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Editorial Board

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Contents

Vol. 34 No. 2 Spring 1992

The next FORUM

At a time when attempts are being made to re-instate Cyril Burt and revive streaming, Jack Demaine exposes the flawed and out-dated underlying theory of I.Q. Three articles consider aspects of assessment — in the early years, SATs and student teachers, competence based vocational approaches as betrayal of CGSE.

David Sands argues for Integrated Humanities within the National Curriculum.

Geoffrey Walford analyses various ideologically inter-linked moves in the process of privatizing education.

The complexity of harmonizing European education is illustrated in an article on moves to integrate the two German systems, while another on the anti-multicultural education lobby in the USA presents a timely warning on letting xenophobia into the curriculum.

Editorial

Some commentators like to suggest that, with the abrupt change of Prime Minister in November, 1990, the long period of rampant Thatcherism came to an effective end. Yet as far as education is concerned, nothing could be further from the truth. It was only late in the 1980s that the Thatcher Government felt strong enough to challenge the existing framework in education and health; and there is no sign of the rate of change being slowed down. Indeed, there is a case for arguing that Kenneth Clarke, once described by Michael White in **The Guardian** as 'the thinking Tory's Norman Tebbit', is the most Thatcherite of all the Education Secretaries of the past twelve years. Certainly his contempt for professional opinion and for the so-called educational establishment is quite breathtaking on a number of fronts and covering a wide range of issues. This journal does not appear regularly enough to chronicle all the policy shifts to which our teachers are subjected; but *two* in particular deserve highlighting in this Editorial.

The first concerns teaching methods and classroom organization in primary schools. As Brian Simon pointed out in our last number, this journal has a proud record of fighting for non-streaming in the junior school and for new approaches to learning made possible by the abolition of eleven-plus selection. Now the Government has made it clear that it wants to see a return to traditional methods where children are streamed from an early age and then taken through a programme of study in specific subjects. In an interview with **The Times** at the beginning of November 1991, Kenneth Clarke asserted:

> What has been regarded as good practice in primary schools in recent years can't deliver because it is too play-centred, too child-centred . . . There is a great deal of this play-centred teaching . . . which means at its weakest, there is a lot of the sticking together of egg boxes and playing in sand.

And, quite disgracefully, the Education Secretary was supported in his generalized attack on primary methods by head-teachers' leader David Hart who used his speech to the Primary Conference at York to call for the reintroduction of streaming in the last two years of the primary school to help teachers cope with the demands of the National Curriculum.

The Government has now set up an inquiry into primary school teaching methods where the three so-called experts making up the inquiry team were told what they had to think even before their first meeting. In launching his investigation at the beginning of December, Kenneth Clarke indicated that he expected the final report to attack child-centred teaching methods and recommend a return to whole-class teaching. The whole debate about learning is thereby simplified so that it can be polarized for popular consumption. The introduction of a subject-based national curriculum is used to justify a return to the worst features of the post-war education system.

At the other end of the age range, the Government has recently announced major changes to the new GCSE examination. New syllabuses will restrict the proportion of coursework counting towards final grades to between 20 and 40 per cent in most national curriculum subjects. And in a further reversal of policy, a differentiated examination structure is planned so that students will be expected to take papers closest to their supposed ability levels; and schools will be able to enter the ablest candidates early. All of which recalls to mind Keith Joseph's famous declaration in 1984 after his failure to reintroduce eleven-plus selection at Solihull and elsewhere:

> If it be so, as it is, that selection *between* schools is largely out, then I emphasize that there must be differentiation *within* schools.

We learn from a recent report in **The Guardian** (3 December 1991) that right-wing Conservative educationists are pressing ministers for further privatization of the education service to take effect after the general election. Donald Naismith, Wandsworth's CEO, is in favour of a new plan by which all schools would charge fees which parents would then be able to reclaim through personal tax allowances.

The Right clearly believes that left to its own devices, the market can be relied upon to create that stratification of schooling experience, both reflecting and reinforcing existing divisions in society, which is the abiding objective of the right-wing hegemonic project. To that extent Keith Joseph was wrong: this Government has found ways of creating differentiation both *between* and *within* schools.

A Conservative victory in the general election will mean further drastic changes to the organization and values of our primary and secondary schools. It will also mean the irrevocable break-up of 'a national system, locally administered'. Whatever happens, **Forum** will go on fighting for the principles it has always upheld. But we are all well aware that with every year that passes, the obstacles become more and more formidable. And we need the support of an ever greater number of subscribers to be able to continue our work on behalf of parents, teachers and pupils throughout the country.

Teachers and Parents as Management Partners

Nanette Whitbread
Co-Editor of **Forum**, Nanette Whitbread has been a member of the WEA team of tutors for Leicestershire's school governor training courses since 1988, is an LEA governor of two primary schools and was an elected staff governor at Leicester Polytechnic for eight years.

The 1988 Education 'Reform' Act subverted the nascent development of a shared partnership model for the co-operative management of schools. It introduced centralized controls which contradicted Governing Bodies' newly clarified and devolved responsibilities. It diverted attention from the general well-being of the school as an educational institution towards detailed financial concerns. It introduced an ideology of competitive market forces into an enterprise that is properly concerned with co-operative planning for the educational benefit of children. It confronted the new Governing Bodies, whose constitutions derived from the quite separate 1986 Act, with a plethora of new Regulations before they had had time to work out their responsibilities and roles.

The Government's imposed formula for the compulsory financial delegation by LEAs to individual schools has distorted local management of schools (LMS) by focussing attention on local financial management (LFM) in a context where seriously inadequate resources have to be distributed to schools on an absurdly unrealistic and unfair basis. This has faced the recently re-constituted and as yet inexperienced Governing Bodies with unnecessarily difficult problems and decisions, which are likely to impede their development of sensible and sensitive new partnerships for fulfilling their wider responsibilities in the wise management of schools.

If governors do not understand that the total financial resources available for LEAs to distribute are inadequate because central government policies have restricted them and severely constrained local government autonomy to raise and allocate funds, then their frustration may sour their attitude to their LEA and engender hostility. Their frustration may even lead them unwisely to conclude that opting-out offers a credible solution. If, however, governors are politically aware enough to appreciate why they are now confronted by these intractable financial problems, then they may be able to develop a fruitful partnership with their LEA and co-operate with other schools to mitigate some of the resulting difficulties for the educational benefit of their own and neighbour schools. They may also become a significant force for undermining and changing this Government's damaging policies. Perhaps this possibility explains Kenneth Clarke's decision to discontinue the DES grant to the National Association of Governors and Managers.

Open Enrolment, backed by the rhetoric of parental choice, not only sets schools catering for the same age range in open market competition with each other; it also breaks up the neighbourhood community of parents as the electorate for parent governors. Paradoxically, this conflicts with the parallel populist rhetoric of 'parent power' in the context of parent governors' ability to maintain contact with, and be responsive to, their electorate.

If open enrolment and opted-out schools together significantly erode the tradition of each school serving a given community, then the principle behind the requirement for co-opted governors drawn from and representing other local community interests will become questionable.

It is evident that the impact of the 1988 Act on the original rationale for the composition of Governing Bodies, previously prescribed as recently as 1986, was either ignored or deemed unimportant. That rationale derived from the Taylor Report of 1977 and was first given effect in the 1980 Act. Significantly, the report was entitled **A New Partnership for Our Schools.**

The rationale for that partnership was evident in the Taylor Committee's belief 'that all the parties concerned for a school's success . . . should share in making decisions on the organization and running of the school' as 'the best way of ensuring that every aspect of the life and work of the school comes within the purview of all the interests acting together.' (para 3.9) Their proposals aimed 'to foster a working partnership which would give staff, parents and community an equal part with the local education authority in the government of their own schools.' (para 3.22) They envisaged maximum delegation of power and budget control by the LEA to the Governing Body consonant with an LEA's responsibility for strategic planning of educational provision.

Governing Bodies were perceived as being *in* partnership with an LEA while themselves each constituting a working partnership at school level. Now they are pawns in this Government's vendetta against LEAs and burdened with salvaging education from the effects of the 1988 Act on their schools.

The Taylor Report recommended *equal* representation among the interests, but the 1986 Act gave parent and LEA governors more places than teachers. This makes it all the more essential that teachers build alliances and work for an informed partnership.

Partnership demands mutual understanding, respect and trust, with a significant degree of consensus on general aims and intent. The successful management of a school requires recognition of the perceptions of those who have a stake in its success as a public enterprise serving the educational needs of its community. Its governors bring a diversity of personal experience and skills to bear on that general management task, while variously and collectively representing the main stake holders. A successful school, which all can be proud of, must be their common purpose.

Making that local partnership work effectively is even more necessary in the context of the increased intervention from central government brought about by the 1988 Act. The focus of this intervention is narrowly on the curriculum, by means of the National Curriculum and its assessment. The implications are much wider and more insidious in the impact on a school's internal organization for forming teaching groups, labelling pupils and students by SAT levels, deploying teachers and ancillary support staff, providing for special needs, determining priorities and so on. A school's whole ethos may be at stake. Governors need to understand the principles, if not always the details, of these interconnections and their effect on the life, work and character of a school.

This was the basis for governors' supposed, but largely ignored, curriculum responsibility under Section 23 of the 1944 Act; the rationale, derived from the Taylor Report, for the more explicit requirement in Clause 18 of the 1986 Act for them to make and keep up to date a written statement on the curriculum. Moreover, Clause 1 of the 1988 Act obliges them to ensure that the curriculum is 'balanced and broadly based'.

Governors' policy statements on the curriculum, the school's aims and other key matters can be an important means of securing the character of a school and protecting it from succumbing to damaging pressures. Such statements can be used as reference points for monitoring new developments and outcomes. Teacher governors may need to take initiatives for building alliances with parent and other governors for this to happen. The partnership has to be worked at and extended to be effective.

Most lay governors, when interviewed or attending training courses, show commitment to humane values for their school and concern for education, but express doubt about their own competence and are ready to defer to teachers' professionalism. They are eager to get to know staff and to understand how the school works. It is the tabloids and government ministers, not real governors, who claim to know more or better than teachers.

When governors on training courses from disparate backgrounds and a variety of schools discuss 'What makes a good school?', or 'What do you especially value about your school and want to safeguard?', they tend to reach a credible consensus reflecting caring attitudes and high expectations. Many are alarmed at the drift of present government edicts and aghast at the underfunding of education, but feel powerless.

Schools and teachers have much to gain from building an effective working partnership with their governors. There is no blueprint for achieving this; but ensuring that lay governors are informed, and a willingness to share anxieties and concerns with them, are vital to the process. Presentations on aspects of the curriculum and other educational matters by appropriate teachers to the Governing Body are welcomed. Sub-committees and Working Parties set up by the Governing Body can include teachers or parents who are not governors. Sometimes it is useful for teachers' planning teams to invite a lay governor to attend. Such practices extend the partnership and build working relationships.

School Development Plans and Curriculum Reviews are a key means and focus for effective management partnership. Both provide an opportunity to monitor and up-date the governors' relevant policy statements and promote informed discussion about where the school is or should be heading. If these exercises are closely related to determining budgetary priorities through open and informed discussion, damage limitation can be maximized. LFM must not become divorced from, nor dictate the principles of LMS.

Genuine management partnership presumes open government at school level. Only authoritarianism is threatened by this. Just as staff morale benefits from participation in decision-making, so open management partnership with governors brings a sense of shared ownership to those involved in the whole educational enterprise. Teachers' and parents' commitment to shared values for their school can be a powerful force for enlightened education.

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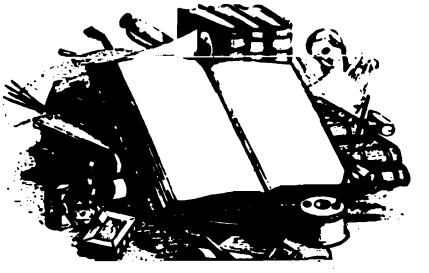

Key Stage Four: the National Curriculum Abandoned?

Clyde Chitty
Clyde Chitty has been Reviews Editor for **Forum** since 1982 and Co-editor since 1989. Before taking up his present post teaching in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, he was a lecturer in Curriculum Studies at the Institute of Education, University of London.

Introduction

On the face of it, the 1988 Education 'Reform' Act, and particularly the clauses relating to the National Curriculum, would appear to represent a defeat for the thinking of two major groups: Her Majesty's Inspectorate and a faction within the Conservative Party of the 1980s often referred to as either the 'Industrial Trainers' or the 'Conservative Modernizers'.[1] We can begin by looking at the case of HMI, although it is not their views (or rather the repudiation of them) which constitute the primary concern of this article. What is of real and abiding interest is the way in which the 'Modernizing Tendency' within the Conservative Party has recently seen its views acquiring a new and unexpected credibility after its initial defeat at the hands of the New Right in 1987-88.

'Common' versus 'Core' Curriculum

The HMI model of a common 'entitlement' curriculum for all pupils aged 5 to 16 has always been very different from the DES concept of a 'core' curriculum which eventually found its way into the 'thinking' underpinning the 1987 DES consultation document **The National Curriculum 5-16**. The original DES idea of a limited 'core' of four or five subjects has been modified over time to arrive at the present unwieldy structure of ten foundation subjects; but there are few other signs of a change in bureaucratic philosophy.

Whereas the HMI approach has traditionally concentrated on the quality of input and the skills, knowledge and awareness of teachers, the DES has been preoccupied chiefly with standards and accountability. Whereas the HMI approach has been based on individual differences and the learning process, the major concerns of the DES have been with the 'efficiency' of the education system and with the need to obtain precise statistical information to demonstrate that efficiency. Whereas the professional common-curriculum approach, as depicted, for example, in the three HMI Red Books published between 1977 and 1983, has been concerned with areas of learning and experience, DES thinking never breaks out of the strait-jacket imposed by viewing the curriculum in terms of traditional subject disciplines.

There is, of course, no evidence of HMI influence on the construction of the National Curriculum our schools are now having to implement. HMI tried to make its voice heard in the early months of 1987, but all to no avail. It is sometimes claimed that things would have been very different had the formidable Sheila Browne still been Chief Inspector (she retired from the post in 1983); but her successor Eric Bolton was not exactly timid in expressing HMI hostility to the Government's plans. Speaking to the Mathematical Association in April 1987, he said that Conservative politicians must not be allowed to take control of the National Curriculum and dictate what was taught in our schools. Some kind of national framework was probably inevitable, since politicians from all political parties had expressed a desire to see it. But whatever the 'frights and horrors' it might cause the teaching profession:

> It will be a better curriculum coming from people who know what they are talking about, than if it is left to be decided by politicians and administrators.

The debate was going ahead, but teachers must not be intimidated into remaining silent:

> Don't wait to be asked to make your views known ... It is silly politicians indeed who fly totally in the face of the best professional advice they can get.[2]

This, then, was a brave attempt to influence events even as the notorious consultation document was being drafted. HMI can perhaps be criticized for failing to give a clear lead after 1987, and for abandoning former principles in more recent pronouncements on testing and assessment. But the role of the Inspectorate has not been an ignoble one during the Thatcher decade. And the Government now seems to be intent on wreaking its revenge on a body of professionals it has always heartily disliked.

Defeat for the Modernizing Tendency?

Though receiving less attention at the time, the 1987 curriculum proposals also represented a defeat for the Conservative Modernizers. And it is this defeat which has had profound consequences for the curriculum development of our schools — particularly at the secondary level.

The debate within the Conservative Party of the 1980s is often and rightly seen as one between the Neo-Conservative and the Neo-Liberal elements of the Thatcherite New Right — an essential point of conflict as far as education is concerned being the desirability or otherwise of a state-imposed national curriculum. But, as Ken Jones has pointed out, Conservatism in education is really 'three-headed', rather than 'double-

faced'.[3] A group of 'modernizing' Conservatives, led by David (now Lord) Young, and not really part of the New Right as such, became particularly influential during Keith Joseph's five-year period at the DES (1981-86) — a factor which helps to account for Joseph's curious failure to implement the sort of privatizing measures much favoured by his former allies in the Far Right think-tanks. The main aim of all these Conservative Modernizers was to see the school curriculum — and particularly the secondary school curriculum — re-structured in order to prepare pupils for the 'world of work'. Their main achievement in the area of curriculum initiatives was probably the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in the Autumn of 1983. Unlike the Cultural Right — and particularly the Neo-Conservatives of the Hillgate Group — the 'modernizing' tendency has no time for the grammar-school tradition and considers it to be largely responsible for Britain's long industrial decline. The Modernizers find little to attract them in the National Curriculum which is seen as offering pupils an education which is both book-bound and supremely irrelevant. At the same time, there is nothing remotely egalitarian in their approach: as they see it, the secondary curriculum should be strictly differentiated in order to prepare pupils for the differing tasks they will perform in a capitalist economy. Their view of educational 'opportunity' was neatly summarized by Lord Young in September 1985:

> My idea is that ... there is a world in which 15 per cent of our young go into higher education ... roughly the same proportion as now. Another 30 to 35 per cent will stay on after 16 doing the TVEI, along with other courses, and ending up with a mixture of vocational and academic qualifications and skills. The remainder, about half, will simply go on to a two-year YTS.[4]

The decline in the Modernizers' influence in the late 1980s can be attributed to a number of related factors. Employment prospects appeared to be improving and, paradoxically, there was therefore less need to be concerned about vocational training in schools. The Manpower Services Commission — which was the Modernizers' chief power-base — never regained the authority and influence it had had while David Young was chairperson between 1982 and 1984. The MSC lost a powerful ally when Keith Joseph was replaced as Education Secretary by Kenneth Baker in May 1986; and, from that date, the DES came more and more under the influence of the Downing Street Policy Unit headed until 1990 by Professor Brian Griffiths. The proponents of the so-called 'New Vocationalism' increasingly lost ground after 1986 to those members of the Radical Right who resented the MSC's interference in the education service and saw no virtue anyway in a vocationalized curriculum. The object now was to erect an hierarchical system of schooling subject to market forces and to government by strict curriculum guidelines. The Industrial Trainers of the MSC were replaced in the Prime Minister's affections by the cultural supremacists of the Hillgate Group. The 1988 National Curriculum appeared to be a victory for the Neo-Conservatives.

Return of the Modernizers?

Yet the National Curriculum was barely in place before it became obvious, even to the Government, that Key Stage Four at least could not survive in the form envisaged by the DES and its allies. The last two years of compulsory schooling rapidly became the most problematic area of the Government's ill-conceived curriculum plans. There were practical problems involved in fitting so many subjects and cross-curricular themes into a finite amount of curriculum time. Many teachers complained that it was simply not possible to teach all ten foundation subjects (and RE) to pupils of all abilities — without risking pupil resentment and indiscipline. And as general economic prospects worsened, it seemed that the New Vocationalism was not necessarily an idea whose time had gone. In other words, the battle for the high policy ground was about to be fought all over again in the changed conditions of the early 1990s.

Speaking at the Conference of the Society of Education Officers in London in January 1990, Education Secretary John MacGregor announced that he was looking again at the requirement that schools should teach 14 to 16-year-olds all national curriculum subjects 'for a reasonable time'. As part of a wide range of options for these older students, he said he had asked vocational examination bodies such as the Business and Technician Education Council and the Royal Society of Arts to submit qualifications for approval.[5] Not surprisingly, this move was immediately rounded on by many headteachers who interpreted it as a step back to the days of: 'GCE for the best and CSE for the rest'.

At the end of July 1990, in a speech to the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) Conference in Nottingham, the Education Secretary signalled a further retreat on the National Curriculum arrangements by suggesting that some pupils could be allowed to drop some subjects from the age of 14. The most likely subjects to be 'dropped' were art, music and physical education; but the position of history and geography was also in doubt. Mr MacGregor made it clear that the National Curriculum remained intact up to the age of 14, but, after that, pupils might well be obliged to take only five of the foundation subjects: the three core subjects of English, maths and science, together with technology and a foreign language. The Education Secretary admitted that Key Stage Four posed its own special problems:

> Essentially, the question is one of fit — how to achieve a broad balanced curriculum for all pupils without sacrificing worthwhile options... There is a genuine dilemma here.[6]

In an interview with John Clare of **The Daily Telegraph** at the end of October 1990, Education Minister Tim Eggar made it clear that the Government was now proposing to encourage secondary schools to develop a vocational alternative to the academic curriculum. In his words:

> Far too many children from 14 upwards are studying things which they and their teachers do not regard as appropriate ... We have to offer these youngsters the sort of vocational courses and qualifications that will make sense to them -and encourage them to stay on in full-time education after 16.

Schools would be encouraged to develop parallel academic and vocational streams, with the main objective being to raise the status of vocational qualifications:

> That is the main issue facing us in education. That is the area where we are so much weaker than Germany — not in turning out graduates, but in producing skilled workers and supervisors ... To achieve that, we must have two parallel streams — the vocational and the academic — from half-way through secondary school, so that children can concentrate on what interests them.[7]

The Government might not be able to legislate for a return to the three-tier structure of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools embodied in the post-war settlement, but it should, in Mr Eggar's view, ensure that all the 'advantages' of that structure are made available to parents and pupils in the last decade of the century. This means creating maximum differentiation within schools.

Finally, the new Education Secretary Kenneth Clarke effectively abandoned Key Stage Four of the National Curriculum in his Speech to the North of England Education Conference meeting in Leeds in January 1991. Ignoring the advice of the National Curriculum Council for all ten subjects of the National Curriculum to remain compulsory until 16, the Government had finally decided that only science, maths and English should remain sacrosanct after 14. Pupils will now be able to 'drop' art, music and history or geography, with physical education being treated 'flexibly'. All pupils would have to study modern languages and technology, but would not be obliged to take GCSEs in them. The new structure was put forward as a victory for commonsense and as a means of ensuring that, once again, schools could cater for pupils according to their differing job prospects. In the words of the Education Secretary:

> I believe we should not impose on young people a rigid curriculum that leaves little scope for choice. By the age of 14, young people are beginning to look at what lies beyond compulsory schooling, whether in work or further study. We must harness that sense of anticipation if every pupil is to have the chance of developing to the full.[8]

The Government's revised plans for 14 to 16-year-olds fit in neatly with their proposals for education and training at the post-16 stage. The White Paper **Education and Training for the 21st Century** published in May 1991 set out the intention to establish a coherent framework of national vocational qualifications in schools and colleges to run alongside a strengthened A and AS Level academic system. And it made clear that vocational awarding bodies would be encouraged to develop a new range of examination courses for subjects inside and outside the National Curriculum, or combinations of them.[9]

It is surely significant that the Government is apparently contemplating the abandonment of its GCSE reforms, both by allowing the existence of competing qualifications and by dividing the GCSE itself into tiers for pupils of differing abilities. We learn that 'bright children' will be sitting GCSE papers by 1994 under a new system which will, in effect, reintroduce O-levels.[10] When these new papers are introduced, the Government will have reversed three founding principles of the GCSE: that, where possible, students should take a common exam; that a high proportion of marks should be awarded for coursework; and that youngsters of all abilities should be able to take the GCSE. In future, children of very low ability (whatever that means) will apparently be excluded.

Having catalogued this series of disastrous measures, one has the fear that things will not be very different if the Labour Party wins the 1992 general election. The general response of the Party to all the Government's extraordinary proposals has so far been both curious and disquieting. Indeed, a confidential paper drawn up by Derek Fatchett, Labour's deputy education spokesperson, and leaked to **The Guardian** in February 1991, contains proposals for the education of 14 to 19-year-olds that might well have been written by either Tim Eggar or Kenneth Clarke. Pupils at 14 will be given the option of specializing in either vocational or academic courses, with new vocational qualifications being introduced alongside GCSEs. The two groups will, however, be allowed to share the same schools; and Labour insists, of course, that there will be 'parity of esteem' between the two tracks.[11] Just as there was between grammar and secondary modern schools in the 1950s!

Conclusion

The common 'entitlement' curriculum developed by HMI in the late 1970s involved a synthesis between the academic, the vocational, the technical and the practical. As we have seen, it had little if any effect on the plans drawn up by the DES in 1987 which were remarkable chiefly for their lack of sophistication. Yet a primitive version of a national curriculum — even the banal model constructed by DES bureaucrats — might well be considered preferable to the differentiated structures that now appear to be emerging post-14. In the meantime, the more enlightened and professional approach of the Inspectorate drifts further and further away from realization — no matter which political party wins the voters' support in 1992.

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1. Roger Dale uses the term 'Industrial Trainers' in his paper 'Thatcherism and Education' which first appeared in **Contemporary Education Policy** edited by John Ahier and Michael Flude and published in 1983. The label actually comes from Raymond Williams's well-known tripartite division of nineteenth-century educational ideologies into those of: the 'public educators', the 'industrial trainers' and the 'old humanists', put forward in **The Long Revolution** published in 1961. Ken Jones prefers to use the term 'Conservative Modernizers' in his 1989 book **Right Turn.**
2. Reported in **The Times Educational Supplement**, 17th April 1987.
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SEAC and HMI Guidance or Confusion?

Kevin Sheldrick
The leader of a Curriculum Advisory Team in Birmingham, Kevin Sheldrick here writes about two key documents which appear to give conflicting advice to schools.

The fact that statutory reporting on key stage 3 assessment is to be further delayed may reduce anxiety in the short term. However, this will rapidly return if teachers feel insufficient guidance is being provided. In this context, at first glance, the arrival of two authoritative documents concerned with the implementation of the National Curriculum would appear to be very welcome and long over due. SEAC have released 'Teacher Assessment at Key Stage 3' and HMI have produced 'Science Key Stages 1 and 3'. Whilst there is much agreement between HMI and SEAC about what constitutes effective assessment, there are crucial differences. These two documents do not give a consistent message to schools.

The problem with comparing the two documents is that they have different purposes. HMI is not considering assessment alone but is evaluating the introduction of the National Curriculum for an audience that includes Ministers and Officers of the DES. The SEAC document is a selection of good assessment practice produced for teachers. Despite this, both HMI and SEAC do cover a lot of the same ground.

The most striking difference between the documents is that HMI appear to lay greater stress on the setting of special assessment tasks. Even at Key Stage 1 HMI support the use of short tests.

> The more confident schools were selective in their choice of evidence to illustrate attainment and set a variety of tasks, including short tests, to judge levels of attainment.

In contrast SEAC indicate that teacher assessment '... does not necessarily require the addition of separate assessment tasks or tests.' The activity designed to encourage teachers to consider the range of evidence that might be generated includes a very impressive list which covers almost every imaginable teaching/learning situation eg. debates, role play, diaries, newspaper articles, models. Tests are noticeably absent from this list. It would seem that SEAC are trying to encourage a move away from testing.

HMI, on the other hand, regard the setting of short tests and special tasks as being part of an effective approach to assessment. HMI state:

> The more effective arrangements for assessing and recording include many of the following aspects:
> - teachers planned assessment tasks which related AT1 to other ATs;
> - teachers used tests to assess pupil's understanding as well as their recall of scientific facts and principles.

Although HMI acknowledge the usefulness of tests for assessing recall and understanding of scientific fact and principle, there is also a recognition of the difficulty schools are having using tests.

> ... even the more effective schools were having difficulty devising tests to judge the effectiveness of teaching across all the ATs.

It is not clear whether HMI are advocating that effort should be devoted to the development of better tests which more effectively assess all ATs, or that other forms of assessment are perhaps more appropriate. SEAC seem to have little doubt that the solution to assessing all ATs is the use of many varied forms of assessment. The SEAC document does not attempt to give guidance as to the development of better tests. HMI do not specifically mention AT1 as the area of difficulty but this is clearly implied by the reference to tests being used for recall and understanding. HMI seem to accept that tasks rather than tests have to be given in order to assess AT1 effectively. SEAC are clearly less than enthusiastic about setting special tasks believing that 'Teacher assessment should be an integral part of teaching and learning'.

Neither document alerts teachers to the drawbacks of using tests, the most obvious being the extent to which we can be sure tests measure what we *think* they measure. All of us know many pupils who often understand a great deal but have difficulty in showing this in a test, particularly if this is in a written form. I recently worked with two comparable mixed-ability classes containing a large number of E2L pupils who had experienced almost identical learning programmes. Before undertaking tests, time was devoted to ensuring the pupils in one class could understand the language contained in a test. The other class were not given this introduction but were told to ask for help if they did not understand the text. The scores obtained by the class which received the introduction were much higher. Particularly noticeable was the much smaller number of pupils gaining low scores. If we rely too heavily on formal tests, then we might seriously underestimate what pupils are achieving.

This, in addition to the problem of using tests to assess process skills associated with AT1. Even the use of special tasks does not solve the problem of assessing AT1 because a pupil's ability to perform in this area is so heavily dependent on context. APU found that the pupils' understanding of scientific concepts affected how they worked scientifically.

HMI seem to recognise difficulties with tests, yet do not specify what these might be or point to any solutions. It could be argued that the role of HMI is to critically evaluate and this does not require them to offer solutions. The role of suggesting solutions belongs to someone else — but who? SEAC is the obvious answer, but they seem to be avoiding the issue of testing altogether. Although most secondary schools will continue using tests and setting special tasks, there seems to be no authoritative body providing any clear guidance on this in the context of the National Curriculum. It could be argued that SEAC have missed an opportunity to encourage teachers to critically analyse the role of tests and decide on their suitability.

HMI identify the problem of schools going overboard on assessment and wasting a lot of time because they have proceeded without waiting for guidance. HMI state:

> Many teachers and advisers committed too much energy and effort to assessment: one school tested its pupils 14 times in the first half term.

Although the SEAC document contains examples of very good practice, it could be argued that this document encourages schools to 'go overboard'. For instance presenting teachers with such a comprehensive list of what could constitute 'evidence' could result in teachers trying to assess and retain too much evidence. SEAC fail to give guidance as to how much evidence should be considered and therefore could be exacerbating the problem HMI identify.

Although there are significant differences, it would be wrong to give the impression that HMI and SEAC are totally opposed to each other. There is agreement about what constitutes effective assessment. For instance, HMI and SEAC seem to agree about the importance of pupils being involved in their own assessment. HMI state that effective assessment arrangements included the following aspect:

> Pupils were involved in the assessment process, so they understood its purpose and gained confidence from knowing what they could do and how they could progress.

SEAC have a whole section on involving pupils and throughout the document every effort is made to ensure maximum pupil participation in their own assessment. In addition, there is agreement about effective assessment being used to inform the planning of future learning experiences, the need for maintaining a simple accessible record system and department/schools developing an agreed assessment policy to ensure consistency of approach. HMI also acknowledge that effective assessment can be part of normal classroom activity.

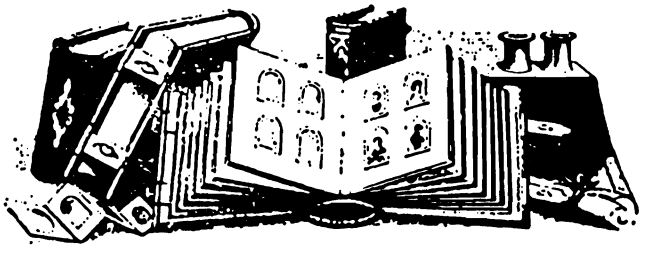
However, when it comes to teaching/learning styles, there is a difference in emphasis between HMI and SEAC. SEAC see pupils as being actively involved in all aspects of teaching/learning, whereas the HMI idea of pupil involvement is more passive. The examples provided by HMI advocate pupil involvement but the teacher has overall responsibility for the planning and development of lessons. HMI provide an example of good practice in which the teacher prepares a range of assignments which recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the pupils concerned. In the one example SEAC provide it is suggested that the pupils be given a great deal of responsibility for their own learning in a way which includes planning and the development of the lesson. Following a class brainstorm, the pupils are involved in selecting appropriate work which would contribute to a class topic on recycling materials on the Earth's surface.

> In the main pupils decide what has to be done and how they will do it. The teacher acts mainly as mediator, using the opportunity to make assessments of a variety of statements of attainment targets.

Clearly, there seems to be significantly different views about teaching and learning underpinning these two documents. This goes a long way towards explaining why they do not give a consistent message about assessment in the National Curriculum.

How should teachers respond to this? SEAC seem to be advocating teacher assessment based on normal school activity and a high degree of pupil involvement. On the other hand, HMI suggest testing and special tasks with a comparatively lower amount of pupil involvement. One suspects that HMI is closer to the reality of most secondary schools and that SEAC represents more of an ideal (or idealistic!) situation. Teachers have to decide what is best for their pupils. Suddenly dropping end-of-unit tests because of SEAC, in a school where they are normal and accepted could easily have a detrimental effect on the pupils because teachers have not developed the skills to operate other strategies. If schools continue using tests and special tasks for their teacher assessment, care will be needed to ensure that the achievement of pupils is not underestimated. This could mean the development of better tests or the use of other strategies.

The year's delay in the need for statutory reporting could allow HMI and SEAC to further clarify what they consider to be good assessment practice. It is to be hoped that future guidance will give a more consistent message to schools.



Telling the Story of Learning

Michael Armstrong
Michael Armstrong is a long-standing member of **Forum's** Editorial Board and Head of an Oxfordshire primary school. The following essay is presented as a contribution to the debate begun by last-year's successful **Forum** conference.

A Preface

In the summer of 1991 Forum held a conference under the title Defining Quality — Recognising Achievement. In the essay which follows I have attempted to define the quality of a fragment of one child's learning and to recognise her achievement. I use the word 'learning' to signify both a process and an accomplishment, as when we speak of a scholar's learning. The kind of learning with which I am concerned cannot be described in the language of the National Curriculum. It requires a very different perspective, as the essay aims to show. The construction, or reconstruction, of this alternative point of view seems to be the chief task which faces educational reformers at the present time. Against the current of the age, we have to discover a language that is fit for the description of learning. I intend this essay as a contribution to that end.

Moon Wing Boots by Carley Still: an interpretation

'We never start from scratch.'
Reconceptions in Philosophy, Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, Hackett, 1988, p. 12.

'Remarkably, each child's first story is a unique event in the history of the world.'
The Boy Who Would Be A Helicopter, Vivian Gussin Paley, Harvard, 1988, p. 8.

Moon Whales is a collection of poems by Ted Hughes, lavishly illustrated by Chris Ridell (Faber and Faber, 1988). Among the poems, which catalogue the disconcerting landscape of the moon, with its wayward flora and fauna, is one entitled Moon-Wings.

Moon-Wings

Unexpectedly descending things
Are these moon-wings.

Broad, soft, silent and white
And like a huge barn-owl's is their flight.

They veer and eddy and swoop.
They loop the alarming loop.

No head or limbs or body — just wings.
A pair pounces down on you and clings —

You feel them trying to grow
Into your shoulder blades, then they flap and you go

You go you go you go -
Where or which way you can never know.

High over goggling faces you are swung -
And just as unexpectedly suddenly flung

Down to the ground — after flying
Nine or ten miles without trying.

Then the wings just whirl off
With a sort of whiffling laugh.

Moon-Wings, which I read to my class of eight and nine year olds early one morning in late June of 1991, was the occasion for the poem that follows. Its author, Carley Still, was nine year's old. (In transcribing the original manuscript I have observed Carley's own line endings but I have revised the punctuation in the light of a discussion which I had with Carley at the time the poem was composed.)

Moon Wing Boots

They fly in the air all the time they
never come down day or night they stay
in the air flying flying everywhere never
stop to say Hello never sit never walk stay
in the air all the time. When it's dark
they go round to fetch little boys and
girls. They slowly put the shrinking
boot into their backs. It hurts
at first then the wings start to flap
you go up into the air. It's fun at first but then
it gets a bit horrible. Then you look back the wings
are coming out of your back you see the boot coming
out you hear the horrible noises it makes
slivery sliding shivering shaking slowly slivering
all night long then you feel the wings come
out. You are a thousand feet from earth
you look up the wings are flapping away
you look down you're falling fast
you can't stop BANG you're dead.

Moon Wing Boots might be taken as a critical reading of the poem by Ted Hughes. Or it might be seen as a reworking of Hughes's imagery, a reconstruction of his vision. Or as a retelling — one more event in 'that slow piling one on top of the other of thin transparent layers' which according to the German philosopher and critic Walter Benjamin, 'constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings.' (Benjamin's essay **The Storyteller**, from which these

remarks are taken, makes fascinating reading for anyone who is interested in children as storytellers, or indeed more generally as writers. See **Illuminations**, Walter Benjamin, ed. Hannah Arendt, Harcourt Brace, 1968.) But I think it's best to delay the confrontation of the two poems until 'Moon Wing Boots' has been observed more closely.

I start with the boots. Carley has drawn them above her title and again below the poem's devastating conclusion. They hardly look violent. If anything they remind me of the roller boots which Carley and her friends ask to bring to school on the last day of term so that they can career around the playground showing off their skills, not to mention the boots themselves. In class, one child was reminded of Perseus's winged boots — we'd been studying the story of Perseus and the Medusa earlier in the year. In any case these boots, at a glance, promise adventure, a kindly magic.

If so, the promise is deceptive, undermined already in the opening lines:

> They fly in the air all the time they
> never come down day or night they stay
> in the air flying flying everywhere never
> stop to say Hello never sit never walk stay
> in the air all the time.

The power of flight has deprived the boots of their function. These boots weren't made for walking. Momentarily in the first three lines ceaseless flight seems full of wonder and charm in its boundlessness, echoed in the inner rhymes — 'air...air....everywhere...' — and in the repetition of 'flying flying'. But immediately the charm is questioned — 'never stop to say Hello never sit never walk.'

'Never stop to say Hello' is one of those moments, endearing and therefore often misunderstood, at which a young writer's naivety opens up significant possibilities which are beyond the scope of writers later in their development. We smile, but not entirely with the writer or the poem. For 'never stop to say Hello' is not a charming but, rather, a terrifying expression. It suggests that these boots, for all the boundless excitement which they promise, are dangerously detached from human concerns. Suddenly the thought that they 'never sit never walk' implies constraint rather than opportunity. When the opening words return — 'stay in the air all the time' — they come with a very different colouring, a change marked by the substitution of the oppressive word 'stay' for the liberating word 'fly'. (There is a question to be asked about a young writer's intentions in respect of this kind of interpretation. I don't want to try to answer it here. I will only say that I don't think that the interpretation of 'stay' and 'fly' which I have just proposed infringes the legitimate bounds of interpretation as far as Carley's poem is concerned.)

Now the terror enters, as if in a second stanza or chapter. To the aimlessness of ceaseless flight is added a threatening note, a kind of purpose although the purpose is without reason, unexplained. 'When it's dark they go round to fetch little boys and girls.' With these words the poem moves into the world of fairy tale, but, as it turns out, a fairy tale deprived of its 'liberating magic', as Benjamin describes it in his essay. This is the first of two moments of transition in the poem. Appropriately it is introduced by the only subordinate clause in the entire piece — 'when it's dark' — which signals the commencement of the narrative. Previously we have heard no more than the announcement of a subject. The dark purpose now animates a plot.

It's 'dark', they 'fetch'. Juxtaposed in the one sentence these two words hint at a sinister design which the following sentence horribly confirms — 'they slowly put the shrinking boot into their backs.' (I will note here in passing that when I reached this point for the first time in Carley's poem I didn't trust myself to have read the word 'shrinking' correctly and paused to ask her if that was what she meant. (It was.) It's possible that Carley has derived 'shrinking' in some way from Ted Hughes's 'alarming loop.' What is certain is that the word condenses and then brings wonderfully to life an almost unmanageable image. If you try to visualize what happens you are heading for confusion. But 'shrinking' is so powerful a term in this context that there is no need to look beyond it. It is the most important word in the poem, anticipating and later triggering the disgust with which the boot's extrication of itself is experienced. The sounds that then overwhelm the poem are felt here for the first time — 'slowly....shrinking....backs.'

'It hurts at first then the wings start to flap,' as if in the excitement of becoming airborne the pain is forgotten. Like so much else in this poem the words 'at first' are about to prove doubly deceptive, but first comes the moment of take off and it is at this point in the poem that the second transition occurs. So far the victims have been 'little boys and girls', unnamed objects of the boots' unmotivated violence. With take off the narrator brings them alarmingly closer. The third person pronoun vanishes, giving place to 'you' — 'you go up into the air'. This shift is no accident. From here on the third person never reappears. In the manuscript of the poem this second transition is marked by a change in the length of the handwritten lines. It is tempting to read this lengthening of the line as a recognition of the change that has come over the poem but perhaps this is to breach the limits of interpretation. At any rate, from this point until the end, the poem abandons the fairy tale genre and becomes a form of nightmare. As in many nightmares, the victim is both the narrator and the narrated subject. Is 'you' me or not me? The answer is, it might be.

The transition occurs in mid sentence. Once the sentence on either side of the lengthened line is put together a further implication of the change of person appears. 'It hurts at first then the wings start to flap you go up into the air.' Flying is not something which the children accomplish of themselves but something which happens to them, which they suffer. They don't flap their wings, the wings flap them. The dramatic turning from third to second person captures magnificently the significance of this moment.

The pace of the narrative now increases, for all that the extraction of the boots lasts 'all night long'. Only one sentence is given over to the flight — 'it's fun at first but then it gets a bit horrible'. The opening picks up the opening of the previous sentence only to return the tale to its dark course. I was inclined at first to resist the apparent naivety of 'a bit horrible', which in this

respect reminded me of the earlier phrase 'never stop to say Hello'. But the later phrase is as appropriate in its context as the earlier one. The narrator is reluctant yet to acknowledge the full horror of what is in store, both for the sake of the ending to come and perhaps also for her own sake. Besides, the final act which now begins, though told in a torrent of images and words, is drawn out in time 'all night long'. Bit by bit, indeed, the horror grows.

The rest of the poem is too vivid and too transparent to require commentary. It's worth noting how comprehensively the fall is rendered in terms of sensation — the look back, the sound of the boot as it extricates itself, the feel of the wings coming out. Only the astonishing line of sounds — 'slivery sliding shivering shaking slowly silvering' — holds back the breathless syntax. At the close there is no relief, no gentle release from the story, no waking up in bed, no acknowledgement that after all this is never-never land. 'You can't stop BANG you're dead' and below, two flapping, indifferent boots. Try reading the poem aloud. The ending is remorseless. The audience sits in shock. There's more than a moment's silence.

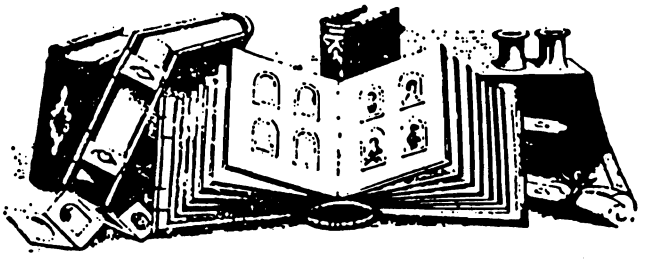
Moon Wing Boots is both an enactment and a meditation. It treats of violation and domination, the defining of our humanity by conversation and exchange, purpose and the lack of purpose, reason and unreason, what it means and does not mean to be a person. I don't think it's far-fetched to attribute concerns such as these to nine-year-old writers. If they seem extraordinary that is only the shock of the ordinary. For narrative, from the start, is a way of defining ourselves and the world in which we live. An infant's bedtime monologue, a pre-school child's dictated story, a nine-year-old's poem: these are all so many attempts, each at its own complex point of development, incommensurate and unique, to reconstruct the world by way of the particular forms that constitute narrative thought.

Reconstruction implies both the invention and the discovery of meaning. It is at this point that it makes sense to confront Carley Still's Moon Wing Boots with Ted Hughes's Moon-Wings. Carley's poem appropriates its model. She has entered the world of one text and recreated it in another. The dependence of her poem on the Hughes poem is too evident to need elaboration but nothing that she takes from that poem is left as it is, from the moon wings themselves, reconstituted as boots, to the savage darkening of Hughes's ending.

There is a certain abstraction in Moon-Wings, a speculativeness that never quite comes to life, even in the drawing that faces Hughes's text. Perhaps if it did come to life the poem would be unreadable to a class of eight and nine year olds. It takes a nine year old herself to invest these images with demonic energy, turning a poetic fancy into a nightmare narrative. I will cite just one example of Carley's way with Hughes: her use of pronouns. I have already mentioned the sudden eruption of the second person — 'you' — half way into the poem and its effect in dramatising the absence of human agency. In part, this effect can be felt in Hughes's poem too and is derived by Carley from that poem -

> You feel them trying to grow
> Into your shoulder blades,
> then they flap and you go.

But Hughes has already used the second person pronoun. From the outset he has personified Carley's 'little boys and girls' as 'you'. By withholding the second person until the very moment of flight, Carley brings an urgency to the imagery which Hughes never attempts. The nightmare which she builds around Hughes's whiffling wings represents her own particular achievement, her own unique event in the history of the world. But it's worth remembering that she didn't start from scratch.



Primary Schools Observed on Either Side of the Channel

Bernard Kavanagh
Bernard Kavanagh started his teaching career in secondary comprehensive education in Luton; he has trained teachers and taught languages at Leicester Polytechnic, before taking up a post as Modern Languages Adviser to the County of Leicestershire. For the last two years, he has been a General Adviser but retains curriculum responsibility for modern foreign languages and oversight of the link between Leicestershire and the Académie de Rouen.

The County of Leicestershire has official links with three areas in mainland Europe: the Seine-Maritime in Upper Normandy, the Saarland in Germany and in Italy the City of Florence. The oldest of these links, that with France, was established in the early 70s, the German one ten years later, that with Florence some five years ago. It is one aspect of the French link that I should like to concentrate on in this article.

I have been lucky enough to be involved in many exchanges and visits, both as *animateur* and as interpreter: this year, the fifth group of primary Heads and teachers, led by an *inspecteur/inspectrice,* will spend a week in our schools, and be accommodated by English counterparts who spent a fruitful week in and around Rouen last March. Our course members are led by Richard Cheetham, a General Adviser with expertise in primary education and in classroom evaluation, which is of great benefit to us all.

The mutual hospitality is an important aspect of the experience. Whilst most of the participants have already visited the other country, this has almost invariably been in their childhood or on holiday. The chance to see other Europeans on their home-ground, to help to deliver young children to their nursery, to eat with families, to 'meet granny' and the like, has two constant features: colleagues discover aspects of life which impress, puzzle or amuse; and they find in themselves linguistic competences which they little suspected; nor are these always pieces of school-child and holiday language, but rather 'communicative strategies'. It goes without saying that these improve, and mutual trust and confidence grow, in fairly direct ratio to the quantity of wine and cider consumed!

In terms of preparation for such visits, there is a balance to be struck, as there often is in experimental learning: participants need to have an idea of systems and an inkling of what they will find in the schoolrooms; but there is no substitute for 'discovery'. So that the teachers are thrown into their counterparts' classes with a fairly sketchy picture of French education. On the return leg, French colleagues are given a fuller set of guide-lines, but still have the same shock as they discover for themselves the informal classrooms in Leicestershire primary schools.

According to Martin McLean,[1] the two systems are at opposing ends of the spectrum which extends from the 'encyclopeadic' to the 'humanistic' models of education. What I should like to do is to give an impression of what that looks like 'at the sharp end', when a French colleague is in an English classroom and *vice versa.* There is a great consistency in French reactions, which could be gathered under the following headings:

1. Abundance: for the French, our classrooms are comfortable and teeming with resources of all sorts, notably books:
Non seulement bibliothèque centrale dans l'éecole, mais coin lecture très fournie dans chaque classe . . . et chaque travail démarre à partir d'un livre.

2. Individual work: children are encouraged to work at their own pace, in ways appropriate for their stage of development and their interests:
On respecte les aptitudes, la maturité de l'enfant; il n'est pas rare de voir des enfants d'âges différents dans les memes groupes ou classes. Tout est fonction de leurs possibilités. Certains démarreront l'apprentissage de la lecture à quatre ans, d'autres à cinq, d'autres à six.

3. Architecture: In old buildings as in new, use is made of every nook and cranny; this imaginative adaption of hallways and corridors, it should be said, was in the interest of making an agreeable and flexible environment, rather than squeezing the maximum number of children into given spaces! There was, not surprisingly, much comment on:
l'architecture des 'écoles ouvertes', qui est caractérisée par des classes non cloisonnées, trèes claires, très aérées et décorées par de nombreux travaux d'enfants.

4. Continuity: Essentially, our French colleagues see this as the result of a shared vision of what the education of young children is:
Il est clair que le système scolaire anglais ne laisse pas de rupture dans le cursus des enfants de 5 à 11 ans.

Moreover, since the schools were 'open', and since there were regular assemblies, children knew what awaited them further on in their progress through the school, they knew the teachers, and indeed, the teachers knew one another:
Ceci permet aussi aux enseignants un travail d'équipe; ainsi s'établit entre enseignants et enseignés une grande communication.

5. An absence of 'lessons' and an absence of 'analysis': A recurrent question here is 'Yes, but when do they have their lessons?'

Pas de cours magistral . . . l'enseignant . . . donne un enseignement individualisé ou par groupe de niveau. And another, about grammar and analytical work on language:

Grammaire, conjugaison, vocabulaire: peu ou pas de traces de ce genre d'exercices correspondant à ce que nous pouvons faire dans nos classes.

These comments, collected from a course evaluation in March 1990, sum up the main impressions which our French primary colleagues always have. What of our teachers in French classrooms?

It is not surprising that they are often the obverse of what we have seen so far:

Where are the books? For school libraries are rare, and classes do not have a choice of books for the children to choose from or to consult. Yet reading is seen, there as here, as the key to so much else, studies are commissioned to look into what are claimed to be falling standards of literacy, and so on. The general picture seems still to be that children are taught in whole classes, attending to a given text; whether this comes from a published reading scheme, or from text generated by individual pupils and then worked on by the whole class (*La méthode naturelle*). In schools attached to teacher training establishments (*écoles d'application*), we have seen a fair number of varied, inventive, and certainly thorough, reading activities, done in groups as well as with whole classes; the common strand though, is that the tasks are teacher-set and teacher-controlled; the English observers wonder: 'When do individual children have the chance to read a "real" book of their choice, and to share the experience with their teacher? What is the role of the parents in the business of learning to read?' Perhaps above all: 'Given individual differences and interests, how can whole classes usefully attend to the same page of the same book, for an hour at a time?'

At their baldest, these questions cluster round the issue of teaching and learning and the match or mismatch between them. On the other hand, classes we attended were **not** marked by apparent boredom or frustration among the children; and our impression is that our success rates in achieving literacy are no better than those in France.

If there is puzzlement about reading, the same applies to writing. Here the gamut of observation contains conflicting and at times challenging evidence: five-year-olds in a nursery school who write (copying or not, depending on the perceived ability of the child), in the most beautiful cursive script, in letters no bigger than yours or mine: where does this fine motor control come from? Why are our own expectations so different? On the other hand, in some tens of hours spent observing French classes, how much **free** writing have we seen? Virtually none. One is led to wonder whether there has been any debate on the effectiveness of having the child expressing its own meanings. Would this in fact be an aspect of what Martin McLean sees as the rejection of 'private knowledge' in the encyclopedic tradition?

I have no doubt but that there is also a feeling that such 'private knowledge' or encouragement of individualization of work is felt, at quite a deep level, to be 'unjust'; if the teacher delivers a uniform, valued set of skills and bodies of knowledge, this is seen as corresponding to a need for republican justice. It is in microcosm what McLean sees as 'the universalist principle' which '. . . goes some way towards guaranteeing at least a limited degree of equality of opportunity through a common experience for all students of whatever background or perceived abilities.'

But back into the classroom: What were we to make of three-year-olds engaged in a class discussion about facial features, which preceded the painting (in inks, with cotton wool buds!) of a 'bonhomme'? Teacher, indicating a photograph: 'Is her mouth a straight line?' Child: 'No, her lips are like a wave.' Of course there are questions which remain, about the amount of carry-over from discussion to art, but the intention is clear, and the language development interesting.

Two further impressions among the English teachers: First, the use which was made, both in provision of resources for children's use and as subjects for talk among even very young children, of great works of art. My colleagues saw a clear connection between this — it is part of the National Curriculum guide-lines — and the great interest taken in painting by their hosts. Generalizations from such small experience are of course as dangerous as they are tempting . . .

Secondly, at a much more down-to-earth level, they were struck by the fact that children, even very young ones, were expected as a matter of course to store unfinished art-work for completion next week.

On every exchange between Leicestershire and the Seine-Maritime, much time is spent explaining differences in the role of head teacher. In England, our French colleagues are always deeply impressed by the presence — and the breadth of functions — of the school secretary. For French head teachers at primary level take their own telephone calls and type their own memos. On the other hand, they have no say in the appointment of staff, nor any responsibility for curriculum development. This latter is in the hands of the local inspectorate, who are part of the Ministry of Education.

Of course, the exchanges are relatively expensive, and they have been supported centrally (in France, this has meant the creation of an 'Association 1901' among the officers and the teachers of the Académie de Rouen). With the approach of 1992, or as the French call it, 1993 (sic!), there is an ever greater demand for visits and exchanges of all kinds, from the other side of the Channel. I sincerely hope that Leicestershire teachers will continue, in spite of all the pressures on LEAs and on teachers themselves, to have this invaluable chance to gain for themselves and thereby for debates within their schools, a point of reference not only outside their parish, but outside their whole tradition.

References

1. Martin McLean: **Britain and a Single European Market** Kogan Page, 1990

British Schools and a Single Market Europe

Martin McLean
A member of the International and Comparative Department of the Institute of Education, University of London, Martin McLean has written extensively about comparative education issues.

In most prediction, calculation is clouded by hopes and fears. Speculation about the implications of the Single European Market for education in Britain gives wonderful excuses to ride hobby horses. One view is that '1992' matters because European educational cooperation is desirable in itself. Another perception is apocalyptic. Economic union will expose British educational weaknesses when confronted by continental European superiority. The third prognosis is that education is the least likely area of public life to be affected by the evolution of the European Community and, in any case, there are inherent strengths in British schools which will remain the envy of continental counterparts.

The first view, which entails questions about what being 'European' means and how such an identity relates to local, to national and to wider international affiliations, may be put aside at the moment. The sceptical projection has some validity and, while often motivated by insularity, is not necessarily anti-European. The constitution and legislation of the European Community, ever since 1957, have been concerned with economic and, more controversially, with political unity. Education was not mentioned in the Treaty of Rome and the European Commission since then has been confused and reticent in dealing with educational issues. There are doubts about whether educational policy and practice can ever be harmonized across twelve or more nation states when teaching and learning in every location reflect deeply entrenched cultural traditions which vary not only between countries but also within them. Even in an economically unified Europe, the diversity of educational cultures can be regarded as a rich heritage which will enhance the choices and opportunities of all its peoples. Yet this conception is best tested by analyzing its opposite that Europe really does matter.

Millenarianism is stronger on imagery than on fact or logic. The argument has depended on a series of assumptions about 'quality' on the one side of the political divide and 'resources' on the other which need more careful analysis. Educational institutions in Britain (or those outside Scotland whose traditions are better tuned to continental practice) may have to adapt radically to meet the challenge of 'Europe'. Yet this challenge is cultural as well as economic. For these reasons, the pessimistic approach should be considered more fully.

British schools and a European labour market

The apocalyptic scenario starts with the premiss that the European Community is about economic competition and only peripherally about political, social and cultural cooperation. Almost complete freedom of movement of goods and services, investment and labour will create a division between regions of social affluence created by high technology economic enterprises and a poorer periphery of economic underdevelopment and social marginalization. One factor determining the location of countries and regions within the inner or outer circles will be the quality of the labour force which, in turn, will be affected by the amount and standard of education. High technology economies require most of the labour force to have good quality education. Its lack may relegate Britain to participating as a new slave economy — as a source of unskilled migrants in a re-run of its relationship with Europe of two millennia previously. Yet this proposition makes unexamined assumptions about the labour requirements of sophisticated economies of the future and about the relative capacity of schools in different countries to equip workers with the required skills.

What behaviour patterns will workers need? Conventional taxonomies of worker attributes have included industriousness and perseverance; commitment and loyalty; intellectual and communicative capacities; adaptability and self-reliance; cooperativeness; motivation and initiative; creativity and imagination. Yet some aptitudes are more applicable to some kinds of occupations than others. Capacities which are pertinent to certain enterprises at present may be replaced by other qualities as productive processes change.

The labour market approach to the analysis of British education and training in comparison with other European countries has focused on the intellectual weaknesses of average British workers which are then linked to deficiencies in schools. High technology production requires most workers to be able to think schematically and to communicate linguistically, numerically and spatially so that they can manage the logical systems which characterize high productivity enterprises. It is claimed that workers in Britain lack these skills at the levels found in Germany, France and the Netherlands [1] which is the product of low intellectual achievement of average school leavers.[2] Young people do not have the educational capacities

to undertake the level of training needed by productive workers. So educational weaknesses in Britain are more deep-seated than the comparatively low rates of participation in education and training beyond the age of 16 which government and opposition are committed to remedying.

If these assertions are valid, then what is the origin of the condition? Analysis of aims and content of schooling reveals long standing differences between England and Wales and other European countries. The Cartesian rationalist philosophy retains a powerful influence not only in France and other southern European countries (except Greece) but, in a less dogmatic or monolithic form, also in Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. It is manifested in an emphasis in curriculum aims on appreciation of theory, abstraction and deductive thought processes and in the high status of logically structured subjects such as mathematics and languages in the hierarchy of curriculum subjects. The curriculum in England and Wales (both before and after the watershed of 1988) favours the humanities, the development of moral qualities, insight into individual human character and emotions, and, in processes of learning, induction and empiricism.[3] Even if the National Curriculum is applied and, indeed, extended to the 16-18 age group so that all students continue study of English language, mathematics, science, a modern language and social studies to the age of 18 to match the breadth of programmes found in other European countries, the goals of teaching and learning in England will still appear less adapted to the intellectual demands of high technology occupations than those of other education systems.

This may not be the whole story. The greater proportion of the total school population which appears to reach higher intellectual standards in Germany and possibly France, Denmark and the Netherlands may be the result of better provision than a more relevant curriculum. Rationalist teaching is not necessarily accessible. Indeed, the criticisms are that its abstraction is alienating as it has little relation to student experience and that, in France for instance, highly theoretical school mathematics is a device for stringent selection of students. Yet the encyclopaedic curriculum has radical roots in the Enlightenment and the 1789 Revolution which aimed at a transformation of society to which all citizens potentially could contribute. There has been a commitment to making the fruits of reason available to as high a proportion of the population as possible. It does not always work, as the failure in France since the 1970s to incorporate the bottom quarter of school attainers into the mainstream curriculum indicates. Yet the strength of the commitment to minimum standards produces the paradox that Germany which, alone in the European Community apart from the Netherlands, clings to a differentiated secondary school system appears to offer better opportunities for the majority of sixteen year old pupils in the hauptschule than British comprehensives do for equivalent students.

German, French, Dutch, Belgian and Danish schools have been driven by a rationalist egalitarianism which is particularly suited to the labour demands of high technology manufacturing. Italian schooling is more uneven, while Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland have not yet overcome the social and economic obstacles to educational development. The difficulties for Britain are not only a residual humanist and anti-rationalist tradition but also a set of attitudes about class divisions which reduce opportunities for the majority of young people through low expectations about their intellectual capacities and occupational futures.

This syndrome is well known. Its economic implications have also been described. How far do they have future as well as contemporary relevance? There are claims that the next generation of mass occupations will require greater individuality, creativity and inventiveness than contemporary industrial activities. Japanese educational policy statements have emphasized the need to develop these qualities through education as a foundation for the next industrial revolution.[4]. British schools are still seen as the model for the achievement of these new educational goals and as the alternative to the arid and alienating externality of the rationalist curriculum. The danger for British education is that its 'best' institutions which in practice coincide with those which provide for the socially privileged will have a major role in the next industrial revolution while the average schools will not yet have caught up with the previous occupational change.

Cultural dimensions

Even in a European Community dominated by economic considerations, the cultural and 'private' functions of schooling will continue to be important. Economic standardization may be accompanied by a cultural atomization. Yet the dynamic of cultural centrifugalism is itself economic. Migration made possible by freedom of movement of labour — though this is a phenomenon about which predictions are very unsure — potentially gives every school a catchment area of enormous cultural diversity. Alongside the less powerful extra-European immigrants, for whom few school systems have provided adequate economic and cultural opportunities, there may be the new class of Europeans whose economic importance will give them leverage to determine educational provision. A skilled worker elite may be more assertive in demands that local schools anywhere in the European Community should respond to their cultural proclivities.

Economic nomads may wish schools to reflect their national and sub-national traditions. These are more than conventional cultural attributes such as language, religion and history. There are also expectations conditioned by the historical experience of educational politics. So, for instance, Danish migrants, used to substantial parental influence on schools, may not accept easily the traditionally distant and authoritarian school-home relationships which have prevailed in Britain. Many French, Belgians or Dutch, in the context of historic battles of their own educational politics, may resist a moral education in English schools based on religion with no alternative except withdrawal. And there are the complications of sub-national divisions — the particular cultural demands of, for instance, Basques or Catholic Flemings

who have fought hard for separate educational provision in Spain and Belgium.

There may be newer manifestations of cultural difference. Affluence and geographical mobility give opportunities for the cultivation and exhibition of unconventional tastes and inclinations. New groupings across geographical boundaries may insist on educational expression of political, ecological, philosophical, religious or sexual identities. In some countries, such educational provision is supported by the state as the 'little' schools run by parent cooperatives in Denmark or the private schools of Germany, the largest number of which are the Waldorf-Steiner type. Such minority demands may not have great force when confined within one national culture-especially where toleration of cultural eccentricity is low. On a European scale they become more influential if groups organize themselves effectively and can derive strength from concessions made in some countries to demand recognition elsewhere.

British schools have had a reputation for the acceptance of personal differences between children. An assimilationist ideology has also been powerful, derived not only from an imperial history but also from traditions of the state school being a total community which supplants others such as family or church. There are particular historical conditions which have marked out British education from those of other European countries in this area — the establishment of state education in an urbanized society in the nineteenth century and the influence of boarding schools of the social elite. The concern of teachers for the social and emotional development of children in schools in Britain may be admired elsewhere in Europe but the lack of respect for other cultural institutions and the lack of clear boundaries between school and family responsibilities may mean that British schools are less responsive to demands for educational expression of cultural difference between students. Of course other European countries such as France, Spain, Portugal and Greece also have had educational traditions which are hostile to minorities and which derive from a state corporatism which is foreign to Britain. Yet the respect for the separate cultural identities of micro-communities which migration may disseminate throughout Europe is not especially strong in British education.

If highly skilled workers do not believe that the education of their children will be enhanced by migration, then there can be distortions in the free movement of labour which can discriminate against countries and regions. Economically successful countries in the European Community may be those in which it is attractive to live as well as to work and educational opportunities may be an important indicator of overall attractiveness.

Educational policy and the Single Market

Despite lukewarm responses in government to proposals for a social dimension to policy in the European Community, educational policy in Britain since the mid-1980s has had an untrumpeted European slant. Yet it is one consistent with a free-market conception of Europe rather than one of federal regulation.

The free-market approach presumes that the economic terms of the Treaty of Rome and the Single Market Acts can be applied in non-economic areas. There can be freedom of movement in education as well as in goods, services, investment and labour. Educational institutions can compete with each other throughout Europe. British policy, from this perspective, should be to encourage and permit such competition. Parental rights — the emblem of British policy since the mid-1980s — can be given to European migrants as well as to British citizens. Accountability and performance measures can be viewed as a consumers' guides and guarantees in a new European educational shopping mall. Where overall levels of provision are significantly less than those of other European countries — particularly in higher education and in post-16 training — then government has encouraged growth (but not in internationally inferior early childhood provision). However, state level European harmonization is avoided.

There are inconsistencies in this policy. The National Curriculum and national student assessment, as consumers' guides to quality, may make some sense in a European educational free market. They also ossify programme content which restrict possibilities to accommodate British education to differing approaches in Europe or to diverse demands of migrants. Consumer choices may be made also by reference to far less quantifiable differences of philosophy and tradition between, say, French, German and British educational institutions. A market approach may avoid European federalism but it will work only if there are close links and understandings between individual schools in different countries as students transfer between them. Harmonization may occur haphazardly between institutions even if superior authorities disdain it.

The federal approach is justified by a more pessimistic view of a European future. An educational free market has distortions which only governmental authority can reduce. A free-market in teachers will mean that educational opportunities will be reduced in poorer areas unless mechanisms can be found to stop the richest regions securing all the best teachers (especially in those subjects such as science and technology and at those levels where language differences are less of an obstacle). Federal measures may be needed to ensure that children and young people in economically poorer areas have the right to a quality of education which will allow them to compete in a European labour market. Educational qualifications may need to be harmonized and given a European status to prevent informal discrimination by employers and higher education institutions. Not all migrants will be affluent and powerful and they may need to have their rights to certain kinds of education (whether of a universal, economic or private cultural type) protected by federal action in all areas of the European Community. Formal harmonization or at least accommodation between different systems cannot for ever be avoided. This is the major challenge for policy makers in Britain.

Education and Training: a European Perspective

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Post-compulsory education and training (PCET) is a hot topic in all the European Community's 12 member states and rapid change is as evident in continental systems as in the UK. Most countries also share a similar range of concerns: how to increase participation in PCET and HE and achieve quality provision for the extra numbers; how to insure that education and training respond to the rapidly changing nature of work, particularly with regard to the flexible leading edges of the economy, the high-tech, 'post-Fordist' sectors; the need to upgrade and broaden vocational training in line with these changes and to enhance the integration of academic and vocational curricula; and, perhaps most controversially, how most effectively to balance central and local control and determine the relative weights of public and private responsibilities. These common concerns are generated endogenously in each individual state, but they are also major preoccupations of the European Commission: PCET is the one area where the European authorities can intervene in national education policies.

These common policy issues cannot, however, mask the extreme heterogeneity of PCET traditions in different EC states. Each country has its own unique system: the product of different national histories and of divergent cultural, economic and political patterns. Institutional structures, for instance, vary markedly between different states. German-speaking areas (western Germany, Austria, German-speaking Switzerland) tend to have Dual Systems, where post-compulsory academic education is school-based and clearly separate from training which is on an employment-based apprentice model with day-release to colleges. Most other continental EC countries (like France, Italy, Spain) have systems which are predominantly school- based, with a variety of institutions offering general and vocational education.

Whatever the institutional structures, all countries seem to have systems that are more or less tracked in curriculum terms, and qualification systems tend to reflect this. You can see three main streams or tracks in most countries: OECD terminology refers to them as the academic, the technical and the vocational. The academic track, corresponding to our 'A' levels and Highers (in Scotland), prepares students for HE and professional or managerial positions; the technical track, corresponding to our BTEC National, gives a broad foundation to future technicians and lower grade managers; and the vocational track (our NVQ levels 1 and 2) trains for skilled craft level. In some countries, like France, there is a tendency for the vocational to be upgraded to the technical, and a number of systems increasingly merge the academic and the technical, by developing integrated qualification systems, like the French bac general/bac professional, and by creating more comprehensive institutions, like the French lycée polyvalent and the Swedish Gymnasieskola (rather like our tertiary college). Although most systems are, to some extent, institutionally mixed and tracked, the English and Welsh system of PCET stands out as more fragmented and divided than most of the others and most lacking in clarity and intelligibility. It is one of the few systems which has no predominant mode or central core to it and this may be one of the reasons for our relatively low rates of participation.

Such diversity of traditions in Europe clearly presents problems for any greater integration of education and training throughout the Community. And whilst the European Commission insists that different national traditions must be respected and diversity preserved, achieving the goals of European integration, like the free movement of labour and certain minimum social rights, does imply some degree of harmonization. Efforts to achieve this have, so far, met with great difficulties. The harmonization of qualifications, for instance, has proved to be an impossibly protracted and complex procedure. Even the less ambitious aim of mutual recognition of qualifications between countries has proven difficult since equivalence is notoriously hard to determine and since many employers resent

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any limitations on their freedom to recruit in any case. Governments which have formally agreed to the directives on mutual recognition have not always been eager to see them implemented.

Despite the manifest obstacles to greater integration of education and training across Europe, there are a number of areas where different national reform trajectories seem to be on a convergent path and there may be some lessons for the UK in this. The first concerns the relations between education and employment. Most countries now appear to accept the desirability of closer links between educational providers and the world of work and between general education and work-related training. New technology and the changing nature of work organization creates a need for employees who are flexible and quick to learn. This suggests a form of PCET which encourages the acquisition of polyvalent or generic skills and these must be based on a solid foundation of general and broadly vocational education. Neither school-based nor employment-based systems have traditionally been very good at getting this mix right. Work-based training tends to encourage narrow occupationalism while inadequate general education and school-based systems have a built-in tendency to be remote from the world of work. What seems to be happening now is that most countries are seeking ways to bring the two together. In Germany work-based training is gradually broadened through increasing periods of general education in colleges, and through the reduction of classified occupations to a smaller number of broader areas. In the school-based systems of France and Sweden (perhaps soon to be in the EC?), one can see a concerted attempt to increase the involvement of industry, as, for instance, in the development of vocational curricula and a growing use of work experience and work shadowing on both general and vocational courses. The two types of system still remain quite distinctive, but the signs are that they are coming closer together.

Another common concern in many countries has been how to break down the divisions between the academic and the vocational tracks and so increase choice and flexibility in the systems. In most systems there are limited progression routes which allow students to cross from one track to another but they are not widely used and students have little opportunity to straddle different tracks and combine their studies. Most countries currently organize their curricula either on the basis of lines of study or modules. The linear mode (France and Sweden) is relatively inflexible but has the pedagogic advantages of coherence and accumulative learning. The modular system, long familiar in the USA and currently fast gaining ground in the UK, is the most flexible in terms of transfer and subject combination and also has the advantages of motivation-enhancing step-by-step assessment and ease of updating. The main problem with modularization is that it can lead to learning experiences which lack coherence and accumulative learning as in the so-called 'cafeteria' model of higher education. There is some evidence of a convergence between these two systems as curriculum designers seek to get the best of both worlds. In linear systems the common core elements of each line are augmented to the point where these cores become common to students on all tracks, thus increasing integration. In modular systems rules of combination are developed which counter the atomistic tendency implicit in modularization and enhance the coherence of programmes of study.

The third area where some convergence is discernible is in the administration of systems. A fierce debate has raged in this country and elsewhere in Europe on the relative merits of centralization and decentralization. We, predictably, have been moving in the opposite direction from most of Europe where the tendency is for greater devolution of control to local and regional levels. There has also been debate about the relative responsibilities of the public and private sectors for PCET, although the shift towards the private sphere and the free-market has been infinitesimal in continental Europe compared with the trends recently in the UK.

The pattern in most EC countries is for PCET to remain a public responsibility tightly regulated through the state but with the different social partners playing important and clearly defined roles. Germany provides a good illustration of this. Education remains a responsibility of the federal and local state and there is little evidence of the kind of free-market measures we have experienced in the UK. There are no parallels to open enrolment, voucher funding and LMS. The practical part of the apprentice training is largely funded and delivered by employers in the private sector. This is no free-market system, however, since it is tightly regulated by federal and Land Law. Young employees must receive training, employers must be licensed to train by the chamber of commerce which they have to join and they must deliver the quality of training which is required and promised in the apprentice agreements. All the social partners have a role: employers, teachers, unions, chambers of commerce, state administrators are all involved at various levels in the corporate bodies responsible for devising curricula, qualifications, agreements and so on. The social partnership approach does not always mean consensus but it does suggest a way of avoiding the undesirable polarities of inflexible and uniform centralization on the one hand, and fragmented and incoherent atomization on the other. It also means keeping a planned public system, for which the state retains responsibility, whilst involving the different social groups with legitimate interests to the collective good.

The PCET systems in continental Europe are, of course all far from perfect in all sorts of ways. They remain multiply segmented and tracked and still manage to reproduce all the old social, ethnic and gender inequalities, particularly so in the still very hierarchical systems in Germany and Holland. Vocational courses are still commonly differentiated by gender in most countries, and children of ethnic minorities still tend to do the less prestigious courses or end up with the poorest apprenticeships. This is even true in Sweden with its long social democratic traditions (notwithstanding the recent election results), its commitment to progressive educational causes and equal opportunities and its creation of a comprehensive system from primary to higher education. Even in countries with high participation rates in PCET, there

remain seriously marginalized groups who get little from the system and continue to worry the policy-makers.

However, despite these enduring problems, there do seem to be signs of some common patterns in European PCET reform which would lead to improved education and training for everyone. Many states are on the way to achieving near universal PCET in systems that are gaining in flexibility whilst still coherent and intelligible. General education in upper secondary is ceasing to be exclusively academic and becoming more relevant, whilst technical and vocational training are gradually losing their narrow, job-specific character. The gulf between the academic and the vocational, between elite education and mass training, is gradually being bridged, at least in some countries. Britain could well learn something from these developments. European integration may, thankfully, give us little choice but to abandon some of the more insular fads of the last 12 years. No wonder the free-marketers don't like it.

First Steps in Facing the Problem of Bullying

Derek Gillard
The author of this important feature on the problem of bullying in schools is Head of Marston Middle School in Oxford.

The purpose of this article is to describe how my school is attempting to deal with the problem of bullying in the hope that this may be useful to other schools and individuals. Having said this, it is vital to bear two points in mind: first, that what we have done — and are doing — is appropriate to our particular circumstances. Bullying in other schools and situations will vary both quantitively and qualitatively and may therefore require different approaches; and second, that the most important aspect of all our work has been the involvement of all concerned — staff and pupils — at all stages. For these two reasons, it would, in my view, be pointless for a school to feel that it could simply go through the processes which I outline here and hope to have dealt with the problem. I hope, however, that the issues discussed and the procedures described in this article will be of help to others in combating what, for far too long, has caused misery for many of our pupils.

The school and its context

But first, a little background information. Marston Middle School lies on the north east edge of the city of Oxford. The area is pleasant and varied, ranging from the picturesque village of Old Marston, through the 1930s semis and the developments of the 1950s to the smaller areas of newer housing. Rural Oxfordshire is minutes away to the north; Magdalen Bridge a mile or so to the south. The city centre is a ten minute bus ride away (or a twenty minute walk across the fields to the University Parks).

The population is largely white, though there are residents from the ethnic minorities (mainly Chinese, Asian and Afro-Caribbean) and this mix is enriched by the presence of a small number of people from all round the world who come to the city to work or undertake research in the University or at the John Radcliffe Hospital which stands about a mile from the school.

The school began life in the late fifties as a secondary modern school, becoming a middle school (for 9 — 13 year olds) in the 1970s. In the early eighties, it was amalgamated with a nearby school, a move which caused great anxiety for the staffs of both schools and led to a level of bitterness and division which has only recently been overcome. Today, the school has around 350 pupils, eighteen teachers, pleasant, well-kept buildings and superb grounds.

Equal Opportunities

I took up the post of Head Teacher in January 1989 and fairly quickly decided that my top priority had to be to improve the ethos of the school by tackling the problems caused by poor relationships. In the autumn term 1989 we made a start by introducing a Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme for all pupils and by undertaking a project on Equal Opportunities. Working with the First Schools in the area, we asked the Equal Opportunities Unit at Westminster College to organize two days' INSET for us. Teachers, education support staff, governors and parents were all involved and many issues were raised during these two days. Decisions were taken to set up a Working Party and to work towards agreeing an Equal Opportunities Policy for the school.

Our work on bullying began at about the same time. There were a number of reasons for this: first, there **was** bullying in the school — not a lot, I felt, but then any bullying is undesirable and if we were really going to tackle the ethos of the school and the quality of the relationships within it, we could not ignore this aspect of the problem. Second, there had been an increasing

level of media interest in the problem of bullying: a programme on BBC2 and a number of articles and letters in the local and national press had recently appeared. And third, we saw it as an equal opportunities issue: pupils whose lives are being made miserable by bullying are not in a good position to take advantage of the social and educational opportunities offered by the school.

The Bullying Group

For all these reasons we set up a Staff Working Party on Bullying (known as the Bullying Group — though we have tried not to bully!) in the latter half of the autumn term 1989. Seven members of staff volunteered and began by considering two issues:

— how would we find out the extent and nature of bullying in the school? and
— should we involve parents? (we decided not to at this stage, partly because we were concerned that to do so might cause panic and partly because we did not wish to raise expectations unrealistically).

The group met again on 6 December. In the week or so since the first meeting there had been articles in **The Times Educational Supplement** ('Playing for real': 24.11.89), **The Observer** ('When the bullies are in your court': 26.11.89) and **The Guardian** ('The deadly drip of cruelty of a bully boy': 6.12.89). Clearly the issue was of great national concern.

The December meeting of the Bullying Group decided to invite the Neti-Neti Theatre Company to visit the school to perform their play 'Only Playing Miss'. This had featured in two of the articles mentioned above, and was said to be a very powerful drama about bullying in schools. It also fitted well with our work on Equal Opportunities as it was performed in English, Bengali and Sign Language. We rang Neti-Neti and were disappointed that, because of the enormous media interest, they were booked up for months ahead. We did eventually get them to come and they were very well worth waiting for.

Personal and Social Education

The remainder of the December meeting was taken up with preparing a five-lesson programme on bullying for all pupils in their PSE lessons, with additional support in whole-school assemblies. The lessons, which took place in January 1990, began with a brainstorming session on 'What is Bullying?' and included class and group discussions on issues such as:

— what sort of people are bullies/victims?
— what sort of bullying is going on?
— where does bullying take place?
— what can we do about it?
— what should a school policy on bullying say? and so on.

A definition

During the lessons, pupils were asked to suggest a definition of bullying. We eventually agreed as a whole school that bullying was 'Any form of behaviour which causes unhappiness for another member of the school'. I was personally delighted that we had arrived at such a broad definition with enormous implications for all of us — including me! (It is also significant that we used the term 'member of the school': it does not apply only to pupils — teachers and support staff can be bullied, too).

The Bullying Questionnaire

In February 1990 several members of staff attended a lecture by Peter Smith of the Department of Psychology, Sheffield University, on 'The Silent Nightmare — Bullying in Schools', given at the John Radcliffe Hospital under the auspices of the Oxford Branch of the Association for Child Psychology and Psychiatry. It was a very valuable lecture which included information about a questionnaire on bullying. This had shown that, in the surveyed middle schools, 11.6 per cent of pupils had been bullied 'sometimes' and 5.5 per cent 'several times a week'.

The Bullying Group met again on 6 March 1990. We reviewed the PSE lessons and decided they had been successful in raising awareness of the issues. We considered the content of Peter Smith's lecture and decided that a questionnaire was the next step for us.

Again, we were convinced that the important thing was to involve the pupils at all stages, so we prepared two further PSE lessons during which pupils were asked to devise a questionnaire. The results of this work were collated and, at the end of April, the finished questionnaire was completed by all pupils during another PSE lesson. An instructions sheet for staff asked them to stress the confidential nature of the questionnaire: 'No-one will even be able to identify your writing — you don't need to put anything but ticks!'

The questionnaire asked pupils to say:

— how often they were being bullied (never/rarely/sometimes/often/all the time);
— how they were bullied (kicked/hit/pinched/pushed/threatened/called names/teased/bitten/told to give money/told to give sweets);
— where they were bullied (on the way to school/at the bus stop/in the subway/in the bike sheds/playground/toilets/changing rooms/corridors/dinner queue/on the field/during lessons/between lessons/on the way home);
— who was bullying them (mostly boys/girls/younger/older/grown ups/on their own/in groups);
— whom they had told (teacher/someone at home/friends/no-one);
— whether they had caused someone to bully them (by calling them names/swearing/making faces/hitting/kicking/insulting them/their families/colour or race/religion);
— whether they bullied others (never/rarely etc)
— and finally, whether they thought a Bully Court would be a good idea.

The results of this survey made interesting reading. For example:

Have you been bullied?	all the time	1%
	often	5%
	sometimes	30%
	rarely	40%
	never	24%

Do you bully others?	all the time	1%
	often	2%
	sometimes	13%
	rarely	36%
	never	48%

The disparity between these two sets of figures is interesting: you can draw your own conclusions but the assumption we made was that the bully often does not perceive his/her actions as bullying.

The questionnaire gave us details of where and what sort of bullying was taking place and which year groups were most at risk.

Police involvement

The next meeting of the Bullying Group was on 12 June 1990. This time, we invited our local police officer to join us and his contribution, together with that of a police inspector who was also a parent, were to prove invaluable.

The Bully Box

The Group agreed to set up a 'Bully Box', as an attempt to deal with the problem that many children who are bullied are too nervous to tell someone about it. The box was to be like a ballot box, with a lockable lid. It would be positioned in the school library and there would be a supply of 'Incident Forms' beside it. Any pupil who was being bullied, but was too nervous to talk about it, could write down the details on a form and put it in the box. At the end of each day, the box was to be emptied and the forms passed to an appropriate member of staff for action.

The other major decision taken at that June meeting was to propose the setting up of a School Bully Court. Our 'co-opted' police inspector was to attend a conference on bullying organized by Kidscape, who were (and still are) promoting the idea of School Bully Courts.

Finally, staff were asked to remind pupils that all bullying incidents must be reported and to be particularly vigilant about the times and places in which, according to the questionnaire results, most bullying was taking place.

Autumn 1990

The autumn term 1990 was one of great activity: the Bully Box was established in the library, Neti Neti Theatre Company visited the school to perform 'Only Playing Miss' and staff agreed to the setting up of the Bully Court.

The Bully Box was installed in September. At first, many forms were filled in — some of them inevitably were hoaxes or attempts to get others into trouble. But we persevered and the number of forms submitted soon dwindled to a trickle and the hoaxes ceased.

'Only Playing Miss'

The Neti Neti Theatre Company's play was performed to the whole school on 2 November and made a profound impact on staff and pupils. It is a powerful drama, acted out with minimum scenery and props. (It is available on video, together with the script and follow-up suggestions — address at the end of this article).

Kidscape

The report from the Kidscape conference was also invaluable in helping us plan for our Bully Court. Founded by Michelle Elliott, Kidscape publishes a wide range of material on bullying and other matters concerned with children's safety. (Again, the address is at the end of this article).

Bully Courts had been pioneered by Kidscape in a number of schools around the country: the first had been set up in response to pressure from pupils themselves.

The Bully Court

Further meetings of the Bullying Group were held in October and November 1990 to agree how the Court would be established. It was decided that it should consist of twelve pupils — one to be elected by each class in the school. Again, PSE lessons were used as the vehicle for discussion about:

— the democratic process;
— what a court is and how it operates;
— the qualities needed by jury members;
— the process of nominating candidates;
— secret ballots.

In December, the first elections were held. Everything was done as officially as possible, with nomination forms and ballot papers typed and photocopied. The pupils responded well and eight boys and four girls were elected to serve as Form Representatives on the Court. (Perhaps the gender imbalance shows that there is still much to be done on equal opportunities!)

The Bullying Group met in January 1991 and agreed a date for the inaugural meeting of the Court. This was held at the end of January and discussed the rules and procedures of the Court. My deputy and I were immensely impressed with the insights and common sense which the pupils brought to this meeting. As a result, a booklet was published, setting out the Court's rules and procedures. (A copy of this booklet can be obtained from Marston School).

The whole school was informed of the Court's decisions at an assembly.

Although we had decided right at the start not to involve parents in the early stages of this work, they had become progressively more aware of it and, by this time, we were informing them in some detail through the half-termly school newsletter. All the comments we received were favourable.

Whether or not the Court has been a success, I'm not sure. In the six months since the Court was set up it has never sat. This is not because there has been no bullying in the school, but because we made the decision at the start that only very serious cases would be dealt with by the Court. Herein lies a problem: someone has to decide which cases the Court should hear. In practice, when incidents are reported to me or to a member of staff, I tend to discuss the matter with that member of staff or with my Deputy and, so

far, we have always agreed that the matter could be resolved without the Court. I have to say that I am not so sure that we have been right about this. Certainly some pupils feel we should have used the Court for some of the incidents which have occurred in the past six months. Other pupils, however, are anxious about the inevitably public nature of the Court, and feel that those who have been bullied might not want the problem aired in this forum — they might actually prefer the matter to be dealt with privately by, for example, a teacher. These are matters which we shall need to discuss further during the next school year.

Media interest

Two neighbouring schools contacted us during this period: one to invite me to view a video they had made about bullying, and one to ask our Bully Court members to tell their School Council about our work. It was as a result of this that the attention of the press was drawn to what we were doing. A reporter from the weekly **Oxford Times** rang me one Thursday afternoon to ask if I would tell her a bit about the Bully Court. I spoke to her for ten minutes on the telephone and thought no more of it until the following morning, when we were the front page headline! From then on, the phone never stopped ringing: Central Television, both local radio stations and several national newspapers all wanted interviews or mock trials for their cameras or reporters. Six of the Court Members and I took part in a local radio phone-in. All the reporters were remarkably fair: no-one suggested that we were a school with a terrible problem. But I became increasingly concerned not to give the message that all you had to do to deal with the problem of bullying was set up a Bully Court. The Court is just one element in a long and varied programme of work, as I hope this article has demonstrated.

We are still getting requests from schools all over the country for copies of our Bully Court booklet and even the occasional request for an interview.

The second questionnaire

At the time of writing, we have just repeated the questionnaire. In retrospect, I think we should have reworded a number of the questions, being more specific about the period to which the questionnaire related. However, the only question we changed was the last one. Instead of asking pupils whether they thought it would be a good idea to have a Bully Court, we asked them whether they thought there was more or less or about the same level of bullying in the school compared with a year ago. A comparison with the first questionnaire reveals the following:

		April 1990	*July 1991*
Have you been bullied?	all the time	1%	0%
	often	5%	4%
	sometimes	30%	28%
	rarely	40%	40%
	never	24%	25%
Do you bully others?	all the time	1%	0%
	often	5%	0%
	sometimes	30%	28%
	rarely	40%	43%
	never	24%	42%
More or less bullying than a year ago?	more bullying		6%
	less bullying		72%
	about the same		22%

(Figures may not add up to 100% because of rounding).

The interesting things about these figures is that, while the proportions of pupils who've been bullied has changed very little, the perception of the pupils is clearly that there is less bullying in the school.

The future

How are we to proceed? At a recent staff meeting we agreed that the Bully Court should continue in its present form for at least a further year. New elections will be held in September and the Court will meet at least once a term, even if there are no cases for it to hear. At these termly meetings, we shall ask the members of the Court to discuss matters wider than just bullying: there are some equal opportunities issues, for example, that we would like them to debate. In addition, the Court will need to review the policy on how cases are to be brought to the Court — should we start using the Court for less serious matters? Should the rules be rather less formal than they are at present? And what about the question of privacy?

The vast majority of members of the school — staff and pupils — feel that there is much less bullying now than there was, and that the quality of relationships in the school is much better. I am sure this is right. But the questionnaire figures also suggest that we have only just begun to tackle the problem. We certainly don't have all the answers yet — I doubt whether we ever will. The important thing is that we have acknowledged that the problem exists and are trying to do something about it: we don't claim any more.

Important Addresses:

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Oxford
OX3 0PG
0865 242946

Neti Neti Theatre Company
44 Gladsmuir Road
London N19 3JU
071 272 7302

Kidscape
World Trade Centre
Europe House
London E1 9AA
071 488 0488

Equal Opportunities: a Classroom Philosophy?

Simon Haines
Simon Haines has been teaching Mathematics at Peers Upper School in Oxford for two years. In this article he describes his personal experience of trying to make Equal Opportunities policy work in practice.

The group in question in this article is a Year 9 all-attainment group, and the pupils are in their first year at Peers School. Individuals vary from those who can handle algebra confidently to those who have basic literary problems. The group was supported for two out of three sessions a week by a support teacher.

I was concerned that I was not making equal opportunity a high enough priority in my classroom. Specific problems were a number of quiet girls and boys and also a particular disruptive element. There are also three black students in the group and I was particularly interested in an outsider's view of my relationship with them.

I initially raised these issues at the Peers School Equal Opportunity Committee where Giti Paulin offered her services to come and observe two sessions with Y9 PL. Margaret Gibb also offered to attend these two sessions.

My objectives for this exercise were numerous. The specific idea with this group was to monitor time spent with individuals and to look at the attention given to each. Also I wanted an outside view of strategies I was using with disruptive students and I was searching for alternative approaches with these individuals. I did not see the process being unique to this group but I was hoping that the lessons I would learn would enable me to carry out similar monitoring programmes with other groups and help me untangle the web of classroom dynamics and identify specific problems with students in other groups.

Giti and Margaret attended two sessions and they divided the room into two halves mentally. They monitored my movements around the classroom, the time spent with students and the type of interaction (e.g. discipline related, work related, student/teacher initiated). Specific incidents were also noted in more detail.

Time spent with individuals

It was noted that during both sessions every student was visited at least once. The time spent with male students and female students was in proportion to their relative numbers in the class, although it appeared that the boys got more attention earlier in the lesson. It was also interesting to note that the length of time spent with a student tended to be longer with a male student, thus suggesting my conversations were less in depth with female students. It was also noted that although I visited every student, some students never spoke to me. There were two pairs of students (Juliet, Katie and Matthew, Matthew) where when I went over to them only one person in each pair would converse. I was aware that I was satisfying the need to visit every student, but I was allowing one person in a pair to dominate. I have memories of asking Juliet questions and Katie answering on her behalf.

Type of Interaction

The system I used when students sought help was for them to raise their hands and wait for me to come to them. I tried not to respond to the student who called out and I tried to be consistent about this. This appeared to be moderately successful in most cases, but I did give in at times to students who were calling out. This did not mean I visited them immediately but I acknowledged that they needed to see me. This sounds fine in theory but it was noted that some quiet students who sat patiently with their hand up for a long while were ignored. These student-initiated interactions were generally dominated by female students. The most visited student was female and she asked for help every time she came up against any sort of difficulty.

There were also many interactions initiated by me, which was my attempt to visit all students. However the type of student who would not ask for my help would often not talk to me when I was with them. At times like these the temptation was to try and satisfy a feeling inside me that I had seen everyone, and the conversation was often: "are you okay?"

"yes thanks". End!

My insecurity meant it was more important for me to have an overall appearance of students progressing, and perhaps I was ignoring individuals and their specific needs.

Disruptive Behaviour

There were specific students causing me concern in this group as their behaviour was inhibiting other peoples work and consequently they were developing attention-seeking strategies that would take up more and more of my time. The conflict was that if I ignored this behaviour and concentrated on conversations about their work, then the noise level would become intolerable. Therefore I found myself reacting to this disruption on many occasions and I would placate demanding students by assisting them out of turn, which caused annoyance to other students who were

quietly waiting their turn. The extreme of this was a particular female student who had her aim raised for almost ten minutes which I was totally unaware of and consequently ignored. This is what is meant by the 'invisible student' who when they do not get assistance do not develop behavioural problems as a result.

I did not notice all disruptive behaviour by any means. Giti and Margaret cited examples of problems which I had no idea were there. Darren was a student to whom I spoke numerous times about his behaviour but in actual fact it was often other students around him who were causing problems and I did not notice this. It was as if every time a noise came from that part of the classroom the other students put their heads down and Darren looked at me and smiled thus shouldering much of the blame from me.

There was another student Teresa who I felt was underachieving but my relationship with her was far from good and any conversation seemed to put her on the defensive. Giti and Margaret noted that she was on task for only very short periods of time and was continually turning around interrupting other peoples work. She exhibited many of the qualities of a bully, hitting and verbally abusing other students. However I was unaware of the extent of the problem until it was borne out by this observation and having evidence to confirm what I suspected I felt more confident in discussing this problem with the student.

When a disciplinary problem arose I tried to avoid a confrontation in front of the class. There was an incident with a black student Lorraine, who made a remark which the whole class heard as I was talking to the group at this time. I could feel all eyes on me to see what I would do, and I ignored this and carried on but made a point of speaking to Lorraine quietly on her own when I had finished. There was another incident involving Lorraine which I did not notice where she put two large earrings over her eyes and looked around the class causing great hilarity. Once again I focussed on the students who laughed the loudest and not on the one who caused the disturbance. There was a student Louise who also received many comments form me regarding her behaviour, whereas Giti and Margaret did not notice her behaviour warranting this. The lesson here is that it is important for me to judge a situation on its merits and not base it on previous experience or prejudice.

I am a large man (6′ 3″) and I am aware I can be physically intimidating to both female and male students, so when talking to students about anything I always tried to be seated and not invade their space. Occasionally I did have a conversation with a student when we were both standing and I felt very uncomfortable as I was literally talking down to the student. I also have a very loud voice which in some ways I see as a problem as I tend to use it to influence discipline in the classroom — not by shouting but by raising it.

Lessons that I have learnt

Since the observation took place I have tried a variety of different strategies with this group and with others. Although not all are a direct result of this, the process of being observed has helped me focus on particular aspects of my classroom management and how I deal with a variety of situations. Always with a philosophy of Equal Opportunities in mind.

Disruptive Students

I have identified particular students who have behavioural problems which range from direct disruption through noise, standing up or interfering with others, to the students who disrupt others by seeking excessive use of my time. I have tried a preventative approach which involves speaking to students at the end of a lesson about my concerns, allowing them to take part in a discussion about them. I then explain what action I will be taking next lesson which ranges from moving places, isolation or close monitoring of time on task and the number of times they seek help. This means during the next lesson or at the end of it I have some qualitative evidence to support what I am saying which provides a basis of discussion for us. It also ensures that when I notice superficial problems I can get closer to the root cause and be more confident that I am aware of what is happening. I try and be very clear with the student about what I think the problem is — standing up too many times for instance, and then they are aware this is what I will be monitoring.

The biggest advantage this has provided is that it has helped me become much clearer about the deeper cause of disruption which is very important, as a teacher facing a class which does not appear to be working well can feel helpless as they may not know where to start in trying to improve the situation.

Quiet Students

Y9/PL is a very mixed group in terms of social confidence with some very quiet boys and girls. Giti and Margaret helped me realise that they were often being ignored and that I needed to take action to ensure they were getting a fair deal.

I now try and make sure I not only visit every student during the lesson but also have a two-way conversation with them, insisting that everyone must talk to me.

Conclusion

This experience has ensured equal opportunities are foremost in my mind in the classroom and I have made it clear to students that this is central to my and their behaviour in the classroom. It has enabled me to justify to myself many of the approaches I have adopted, and helped me see a way to identify what really is happening in my classroom.

One of my strongest memories will be a debrief conversation with Margaret when she asked me whether the school having an equal opportunities policy made any difference to my classroom practice. I thought for a moment, and then I realised that it was not simply that the policy made any difference but I was attempting to make equality of opportunity my whole classroom philosophy. This is what governed what I did and this is what teaching should all be about.

Reviews

An Optimistic Survey

Primary Education From Plowden To The 1990's, by Norman Thomas, The Falmer Press (1990), pp. 187, pb: £9.95 ISBN 1-85000-709-8; hb: £20.00 ISBN 1-85000 -708-x

In this book Norman Thomas outlines the events which have shaped some of the changes in methodology and curriculum in our primary schools during the last thirty years and thereby puts the National Curriculum into context. He traces the continuity of events which helped to make such a curriculum an inevitable outcome of the years of concern and thought. An understanding of a primary teacher's needs, gathered from the author's experiences both as a headteacher and as a Chief Inspector for primary education, is very obvious, and his realization of the pressures of the present situation in primary schools is most welcome.

Mr Thomas makes it plain that he regards education as concerning individual children and not as an abstract process; and in his first chapter he discusses the many differences in children which will help to affect their educational performances. He cites reports such as Plowden, Swann and Warnock to show that the importance of these differences has long been recognized. The ideas on education from many sources are detailed in following chapters so that the reader is able to see how they have evolved or changed through the years. Some of the official statements on curricular aims produced since the 1960s are discussed and the author uses a combination of his own experiences and these statements to suggest what should be taught. We are reminded that 'both faith and disbelief in the education system are influenced more by incident and the natural inclination of the observer than by conclusive, objective evidence, which is remarkably difficult to come by in any form that can be interpreted with confidence'.

The author points out that the idea of the curriculum carrying through from five to sixteen was already in force in 1977 when one of the four conferences of the 'Great Debate' was entitled 'The School Curriculum 5-16'. The common core curriculum was also much discussed at that time.

The role of central government is looked at from 1964 to 1979 and also the intervention of the Government and Parliament from 1979-89, where the reports which influenced thinking in these years, particularly H.M.I. and D.E.S. documents, led to the 1986 Report **Achievement in Primary Schools**. This was very shortly followed by the consultation document **The National Curriculum 5-16** in July 1987.

A very interesting chapter for primary teachers is the one detailing forms and purposes of assessment and the four main forms informal, commercially produced tests, summary assessments and the Standard Assessment Tasks — are explained. Another chapter of particular interest concentrates on teaching techniques, timing and school organization with comments upon the various methods of teaching and their effectiveness in varying situations.

The author concludes his book with some ideas for what needs to be done next, and gives the important reminder that 'the new times of change are being built on previous achievements, not on disaster'.

This is a very readable book and should prove of value to young teachers who will be interested in the reasons for the changes which have taken place in recent years as well as older teachers who have taught through the years described and now have the opportunity to see how the various reports have influenced these changes.

The stated intention of the author is to look forward rather than back, so that by understanding the origins and contexts of the change, teachers will be able to forecast what the future might bring and be helped to decide their own priorities for action. The writer gives down-to-earth, sensible suggestions which will be of help to teachers in choosing these priorities. One of the main messages of the book is that education in the primary sector is better now than it was in the past.

ANGELA EVANS
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The Politics of Education

The Politics Of Reorganizing Schools, by Stewart Ranson, Unwin Hyman (1990), pp 135, pb: £8.95. ISBN 004-370197-3PB

Schemes of secondary reorganization were barely in place when falling rolls in the 70s and 80s faced LEAs with the need for a further reorganization of secondary schools that again highlighted some of the core issues of educational politics since 1900 — the structure of the secondary stage, the provision of an effective curriculum and access to it, and the respective responsibilities of government, LEAs and parents. Another issue with a shorter history of some forty years, whether to cap their secondary schools at 16+, also reached the agendas of many LEAs.

This book sets these issues in the context of the changing government and politics of education. The focus is the 1988 settlement but the whole of the post- war period is within the frame — the tripartite years, the first phase of comprehensive reorganization, and the latest phase culminating in the 1988 Education Reform Act, seen as 'completing the revolution of parental choice' — a verdict, incidentally, that is not beyond doubt.

The book falls somewhat short of the publisher's claim that it is an *authoritative* (albeit introductory) guide for teachers, educational researchers and policy makers because the basis of the discussions — one assertion and one analytical theory — is too limited to bear the weight of the subject matter. The assertion is that each phase of reorganization reflects 'different patterns of values, organization and power in the government of the service'. This is not altogether true. In the first place, governments are often not very efficient in translating their values into legislation. Secondly, if the legislation does capture the values, its implementation does not always reflect them; LEAs, schools, teachers and parents cannot be programmed like robots.

The actual analytical theory that I find questionable when, as in this book, it is pushed too far is a theory of 'the politics of decision-making'. This theory 'seeks to make sense of the competing strategies of different *interest groups*', each pursuing its own objectives and coming into conflict or making alliances with other groups in a struggle the outcome of which depends 'upon the relative power of those involved'. To characterize the political context as a struggle between interest groups is an over-simplification. The skein of history is much richer, more tangled and more interesting than this theory would have it.

The last chapter, *Public policy for the future*, is an attempt to bridge the gap between, on the one hand, illiberal collective planning that would minimize parental preference and, on the other hand, the champions of the market and competition whose plan is not to plan at all in the faith expressed by Stuart Sexton:

> ...that the wisdom of parents, separately and individually exercised, but taken together becoming the collective wisdom, is more likely to achieve higher standards more quickly and more acceptably to the public than the collective wisdom of the present bureaucrats, no matter how well meaning those bureaucrats may be.

Ranson's compromise has two components. The first is that 'the proper mode of government is a partnership wherein the tiers of government agree on an infrastructure that would enable educational opportunities for all'. He argues that such a partnership is feasible if 'A government committed to a market society (fulfils its) duty to enable citizens to enter the market place with rough equality'. The second component is a task for the LEAs. Ranson believes that if LEAs develop 'a new commitment to involve the public as partners in the local government of education', they could nurture 'a shared understanding of the conditions for excellence in learning' that will in turn transform parents as *consumers* into parents as *active citizens* who will then make choices that are in the public good, presumably in some cases against their private advantage.

I cannot subscribe to Sexton's mysticism. On the other hand, Ranson's proposal, as a practical proposition in the foreseeable future, strikes me as wishful thinking — although I agree broadly with his desiderata.

Despite these reservations, I found this book useful, readable and interesting; the issues are discussed succinctly and clearly, and the formula — important issues, relevant references, a perspective, a framework of analysis, a case study (the Manchester saga) — is a commendable model.

JACKSON HALL
formerly CEO, Sunderland

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