, by parental action.

The real problem for those who fear the worst consequences of the 1988 Act is that it is now very difficult to initiate major improvements. Indeed, as the Government itself has begun to point out, the initial schemes for testing, drawn up by educationists themselves, are far too elaborate and time-consuming. Hence the proposals to cut them drastically and simplify their implementation. Yet this simplification process is likely to remove just those elements which many educationists originally found attractive: the practical and oral work for example, and the integration of the SATs into ordinary classroom teaching.

Rounds one and two without doubt have gone to the Government.

Testing to Destruction

Our own attempts to set the current situation in historical perspective lead us to two general conclusions. First, that there has to be a reasoned resistance to the worst aspects of the Government's curriculum and assessment programme, as well as opposition to its fundamentals. Second, that hopes for structural change are unrealistic in the short term and that opposition needs to be carefully and patiently argued.

One of the most important ways in which the late 1980s and early 1990s differ from earlier periods is that reasoned argument no longer seems to form a shared basis for decision-making involving the Government. This is perhaps nowhere clearer than in the Government's proposals on the reporting of school assessment results. In its recently-issued draft proposals on the reporting of GCSE results and as far as can be seen in the reporting of national assessment results, the Government still intends to report school mean grades or scores. Yet all the evidence suggests that this is misleading and unjust. Work on examination results in the Inner London Education Authority (Nuttall et al, 1989) and elsewhere has shown that average schools scores or grades more than anything reflect the achievements of the children when they entered the school. The only secure foundation for making comparisons between schools rests on measuring the 'value added' factor, that is by allowing for the 'intake' achievements of the children. To do this, however,

requires long-term study and careful analysis of results. Almost certainly it could not lead to any simple ranking of schools or production of 'league tables'. All that we know, on the basis of careful and extensive work of a number of investigators around the world, suggests that the comparison of schools on the basis of their performances of their students is a delicate and difficult operation. The Government's persistent refusal to acknowledge the complexities involved can only reinforce our view that it is less interested in improving schools than in introducing mechanisms for differentiation and selection.

To follow the Government's recommendations would inevitably lead to some 'ineffective' schools being labelled as 'effective' simply because they had a high-achieving intake and for that reason alone produced good results, but otherwise failed to offer optimum 'progression' for their students. Likewise there would be other schools, perhaps very 'effective' in terms of the educational progression of their pupils, but doomed to produce at best mediocre results due to the low-achieving starting-points of their students. The extraordinary fact is that the Government, and certainly its senior civil service advisors, know this yet chooses to ignore it. Instead it chooses to reiterate its claim that parents have a right to know how well a school is doing and that information about achievement should not be withheld. The fact that such information as it is proposing to release will be highly misleading is ignored.

In the present climate, appeal to rational debate with Government seems to be less than fruitful. This makes it all the more important that such debate should be pursued among those who are genuinely concerned with the health of the educational system and the welfare of its students. This means teachers, parents, administrators and others responsible for making the system work. It implies, we believe, a long-term perspective and a refusal to be constrained in our thinking by the narrow agenda set by Government. Specifically, we have some proposals, which we now outline.

Proposals

Our first three proposals concern assessment. The first is that we should do all we can to develop forms of assessment which are superior alternatives to the centrally-devised SAT's. The principal vehicle for these will be the formative records of achievement, many of which are already operating in schools. The key features of such assessments are their cooperative nature, involving students, parents and teachers, and their essentially private and formative nature (we contrast this with the public nature of the Government's tests: see Noss R., Goldstein H and Hoyles C., 1989, for elaboration of this distinction). They are for the promotion of each individual child's learning and not for the comparison, grading or streaming of children. We already have a large pool of expertise concerning the construction and use of such records (Broadfoot et al, 1991) and the challenge now is to ensure that they are not simply turned into yet another instrument for labelling a child. Sadly there are signs that this may be the intention in some quarters, by linking them to

existing SAT results. The challenge to the profession is to avoid that happening, on the grounds that the public, grading function of assessment is fundamentally incompatible with its private, diagnostic features which are required by teachers, parents and children.

Our second proposal is based on the need to focus on the testing associated with the National Curriculum, rather than trying to ignore it. Our strategy is concerned with explaining why the Government's present assessment proposals, especially those concerned with reporting results, are bad. While the Government may legally force the publication of misleading assessment results, it would be unable to prevent the profession from pointing out just how unreasonable such publication is. If every school and Education Authority were to issue its own 'health warning' whenever required to publish such figures, and if teachers were to explain to parents and the public why such results were useless, the Government would soon have to realise the futility of its aims. Once the legitimacy of the currency for school (and teacher) comparisons has been destroyed, the remainder of the market-place proposals will become much more difficult to operate.

Thirdly, there are signs that parents are taking action into their own hands. At the time of writing it seems as if in Scotland parental action in boycotting the equivalent 8-year-old tests has undermined the Government's aims rather effectively, and the first stirrings of similar dissent are unfolding in England. If such action, in cooperation with teachers, prevents substantial numbers of children from taking the tests then this would further contribute to the invalidity of school comparisons, as well as seriously undermine the Government's claims that it is testing pupils in response to parental wishes for accountability.

Our proposals on the curriculum are in the nature of patient attempts to continue to develop all the gains and good practice before the imposition of the National Curriculum. Our argument centres on our belief that the Government is interested only marginally in what is taught. In fact, it is more interested in what is not taught. Beyond the attack on 'silly teaching methods' and calls for a 'return to basics' we need to have a concern that children develop a critical awareness of the world they live in. The fragmentation of the mathematics curriculum, the artificial boundaries of time and space imposed on history and geography, and the ridiculous debate about 'real books' appear to be much more concerned with depriving children of knowledge and ways of thinking than with dictating what they should learn via the statutory orders.

Yet, paradoxically, we think that this gives teachers space in which to reassert their craft. We do not propose that pre-National Curriculum schooling was faultless, and undeserving of any criticism, nor that the debates around the National Curriculum have not yielded some useful ideas. We do assert that British education, particularly primary education, has made tremendous strides in the last thirty years, both in the context of what is taught, and in the ways in which schools and classrooms are organized. In our view teachers should attempt to reassert curricular content within the National Curriculum 'statements of attainment'.

It is clear that there are pressures to redefine curriculum in terms of these statements: already there is a plethora of textbooks which seek to define content in terms of them. The statements of attainment by themselves cannot define the details of the curriculum, yet it is the working out of this detail which is crucial. We suggest that teachers should celebrate their existing achievements by incorporating them into the curriculum structure which the present law obliges them to follow. We do not think that this strategy will bring about instant results; but we are confident that the edifice is already crumbling, and we believe that the time is right to begin the creation of an alternative current that will prepare people for more rational and constructive curriculum policies.

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Losers in the Market Place: Children Under Five

Mary Jane Drummond

A tutor in Primary Education at the Cambridge Institute of Education and a member of the Forum Editorial Board, Mary Jane Drummond here highlights our appalling record in providing and funding services for the under-fives.

'If you want to be under five', Harriet Harman once remarked, 'don't do it in Britain'. That is, don't do it if you believe that as a young child you have a clear entitlement to publicly-funded care and education before you reach the statutory school age of five. If you do believe this, you are doomed to disappointment.

For a number of reasons, you would do much better to be under five almost anywhere else in Europe; firstly because levels of provisions for young children are dramatically higher there. In this country as a whole, only 24 per cent of three and four-year-olds attend a maintained nursery school or class, compared with 95 per cent in France and 88 per cent in Italy. In some local authorities in England there is no nursery education at all (DES 1990).

There are, of course, other forms of pre-school provision in this country, and the number of places offered by the voluntary and private sectors (in playgroups, private nurseries and by childminders) is growing year by year. In 1985, 85 per cent of children aged three and four experienced some form of pre-school provision: the majority of these children attended playgroups (Pugh 1988). In 1989, playgroups were still the most important form of provision, in terms of numbers of children attending: they provided places for about a third of all three and four-year olds (Moss 1991). But it is important to remember that most of these places are not publicly funded: for the country as a whole, the Pre-school Playgroup Association has estimated that grants contribute less than two per cent of total running costs.

Elsewhere in Europe, the level of public sector involvement in providing and funding services is substantially higher. Most other countries (the exceptions are Ireland and the Netherlands) have, or are actively working towards, two or three years of publicly-funded nursery education or kindergarten, available to all children. This country is still at the very bottom of the European league table for both levels of provision and levels of public funding for services to under-fives.

National figures mask extreme local variations. Nursery education is provided for 66 per cent of three and four-year olds in Hounslow, while in eighteen LEAs, fewer than one in ten of children under five gets a place in a nursery school or class (DES statistics 1986). If you must be under five in Britain, and you insist on your right to education, choose your local authority with care.

Inequality of opportunity for the under-fives does not stop here. Within the limited services available, some families and some children will benefit to the exclusion of others. The largest study of pre-school services carried out in this country (Osborn and Millbank 1987) reports substantial social inequality in access to pre-school education: 'as many as 46 per cent of the most disadvantaged children had received no form of pre-school education, compared with only 10 per cent of the most advantaged group' (p 56). Racial inequality was also identified: 'As many as 46 per cent of Indian/Pakistan children and 35 per cent of Afro-Caribbean children had no pre-school experience. This

compared with 28 per cent of the European (GB) children who were non-attenders'. This imbalance is reported again in Van der Eyken's 1975 survey of pre-school provision (Van der Eyken 1984) and in a more recent study of provision in Birmingham and Coventry (Clark et al 1982).

This gloomy picture of under-funded, ill-provided and inequitable services to under-fives is even more depressing when seen in the context of public demand: what *do* British families want for their young children? Blackstone (1971) gives an historical survey of the long-running story of unsatisfied parental demand for early education; more recent accounts include Hughes et al (1980) who report that in 1974 mothers were asking for nursery places for 90 per cent of their three and four-year-olds. A survey of all the London Boroughs (GLC 1985) concluded that provision in the area (which is much more extensive than in many other regions) would have to be increased by 60 per cent to meet the *lowest* estimates of parental demand.

Gloom and depression give way to stronger emotions however (such as outrage or disgust) when Government policies are taken into account. In 1972 the extraordinary White Paper **Education: A Framework for Expansion** recommended that within ten years, there should be nursery education for 50 per cent of three-year-olds and 90 per cent of four-year-olds (DES 1972). The optimism generated by this paper was extremely short-lived: the target was not only never met, it was swiftly officially abandoned. Public expenditure crises in the 1970s checked growth and by 1985, in another White Paper, a new policy was proclaimed: to maintain the status quo. 'The Government will make it its aim that plans for local authority expenditure should allow provision (for under-fives) to continue in broad terms within broadly the same total as today.' (DES 1985).

The principles that now underly Government policy on all forms of pre-school provision (in education and social services, as well as in the private and voluntary sectors), are absolutely clear. Young children are the responsibility of their parents, not the State; publicly-funded provision should be confined to children in need or at risk; parental demands will be met by private services which will be encouraged and regulated by the Government. Peter Moss summarizes the position bluntly:

The clear objective of policy therefore is to encourage a private market in under 5's services, paid for by parents (sometimes with the support of employers), and only diluted by a limited amount of State nursery education and very small quantities of public day care for children 'in need'. The Government want to see the market provide diversity, choice and good quality. Issues of access, equality and segregation receive no attention. (Moss and Melhuish, 1991, p 84)

Naturally, Ministers of Education tell a different story. At a public lecture at the Cambridge Institute of Education, Angela Rumbold was asked to comment on this country's poor record in providing education for non- statutory aged children. Her reply was unapologetic; she assured her audience that this was the only European country where 100 per cent of five-year-olds were in full-time education — a record to be proud of. She also drew attention to the increasing

number of four-year-olds being admitted, both full-time and part-time, to primary schools, suggesting that this form of provision was a perfectly acceptable substitute for nursery education.

Her facts were accurate: it is her self-congratulatory interpretation of them that is awry. Five-year-olds in this country do indeed receive full-time education but they receive it in primary, first and infant schools with pupil/teacher ratios of up to 35:1. None of this country's five-year-olds receives nursery education, as the vast majority of five-year-olds do in Europe. British four-year-olds too (at least 65 per cent of them, but probably more) are now also being educated in primary schools, in settings designed for older children, taught by teachers who were not trained to work with young children, in classrooms with limited access to outdoor play, and very low levels of staffing. Their education is, of course, considerably cheaper than that of their European counterparts but, except in the market place, cost is not the only factor to be counted.

Angela Rumbold's determination to think well of primary-school provision for non statutory-age pupils is not given any support by those who have studied the matter a little more closely. Osborn and Millbank could find no evidence of educational advantage for children who entered infant reception classes before the statutory age, and they contrast this finding with 'the consistently positive effects ... associated with attendance at pre-school institutions'. (p 149). HMI's 1989 report on **The Education of Children Under Five** sounds an equally cautious note: 'In most such (primary) classes, the education of children under five, though sometimes given a high priority, often suffers from a lack of breadth and balance, so that the curriculum is not as well-matched to their educational needs as it should be.' Even Bennett and Kell (1989), who have little positive to say about the benefits of pre-school education in general, can identify the weaknesses in the present education of four-year-olds in primary schools:

if a decision is made to continue the system then it needs appropriate resourcing, including adequate capitation, ancillary assistance and training. Too often, it would seem, political rhetoric hides classroom realities and teachers are sacrificed to economic expediency (p 88)

But under LMS, open enrolment and formula finding, it is not just the teachers who are sacrificed, but also the children themselves. A teacher of four-year-olds in Bedfordshire, an authority which has invested considerable sums of money in bringing four-year-olds into nursery-type provision in primary schools, told me of a discussion she had with her headteacher. She was suggesting that at least some of the children they were admitting were still too young to benefit from the curriculum they could offer with the resources available. She urged restraint in the admissions policy, but the headteacher was adamant that all available four-year-olds should be admitted as soon as possible. 'Where you see children' he explained, 'I see pound notes'.

The most recent indication of Government thinking on the care and education of young children can be seen in its reaction to the so-called Rumbold Report:

Starting with Quality (DES 1990). This is the report of a committee, chaired by Angela Rumbold, which reviewed all forms of educational provision for children under five.

The members of the committee, experienced and expert educationalists, called unanimously for 'a continuing expansion of high quality services' and identified an urgent need 'to raise the quality of a good deal of existing provision.' (p 1). Their report has been received with a crashing silence from the DES, and Timothy Eggar, at a recent meeting with the members of the committee, declined to commit the Department to any increased spending on pre-school education. Similarly, Virginia Bottomley at the Department of Health, makes it clear whenever she speaks in public, that private child-care is the only way to meet the needs of working parents, and that the private sector holds the solution to inadequacies in existing services. This emphasis on the private sector is in stark contrast to the European concept of 'shared care', in which central and local government, parents, community and local employers, jointly take responsibility for the care and education of young children (Moss 1988). In this country, the Government has made clear, young children can either be brought early into statutory, primary and inappropriate education, where the shades of the National Curriculum can begin to close on a generation of non statutory-age children, or they can safely be left to market forces to sort out.

In his speech to the North of England Education Conference in 1990, Cardinal Basil Hume spoke movingly of the dangers of this Government's market-led conception of education. 'In a market economy', he concluded, 'there are always losers.' In Britain today, many of those losers are children under five.

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Which Way Forward for the Primary School Curriculum?

Kevin Brehony

After teaching in a number of primary schools in the West Midlands Kevin Brehony became involved in teacher training. He is currently a lecturer in Education at the University of Reading.

In this article, I shall identify some of the directions that the primary-school curriculum is likely to take in the next decade and also indicate some of the directions I think it ought to take. I shall be guided by two main considerations: firstly, the question of social justice and its achievements and, secondly, ways in which the effects of social disadvantage on the younger learner may be reduced. By social disadvantage I mean what we once used to call social class but which in the interests of accuracy ought to be called material deprivation. In addition, I also mean the disadvantages experienced by black children, by girls and by children with disabilities.

If in the primary school our main task is to promote learning, then it is imperative that our practice takes account of the obstacles to learning presented by social disadvantage. But this is not what the primary-school sector on the whole has been doing and it is this that needs rectifying first rather than weak objectives in geography or topic work which HMI reports have highlighted so consistently. Across the debate over standards lies the long shadow of social divisions and it is necessary to remember when confronted by lurid headlines, that ours is a profoundly divided society in terms of wealth, income and life-chances. It is a rash observer of the scene who, in the present uncertainties,

would dare to predict the shape of the primary school curriculum of the future. If I had the power to shape the future primary school curriculum I would not want to start here. But here is where we are and given the cross party support for much that was introduced in the 1988 Education Act, it is going to be around (or at least some of its features will) for the foreseeable future

Some elements of the present scene, however, are clearly untenable. For present purposes let me identify one, namely the fiction that what is taught is totally separate from how it is taught. Kenneth Clarke's attack on child-centred methods, following the inspection of Culloden School, comes very close to proscribing some methods of teaching despite the rhetoric about teachers having the right to choose the methods they think are most appropriate. And yet the air is thick with irony, for many of the National Curriculum documents which refer to the primary years either recommended child-centred methods or enforce such methods through their status as law. The paradox is one that would have appealed to Rousseau; under the National Curriculum teachers must be forced to be free or if not free, then at least child-centred.

Methods of pedagogy are very much part of the curriculum, but what is more commonly thought to comprise a curriculum is what is taught to children. At first sight, the introduction of an entitlement curriculum (that is a clearly specified curriculum to which all children are entitled by law) seems more democratic and more egalitarian than one which was left to the preferences of individual schools and, perhaps more often, to individual teachers. Thus it will no longer be so easy, for example, to systematically exclude girls from science and technology as has occurred in the past.

Significantly, not only is the National Curriculum an entitlement but it also offers to all children of the primary age range that which could previously be purchased only in preparatory schools, namely a subject curriculum. Among those seeking to reduce inequalities in education there is a long tradition which consists of the view that if the rich buy a particular kind of schooling, then it must be the best. If this is so, the argument runs, then, in the interests of equity, all should be entitled to it. There is no doubt some force to this argument, but is the subject differentiated curriculum really the best model for all children? In the preparatory schools, aims are relatively clear. Their main purpose is to prepare pupils for the common entrance examination. In principle virtually any curriculum content would serve this purpose, but that which is taught generally has the weight of tradition behind it and it is not the same subject curriculum as is being imposed on primary schools. Since their emergence from the elementary school system and selection at eleven state primary schools have found it relatively difficult to formulate agreed curriculum aims. The decentralized nature of the education system was partly responsible for this, but the lack of unanimity was also related to the presence of differing views of what primary schools were about. In a democratic system, such differences are to be expected and indeed welcomed. The National Curriculum changes all that by asserting that the aim of primary schooling is to reach the objectives set for the subjects. That is not

what is stated in section 1 of the Education 'Reform' Act; but neither is what is stated there, about the promotion of the development of pupils or their preparation, specific to the primary stage. Moreover, in its leaflet for parents intended to explain testing the Department of Education and Science declares that 'School from age 5 to 16, is a journey through the target levels'.¹ Statements like this, and there are many others that are similar, confirm the point that the National Curriculum starts not with a full consideration of what the curriculum is intended to lead to in either social or individual terms but with the view that, on the whole, the subjects are *ends in themselves*. The main problem with the subject-based description of the curriculum is that it inevitably misses many things which defy subject categorization but are nevertheless held to be desirable. These include such things as citizenship and health education which have to be tacked-on afterwards as cross curricular themes. Even then the cross curricular themes cannot capture all that is specific to working with primary age children. In the past these things have been lumped together under the label of socialization and teachers were quick to realise that children with low self esteem, or emotionally disturbed children, were not ones to whom learning came easily. Work with the whole child is ignored and undervalued by a subject curriculum in primary schools, although it is a safe bet that teachers will continue to prioritize the emotional and physical needs of the young child. Just as the child-centred position tended to neglect the content of the curriculum, the subject-centred curriculum takes little account of how children learn.

The status of the cross curriculum themes as an afterthought is further reinforced by the fact that unless there is a specific attainment target within the subject curriculum, then the work on the themes will not be assessed and the historical record amply demonstrates that what is not assessed in schools is not valued. While the cross curricular themes form one tier of the entitlement curriculum, the foundation subjects comprise another because while work in them is to be assessed, SATs are not to be set for them. This, along with HMI evidence that a large proportion of time is being spent on core subjects,² will undoubtedly undermine the claim that the curriculum is balanced. Only the abolition of SATs or their extension to all subjects could ensure the much vaunted balance in the National Curriculum.

Even this, in my view, would not be sufficient to rescue the present, subject-based National Curriculum as a desirable model for primary schools. This is partly because decisions about the curriculum are often influenced more by resources than by questions about what knowledge or skills are the most worthwhile. My guess is that the subject-based National Curriculum will be wrecked more by the absence of resources than by active opposition to it. Indeed, most of the primary teachers I have talked to recently have welcomed the content of the core curriculum and oppose only the extra work involved in administering the SATs. Some have also criticized them because they take little account of the needs of bilingual children.

I am aware that to raise the problem of resources these days is to lay oneself open to the charge of being nostalgic for the sixties or, worse still, of being a

'prisoner' of producer interests. Nevertheless, it is inescapably the case that a subject-based curriculum contains within it a dynamic which is leading to the recruitment of subject specialist teachers and to pressure for more subject teaching within primary schools. On one level I do not find this prospect appalling as I am not of the opinion that the argument that little children do not think in subject terms has ever been proven. After all, the preparatory schools teach a subject-based curriculum to young children with no apparent ill effects in after life. Moreover, as Alexander has pointed out,³ the generalist who teaches virtually everything to the children in her class is a relic of the old days when elementary schooling was a social and not an educational category and when the main criteria applied to the schooling of the working classes was that it had to be as cheap as possible. However, if the logic of recent policy on the training of primary school teachers and the National Curriculum were to be followed to its conclusion then it is difficult to see how staffing could be other than curriculum-led.

Assuming the specialist teachers could be found, and that requires the suspension of a large degree of disbelief, the consequences for primary schooling would be enormous. Principally, the small primary schools, in defence of which parents seem willing to contemplate the unknowns of opting-out, which are so valued for their family-like, caring atmosphere, would have to disappear. Currently about 59 per cent of all primary schools have fewer than 200 pupils on their rolls. The 1990 pupil teacher ratio in primary schools is 22, so we can assume that only a school with 200 pupils could have 9 teachers the minimum number of subject specialists required to teach a nine subject core and foundation curriculum. If RE is also taken into consideration, then even a school of 200 pupils would be too small. While tendencies towards curriculum led staffing are a gift to the teacher unions the reorganization of so many primary schools is clearly not going to happen as the scale of the transformation required would be colossal. What instead is happening and is likely to continue is the trend towards the much cheaper alternative of appointing curriculum co-ordinators. This policy is principally one of muddling through because they are not being given sufficient non-teaching time⁴ to carry out their ascribed roles as curriculum leaders and advisors.

At bottom, non-teaching time is a resource question and one which will not simply go away because a Secretary of State holds it to be unimportant. In resource terms primary schooling has always been the poor relation in the state education system. The introduction of the AWPU as a measure in the formulae for determining the delegation of budgets caused many to hope that the differential between the amount received for secondary age pupils and that for primary would disappear. These hopes, however, proved unfounded and with a heritage of many old and inappropriate buildings and a long experience of underfunding many primary schools are ill-equipped to teach the National Curriculum. Recently HMI found in primary schools that, 'a third of schools were short of space and appropriate furniture in one or more classrooms'.⁵ Such conditions must mean that entitlement has rather a hollow ring to it because some

schools, even before LMS and open enrolment are taken into consideration, are in a much better position to resource the curriculum than are others.

What, then, should we be aiming for? Given adequate resourcing, the notion of an entitlement curriculum is one which has wide support and needs to be retained. The current subject-based curriculum seems as if it is not going to work as intended. Whatever is to replace it, the process of change needs to be incremental so that the system is capable of assimilating change rather than being put into a state of crisis by ill-thought out attempts at radical transformation. In place of the National Curriculum I suggest the formulation of an agreed curriculum which takes into account those aspects of primary age children which differentiate them from older children, and which also recognizes the organizational constraints which characterize so many of our smaller primary schools. Pupils' progress in all areas to the curriculum should be assessed only by teachers and reported to parents through records of achievement which profile the whole child. The curriculum should consist of a common core so that the notion of entitlement is retained. This will help ensure that resources are channelled to the disadvantaged. Unlike the present arrangements, this core should be reduced in importance so that the key skills of numeracy, literacy, observation and discovery, which are currently assigned such importance in English, Maths and Science, should be applied throughout the curriculum. The core should be expanded to include the skills of self expression in media associated with the arts. Narrowly conceived utility should cease to be the main criterion for the selections from culture which comprise the curriculum. The question of what should constitute the rest of the curriculum should be determined by teachers, governors and parents in the light of an analysis of what aims the school ought to adopt and what existing and future resources are at the school's disposal. Above all, such an analysis should recognize that in primary schools the main aims of teachers should be to teach the skills which unlock doors leading to success at secondary level, encourage curiosity and stimulate and motivate their pupils. In other words teachers and the curriculum should encourage children to learn how to learn.

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Quo Vadimus? National Prescription or Entitlement Curriculum

David Armstrong

For the last twelve years, David Armstrong has been teaching as Deputy Head and then Headteacher of Deerness Valley Comprehensive School, a small 11-16 Comprehensive School in the City of Durham area. In this article he argues that after three years of a National Curriculum, we are nowhere near an understanding of the true nature of learning and curriculum.

Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Clarke refers to 'nutters and fly-by-nights' ruining the curriculum. If only he knew!

I began my career in those halcyon days of the Sec. Mods. in 1960. My first class was 4C, and after the Christmas leavers had gone, amalgamated 4C/D could cross a pen-nib at 20 paces. Since we were allowed only one box per month I had an immediate nib-flow problem — apart from anything else. With hindsight it was fascinating how everything was fixed — your dinner duty days, school rules particularly in respect of smoking and expectoration (sic), the confines of the curriculum content box, the limited expectations of everyone.

In reality, the 'boss' was a lovely soul trapped in a system. I respect his memory still. That despite one famous day when desperate to interest 4C/D I had them silently wandering the school with home-made clinometers of cardboard, string and a rubber, measuring the heights of this, that and the other. No, I hadn't asked for permission. No, I hadn't consulted colleagues on the acceptability of this form of education. Yes, someone shopped me and the boss arrived, as if happenstance, and whispered forcefully in my ear!: 'Get them back to their desks Mr Armstrong and do some proper Maths.' A nutter and fly by night in the early 60's getting into such ruinous activities as student-centred, task-focused problem-solving learning experiences.

Yet I was a fortunate soul. After a 'classic' education of Grammar School, University (Latin, Philosophy), National Service and a first stereotyped school — the epitome of knowing one's place and what was good for one and the world — in 1968 we inherited a new 'boss' who called a Staff Meeting (!) and announced that we were going mixed ability. After hours of agony and debate — we did! Truncated history brings me to the publication of *The Practical Curriculum* in 1981 and the nonsense of the Great Debate in both of which I participated actively. But the significant catalyst was '*Curriculum 11-16 Towards a statement of entitlement*' (HMI 1983). Remarkably by then I was a headteacher — remarkable because I appeared to be a curriculum thinker and, as such, was appointed in Durham.

Hopefully in 1991 we continue to curriculum think

and speak and act. Would that, after all these years and after all the various initiatives and documents that we ALL knew what 'curriculum' means. Would that after three years of a National Curriculum we were nearer to an understanding of the nature of learning and curriculum. IN FACT WE ARE FURTHER AWAY. We are heading into negativism and minimalism — and if we are not careful into nihilism.

Almost miraculously, National Curriculum Technology nearly gets it right. Certain developments in recent years in Science, English and latterly in Maths — as well as progressive work in History, Art, Drama, PE, CDT and elsewhere in GCSE have begun to illustrate not only what is possible but the only way forward.

I applaud those schools which have held firm and continue to do what is worthwhile and purposeful for themselves, their students and their communities. One hesitates to look for support from certain quarters but I note that the NAHT President Bob Fisk in late May 1991 was suggesting that schools should adapt, adjust and manipulate the imposed requirements so that the fundamental values which enrich the quality of life and education are not lost. The *Guardian* headline was 'Heads should alter school curriculum'. Come and join the nutters and fly by nights!

I have no sympathy for those well-paid managers who have tried to follow all the ill-conceived and mechanistic interventions of the Government, NCC and SEAC. Only in isolated cases have their recent pronouncements had anything to do with curriculum and the work of schools in providing appropriate learning experiences. Would that those who haven't had the privilege of working in an environment, where such curriculum is offered and students are enabled to learn, would open their eyes and ears. It is not an issue of real books but of real curriculum. It works and it works demonstrably as a study of any good comprehensive establishment would display — many primary schools and good secondary comprehensive schools.

I have dwelt at some length on my personal experience — over 30 years in relatively deprived 11-16 schools and over 20 years in active leadership work in the NUT — in order to challenge a Secretary of State

with some months' experience in his post to present his evidence that I am a nutter and a fly by night.

Schools are negative places anyway. Students are in a race that they cannot win and locked into a failure categorized system. What does it mean to a student from a deprived background and with a deprived future (and there are millions of them) if politicians, who are ignorant of the realities, and middle-class teachers, who are badly paid and lack morale, resort to talk of discipline, homework, testing, standards (*a la* Michael Fallon: February 1991) as the way backward or 'forward' to a meaningful and purposeful curriculum?

The sole purpose of schools, and the education system, is to provide learning experiences appropriate to the individual student and his/her needs for those skills, competences and abilities which will best serve him/her in the unknown TODAY, never mind the morrow. All those interested for whatever reason in education would probably subscribe to that statement. The dispute and wide differences of opinion between us arise over the definition of the word 'appropriate', because of a failure to understand the nature of learning and of a mega-failure to understand that what is offered — 'the presented curriculum' — BEARS NO RESEMBLANCE AT ALL to what students learn, glean, acquire, and take away — 'the received curriculum'. What people learn is not only very important (we would probably all agree on that) but it is very individual and may vary very significantly from what is 'taught'. It is the process which is the key element.

In fleeting moments of hope it appeared that the National Curriculum would emphasize and seize on 'process' as its fundamental base. As the reports of successive Working Parties have appeared and the task of implementing reasonable education for all has highlighted the politically unacceptable and undesirable challenge of finding adequate resources — finance and staffing — the retreat has been quickly to 'product'.

In my advancing years I don't often get angry — but as I have heard a series of politicians in recent weeks preach from their provided briefs about the inadequacies of the process eg continuous assessment and the virtues of 'assessing' the product on a 'on-off' pen and paper test I get very angry. When I hear the justification of submitting *all* students to a once and for all terminal 'test' and of down-grading an individual student because on that day he/she was not on form, for whatever reason, — 'because life is like that' — I oscillate between a desire to cry or be violent!

We are not teachers and certainly not subject specialists and our subject doesn't need 'X' hours per week.

We are not educators — drawers out of whatever.

We are not into giving knowledge or facts.

We are creators of climate, offerers of opportunity.

We are into offering the chance to acquire skills, self-awareness, confidence, insights, concepts, competences and the rest.

'Curriculum 11-16: Towards a statement of entitlement' focused the thinking and best practice of the previous decade, opened the doors and exposed the horizons.

The 1987 National Curriculum, in conception, was a nonsense; in early evolution it showed the promise of

the development of real curriculum; latterly it heads lemming-like not only to re-invent the obsolete and inapt wheel of diet of yester-year — but to re-invent it as square and spokeless.

The highlighted emphases of TVEI, the main thrust of GCSE and the fundamental essence of the National Curriculum is to offer students those skills concepts and attitudes which will best serve them in 'life after school'. We talk of offering mega-skills which facilitate the acquisition of other skills: we demand a multi-skilled school leaver who can easily adapt and change to new skills — AND, led by the Secretary of State, we retreat to subjects, time allocation, content, knowledge, testing and spelling.

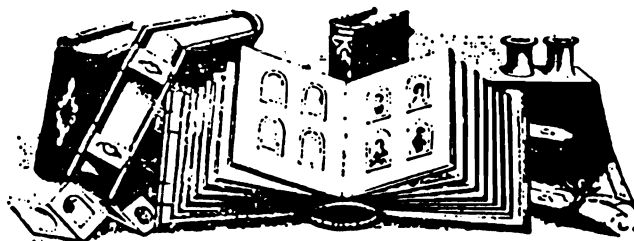
Broad, balanced and relevant indeed!

If the National Curriculum is about subjects and SATs, about timetables and testing, about content and control it is adult-orientated, out of phase, narrow, biased and irrelevant. If it is constrained to develop as such, it will do irrevocable disservice to the students, the school, the communities and the nation of the next century. It will set back the general development of curriculum of the last two decades almost beyond redemption. It will re-engender the sterility of division, elitism, separation and rejection.

If the National Curriculum is allowed, encouraged and enabled to develop along the lines of a different underlying philosophy, it can become a student-centred model of learning experiences — a broad, balanced, relevant and appropriate curriculum. It can then liberate schools and students to reach some of those goals and horizons that we all seek. It will grow to serve the cause of the education service, the needs of the country and communities and the entitlement aspirations of all our students.

What a challenge!

I offer one final consolation to Kenneth Clarke. Education, as both he and I see it, has always been somewhere on the continuum between producing creative geni and performing seals. At last his performing seals will be able to ride the National Curriculum chariot with its spokeless square wheels! I can't and I won't. Most of the students whose development I am very privileged to nurture and encourage can't and won't. If the worst happens, we will find our own way, along with thousands of others. We will seek to reward what is worthwhile and positive in 'curriculum' and enfranchise our young people to face the world with some sort of opportunity and chance. We will prefer to be old nutters and fly-by-nights!



Constructing a Curriculum for Equality

Adam Newman Turner

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Most of us learn our first and most significant lessons about power, institutions and our place in social structures during our first few weeks at school. These lessons were not called 'power', 'institutions', 'hierarchies' or 'where we each belong' because the 'programmes of study' were intricately threaded through our whole curriculum and implemented by nearly all staff — without so much as a suggestion of a whole-school policy (or even an inter-departmental curriculum audit on a teacher in-service afternoon). Some of us might now apply the National Curriculum Council's terminology of 'cross-curricular dimension' to this process which still succeeds in transmitting to children a practical experience of the values and unwritten rules of unequal entitlement which subdivide our society. Just occasionally, however, if we were lucky, we might encounter a teacher whose political analysis, pedagogy or compassion sparked off, in us, a questioning of established structures and injustices, a feeling that to challenge authority is sometimes necessary or a personal realization of the potential power within us. If we were even luckier, it was a group of teachers pooling their energies and ideas.

The model of schools as principal agents in the serial reproduction of the unequal distribution of privileges in wider society is not, however, a fully adequate description of the complex interaction between the education system and young people. Learners, individually or in groups, adopt various strategies to comply, resist, ignore, distort, negotiate, subvert and embarrass the power structures in schools. This process forms a significant part of the 'whole curriculum' for these learners and for the others who observe them as they do it.

Teachers may choose to ignore, resist or encourage young people as they investigate the power in their immediate surroundings. Some teachers may wish to develop the opportunities which these explorations provide to work towards a curriculum for equality.

A curriculum for equality is one which encourages learners to understand power and to see and describe both justice and injustice whether in their classroom, across the world or within their own attitudes and behaviour. It enables learners to articulate and unravel the contradictions which they encounter daily. In doing so, it helps them to find and test their own values and use them as a basis for developing compassion, conviction, confidence and competence. But, most importantly, it is a curriculum which leads to action.

Videos, worksheets and topics giving information

about the prevalence of sexual harassment or the relationship between disability and income distribution are necessary but not sufficient elements of this curriculum. They are only parts of a process which must be planned to link overtly the abilities to know, describe and feel angry with the abilities to act and contribute to change. The former without the latter is not a curriculum for equality; it is a curriculum about inequality.

As an adult, I am continuing to learn about my abilities and inhibitions in living up to my values and beliefs. My ability to act outwardly and contribute to change is related to my ability to explore inwardly and find where the appropriate confidence really resides. My ability to do either of these things seems to depend heavily upon my feelings about the immediate situation I find myself in. A lot rests upon my relationship with others around me and my perceptions of authority. The 'cross curricular dimension' of power is still permeating my learning.

Every classroom offers a similar set of complex relationships and a rich seam of learning material for young people to investigate, question and act upon. How could we organize learning so that it was more likely that the following questions were explored by each young person?

What proportion of power am I entitled to in this group?

What portions of power do others hold?

Can these change? If so how?

Is my membership of value to this group?

Are my achievements, identity and history of interest to this group?

Are my concerns and difficulties important to this group?

Am I really interested in the achievements, identity and history of others in this group?

Am I really interested in the concerns and difficulties of others in this group.

If I work with others in this group, can we bring about any changes which are worthwhile?

Can I help this group to agree which changes are worth working for?

What skills do we need to make these decisions?

What knowledge do we need to make these decisions?

What skills do we need to act upon them?

How and where can we acquire these skills?

How will we know when we have achieved what we want?

The issues raised by these questions will be familiar to teachers who are managing classroom interactions every day. But how frequently are young people encouraged to explore them with each other?

Questions framed in this way might be a starting point for teachers to discuss how children should encounter them and work on them. The teacher's skill rests in knowing the practical detail of the most appropriate stimulus, the approach to classroom management and the links to the rest of the curriculum. These fifteen questions focus upon the immediate group. Can they be asked, in some form, at all ages? How, at different ages, might their relevance to wider social and global issues be experienced by the learners? My own experience suggests to me that the learning derived from this type of collaborative investigation, starting with the context that I am in, leads to the most transferable of all competencies.

The fifteen questions seem to be fundamental to an active curriculum which deals with discrimination, inequality and prejudice in a way which leads to action and change. Disability, gender, ethnicity, language, culture, 'race', sexuality and socio-economic background are all concepts which all young people should investigate. The questions above apply to all of these subjects of enquiry. The same questions extend from the classroom to the local community and to far wider arenas.

There are, of course, highly significant differences between social and historical experiences of people with disabilities, gay people, black people, women and the working class. There are complex interactions. There are also many other categories of small and large scale oppression which are not usually identified in statements of equal opportunity policy. Any group of young people will be able to identify some of them: appearance which marks you as different from the norm for example or distant regional accent. But fundamental values apply to all these issues and the questions above are a starting-point for learning to tackle inequality.

What goes on in a classroom needs, of course, to be supported by a 'cross-curricular dimension' which exemplifies values of equality.

There is a glimmer of irony in the fact that the National Curriculum Council may succeed (where generations of radical teachers have failed) in outlining and disseminating a potentially useful approach to uniting equality issues through the introduction of the model of different types of cross-curricular elements: dimensions, themes and skills. (Bearing in mind, however, that the NCC did have more resources at its disposal than the sum total of funding seen by all radical teachers throughout history, the achievement is less impressive than it might first appear — but we shouldn't be churlish.)

The concepts of whole-curricular planning and cross-curricular dimensions are neither innovative nor sophisticated approaches to curriculum analysis and development. But they are usable, have been circulated to every school and carry some official status. Within them, clear and significant purposes are identified:

recognition that preparation for life in a multicultural society is relevant to all pupils should permeate every aspect of the

curriculum

schools need to take account of and challenge attitudes present in society which consider that subjects such as mathematics, science and technology are less relevant for girls than for boys

schools need to foster a climate in which equality of opportunity is supported by a policy to which the whole school subscribes and in which positive attitudes to gender equality, cultural diversity and special needs of all kinds are actively promoted.

preparing young people for adult life; this means life in a multicultural, multilingual Europe . . . in a world in which the roles of men and women are changing and both sexes are likely to have dual responsibilities for home and work.

The ethos of a school should support the school's policy on equality of opportunity by countering stereotypes and prejudice, reducing the effects of discrimination and helping pupils to accept and understand social diversity. Teaching materials should not be stereotyped or discriminatory. Where evaluation shows materials to be inappropriate, plans for its replacement or adaptation should be established.

(National Curriculum Council, *Curriculum Guidance*)

Amidst the negative aspects of the National Curriculum a chance has been created to take the debate about equality of opportunity several steps further forward by focusing curriculum review on the notion of cross-curricular dimensions.

There is concurrently an opportunity to enhance the role of equal opportunity policies by linking them with school or college development plans. In some schools, the development planning process has been a mechanism to get equality of opportunity on to the agenda for each subject area and to discuss and agree targets which will be monitored through the development planning cycle.

The instability caused by the overall process of reviewing and re-structuring which is currently taking place may create sufficient spaces to slip some foundation cross-curricular dimensions in at the base of the edifice before a new *status quo* settles. Discussions may be opened up with teachers who have evaded debate about entitlement and access for many years.

The debate needed to develop the ethos and the curriculum of an establishment in order to promote equality will need to be broader than many of the processes which have produced existing equal opportunities policy statements. In many cases these policies have concentrated on overcoming barriers to access, eliminating bias and stereotyping from our programmes of study and establishing procedures for dealing with discriminatory behaviour. Less emphasis is placed upon the learning objectives which should define an entitlement curriculum for all young people who inhabit our unequal society. A statement of these objectives must include a clear definition of the skills and attributes needed to survive and resist various types of oppression and the confidence to work with others to bring about change.

The effects of a successful policy, ethos, cross-curricular dimension or 'curriculum for equality' are difficult to monitor and evaluate thoroughly. This, however, is no excuse for not trying. One starting point might be in discussing with young people the extent to which all the fifteen questions above could be answered identically by each member of the group.

The White Paper on Education and Training: The Rhetoric and the Reality

Andy Green

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In 1959 the Crowther Report predicted that FE would become the 'next battleground' in English education. Thirty years later, it seems that the battle has at last commenced in earnest. Once the 'Cinderella' sector in the education service, and poorly understood by politicians, journalists and public alike, further education and training is now one of the hottest items on the post-Thatcher political agenda. The political fanfare surrounding the Government's announcement of the new White Paper, **Education and Training for the 21st Century**, represents, in a sense, its final coming of age.

The last year has seen unprecedented public interest in post-16 education and training. In August 1990 Sir Claus Moser delivered a well-publicized speech (to the British Association for the Advancement of Science) which highlighted concern at the performance of English education and training and called for a Royal Commission. When this call was rebuffed, a National Commission on Education was instigated, led by former director of the MSC and NEDC, Sir John Cassels, and comprising a gallery of other notables. Since last Summer major reports have also appeared from a variety of prestigious think tanks and august bodies: from the IPPR and the Policy Studies Institute and from Sir Christopher Ball for the RSA and Sir Leslie Crombie for the Royal Society. All have been highly critical about the current state of provision and all make more or less radical policy proposals for dealing with it.

In the wake of all this heavy-weight thinking and powerful lobbying, and no doubt galvanized by it, comes the Government's White Paper, grandly claiming to set the agenda for the next century. It promises enhanced status and parity of esteem for vocational qualifications, higher levels of participation in further and higher education, and a tranche of new market measures to increase 'efficiency and effectiveness'. The question is whether the policies will match the rhetoric and whether they will make any difference. Does the White Paper advance the debate or is it just a bluff hand by a bankrupt government desperate to remain a player in this increasingly 'high stakes' education game?

The proposals have certainly been well-hyped. Kenneth Clarke first talked of removing colleges from LEA control in March at the height of the poll tax

fiasco. It was widely seen as an expedient way out of the impasse over local government finance and consequently received widespread press coverage, later fuelled by angry local authority response and speculation that the DoE was pressing for control to go to the new TECs. When the White Paper was finally released, a month behind schedule on 21 May, it was accompanied by a high-profile press launch, starring John Major himself, and with the other responsible ministers, Kenneth Clarke and Michael Howard, relegated to the chorus line. The document itself, coming in two glossy volumes, is also a media-conscious production in the characteristic mode of modern White Papers; what it lacks in detail is well hidden by fancy graphics, trendy 'bullet-lists', and flowery rhetoric designed to convey 'that vision thing' so precious to modern political PR. But does the substance justify all the razzmatazz? **The Independent** clearly thought not. 'A timid Tory plan for training' was its editorial headline.

The White Paper reforms certainly range wide, affecting all areas of the service including sixth forms, colleges, adult education, training and the careers service. School sixth forms are to be permitted to enrol and charge adult and part-time students, and to run vocational courses such as BTEC 1st. Legislation will allow the careers service to be contracted out to the private sector or to be run either directly by the TECs or by the TECs in conjunction with the LEAs. Training credits will be extended beyond the current 11 pilot areas so that by 1996 all 16 and 17 year old school leavers will get a voucher worth about £1000 to spend on education and training. However, the major proposals concern the control and finance of colleges and post-16 qualifications.

The measures on colleges follow the lines originally suggested by Kenneth Clarke, and suggest a DES victory over the DoE. From 1 April 1993 most further education colleges (ie those with at least 15 per cent of their students enrolled on a full-time, block or part-time day basis) will be removed from LEA control, becoming centrally-funded corporate institutions with their own legal identity and charitable status. Sixth form colleges will no longer operate under schools regulations and will be likewise removed from the LEAs. Both will be funded by new FE councils, consisting of 12-15 members drawn largely from

industry and commerce and appointed directly by the appropriate Secretary of State. Wales will have its own council and the English council will be supported by 7-10 Regional Advisory Committees (RACs), likewise appointed. The RACs will work closely with the TECs and will each have two TEC representatives on them.

These councils will inherit the duty originally placed on the LEAs by the 1944 and 1988 Acts to provide adequate further education. They will be responsible for allocating resources to colleges to ensure 'the efficient management of the sector' and will advise the Secretary of State on 'the organization and re-organization of colleges necessary for them to fulfil their responsibilities'. This may involve, 'from time to time', merger closure and the establishment of new colleges. They will have the power to 'determine the general character of a college' but exactly how far they will be expected to plan provision across colleges is unclear. Cash allocations to colleges will be determined on the basis of historic and expected student numbers, weighted to reflect real costs for different courses, but these decisions will be 'informed by quality judgements', and there will be a new mechanism to ensure that funding is adjusted during the year to reflect actual enrolments during that year. To remove all vestige of LEA control, the White Paper also promises to withdraw LEA rights to representation on college governing bodies and to require instead at least one TEC representative.

On qualifications the White Paper makes two main sets of proposals. There will be a new set of General Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) distinct from both NVQs and academic qualifications. Unlike NVQs these will relate to a broad vocational area, rather than a specific occupation, will not be limited to employment competences, and may come in the form of courses of specified length suitable for full-time students in schools and colleges. NCVQ is currently developing these in conjunction with FEU and various awarding bodies and they are to be ready for use in September 1992. There will also be two new umbrella qualifications attained through combinations of existing certificates. Students will be entitled to an Advanced Diploma if they attain two 'A' levels or some combination of these, A/S levels and equivalent vocational qualifications. The Ordinary Diploma will be achieved with four or five GCSEs at grade C or a combination of these and NVQ level 2s. (The grade C or above stipulation is applied to the 'A' levels in the document but presumably this is an error, showing the speed with which this paper has been compiled.) Colleges will be able to offer only those vocational qualifications approved by the NCVQ.

The proposals on central funding for colleges have been opposed by the local authorities but welcomed by many college principals and (initially) by the NATHFE leadership, although not by annual conference delegates. There are clearly some potential gains in this arrangement. It may help to give the post-compulsory sector a new identity and could focus political attention on this long-neglected sector. Were a government to decide to create a more integrated national system of post-16 institutions, enhanced central control might make the job easier. However, such is clearly not this Government's intention.

Sixth forms have been left out of the new arrangements, thus cutting the sector in two and further delaying any moves towards integration. Without the benefit of LEA strategic planning, it will now be up to the new councils (in conjunction with the TECs) to plan the FE sector in the light of local needs and changing economic and demographic trends. However, rather than hands-on intervention to plan a rational distribution of provision across different institutions they may prefer to let free-for-all competition between institutions prevail. Quizzed on this in April Kenneth Clarke ominously dismissed strategic planning as 'a way of creating jobs for planners'. In any case the bifurcation of control between LEAs (for sixth forms) and the councils (for colleges) will rule out any further comprehensive reorganization and put an end to further tertiary college development. Even the nascent 'tertiary systems' will be jeopardized, since these carefully nurtured cross-institutional networks have relied on the good offices of the LEAs and an ethic of co-operation which is unlikely to survive in an atmosphere of open competition. Our inefficient and confusing 'mixed institutional system' seems here to stay.

Controversial as they may be, the measures on institutional reform at least have some substance. The proposals on qualifications seem largely gestural. The declared aim is to enhance the status of vocational qualifications and to establish parity of esteem between them and the academic qualifications. And yet the Government remains obdurately opposed to 'A' level reform, the main precondition for achieving such parity according to all the above-mentioned reports. In fact 'A' levels are to be shored up by further regulations limiting course work assessment to 20 per cent, thus undermining innovative modular schemes such as the Wessex Model. Ministers no longer use the expression but they still consider the 'A' level to be the 'gold standard', fully aware no doubt that, as Christopher Ball points out, 'the chief value of gold lies in its scarcity'. While this attitude remains, it is hard to see how vocational qualifications can be enhanced.

The diplomas are not new qualifications as such; they are just new names for groups of qualifications. But words alone will not guarantee status or recognition. The component qualifications will presumably continue to be specified in applications and employers and universities will select on the basis of these and may still exercise their traditional prejudice in favour of 'A' levels. If Advanced Diploma involved some tangible entitlement, like the guaranteed access to HE conferred by the French Bac, it might gain recognition. Alternatively, if a combination of academic and vocational qualifications were required to gain the diplomas, this would help create parity for vocational qualifications. However, neither of these measures is envisaged. What we have is simply a new set of names which will add to the semantic muddle of certificates without changing much else.

The General NVQ, on the other hand, will be a new qualification, although how distinctive remains to be seen. Cynics may say that this is just BTEC by another name; a covert U-turn by a government that wants to back away from the narrow occupationalism of NVQs and return to broader vocational preparation without

giving BTEC the credit. However disingenuous, this move would certainly be welcome since narrowly job-specific competencies are inappropriate for many 16 and 17 year olds, who are vocationally undecided and want a broad preparation for work in an economy where job demarcations are increasingly fluid and changeable.

So what is the outcome of the *annus mirabilis* of policy debate on the post-16 question? In this Government's hands, we seem to be progressing fast back to the old tripartite division of academic ('A' level), technical (now GNVQ) and vocational (now NVQ) tracks, delivered through the same multiply-fragmented institutional system, but with marginally

greater flexibility for transfer and combination within different areas. However, this is unlikely to remain fixed. In time the logic of the market may, ironically, be a spur for institutional rationalization. As *per capita* funding forces sixth form colleges to offer more vocational courses to attract students, they may become indistinguishable from their FE cousins and thus vulnerable to merger. Prestigious sixth forms will doubtless survive but others may wither and die. A comprehensive tertiary system may yet emerge. The qualification system remains divisive and muddled but in the long term perhaps, even here, we may see a shift; few believe that 'A' levels can survive indefinitely. One day policy may catch up with the rhetoric.

Keeping Manor Local — an anti-opt out view

Elaine King

Elaine King was a parent governor and then a co-opted governor at Manor High School. She says 'Whilst writing this article I realised why schools which had failed in their opt out attempt were so unwilling to discuss their experiences. All the people involved are still there, teaching, managing, governing! There are many things I feel unable to say.'

Politics, intrigue, disinformation, plot and counter plot. Is this a middle European coup d'etat? Nothing so tame, this is a middle school opt out bid!

Manor High School, Oadby, is a 10+ to 14 Middle School in a leafy suburb of Leicester. The parents are, in the main, home owners, office workers and professional people. They usually vote Conservative at local and national elections.

Manor High School was always an obvious candidate for an opt out bid. The Headteacher has a reputation for tilting at Local Education Authority windmills, and has in the past sent home parent newsletters which have been very critical of the constraints and lumbering bureaucracy of the local education authority.

Almost as soon as the ink was dry on the 1988 Act the Governors discussed the subject of opting out. It was decided that this was too big a plunge to take, and we would dip a toe in the waters of local financial management first.

When the funding formula was announced it became clear that the school would suffer financially in two ways. Its 10+ children, who make up 25 per cent of the school, can no longer be financed at the higher secondary school rate, and the staff tend to be of long standing, and therefore comparatively expensive.

The finance sub-committee reported that the school would 'go into decline' under LMS and recommended Grant Maintained Status. In August 1990 the Governing Body of Manor High School took the first vote to ballot parents on opting out, adding that the Governors' recommendation was to vote 'Yes'.

Only one school in Leicestershire had already opted out, under threat of closure. In an attempt to glean information a Governor Working Party contacted all the schools which had already balloted parents on opting out. Interestingly, we found schools which had become grant maintained were happy to respond, whereas those in which the vote had gone against opting out were decidedly less communicative.

The law dictates that a second meeting of the Governors must be held within six weeks to ratify the first vote. During that time the Governors must hear representations from the local education authority.

The Finance Working Party's figures were so discredited by the officers of the Education Authority that when the vote was taken it was agreed that the bid should be 'put on ice'.

The prime movers towards Grant Maintained Status were very disgruntled, and we felt sure that we had not heard the last of opting out. So a group of Governors, parents and teachers who were strongly opposed to opting out (and it is a principle which does bring out strong emotions on both sides) formed a group and called themselves 'Keep Manor Local'.

We met regularly every Thursday evening at the local Community College and were joined by many more people, including governors, parents and teachers of other local schools who felt that their school might be next.

We printed a broadsheet setting out our aims and principles, and distributed 5,000 copies to the catchment area of the school via the local free

newspaper. This was not cheap. We raised funds by charging membership and by asking for donations. We printed 'Keep Manor Local' car stickers; and we had the start of a campaign!

There was a general lack of awareness of the wider aspects to opting out, and so we rather ambitiously held a meeting to discuss the issues and hopefully glean some useful information from specialists in education, politicians, school governors and parents.

We were lucky to find two very charismatic speakers in Sandra Mohammed from Local Schools Information (the antidote to the GMS Trust) and Philip Merridale, a Conservative ex-Chairman of Hampshire Education Committee.

Our speakers gave us a very valuable insight into the background and wider considerations of opting grant maintained status. The only problem we had was in getting people to go home at the end of the discussion. Seven Leicestershire County Councillors attended, from all three parties, and we felt this was significant as we had tried to keep our Group apolitical.

The meeting attracted press and radio coverage, which stimulated interest amongst local parents and schools. The Headteacher felt constrained to write a disparaging note in the school newsletter to parents, obligingly giving more publicity and substance. The Governors who had spoken to the press were branded 'troublemakers', and when we gave information to parents we were accused of 'confusing them'.

Keep Manor Local was expanding and gathering strength. We decided to hold public meetings to give a balance to the information which parents had received.

We ran a meeting at the local primary school entitled 'Grant Maintained Status — Independence or Isolation?' Once again, we sent out 5,000 notices through the local press, since we were not allowed a copy of the parent list to enable us to write to parents direct. We also put up posters in local libraries, post offices and shops.

At this meeting we had representatives from the Education Authority, including the Director of Education to answer questions, as well as our trusty speakers. Parents were very impressed. We were very impressed!

There was a rumour that two parents (one a governor and the other a paid member of staff) were collecting signatures for a parent petition. If the required number of signatures is reached (around 155 in our case) then the Governing Body can be overridden and a ballot on opting out must be taken.

At the Governors meeting in March 1991 the anticipated parent petition was delivered to Governors and arrangements made for a ballot of parents. They again felt constrained to recommend that parents vote 'Yes'.

We had to wait a further two weeks before the parent address list was released to us, because the school had not given parents the choice of removing their names before the list 'went public'. These two weeks were not wasted. We put together and printed off eight leaflets covering various aspects of opting out. We were extremely lucky to have the use of a volunteer typist, a photocopier and computer label printer.

The leaflets were very distinctive, with the 'Keep Manor Local' logo top and bottom. We kept the

information short, to the point and on one side of A4. We hand-delivered these leaflets, two or three at a time. They were businesslike and contrasted well with the expensively printed glossy brochure from the school, which prompted questions about the source of funding.

Three meetings were held by the school to tell parents what the opt out entailed. Several hundred parents attended each of these meetings. Keep Manor Local was allowed a representative on the platform, alongside the Chair of Governors, a senior teacher, a governor and the Headteacher — all of whom were pro opting out.

The teaching staff against opting out felt understandably ambivalent about speaking publicly against their prospective employers and their Headteacher. They asked for a teacher representative from the Education Committee to speak on their behalf. This was refused, leaving them unrepresented.

During this time the news broke of the job losses at Guy's Hospital since it had opted out, and Kenneth Clarke was making pronouncements on a regular basis about moving the goalposts to encourage more schools to opt out. Indeed on the very evening of one of these meetings he announced the abolition of the 5 year wait before schools could change their status. People understandably felt they were on shifting sand.

The three week voting period was agony. When the vote was known we had won 73 per cent no to 27 per cent yes, on a turn out of 65 per cent. The local newspaper had carried prominent reports during the run up to the vote, but announced the results in a tiny article at the very back of the newspaper. Odd that!

Within a week, the other local middle school which had been collecting signatures on a parent petition announced that this was not the right time to go ahead, but they might go back to it in the Autumn. Victory indeed, we thought!

But not so. The whole process has been very damaging. The governors cannot but feel loss of confidence in the Finance Working Party, many parents have lost confidence in the governors and the teachers have lost confidence in the Headteacher.

The anti-opt out group is regarded as a disruptive faction — the cause of the 'decline' of the school. Also by defending local democracy we are being seen to defend the local education authority, warts and all. The most worrying aspect is that the people who publicly lost face have a vested interest in proving that they were right all along. If the future can be made to look bad enough, they can come back in 12 months time for another try.

It is frightening to think that this destabilizing little saga is going to be repeated in innumerable school communities in the coming months, wasting countless hours of effort and dividing loyalties.



Reviews

An Optimistic Collection

School Management and Pupil Behaviour, edited by Neville Jones, Falmer Press (1989) pp.277, pb: £9.95. ISBN 1-85000-592-3.

This collection of articles forms a refreshing and hopeful book. It includes contributions from a variety of perspectives — academics and researchers, LEA Officers, teachers, officers from various childrens' organizations and an educational psychologist, the editor, Neville Jones. All are in broad agreement that an effective school makes for good discipline.

Having worked in an off-site unit and moved on to comprehensive school teaching, I find the title encouraging — '**School Management**' rather than '**Pupil Management**'. Howard Green, head of a shire town comprehensive, tells us in his article: 'we understand management to be a deliberate and planned attempt to achieve positive outcomes from education' (p 213).

The book is divided into three principal parts — Pupil Behaviour and School Discipline, Recommendations to Lord Elton and, most importantly, Curriculum Approaches to Prevention. As to the brief of the Elton Committee and its recommendations, I refer those interested to Neville Jones' chapter 'School Discipline and the Elton Report'.

The majority of the contributors try to get to grips with definitions of 'bad' and 'good' behaviour in the school setting: in the words of Norman Tutt — 'a slippery concept'. This and one or two other aspects of the book tend towards repetition. The need to redefine shows, perhaps, the uncertainty and lack of confidence as to what is and what is not acceptable behaviour in school. As Galloway, Mortimer and Tutt stress in their chapter entitled 'Enquiry into Discipline in Schools', not *all* pupils misbehave with *all* teachers. They go on to point out that 'over four years in Sheffield, approximately half of all exclusions were from six of the thirty-seven secondary schools from which information was available. An exhaustive study of the catchment areas of all thirty-seven schools showed no consistent relationship between social factors and the number of pupils excluded.' This research says much about both the different criteria for 'acceptable' behaviour in different schools and something about the fact that schools can be more or less effective in dealing with poor behaviour.

In his chapter 'Effective Schools and Pupil Behaviour', early on in the book, David Reynolds points out that possibly the reason that the Government is returning to a traditional curriculum in its legislation 'may paradoxically have been because they (the schools) were beginning to succeed in generating authentic comprehensive education, not because they were not' (p.41).

This gives a hint of what is to come. Principally in the final part 'Curriculum Approaches to Prevention', the collection blossoms into an exciting and constructive series of descriptions of curriculum change and these are detailed enough to allow others

to grasp the essence of what and how. This is the best kind of educational writing.

I feel obliged, in passing, to sing the praises of Oxfordshire LEA in this context. While there are certainly other authorities leading and supporting positive initiatives in schools and one has to remember that the Editor is Oxford based, these factors must not detract from the clear signs that Oxfordshire puts its money where its mouth is — and it has undoubtedly paid off.

What a relief to hear from the pupils themselves in Baglin's clear description of the LAP project in Oxon and its evaluation. She carefully describes the key areas of successful practice, states with confidence that if the curriculum is right pupils will not mess up, and asks why the Elton Committee did not consider the contribution made by such projects to the minimizing of disaffection in schools. Why indeed?

Howard Green's article is encouraging for comprehensive staff carrying through developments. The change of name from Special Needs to Learning Support Department with a description of how all pupils are likely to come into contact with learning support at some point in their school life is salutary. Walker, in her lively style, which includes come clear and entertaining analogies, explores TVEI and suggests that while it is certain that all the initials will fade away, it is up to us whether they were 'rocket boosters or unwanted baggage'.

All those writing about these initiatives emphasize the necessity for a whole-school approach and argue their reasons well. Baglin explains the need to avoid the 'sink group' provision. Earlier, other contributions point out the dangers of unit provision and Tattum goes as far as to state that he believes that the use of units de-politicizes the issue of disruption in school. Martin Rosenbaum of the Childrens' Legal Centre is rightly insistent that pupils referred to units should go through the statementing process while NAPCE suggests that the Elton Committee's support for alternative provision 'is a partial and questionable view' as 'it is founded on the view that particular pupils are responsible for indiscipline . . .' (p 133).

Many talk of partnerships as the way forward. NAPCE talks of central government, local authorities, voluntary bodies, governors, headteachers, teachers and parents. . . . 'when these different groups act in effective partnership then schools are characterized by having fewer discipline problems, while conversely, when there is conflict between these parties, then pupil behaviour may well mirror it' (p 130). I would go further and add pupils to the list of partners in the educational experience and recommend this book highly to those who agree.

CLAUDIA BEAMISH

Independent Working-Class Education

The Search for Enlightenment: The Working Class and Adult Education in the Twentieth Century, edited by Brian Simon, Lawrence & Wishart (1990) hb. £19.95, pp.334. ISBN 0-85315-683-2.

This collection of essays dealing specifically with independent working-class education

begins with an excellent overview by Brian Simon of the 1920s when competition between rival organizations to provide education for trade unions was at its height. This is followed by a series of case studies by Edmund and Ruth Frow, Margaret Cohen, Roger Fieldhouse, John McIlroy and a concluding chapter by Bob Fryer which examines the last 40 years and provides suggestions for 'the principles and key features which should inform the construction of an agenda' for the future. The chapters fall into two periods; pre-and post-1945.

Two questions recur throughout the book: who should provide education for trade unionists, and who should control the curriculum? There were those who, like the Central Labour College and the NCLC argued that as education was inevitably value-laden it should be provided from a working-class perspective and for this to be guaranteed it should be controlled by trade unions. Others such as Ruskin College and the WEA suggested that impartiality was possible. The former group believed education would be compromised unless working-class organizations financed it; the latter argued that grants from local authorities should be sought for this form of education just as they would be for any other form of schooling. The point of dispute here was whether those who paid the piper would call the tune. This book provides evidence that at times this was the case. Cohen also shows how much of the factional fighting between rival organizations, often arising from a combination of intolerance and naivety, prevented the establishment of a national system of trade union education in the inter-war period.

The early chapters by the Frows and Cohen vividly portray the energy and organization of intelligent working people who attended classes after long hours of manual labour to study economics, history and philosophy, without any prospect of material gain in the form of promotion at work. Similarly there was the dedication of tutors covering considerable distances by public transport carrying books and visual aids driven by little more than their own enthusiasm. Such classes at a time when the majority of the population received only elementary schooling provided a much-needed further education which helped some later to serve as local councillors and MPs.

McIlroy shows how pressure was put upon the TUC from the 1970s onwards to pursue 'technical education' related more closely to daily work, such as factory legislation and negotiating procedures, at the expense of wider economic and political issues, against which they needed to be considered.

As several of the writers point out, the changing post-war times of greater affluence for many, wider provision of schooling, competing interests of TV and video, all need to be considered in present attempts to provide independent adult education. In a list of key issues Fryer includes 'the anti-intellectualism which so damagingly hobble working-class advance', something we often try to excuse but which lies at the core of attitudes towards racism, hooliganism and vandalism in society today. If we are to persuade a government to reject its own anti-intellectual approach to so many aspects of our lives, a well-educated workforce could

be a major influence at both local and national level, in demanding a more caring and civilized society than one dominated by market forces alone. If only for that reason, the failures and successes of independent working-class education explained in this book deserve serious attention.

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Equal Opportunities

Dolls and Dungaees: Gender Issues in the Primary School Curriculum, edited by Eva Tutchell, Open University Press. (1990) pp.114, pb: ISBN 0-335-09287-X.

Do we really need to concern ourselves with those issues like gender and multicultural education which we had time to discuss in the good old days *before* the arrival of the National Curriculum? In fact the book **Dolls and Dungaees** comes in the wake of substantial research showing that if we are to be true to the *ethos* of the National Curriculum and try to give equal access for all to the knowledge and understanding in the core and foundation subjects, we *must* pay very close attention to the sort of issues addressed in this book. The book aims to provide accessible accounts of recent practical classroom and whole-school initiatives in primary schools.

In Chapter One Eve Tutchell discusses her role as an advisory teacher for equal opportunities. Her emphasis on the value of working alongside teachers in the classroom and in the staffroom, modelling good practice, initiating reflection, is not new but in these days of the 'cascade' model of Inservice Training it is timely.

The second chapter quotes some familiar but disturbing statistics on the number of women teachers achieving promotion to Deputy or Head. In 1985 7 per cent of women teaching in primary schools were heads and 8 per cent deputies, compared with 32 per cent of men as heads and 20 per cent as deputies. Sue Wootton Freeman also highlights the potential dangers to equal opportunities of the decreasing power of the LEA, coupled with the increased opportunities for school governors to hire and fire teachers.

Helen Wick describes her work in classrooms using drama to challenge some of the aggressive tendencies in junior-aged boys. Bridget Egan emphasizes the importance of changing girls' attitudes to CDT, as well as ensuring that they have equal access to the design technology curriculum. Descriptions of equal opportunities work in the early years are very rare indeed and so Jo Sherwin's very practical account of the use of construction kits in reception classes is both interesting and innovative.

In Chapter Six Christina Shamaris describes a project in which a GCSE group write non-sexist stories for a reception class; and Liz Forsyth gives an account of a mother tongue story-telling project with groups of mothers.

Many primary teachers will be familiar with the scenario described by Annie Campbell and Nicola Brooker: 'The children (aged 10 and 11) had become accustomed to one another, but if on the surface there appeared to be general acceptance, the

reality was that the class was strongly divided along gender lines to the extent that the situation had become girls versus boys.' The account of the attempt to break down the barriers through frank discussion, humour and a carefully-planned curriculum is very useful.

Both Sue D'Arcy's chapter 'Towards a non-sexist primary classroom' and Derek Tutchell's piece on developing a whole school policy on gender would provide useful starters for a school discussion on an equal opportunities policy, although sadly schools would have to fight hard these days to find the INSET time needed to participate in the kind of process suggested here.

The final chapter is concerned with a project which aimed to explore the potential for the promotion of anti-sexist/anti-racist initiatives in the context of primary-secondary liaison. As the results of the project seemed a little inconclusive, the chapter might have been better placed earlier in the book, although some of the issues raised have important implications for science teaching and learning.

Most of the articles in the book will provide useful stimulus for discussion about practical ways of implementing equal opportunities in primary schools.

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England's Backwardness

Education and State Formation: The Rise of Education Systems in England, France and the USA, by Andy Green, Macmillan (1990), pp.353, hb: £45.00 ISBN 0-333-51897-7.

The essential theme of this important book is neatly encapsulated in the **Punch** cartoon reproduced on the front cover: dating from 1847, it shows a Victorian school-boy falling between two stools, one labelled 'Voluntary Education' and the other 'State Education'. The original caption read: 'Between two stools he comes to the ground — Old Proverb'.

According to Andy Green, England was the last major country to create a national education system — lagging behind the leading continental states by at least fifty years. In Prussia, for example (dealt with fully in the book but not mentioned in the title), Frederick II's compulsory attendance laws in 1763 marked the first important move in the general direction of national education; and a national public system was essentially in place by the end of the 1830s. In France, the Napoleonic *lycee* was created as early as 1802 giving the state a strategic control over secondary education; and it is possible to talk in terms of a full judicial and administrative framework for national education by 1852 when the Second Empire was inaugurated.

In England, on the other hand, it was not until 1870 that the Forster Education Act laid the first foundations of a *national* system of education. Yet even this important piece of legislation — designed to *fill the gaps* in existing provision — did not introduce compulsory education, just as it did not make education free. It was not until 1880 that compulsory school attendance was finally required at least until the age of ten; and not until 1891 that most parents were

given the right of free elementary schooling for their children.

It is the central purpose of Andy Green's wide-ranging and seminal study to ascertain why this should have been so. Why was the country that was 'amongst the most literate of nations' at the time of the Reformation, that was the first to experience industrialization and urbanization, and that was the richest society of all in the mid-nineteenth century also the last to recognize the benefits that could accrue from establishing a national system of education? Why did the dominant tradition in England remain the voluntary system, a form of school organization based on private initiative and independent control?

The author rejects many of the theories so far put forward to account for the social origins of national education systems. He also doubts whether the so-called 'peculiarities of the English' (De Tocqueville's phrase) can be explained either by the rivalry between Church and Dissent or by the continuing dominance of aristocratic amateur values in a society where the middle classes had apparently failed to achieve undisputed hegemony over the political and state apparatus. Green himself inclines to the view put forward by Marx that aristocratic hegemony was in reality a mask disguising effective bourgeois power; so we are still left with the problem of why so little was done to create a national apparatus for middle-class education.

It is Green's view that other, and more convincing, explanations for England's 'backwardness' would have to include the deep infusion of liberal individualism in both the landed and the middle classes. What separated this country from the major continental states was not therefore the predominance of landed culture, but the power of the individualist creed which meant that *all* sections of the ruling class shared a marked hostility to the state and were deeply suspicious of the whole idea of state control of education. Fearful of state intervention, the middle classes were quite prepared to educate their children in schools which reflected the culture of the rural upper class and even after the principle of government responsibility was conceded in 1870, did nothing to create a system of schools to cater for their own needs.

Andy Green's book makes a vital contribution to our understanding of the changing role of the state in education provision. It should be read widely — and particularly by leading policy-makers in all the main political parties. At £45 it is an expensive buy; and it is therefore welcome news that a paperback version is being prepared.

The book ends with the pertinent observation that if the past has any lessons at all, it is that 'the mechanisms of the market and the ideology of *laissez-faire* serve education very ill indeed'. It would, therefore, be a very sad irony if the country which was the last to create a national education system — and which never actually completed the job — should now be the first to dismantle it!

CLYDE CHITTY

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