

FORUM

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**Mixed Ability Applauded
Post-16 Developments
Local Democracy Attacked
Scottish Update**



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The next FORUM

The Summer 1993 *Forum* (Volume 35, No. 2) will focus on attempts by teachers to defend and promote the best progressive practice in schools and on local campaigns to fight the divisive aspects of Conservative legislation. *Ken Jones* writes about recent developments in the teaching of English and the campaign to thwart the new proposals for Key Stage 3. *Mairtin mac an Ghail* reports the campaign to prevent St Phillips RC Sixth Form College in Birmingham becoming a selective boys' school. *Janet Maw* considers future prospects for school inspection. *Alan Payne* makes the case for a common post-sixteen curriculum and *Andrew Morris* writes about moves towards a local unified qualifications system. *Ian Campbell* looks at factors causing pupil disenchantment with schooling. *Clyde Chitty* reviews an NFER study of whole-school curriculum management.

Beyond Irrelevance

It has been an autumn of discontent for all concerned with education. Ministers at the Department for Education, in evident disarray, displayed extraordinary ineptitude.

Crass behaviour over GCSE results – praised by Eric Forth but denigrated within a few days by John Patten – upset parents, students and teachers in the state and private sectors. Then publication in mid-November of GCSE and A/AS level results in a form to invite national and local media to construct crude league tables evoked outrage – and condemnation by the Royal Statistical Society. Meanwhile Baroness Blatch managed to offend the Secondary Heads and the Girls' Schools Associations; John Patten snubbed both the National Association of Head Teachers and the Secondary Heads Association. High-handed interventionism and anxiety to sustain his own supremacy led the Education Secretary to quarrel with the GCSE examining groups, with both the National Curriculum Council and the School Examination and Assessment Council, and into strained relations with his new style inspectors, OFSTED.

Overshadowing all this was and remains the preposterous White Paper followed by the monster, 200-page Education Bill. These are analysed in this number by two of *Forum's* Editorial Board.

Obsession with enlarging the Grant Maintained sector, despite governors' and parents' general reluctance to opt out, has driven the government to try any device. The proposed Funding Agency may open new GMS; the troubleshooting 'Education Associations' may turn 'failing' schools into GMS; in return for 'sponsor' governors industry may take over funding a school – an invitation rejected immediately by the CBI. This obsession and the accompanying 'sweeteners' worry the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church which fear destabilisation of the 1944 partnership and doubt the morality of worsening inequalities for children.

It is the impact of autocratic centralism through Orders and Regulations for continual, detailed changes in the National Curriculum and tamperings with GCSE assessment that exasperates teachers in all schools. Roger Seckington's article in this *Forum* exemplifies some of the problems at Key Stage 4.

When teachers, parents and governors are already irritated and sceptical of centralist meddling, the autumn saga of ministerial ineptitude could not but further erode confidence in those supposedly in charge of the nation's education. Father Dominic, who currently chairs the Headmasters' Conference, spoke for many when he was provoked into public complaint at the government's cavalier disregard of the teaching profession in promulgating so many ill-conceived reforms so fast.

Acting together parents and teachers in Scotland resisted such centralist intrusion in the classroom and secured a curriculum and assessment model that trusts teachers' professionalism, as Aileen Fisher's 'Scottish Update' shows. So the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations and the NUT approached John Patten to seek a Scottish model for England and Wales. The primary and secondary heads together proposed a 'whole curriculum' framework on similar lines. Reassertion of professionalism has been signalled.

A glimmer of light shines through the autumn gloom towards a brighter future when there may be ministers intent on tackling the real problems and on designing an education system fit for children. Alternative think-tanks are at work.

This autumn the National Commission for Education, an independent body sponsored by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Institute for Public Policy Research, each published several more papers suggesting how education should be realistically reformed. (Six earlier IPPR papers were reviewed in *Forum*, 34/3, 1992).

In the NCE's *Selection for Secondary Schooling* Geoffrey Walford reviews research on comprehensive schools' effectiveness at raising attainment while reducing social class differentials in the context of disparity between school intakes as affluent parents could select and affect catchment areas. He concludes that "a broad and balanced curriculum for all children up to age 14" followed by "some degree of specialisation ... alongside a core curriculum" in "a system of well-funded comprehensive schools provides the best opportunity to ensure that all children receive the highest quality education possible"; additionally, "all families should be required to select three or four schools in order of preference" and all "successful applicants should be selected at random from those who apply" to over-subscribed schools. The IPPR's *Managing Effective Schools* makes detailed proposals in the context that LMS must be properly resourced and must not undermine a comprehensive education system with governors and in partnership.

The latest NCE paper points the way for appropriate balance between the involvement of higher education and schools in preparing the 'reflective' teachers needed – a theme echoed in Liz Thomson's article.

Forum welcomes the contribution of these think-tanks towards planning a brighter future. Meanwhile alliances among parents, teachers and governors can resist further destabilisation and take a grip on certain basic principles for the sake of today's children. Articles in this number reaffirm the rationale and practice for non-selective mixed ability teaching and for coherent post-16 programmes.

Slipstream or Backwash?

Annabelle Dixon

A member of Forum's Editorial Board for many years and an experienced infant teacher, Annabelle Dixon examines some of the current pressures which could set the clock back many decades in primary schools and argues why streaming and labelling must not be allowed to return.

No primary school with less than 400 children; the closure of most small rural schools; specialist teachers and a subject based timetable for junior age children; weekly tests and published marks; infant classes of 80 or more supervised by one teacher who will be required to delegate much actual classroom work to nonprofessional assistants. And streaming.

It depends upon your point of view as to whether this is the best or worst 'scenario' as the current jargon has it. To those who would reward it as the former, some pleasure might be derived from the fact that many parts are already being assembled for the enactment. I hope to set the issue of streaming within the context of this possible scenario so that its integral and important part may be clearly recognised.

So what is the backdrop to this scenario? Conveniently, the Audit Commission has highlighted the present number of surplus school places. The eradication of such places would, apparently, in the kind of arithmetic for which the backs of envelopes were expressly designed, save the Treasury a great deal of money. It might be thought that only non grant-maintained schools will be closed or amalgamated if they have too many surplus places; not so; even grant-maintained schools will not be given protected status even if there is parental opposition. Questioned on this during a radio interview [1] John Patten, the current Education Minister, spoke of the necessity of being 'unpopular' at times such as these. He is, it seems, manfully prepared to shoulder the inevitable opprobrium that will come his way but is more reticent about the fate of the once vaunted matter of parental choice.

Having organised primary schools into large units with forty children to a class, the teachers will be selected to represent necessary subject specialisms. Younger (cheaper) teachers are of course already trained with their specialist subject forming the main part of their training. Redundancies? Unavoidable but another one of those regrettable 'unpopular' measures.

Streaming enters (stage right ...) at the point at which the key phrase 'value for money' enters classroom practice. It would be hard to find anyone who didn't wish education to give value for money, but the phrase has been commandeered as belonging exclusively to a particular political persuasion. Whole-class teaching, recommended as being more efficient, mostly on the basis of a highly idiosyncratic HMI review [2] of a very small, socially favoured area of France, is considered to be particularly so when it is applied to classes that are streamed by ability.

Streaming then, is seen as an inevitable and desirable outcome. Exaggeration?

Let Dr John Marks, chairman of the NCC, speak for himself "... there is much to be gained, both for pupils and for teachers, from abandoning mixed ability teaching and

using more homogeneous teaching groups wherever possible".[3]

I have argued elsewhere [4] that streaming has in fact never really disappeared from British primary schools though it is usually hidden behind the facade of flora and fauna, e.g. 'Roses' and 'Crocuses'; 'Puffins' and 'Beavers' etc. (The names can be indicative if so desired.) Headteachers, and teachers to a lesser extent, have nonetheless had the choice as to whether or not they wish their schools or classes to be streamed. The abandonment of the 11+, parent pressure and the advent of a more humanitarian approach has made such a decision a less public and maybe a less urgent one. Now however, as senior schools are going to be allowed to become more 'specialist' [5] – for which inevitably read more 'selective' – the reintroduction of the 11+, otherwise known as the Key Stage 2 tests, will become very significant. The pressure it will exert on primary schools will be felt as far down as the infant department, with the consequent damage being only too predictable.

The damage will be twofold. To the children who will be shunted through so many tests like parts on an assembly line and whose individual rates and styles of learning will be ignored to the detriment of their real progress; whose emotional and social development will also be ignored even though the future stability of the school depends upon it, to say nothing of its personal value to the children themselves. In its place an emphasis on a spurious 'academic' regime that depends on rote learning and memory once again for its supposed intellectual framework. What is simple and cheap to measure will determine the curriculum and classroom organisation, i.e. streaming by ability, and it will come to be considered the heart of education. It is the equivalent of fast food. Only maybe it should be remembered that nowadays much fast food has also come to be called junk food.

Those who will also be damaged will be the teachers. There have always been those who are acquiescent and prefer not to question: they will not even be introduced to the possibility of growth. Others will feel there is something disturbingly wrong about a system that will label children as 'failures' or 'doing badly' when they are as young as six or seven; these teachers will be trapped within a centrally controlled system that will do little to alleviate such fears and give them little opportunity to extend their teaching styles. At the back of their minds may well be the "regular and rigorous inspection...(to be held)...under the watchful eye of the new and powerful Chief Inspector of Schools." [5] The whiff of George Orwell is hardly a great distance away when a government paper has to use the phraseology of menace. Other teachers, who know by experience what young children are really capable of achieving within a different

framework, will be saddened beyond belief by a system intent on a cheap version of 'playing at schools'.

Robin Alexander asserts [6] that learning and progress depend on "effective management, interaction, diagnosis and assessments". Few would argue with such principles, but suppose one's diagnosis was that real anxiety about being tested was seriously affecting a child's learning? Do you then in your 'management' of the problem tell the child and its parents that the tests aren't important? (remember the watchful eye – there are probably watchful ears as well...) or do you accept it as an inevitable casualty in a system where the weakest are going to go to the wall anyway? How do you have a successful 'interaction' with a class of eleven-year-old children who are only too aware they have been labelled the 'thickies' ever since the infants? If the bright ones know their chances of employment are becoming increasingly unlikely, what point are the less able going to see in education, especially if its "...primary objective... is to transfer knowledge and skills from teacher to pupils".[3]

The above statement comes from a polemical pamphlet called *Value for Money in Education* in which Dr John Marks makes a number of unsubstantiated assertions. Facts so dear to the heart of 'real education' campaigners are, after all, only to be used selectively it seems. Nonetheless, amongst the rhetoric there is a small footnote. Given the likely audience of the pamphlet, it is possibly meant to be sardonic. In it, Marks says that if the transfer of knowledge and skills is not accepted as being the primary objective of education and "...teachers are regarded as facilitators in a process of learning by discovery, the discussion would have to be recast". As indeed it would.

If streaming is to be reintroduced, any appeal to educational theories of learning will definitely take a back seat in preference to a justification in terms of 'cost effectiveness'. This is the 'new realism' where unit costs (I think that is what is meant by a child) are to the fore. Also, let it not be seen as a backwash, more a slipstream for the brightest to get ahead.

If money has to be saved, there are many other possible ways this could be done. Education may well be costing more but surely that is only following certain government initiatives such as the assisted places scheme, city technology colleges, pump priming for grant-maintained schools, etc. that have been introduced on political rather than on educational grounds. Is this a genuine argument about money, or is it really about something else?

If we are to have any understanding of right wing priorities, and they may not be susceptible to the usual rules of logical debate, we should look at the nature of this fear or fears. That is not to say that the reality of those anxieties should be denied or denigrated but that they should be seen for what they are, rather than sustainable educational argument.

We live in times which to many might appear deeply troubling, the social fabric barely holding together. This creates a resonance in some which results in an emotional response. It is fear about disintegration and loss of control. It does not spring from lack of potential intellectual capacity to appreciate that many distinguished and indeed apolitical academics have made considerable progress this century into the understanding and nature of learning. An increase in our understanding which has significantly altered the way in which many people view education, whether or not they term themselves 'progressives' or have any particular

political allegiance. To ignore such findings, such knowledge even, is an undeniable act of choice in which fear seems to have overridden intellect.

The rationalisation of these fears takes many forms. Once they are recognised for what they are, I believe we shall have a greater understanding of the engine driving the machine which is making for changes in public education. What we are tackling is not intellectual but on a deeper, more emotional level, which I think explains why so many are baffled by the new 'priorities'.

The teaching of spelling is an interesting example. Being able to spell is a useful accomplishment but that is exactly what it is, an accomplishment of persistence over the tyranny of the English language for the most part, but hardly one that demands great academic skills or aptitude. To many teachers nowadays, despite various horror stories, it is still a necessary skill that they feel it is their duty to teach. The real change is that it no longer attracts an emotional charge: it is considered a necessary but comparatively low level skill. To have problems acquiring this skill no longer marks someone for the public shame that once surrounded such an admission.

Not so in the education of many who are now in their forties or beyond. Success in spelling used to attract prestige in their formative school days and was publicly recognised as proving one was 'educated' and even merited a certain social advantage. Values have changed; old certainties have gone.

Put back the clock. Re-establish the comfortable and familiar hierarchies and all will be well. We'll beat our competitors, as it seems education is the only responsible variable for economic decline, and we'll march forward to a golden, simplistic future.

Can the clock be put back to the '40s and '50s? So much has changed since then it is the stuff of daydreams. It is interesting to compare other social features of our competitors however. The way in which families are supported for instance and, a related fact, that so many of these countries have a very generous system of nursery education. It was certainly no coincidence and an uncomfortable political fact, that research showed that children who had attended nursery schools in England did significantly better in their Key Stage 1 test.

To take us back 40 years, when streaming dominated classroom practice, is to take us back to an era when a much larger proportion of youngsters left school as early as they could and far fewer took and passed public examinations and/or went on to higher education.

Is a return to that really what the country wants? Changes to the National Curriculum and in the nature of testing are undoubtedly on the way. Streaming would be difficult, though not impossible, to dictate as a system of classroom management. It may take a strong level of parental and professional resistance to withstand the pressure for its reinstatement though.

The far right in education is fond of reminding us of 'traditional' British values. Surely one of those values is a sense of fair play. There is a fundamental unfairness about streaming and all that goes with it which played a great part in gradually gaining the argument for comprehensive schools. It has never been proved as the most effective way of educating children [7] and many teachers would feel deeply uncomfortable about being made to adopt such measures.

It may not be exactly what Dr Marks had in mind, but it would be hard to disagree with his following conclusion: "... if we impose relatively inefficient systems or orthodoxies on teachers concerning teaching methods or class or school organisation or assessment we are effectively preventing them from giving of their best".

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- [4] A. Dixon, *Forum*, 13(3), and 20(2).
- [5] HMSO (1992) *Choice and Diversity: a new framework for schools*, July.
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Middle School Strengths

Lee Enright

A teacher with wide experience of Dorset middle schools and a member of Forum's Editorial Board, Lee Enright explores the curriculum and organisational strengths of middle schools and argues why premature subject specialist teaching is inappropriate for children in their middle years.

Future prospects for middle schools seemed bleak when the National Curriculum appeared with its key stage breaks at 7, 11 and 14. The current debate over specialist/generalist teachers from 9+, fuelled by the DES discussion paper *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools*, has prompted middle school proponents to share their experiences. Now is the time to declare the strengths of a system which knits children's need for security and stability to a curriculum which is challenging and stimulating and one which contributes to a fully fashioned, seamless education from 5 to 18.

For many years teachers in the primary/secondary sector have worked to develop links so that pupils may transfer with as little disruption as possible to their learning. Such links have been fraught with problems: primary schools feeding large numbers of secondary schools, secondary schools being fed by an equally large number of primaries. No one could blame those who threw up their hands in exhaustion crying 'Enough!', concentrating instead on careful induction programmes for the newly-arrived Year 7 pupils. The National Curriculum, with its cut-off points at 7, 11 and 14 has only served to compound the problem. Its system implies that as long as pupils are transferred with sheets of paper covered with boxes (ticked or unticked), continuity is guaranteed.

Middle schools, by their very existence, throw a pedagogic spanner into this bureaucratic dictat. Their new entrants, strengthened by five years of education in the hands of early-years experts, are enabled to move smoothly into 'secondary' education through an interdisciplinary curriculum structure. Because pupils transfer *during* a key stage, liaison between schools has to be very carefully planned. The transfer of information has to be much more detailed, and is likely to include exchange of teachers, continuity projects in a number of curriculum areas, and Records of Achievement.[1]

Since middle schools began in the early 1970s they have experimented with a variety of arrangements of specialist/generalist teaching. Such arrangements were,

indeed, acknowledged in the Discussion Paper as "creative and responsive". [2]

A description of middle school organisation may, indeed, be exemplified in paragraph 147 of the discussion paper:

We recommend that every school should work out its particular combination of teaching roles in the light of two principles:(a) . . . the pattern of staff deployment must serve pupils' needs . . . balancing the pupils' need for security and stability with their need to follow a curriculum which, because it is rooted in secure subject knowledge, is challenging and stimulating.(b) . . . the strategy must work from the professional strengths of the staff and build on both their subject knowledge and their expertise in respect of specific age groups or pupils.

Creative and responsive organisations do not happen by accident. Careful planning, which builds on the strengths of teams of teachers is the hardly surprising key. Because of the size of middle schools (usually three or four, but sometimes up to six, forms of entry), year teams work together to deliver the curriculum. Thus, a subject specialist is likely to be a member of the delivery team, rather than a colleague working elsewhere in the school.

This middle school team approach, with its shared ownership of expertise and ideas, enables staff to become more than the sum of their curriculum parts, as it develops their own confidence, commitment, security and enthusiasm.

Even more importantly the team approach takes account of pupil needs, especially in Years 5 and 6. The nature of the primary child makes it important for her to have time to pursue personal interests at school in order to develop self-esteem and independence of thought and intellect.

While a middle school Year 5 or 6 pupil in a 'creative and responsive' organisation may work with a number of different teachers during the week, she is likely to spend a half to two thirds of her time with her class teacher, who is able to allow her the time she needs for independent study.

Another aspect, particularly important to children in the primary years, concerns expectations and the way they differ from teacher to teacher. If you ask children about their

experiences as newly transferred pupils, what emerges time after time is that hiccups in learning occur not from gaps in knowledge but rather from changing teaching/learning methods and expectations. This issue was illustrated recently in a comment from a prep school head about his 8-10 year olds who have recently had their timetable adjusted away from totally specialist teaching so that they now spend half their week with one teacher.

If they are flitting around from one member of staff to another they will never meet consistent demands. Where half the timetable is taught by one teacher it gives them a basis of continuity and security.[3]

This comment, in fact, underlines the importance and strength of the middle school year team structure. Where a team of teachers develops, delivers and evaluates a curriculum, differences of expectations are likely to be minimalised.

As pupils move through middle schools they develop working relationships with 'families' of teachers, each having his or her own strengths as well as being recognisable as a 'class teacher'. 'Experts' are encountered and/or made available in gradually increasing numbers so that separate disciplines of knowledge emerge more naturally. Younger children see their older peers experiencing their learning in slightly different ways, and absorb the changing approach within a familiar (in both senses of the word) background.

An acknowledgement of teachers' strengths is also an important aspect of the use of specialist teachers at Key Stage 2. In the past, teachers of this age group have often had their curricular strengths subsumed in the general (and necessary) aim of educating the whole child. In the present climate of change, a teacher's own personal development will be crucial if the school and its pupils are to succeed. Indeed, many teachers have welcomed the move away from their isolation into the teamwork necessary to implement the recent changes in the curriculum.

It must be said, of course, that the resourcing of middle schools has been a vital element in their development of a 'creative and responsive' organisation. This includes the favourable effects of combining Years 5 and 6 with the 'more valuable' (in formula funding terms) Years 7 and 8, and the wider range of specialist teaching areas (Science Laboratories, Design/Technology Rooms, Music/Drama Studio, PE facilities, etc.). Because these facilities are available to pupils from age 9, the move from generalist (class teacher in own room) to specialist (specialist teacher in specialist area) teaching can be made via an intermediate stage where children work in a specialist area with their own teacher. It is also fully recognised in middle schools that all staff have a specialist responsibility, even when they operate almost entirely as generalist teachers.

Recruiting and retaining the multitalented staff needed

in such an organisation has also been made possible because of its size and formula funding arrangements. Subject co-ordinators/specialists at middle schools may be offered higher incentive allowances than is generally possible in primary schools of similar size.

Middle schools may appoint a specialist to teach in Years 7 and 8, but who also has responsibility for the development of a curriculum area across the school. This responsibility may be realised either through an advisory role and/or team teaching. Middle schools which operate in the 'creative and responsive' way acknowledged by the Discussion Paper are also likely to exploit their organisational flexibility by moving these specialists round the school from year to year in a mutually developmental way.

The final issue has now, I believe, moved beyond the simplistic generalist vs specialist organisation of learning. The crucial issues are clearly those of resourcing and commitment to learning issues which have not yet been fully addressed by the present government. If children need teachers who are at the peak of professional development, then they must be provided. If children from 9+ need specialist skills/experiences then the suitable specialist teaching areas must be provided.

If the government is to accept the Discussion Paper's statement that it aims to achieve "the highest quality of teaching for all the children in our primary schools", it must also demonstrate its own commitment by providing "a coherent and continuous cycle of professional development" for teachers. The professionalism of teachers must be acknowledged publicly. Their contribution to the development of education must be sought, accepted and valued.

The government must, in addition, fund "improvements in primary school staffing ratios". With the possible dismantling of local education authorities, the government must accept the full measure of responsibility. The recommendations made in the Discussion paper will be costly to implement. If, however, the government refuses to fund them they will have put a ceiling on the value of our children and their future. A fully fashioned, seamless education is possible for all our children – why make do with one full of darns and falling apart at the seams?

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- [3] Lindsey Darking (1992) House rules make room for specialists, *The Times Educational Supplement Update*, September.



by Paul Nayton

Survival and Revival

Harvey Wyatt

A long-standing member of Forum's Editorial Board, Harvey Wyatt is Deputy Head at The Woodlands School in Coventry, a secondary school that has been engaged in mixed ability teaching for 25 years and continues to practise it. Here he writes about its development and survival in the current political climate and shows why the original rationale is valid today.

Writing in their closely researched book *Half Way There* in 1970, Brian Simon & Caroline Benn [1] comment:

comprehensive schools are no longer an experiment; they represent what will shortly be the standard pattern of secondary education throughout Britain.

Much later but with similar sentiments, Bernard Barker in his book *Teaching in Transition* [2], published in 1986, linked his own personal experience to the previous statement when he related:

My socialist father sent me to Eltham Green (comprehensive) to take part in a social experiment. It was the most daring thing he ever did and he hoped that class and privilege would dissolve as children shared a common learning experience. A new, democratic society without masters or servants would be forged in the Promethean fire of knowledge.

Indeed, in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s as the comprehensive system expanded and developed, the aim of many enlightened pioneers – heads, teachers and academics – was to bring to the English educational system a sense of equality and opportunity for all children that had been singularly lacking in the bipartite system. This, in a number of instances, led to experiments with mixed ability teaching, firstly in the primary and later the secondary school.

I make no claim that the arguments that follow will be dispassionate or disinterested concerning the move to mixed ability forms of organisation. In the mid-1960s, as a very young and inexperienced head of department, I came under the influence of an extraordinary headmaster. He was one of an early and select band of pioneers who were encouraging their staffs to become involved in the practice of mixed ability teaching (or as he preferred to call it, unstreamed grouping). The impact proved to be profound and long lasting. Indeed some of my colleagues a quarter of a century on would describe it as terminal!

Superficially, his philosophy was a simple one. Children were born unequal. The purpose of education was to redress that balance and create equal opportunities for all. In modern jargon they must all have access to an entitlement curriculum. If an individual were to have an enriched curriculum in the later years of secondary education, it would be by their own choice, not at the whim of teachers or bureaucrats. Subjects would not be ordered by some pre-ordained hierarchical status, but would be accessible to pupils of all levels of ability. The grammar-secondary modern divide would be destroyed forever.

Those who have followed the columns of *Forum* for many years will know that the headmaster in question was anything but superficial in his approach. His school, The Woodlands in Coventry, became a flagship of the movement, and his philosophical and statistical analysis of the changes wrought,

was carefully documented in this journal. The man in question was Dr Donald Thompson.

At the same time, similar work was progressing ever more widely throughout the United Kingdom. Contrary to the widely held views of right-wing politicians then and now, the mixed ability movement was not populated or manipulated by radicals, hell bent on social engineering. Rather the whole process was cautious and incremental (the words of the ILEA Inspectorate, not mine). In the course of leading over 100 in-service courses and workshops nationwide in the 1965-75 period, my main recollection was that the vast majority of teachers were sceptical about the change and required solid evidence of success. Their aims were essentially pragmatic and practical, never political. The recurring question was how to implement the change at classroom level. Secondly, the other major concern was how big a time commitment would be required. The answer was, always, a lot of time.

Given the passage of time it is difficult to disentangle the main strands which illuminated the changes in attitude towards the education of children at that time. There did, however, appear to be at least three major influences.

Firstly, there was the publication of two very important and humane books concerning the nature of children and education. Clegg & Megson's *Children in Distress* [3] and *Education and the Working Class* by Jackson & Marsden [4] did much to alert those in our schools to the limitations of the system. They did, at the same time, make positive and optimistic suggestions about change. For those who took their message seriously it was to have a lasting effect upon their humanity.

This was followed by serious research discoveries that were to influence the thinking of teachers and administrators. Perhaps the best exemplars of these were David Hargreaves's *Social Relations in the Secondary School* [5] which highlighted the disastrous social and academic results of streaming. At the same time, Passow in the USA [6] was discovering that little positive advantage was gained by narrowing the ability range in the classroom. Of real interest to schools in Britain was Simon & Benn's finding that staying-on rates prior to ROSLA rose in schools practising mixed ability teaching. These sorts of findings gradually changed attitudes to the way we grouped children in our schools.

Following upon this early research came a series of influential books that were more concerned with classroom practice. They provided a different emphasis, but from a teaching perspective, a supportive one. Kelly in *Teaching Mixed Ability Classes* [7] looked carefully at forms of organisation such as individual and group assignments, team teaching, resources, slow learners, assessment, and most

significantly, the way in which we might educate teachers for mixed ability work. This was closely followed by books edited by E.C. Wragg [8] and R.P. Davies [9] that looked at teaching more specifically from a subject perspective. The contributors were practising teachers who were working to achieve success at classroom level. They provided a valuable support system for schools.

At the same time individual schools in varying parts of the country were experimenting and producing valuable small scale research evidence. The Woodlands School produced clear evidence that staying-on rates and external examination results both improved significantly under non-streaming. Concurrently, the work at Banbury School, researched by Newbold [10], also gave encouraging feedback. He concluded that this controlled study, set in the context of common objectives for homogeneous and heterogeneous ability groups at first and second year, showed that mixed ability groups led to social improvements without any decline in academic performance. In fact there was evidence of academic gains from children of lower ability.

In the final analysis, whilst in no way detracting from the pioneer schools or the research findings, the reasons that led most schools into the mixed ability arena were largely pragmatic. It had more to do with positive classroom atmosphere and the way in which learning was perceived to take place. The social arguments were varied but included the concept that the less able gained confidence from the support of the group; improved relations between pupils and between pupils and teachers reduce disciplinary problems; the notion that streaming and banding play a very predictive function in setting restraints on individual children); it required staff to work more collaboratively. Mixed ability in the early years of secondary school enabled a more accurate diagnostic and prognostic analysis on individual pupil performance, i.e. premature labelling was avoided. Mixed grouping encouraged a higher level of achievement for the great majority of pupils. This in turn led to greater output of effort and increased enjoyment. Negatively, it was held that streamed/banded/setted systems, although they allowed for transfer between groups, hardly ever effectively implemented it.

The pragmatism and enthusiasm of teachers was summarised by the staff inspector for the ILEA in 1976 [11], when he wrote:

The treatment of mixed ability systems in these schools (nine surveyed in London) is fundamentally an issue of hearts and heads. At one school for all their study of the problems, it is very much an affair of the heart – the dialecticians are often the greatest romantics. At two others on the other hand, the approach is strictly cerebral ... The collective brain of the staff of one school is very substantial, so is the collective heart of the staff of another. Something very powerful is astir in these mixed ability camps; there is no stopping them once they are under way. The conviction of the staff is absolute ... I am impressed and, indeed, humbled before the concern of these teachers to get it right for every child.

Even the more neutral NFER report [12], carried out in five local authorities, claimed in its foreword:

There is little comfort to be derived from its content either by those who maintain that mixed ability grouping per se affords a short cut to the millennium or by those of

their opponents who identify it as a major threat to the maintenance of educational standards.

They omitted to say that if it removed the inequities of streaming without damage to academic standards, then socially it had to be better than the divisive system which preceded it *per se*.

The cumulative effect of the mixed ability movement meant that by the early 1980s the practice was widely embedded in most English secondary schools, at least in the early years. The practice of premature selection of pupils into differentiated secondary schools, or into streamed classes in the same school, had been heavily eroded. A quiet and thoughtful revolution about the nature of children and the way in which they should be taught was nearing fruition.

However, the advent of Conservative government at this point and the development of powerful right wing doctrines began to infect the way our education system was organised. With notable exceptions the literature on mixed ability practice and philosophy began to disappear from books and educational journals, to be replaced by market place economics, competition between schools and a plethora of political complaint against the teaching profession in general and local authorities in particular.

Perhaps the main defence of the comprehensive system, apart from the continued existence of *Forum*, was Barker's book *Rescuing the Comprehensive Experience* [13] in which he comments:

Many comprehensives failed and continue to fail the mass of their pupils by their obsession with academic success to the exclusion of other human attributes. The classroom experience remains as irrelevant to students as did that of the bipartite system that preceded it. Teachers do not rethink their strategies or their assumptions about the nature of developing adults. They searched and found the 'children of gold', nurtured and nourished their abilities and sent them off to manage and administer the great bulk of children who were seen as their 'followers'.

Now, more than ever before, in the present economic climate, it is imperative that we release all children from the limited horizons described by Barker. Heads, teachers and governors must resist the attempts of government to put back the educational clock by half a century. They must stand quite firm on the principle of equality of opportunity through an entitlement curriculum, delivered to all.

The advent of the National Curriculum, of itself, could have presented a unique opportunity to achieve that goal. However, with the passage of time and further legislation, the underlying principles are being eroded. Subject content has become highly prescriptive, reducing the professionals to the role of ciphers. At the same time there is a great danger that their range of teaching skills will be reduced and enthusiasm for any experimentation, dulled. The prospect is unedifying and Orwellian.

Add to this the government's obsession with pencil and paper tests at the conclusion of each Key Stage and we begin to produce not only a limited, but a limiting curriculum. The tyranny of the 11+ is gradually being replaced by a worse scenario at 7+, 11+, 14+ and 16+. In the end, the product becomes more important than the process in education and the streaming of children by ability at an increasingly early age the natural corollary. In short, teach to the test, but avoid educating in a liberal or experimental way.

If this were all that was happening the situation would be serious, but worse is projected. The government is pressurising schools to opt out of local authority control. The increased competition between schools for pupils that this move is inevitably going to create must, at least, lead to selection on the basis of ability in Key Stage tests or, worse, on the evidence of social background or parental support. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence that this is already happening in the existing opted out schools:

This, added to the Conservative government's neurotic mistrust of the teaching profession, does not bode well for any reasoned educational debate in the next few years. It makes for strange bedfellows when the former advisers to government such as Lord Griffiths and Brian Cox of '*Black Paper*' notoriety line up alongside the teaching profession. Something must be seriously rotten in the state of England.

In conclusion the government, having neutered the HMI, intend to place the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker, in the shape of OFSTED, in judgement over schools. Surely it is time that we stood firm against such nonsense and stopped depending on Ted Wragg on the back page of *The Times Educational Supplement* to defend us against allcomers.

What sense can be made from this plethora of bureaucratic nonsense which daily undermines the whole profession? The remedy must lie in our own hands. To the great majority of teachers who carried the banner for genuine, egalitarian, comprehensive education, it is important that they stay committed to their ideals. The present right wing politics are a temporary hindrance to the cause of democratic, universal education.

To those committed to the practice of mixed ability teaching, their case is still a powerful one. The teaching skills of a profession that have been developed in the last 20 years, with its associated wealth of knowledge in this area, must not be squandered lightly. They represent the trainers and mentors for the next cohort of young teachers. Those skills are no longer embryonic or experimental, they are deeply embedded in the practice of secondary schools.

In addition, the technological revolution has given this group of people a resource support system that was totally beyond the imagination of the pioneers of the 1960s. The advance of technology in the form of reprographics equipment and computers has liberated teachers from the original cottage industry of resource production. Add to this the great advances in the quality of professionally developed material from the publishing companies and the media and there is a wealth

of material to support both individual and group work. The support system for mixed ability teaching has never been stronger.

Crucially, the National Curriculum levels at transfer to secondary school can be used positively to produce well balanced mixed ability groups more reliably than ever before. Then we would be using the National Curriculum in the way it was originally envisaged, as a diagnostic tool that would support children through the next stage of their education.

It is foolish to pretend that education is not inextricably linked with politics. After 120 years of state education we are still a deeply divided society where limits are placed on the aspirations, both educational and cultural, of the majority of our children. Equality of opportunity, through mixed ability teaching, may not represent the millennium, but it could herald the path to it.

What would the late Alec Clegg have made of all that is happening in the current educational scene? In his book *Children in Distress*, he summarises his feelings much better than I could express them:

The impalpable essences arise from the love, faith and devotion of teachers, and include their ability to compensate the pupils for a lack of parental concern, their skill and determination in giving each child experience of success, their ability in minimising the effect of failure, their capacity to inspire confidence and banish fear in their pupils, their concern for his imagination as well as his intellect and their sensitivity to child deprivation in all its forms.

What price equal opportunity?

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Is your school striving to adhere to its progressive principles and resist reactionary pressures so that all children may expect an equal entitlement to as good an education as possible?

Please write to *Forum* (see inside front cover for address) about what you are doing. *Forum* aims to encourage good practice by sharing schools' experiences. Ed.

Key Stage 4

Roger Seckington

A teacher with wide experience of comprehensive secondary schools, who was previously head of an 11-14 Leicestershire high school and now of a large 14-18 upper school where he still makes time to teach, Roger Seckington has chaired *Forum's* Editorial Board since 1983. Here he closely examines the implications of current proposals and uncertainties at Key Stage 4 for curriculum organisation at this critical point in a student's education.

What is so remarkable about these troubled times is the general level of acquiescence. At a time of declining resources so much is being asked of the education service. Even by the most objective of standards much of what is in the current educational cauldron must be seen as bizarre and some elements border on madness. The government's economic policy is bankrupt and it is difficult to be sanguine about an education policy conducted through 28 education bills in 13 years. Fortunately even the most ardent admirers are having some difficulty with *Choice and Diversity* the latest muddled landmark, hailed as even more significant than the 1944 Education Act and designed to see us into the next century. Meanwhile great damage is already being done as LEAs are rapidly deconstructed and schools are being required to adopt a plethora of orders and ideas. The greatest difficulty facing schools is the very evident ignorance surrounding the DFE about how those ideas can be translated into schools.

Why then are teachers getting on with the job? Cynically it could be said that there is little choice as schools are being driven to compete and it could be considered a question of sink or swim. More positively, or at least understandably, there are sound reasons why the creative energies of teachers are focused on ensuring the best outcomes. Fundamentally the idea of a national curriculum is readily accepted. Some of our concerns stem from the speed of introduction, the bewildering succession of 'leaders', the incredible capacity to over-complicate, the lurching back and forth, inadequate resources, the impossibility of some aspects of the proposals and the uncertainty which still surrounds KS4. Throughout the last few years the skills, knowledge and experience of teachers have been marginalised or worse. No attempt at a

"The fact that children in schools have not suffered unduly from transformation of the education system since 1979 is a substantial tribute to the teachers of this country".

Cliches abound in the KS4 debate. Most commonly, how do we get the quart of KS4 proposals into the pint pot of the working week. What's new? I am tempted to ask. In my experience of more than three decades in secondary schools the problem of fitting-it-all-in has been a recurring theme. Too often people are exhausted by long debates about minutes here and there, fair allocations per subject area, the deep suspicion that the hidden agenda is always really 'more time', that getting around the needs of a curriculum strategy is made more difficult. Quality time and flexible use of time are both more important issues. However, the length of a working day is finite and the typical school day is intensive and already demands more of students than would be acceptable to most adults. It is important not to lose some of the initiatives developed over the years to make better use of time as timetables have moved from the eight-period day much favoured by grammar schools, to long blocks of time and modular forms enabling a variety of teaching and learning styles to be employed. There certainly seems to be a pressure to return to models reflecting relatively standard units of time for each subject.

In Leicestershire (and what a tragedy it is to see an enlightened, vigorous and responsive LEA so damaged by current reforms) the curriculum organisation of KS4 schools can be characterised as shown in Figure 1.

Most schools accommodate modern languages within the option columns. As a general rule the initial response to extending modern languages provision for all will be by using one of the option columns so a 90:10 core-option

	CORE 80%								OPTIONS 20%	
	ENG	MAT	SCI	HUM	DES	PE	ARTS	PAST	OPT1	OPT2
%	10-15	10-15	20	10-12.5	10-20	5-7	0-10	3-10	10	10
%	12.5	12.5	20	10	10	10	5	10	10	100

Figure 1

partnership has been made in this top down imposed scheme so basic principles of sharing and owning change and the change process has been deliberately overridden. But for teachers the overriding concern remains with the children or students at KS4 who must be given the best deal possible by teachers and that means working effectively in the real world. As Clyde Chitty says in the closing sentence of his recently published book *The Education System Transformed*,

balance will be quite common. A few schools have already abandoned free-standing option columns so that modern languages has a discrete time block (Figure 2).

This is an important shift in the organisation of the KS4 curriculum that I will return to later, but with regard to modern languages this is undoubtedly a critical issue. Again this is not new and I well remember Michael Marland, headmaster of North Westminster School, telling an audience,

perhaps 20 years ago, that there were five main problems facing comprehensive schools, the first of these was the 1st modern language and the second the 2nd modern language ... Like many I see the expansion of modern language provision as wholly justifiable but at this stage there are not enough modern language teachers and there are major training and resource implications at both national and local level which have to be overcome before we can successfully implement this as a compulsory subject. There are other subject areas which reveal similar critical concerns.

Many Leicestershire schools have a strong tradition of integrated design courses. Since the '60s a great investment has been made in buildings and specialised accommodation, staffing, and in the development of Mode III style assessment

to re-establish the bipartite or tripartite system of schooling, is to ensure differentiated structures at KS4. I can only offer anecdotal evidence and that can be all too easily dismissed, but I remain totally dumbfounded at the widespread but naive assumption that any process of selection is favourable. Having taught in both grammar and secondary modern schools – and the ratio of children attending in the post-war heyday of the bipartite system was 30:70 – I can with assurance say they were very different places. It is not that secondary modern schools were poor, indeed many were very good, but even the best could never escape from the second class label and pupils had great difficulty in gaining access to the more privileged route enjoyed by grammar schools. Too often the grammar schools celebrated exam success without

	ENG	MAT	SCI	HUM	DES	MOD LANG	PE	ARTS	
%	13.5	13.5	20	10	16	10	7	10	100

Figure 2

for all students. The uncertainty which exists regarding the final programme for technology and the place of art in a design/technology course is hampering forward planning and undermining the confidence and morale of teachers. Students will be the ultimate victims.

Similarly in Leicestershire, humanities enjoys a long tradition as a highly successful integrated course accessible to all students. A particular target of government reforms, it is certainly the case that the well resourced, team taught, investigative style has been misunderstood and underrated. At least it is becoming clear what is intended with long geography and history courses, though the huge logistical problems of moving from an integrated course to separate foundation subjects must not be underestimated. But clear forward planning is still hampered, as elsewhere in the curriculum, by a lack of information on what form the short courses will take.

I would argue that the teaching of science has greatly benefited from recent pressure towards 20% broad and balanced science. The Double Award, with a modular approach possible, seems to have done much to improve attitude to, and performance in, the sciences. Gender issues are being more successfully addressed and gone is the divide between separate sciences for the more able and those often rather dreary general science courses for the not so able. But at least three possible routes are emerging with the Single

reference to a substantial element who were failed by the system. Do we have to rehearse all over again the work of educationists who, in the '50s and '60s, were graphically demonstrating the failings of the process of selection, the huge waste of talent and the poverty of the second class route? Notable amongst them was the founder of this journal, Brian Simon, whose inspirational work so much influenced the comprehensive movement. But that movement would have failed had not parents been dissatisfied with the provision for three-quarters of the school population. Then there was widespread acceptance of the fact that selection was for the few and largely at the expense of the majority. The triumph of the comprehensive school was to try and work with an unselected intake, dispensing resources equally and striving to ensure that individuals reached their full potential. Despite the detractors, there is abundant evidence that comprehensive schools have been very successful.

The task at KS4, then, is to develop a curriculum model that will keep open a broad range of experiences, limit too early specialisation and constrain overt selection or differentiation. This has been very successfully achieved for many years by giving autonomy of organisation to subject area blocks, the so-called mixed economy. Whole school streaming or differentiated curriculum strategies are prevented but each block can use ability setting, grouping by interest or work in mixed-ability groups. It is a well-tryed

	PE	SCI	HUM	DES	MAT	ENG	LAN	ARTS	NON-STAT	
%	5	20	10	12.5	12.5	12.5	10	9	8.5	100

(the percentage allocation finally has to match period length)

Figure 3

and the Triple Awards routes alongside the Double Award. This, it seems to me, encapsulates one of the greatest dangers in the organisation of the curriculum, especially within the comprehensive context, that of differentiation – different routes through the curriculum determined by ability. A bipartite system, or something even more complex, is created within the common school.

Clearly the government's intention, having largely failed

and tested structure that allows a wide range of grouping strategies. A possible KS4 curriculum plan can be based on core with choice referred to as clustering. It is not unique and a variation of clustering has already been shown above. Blocking of staff can obviously be arranged in a number of ways but one approach would be as shown in Figure 3.

Subject areas can organise learning groups as they wish and choice within blocks is unrestricted because the whole

National Curriculum is covered. Non-statutory subjects can be included to maintain the breadth and balance which exists in previous key stages.

Situations are, however, rarely straightforward and many teachers cling to their conviction that free-standing options offer a better route. No doubt this is one of the key battles up and down the country as the KS4 National Curriculum wheel is re-invented. An issue worthy of intensive short term research would be to establish whether or not minority subjects are placed in more jeopardy within option systems and therefore by token would be better protected by clustering. My own colleagues are also greatly taxed by how best to ensure an aesthetic or expressive arts experience for all in the curriculum now that art and music are no longer required subjects.

A particular problem at KS4 is assessment. Long-used to a terminal public examination system that, to a large extent, determined much of the shape of the whole secondary curriculum, there are now new pressures for schools. GCSE itself is under attack. Introduced at the peak of the Thatcher government to merge 'O' level and CSE, it was widely supported by the teaching profession who had long argued for a single examination. A tremendous effort was required,

as always within a context of declining resources, to establish this examination. There has been wide recognition of the success of this new examination, yet recently a flow of criticism suggesting lower standards has been made and the course-work element has been abruptly and insensitively constrained. The nonsense of the national league tables which will do short-term damage to some schools will already have had their first run by the time this journal is published. Students entering KS4 will do so with a very different assessment experience from previous years. There will also be new pressures resulting from the strong developments of GNVQ routes post-16, provoking consideration of pre-vocational courses.

At this stage of planning KS4, it is difficult to see beyond the problems. The potential advantages of a National Curriculum have been well rehearsed elsewhere. And there is no doubt that it will be made to work because hard-working teachers will do their best to create some order from the current chaos so that the young people in their care are not disadvantaged. It is a great pity that more is not left to the professionalism of teachers. Our aim should be to make an overly detailed and prescriptive process as simple as possible and ensure that it works within comprehensive principles.

Post-16 Qualification Reform

Andy Green

A member of Forum's Editorial Board and a lecturer in the the Post-Sixteen Education Centre at the Institute of Education in the University of London, Andy Green has taught in further education in London and the USA. Here he follows up his articles in recent numbers of Forum.

If participation and achievement in post-16 education are to be improved, the existing qualification system must be radically reformed. This has been the message of successive reports on provision in England and Wales from Higginson to recent documents from the RSA, the IPPR and the Royal Society. In the past the government has taken little notice of calls for radical reform, preferring a bit of tinkering here and there to more substantial changes. However, since the publication of the White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21st Century*, a number of more substantial changes have been promoted, including the development of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and the Advanced Diplomas. These new initiatives, it is claimed, will enhance the status of vocational qualifications, allow more choice within a more integrated system and therefore help to increase participation and achievement. The GNVQs will undoubtedly become an important part of the post-16 landscape; but how seriously should we take the claims for 'parity of esteem' with 'A' levels and do these measures really bring us closer to a more coherent system of qualifications?

Our qualification system post-16 is overspecialised, fragmented and incoherent, and this, it is widely believed, creates barriers to access and progression and therefore inhibits participation and achievement. The 1986 De Ville *Review of Vocational Qualifications* (RVQ) underlined the lack of pattern and coherence in our current system. The

diversity and fragmentation of the system, it said, led to numerous gaps and overlaps in provision, absence of clear standards and progression routes, and an overall lack of transparency and clarity. Two years later the Higginson report, *Advancing 'A' Levels*, criticised the academic exams for being over-specialised, insufficiently related to the demands of work, and generally unsuitable for the vast majority of young people who might benefit from extended post-compulsory education. Neither in the vocational nor academic areas was there a system of courses and qualifications which were designed for mass participation in post-16 education. The government's response was to make modifications in both the academic and vocational qualifications – but separately.

The changes in 'A' level provision have been nugatory. The Higginson proposals for a five subject 'A' level were quickly dismissed as being incompatible with the essentially specialised nature of the exam. Instead the government promoted the idea of slimmed-down A/S levels as a complement to 'A' levels and undertook to investigate embedding 'core skills' in 'A' level programmes. 'A/S' levels have not really taken off as young people doubt their credibility and fear that by taking 2 'A/S' levels instead of one 'A' level they will simply be increasing their work to no good purpose. The core skills initiative also seems to have run aground. The National Curriculum Council submitted their report on core skills and 'A' levels as requested

by John MacGregor but the subsequent Secretary of State, Kenneth Clarke, decided to abandon the initiative on the grounds that any attempt to broaden the 'A' level by core skills requirements would risk 'distorting' the qualifications. The position now seems to be that 'A' levels should be retained for the 25% for whom they were designed and that no modifications should be introduced which would undermine their essentially specialised and elitist nature. The current restrictions on coursework assessment will undermine recent attempts to broaden the 'A' level through modular developments and ensure that there is little expansion in the numbers taking this route.

The Vocational Route

The reforms in vocational qualifications were somewhat more substantial. Following the recommendations of the RVQ the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was set up with a brief to rationalise vocational qualifications. The NCVQ, in collaboration with examining bodies, devised a system of five levels of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), setting out clear criteria which examining boards would have to meet if their qualifications were to be approved as NVQs. Qualifications would have to be specified in terms of outcomes to be achieved; statements of competence would be derived from the standard of performance required at work; assessment would be through observation tasks performed, preferably in real work situations, and should be on demand; those demonstrating the required competencies would be entitled to accreditation irrespective of the length or mode of study undergone. Industrial Lead Bodies were set up to determine the standards for occupational competence in different sectors and awarding bodies like City and Guilds have redesigned their qualifications to meet the new criteria. By the end of 1992 there are due to be 90 NVQs covering the jobs of 80% of the workforce.

The NVQ project has brought some considerable benefits. Criteria for achievement in vocational areas are much more explicit, which is an advantage for learners and encourages greater consistency of standards. Assessment on demand encourages people to apply for accreditation since they are not restricted by modes of study and can gain accreditation for their prior learning. Rationalisation has improved progression routes, and the close relationship between NVQ requirements and employers' needs has encouraged many large firms, like Rover and British Home Stores, to instigate programmes to qualify their workforces, which will hopefully also improve levels of skill. However, there are a number of problems with NVQs particularly, with 16-19 year olds in education.

In most of the NVQs currently on-stream the competencies specified are narrowly defined job-skills. They tend to relate to the short-term needs of employers and not to the longer term needs of the economy or the learners. The level of general education involved in NVQ is minimal and does not provide a sufficient foundation for progression to higher levels. Recent research by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research suggests that levels of numeracy amongst those gaining craft qualifications in construction are declining since they are not required to show mathematical skills in any written or oral tests but only to perform certain tasks which can be achieved by using 'rules of thumb'. [1] Employment-based assessment is expensive, often

unreliable, and firms may not wish to provide it, especially if employees who gain new qualifications are then tempted to find jobs elsewhere. Where firms do provide NVQ assessment it can easily degenerate into a 'box-ticking' exercise. There is a danger that the end-result of the process may be to increase the numbers of certificates in circulation without actually raising skill levels.

The experience of the last two years has shown that NVQs are quite unsuitable for use in sixth-forms and colleges. Their content is far too narrow for vocationally-undecided 16 and 17 year olds who do not wish to specialise at this stage and who need to improve on their general educational skills. Their assessment requirements are also unsuitable for educational contexts since it is very difficult to simulate real work situations. The government has now belatedly acknowledged that NVQs are not right for schools and colleges. Enter the General NVQ.

GNVQs

The GNVQs, first flagged by the 1991 White Paper, are similar to the NVQs in that they are specified in terms of outcomes and will be assessed on demand without regard to length or mode of study. However, in other respects they are quite different. These are broad vocational qualifications, relating not to particular occupations but rather to broad vocational areas. They will involve 'skills, knowledge and understanding' expressed in 'statements of achievement' which, unlike 'statements of competence,' do not relate to specific work roles and need not be assessed in real work situations. In some ways they represent a return to the model of the BTEC qualifications which have proved successful in colleges.

NCVQ are planning to design some 12 GNVQs at levels 1-4, but currently only five are available at levels 2 and 3 in Leisure and Tourism; Manufacture; Business; Art and Design; and Health and Social Care. The level 3 GNVQs consist of eight mandatory units, covering 'fundamental skills, principles and processes' and four additional units which can be chosen from a range which includes some more specialised vocational areas and some general education subjects, like foreign languages. The 'core skills' of communications, numeracy and IT will be embedded in the vocational units but are separate units for the purposes of assessment. All units will be assessed by coursework and compulsory externally set and marked written tests which will eventually be available on demand from a central bank. Students successful in 12 units will be awarded a GNVQ and these will be graded pass, merit or distinction based on performance in selected areas. The units have been designed so that a student may do 12 units for a GNVQ alongside an 'A' level or six NVQ units (six units are meant to require the same average learning time as one 'A' level).

The speed with which GNVQs have been designed and implemented has caused a great deal of alarm and many colleges are reluctant to abandon the tried and tested BTEC National Diplomas for GNVQs until they are sure that the latter are as good and are here to stay. The new qualifications do have a number of advantages. They provide the kind of broad vocational preparation that many young people want; they could offer better progression routes than were available before; and it will be possible to combine them with other qualifications such as 'A' levels and NVQs. Most of the 90

odd colleges and schools currently offering GNVQs have devised new timetables and curriculum frameworks which make this possible.

Incoherent and Divisive

The logic of expansion also argues that GNVQ will be important. There is a secular trend towards increased participation 16-19 (currently over 55% of 16 year olds continue in full-time education) which will probably persist even after the end of the current recession. Many of these extra students want to take vocational courses. The government target is to have 50% of the cohort gaining level 3 qualifications, and 35% entering higher education.

Although there is always an underlying tendency towards 'academic drift', coursework restrictions will reduce the attractiveness of 'A' level to the less academically-confident and will probably limit numbers to the existing 20-25%. The increased flow through post-16 education will therefore have to come through an expansion of the general vocational route. Currently around 6% of the cohort achieve a BTEC National Diploma (ND). The GNVQ route which replaces the ND will need to treble that to reach the target. There is good reason to think that GNVQ will become the major alternative route through an expanded post-16 education sector based increasingly on colleges rather than sixth-forms. As GNVQ attains the 'critical mass' which eluded BTEC National its currency may rapidly appreciate. However, this does not mean that it will gain 'parity of esteem' with 'A' levels as promised. Nor has the introduction of GNVQ and the plan for Advanced Diplomas taken us very far towards a more integrated system of academic and vocational qualifications.

Whilst 'A' levels are preserved in aspic they will continue to be regarded as the 'gold standard' and vocational qualifications will continue to have second class status. The problem is that university entrance requirements have provided the yardstick for what is valued and GNVQ will not easily match the 'A' level in this respect.

The Advanced Diploma framework does provide opportunities to mix vocational and academic learning as promised and some students will no doubt opt to combine an 'A' level with a GNVQ. However, flexibility and choice are still limited by institutional and curricular constraints. Without an integrated institutional structure many students will not have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of subjects. School sixth forms and sixth-form colleges lack the equipment and expertise to offer a range of vocational courses. Equally, without a fully integrated qualification system, combining academic and vocational areas may still be a risky and complicated business for many students. Post-16 education is now divided into three distinct tracks: the academic ('A' levels); the broad vocational (GNVQs); and the occupationally-specific vocational (NVQs). Whilst there are links between them there is too little commonality to call this an integrated system. There are major disparities

between the curriculum design, modes of assessment and teaching methods associated with each track and there is not a sufficient common core of general education to make them really comparable or readily combinable. The differences in styles of teaching and assessment between qualifications may well count against students who try to combine them.

Compare France

The French, by contrast, have created a more integrated system of general, technical and vocational *baccalauréats* offered within the *lycée* system. The qualifications all share the same prestigious title which confers rights of entry to higher education; each track has a considerable component of general education, much of which is common to all; and modes of assessment and curriculum design have more consistency across the different tracks. The system has not yet achieved equal status for academic and vocational tracks but it has considerably more potential for doing so than our new system. It has also achieved a level of participation and qualification at 16-19 around 100% higher than our own (48% attain the *bac*).

Post-compulsory education in France and Britain in the 1970s faced many of the same problems which still face us now. It was highly elitist, not designed for mass participation and vocational routes had very low status. In France it has been improved through decisive and co-ordinated government action and by the adoption of a comprehensive approach to the planning of the whole post-16 sector. To achieve similar results in this country, our own government would need to adopt a similarly resolute and co-ordinated approach. Education and training would need to be brought together under a single department and planned as a whole; SEAC and NCVQ would need to be amalgamated with the new joint qualifications board responsible for creating a single national framework of qualifications. There would be an end to the absurd free-market approach to the setting and awarding of qualifications where over 300 independent bodies currently offer thousands of different certificates, each seeking its particular niche in the market, and in competition with the others.

If the government is serious about giving more choice to students, raising participation and achieving higher and more consistent standards, we need to see a little more rational planning and a lot less free-market dogma. In the meantime teachers will continue to struggle at the local level to make some sense out of the muddle created by myopic ministers and blind markets.

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Do You Mean the Tech?

Jill Hoffbrand

After teaching in inner London secondary schools for some years, Jill Hoffbrand became a Head for three years and then in 1990 moved to her present post as Head of Careers/Industry Services for the Borough of Camden where she provides the link between the TEC and Camden Education Department. She is a member of Forum's Editorial Board.

Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) were first mentioned in the December 1988 White Paper *Employment in the 1990s*. There are now 82 TECs (LECs – local enterprise companies – in Scotland), employer-led bodies with an increasingly wide remit in education as well as training and enterprise. This article traces the emergence of the TEC movement, describes the (potential) impact of TECs on education and examines some of the issues associated with their role in Youth Training, particularly in relation to LEA Careers Services in London, where the author works.

Few groups of education practitioners, apart from the FE sector, appear to have any clear understanding of the nature or purpose of TECs. The title question is a not infrequent response when the TEC is raised in discussion at teachers' conferences, sometimes coming after several minutes of confused and cross-purpose argument; realisation of the mistake gives rise to amusement, followed by curiosity and requests for explanation. What are TECs then? What does ours do? Will that affect education in our area?

The answers depend to a large extent on the geography and history of individual TECs. By November 1990 thirty six were in operation, the majority were established by Spring 1991, with boundary issues holding up the completion of the nine London TECs until Autumn 1991. The fact that this was still ahead of the government's target for nationwide coverage gave a clear indication of the enthusiasm with which the initiative was embraced by the leaders of the employer community, at least in those early stages.

What are TECs for?

TECs were, after all, created to give employers a greater incentive to support training and enterprise by giving them the leading role in promoting these at the local level. The invitation to set up a Training and Enterprise Council (local enterprise company) was an open one, without even specifying the size of the area; groups of 'local employers' simply got together and made plans, submitted their proposals to the National Training Task Force and in the main were given permission to implement them.

TEC Boards have up to 15 directors, of which two thirds must be from private companies at chair or chief executive level; the remaining five places are for similarly high level members of public sector employers, local authorities, voluntary sector, trades unions – immediately problematic in TECs covering a number of local authorities, but also where a single local authority is covered by more than one TEC.

A Voice for Education?

Though several TECs have a Chief Education Officer (CEO) among their directors, this is by no means the norm. In many cases, it is the local authority's Chief Executive who

has taken this role with, at best, an advisory group of CEOs to inform policy. Each TEC is likely to have appointed, among its other full-time staff, an officer to manage its involvement in education, according to the priorities set out in the Business Plan. It is largely the composition of the Board, the background and interests of its members which determine the attention given to educational issues in any one TEC area; it is important also to remember that there are no national guidelines laid down to ensure consistency beyond the broad remit set out in the original White Paper:

The government hope to place 'ownership' of the training and enterprise system where it belongs – with employers. They (TECs) will be responsible for promoting and directing more private sector investment in training.

What about their Role in Education?

Subsequently, TECs were given additional responsibilities, in relation to education. These range from taking over Compacts and Work Related Further Education and an involvement with TVEI, to setting up Education-Business Partnerships (EBPs) and partnerships with LEA Careers Services. Of these, the partnerships could prove to be most influential, with EBPs in some areas already injecting resources into curriculum development and encouraging employers to take an interest in a whole range of work-related initiatives at all key stages. Involvement with Careers, voluntary at present, will undoubtedly be affected by the new Employment Bill, which some speculate will give TECs more power as LEAs lose their statutory duty to provide careers guidance.

TECs also now administer a proportion of Section 11 and European Social Fund resources, previously allocated through local authorities.

Cynics explain these developments as measures to placate business leaders frustrated by cuts to the training budgets they had inherited, and by the lack of flexibility these and other constraints were placing on their ability to develop local initiatives. There were certainly clear indications that all was not well by May 1990.

Funding the TECs – can they survive?

Problems with inadequate funding and lack of autonomy have led leaders of the government's newly created Training and Enterprise Councils to negotiate improved contracts.

... Private company chairmen had expected revenues of the main training programmes to be continued at previous levels but were shocked to find reductions on the agenda. (The Independent, 30 May 1990)

When the influential group of 10 TEC Chairmen, G10, met with the government in August the same year to express

their concerns, the *Daily Telegraph* reported, from a leaked minute, that the scheme:

... bore little resemblance to the vision that had attracted businessmen to TECs in the first instance.

As the recession deepened, so did the dissatisfaction of TEC Chairmen with the position they found themselves in, particularly in relation to meeting the government's guarantee: a training place for all young people under 18 and all those between 18 and 24 who had been unemployed for 6 to 12 months. Sixty of the eighty-two councils wrote to a Commons Select Committee in November 1991, with exasperated comments such as:

... an almost unsolvable problem without further funds ... we seem to be caught between, on the one hand, the need to increase the skill level of the labour force, and on the other, the requirement to remove individuals from the unemployment register at any cost ... government credibility has been severely tarnished ... unless there is a major increase in the budget the TECs will be damaged beyond repair.

The recent (September 1992) Coopers & Lybrand report, commissioned by the London TEC Group (G9), gives ample and stark evidence to support the case for major increases: £23 million would be needed for London TECs to catch up; funding for Youth Training is £643 per head in London compared to £1047 on average elsewhere; "... in all areas of activity London is underfunded". But in order to redress the balance there can be no extra resources, only a reduction of funds to other TECs which, according to the G10 chairman, could result in some of them folding completely.

A Broken Promise

The plight of individuals for whom the Youth Training (YT) guarantee is not being met received national prominence with the publication of a joint Youthisaid/Childrens' Society report earlier this year. *A Broken Promise: the failure of youth training policy* presents evidence from a wide variety of sources, including the TECs themselves and the Careers Service. The report documents the failure of government policy in terms of the lack of YT placements, deteriorating quality, and hardship for those without a YT place and no other means of support (income support is no longer available for under 18s). Additional problems result from lack of essential employer placements for trainees during the present recession, and the effect that the shortage of training places has on career choice – young people needing an income having to accept training in a field they do not want.

Learning to Live with the TECs in London

Although it took many months for the reality of TECs to become apparent, particularly where boundaries were disputed, no one was in any doubt as to the potential significance of their eventual creation. Some TECs were better than others at using communication channels from the outset; some set up effective structures for consultation; newsletters appeared. In the main, though, the education service was initially obliged to rely on rumour and speculation in the absence of anything more concrete. With the launching of Education – Business Partnerships it becomes easier to give positive messages to our schools, who will come into closer contact with their TEC from now on through schemes for work experience, Teacher Placements in Industry, TVEI

schemes and other initiatives formerly associated with Compacts.

Because of more obvious connections, the Further Education colleges and Careers Services developed clearer relationships with their TECs from the start. They needed each other. Experience elsewhere suggests that the wider introduction of Training Credits will further strengthen links.

At the heart of the Careers Service/TEC relationship has been the Youth Training guarantee issue. It is the TEC's job to act on the government's behalf in meeting the guarantee; the Careers Service is the main channel for placing young people on YT schemes. The growth in unemployment and the worsening recession threaten the achievement of both parties' objectives, giving rise to all the problems highlighted in *A Broken Promise*.

There are some additional concerns in inner London: the fact that London is a single labour market with nine TECs operating boundary restrictions for their YT schemes (no recoupment arrangements for TECs yet); the problem of homelessness faced by so many Careers Service clients; the lack of training provision for ESOL clients; the unsatisfactory systems for providing training for young people with special needs; the emphasis on output related funding (ORF); training linked to National Vocational Qualifications.

NVQs are an excellent target for those who can achieve them; level 2 is now the norm. Special Training Needs come in three categories:

(A) Young people whose disadvantages initially prevent access to vocational training and who require a period of initial training and preparation (not more than 6 months).

(B) Young people for whom training aimed at NVQ level 2 is not thought to be realistic on the basis of current assessment. They should, however, be given the support and help they need to progress as far as they can towards general vocational competencies.

(C) Young people who have some prospect of achieving NVQ level 2 but in order to do so need significant additional support and/or a longer duration of training.

The procedure of 'endorsing' young people for training in these categories is done through the Careers Service. The issue of competence to make such assessments is further complicated by the fact that category (B) provision carries a significantly higher level of funding for training providers. Careers staff have found themselves in the invidious position of appearing to deny extra funding to local providers by their reluctance to make inappropriate (in their view) category B endorsements.

Meeting the Guarantee: a new urgency

A change of Secretary of State for Employment has brought the guarantee issue into sudden sharp focus, with stringent new monitoring systems designed, not surprisingly, to reduce the numbers awaiting YT places. The Careers Service has to provide TECs and the Employment Department with regular updates on numbers in the guarantee group still unplaced after 8 weeks on the 'register'. This is an imposition for both parties, as TECs are then obliged to scrutinise the data, meet with Careers Service staff and respond to the needs identified by this procedure. No one has the time, but a system has to be devised, so we meet and come to an arrangement. We have to work together, remembering that the forms, the systems and the impossible deadlines are all about young people's futures.

FUD or Fudge?

Liz Thomson

A member of Forum's Editorial Board, Liz Thomson has worked at a Teachers' Centre and in the advisory service of two LEAs. Now Deputy Principal at Bishop Grosseteste College in Lincoln, she discusses confusion in government policy to increase the school-based element in initial teacher education.

If I subscribed to conspiracy theories, I might believe that the sequence of events initiated by Kenneth Clarke's speech [1] to the Society of Education Officers' North of England Conference last January, was a deliberate move to exacerbate the FUD factor amongst teachers in schools and those of us involved in initial teacher training. In case you have not heard of it before, FUD stands for *fear, uncertainty and doubt*, and is listed in *Stress & Management in Work Situations* [2] as one of the common factors contributing to job stress. Others which are particularly apposite to the current educational context include:

- inadequate time to complete;
- inability or lack of opportunity to voice complaints;
- multiple responsibilities without the capacity to authorise or make decisions;
- basic differences in goals and values;
- job insecurity;
- inability to utilise personal talents or abilities effectively or to full potential;

Whilst I recognise that the factors listed do not all apply directly to recent developments in initial teacher education, they do relate to the climate of change we have experienced since the 1988 Education Reform Act. A climate which is hostile to the professional autonomy and development of teachers and which seeks to impose instrumental solutions related to measurements of competence and performance at all levels.

When Kenneth Clarke announced that "student teachers need more time in classrooms guided by serving teachers and less time in the teacher training colleges", he chose to make a comparison with the professional training of lawyers and doctors. He proposed a change from a minimum of 15 weeks out of a 36 week course on the secondary PGCE course to 80% of training being school based. He based his proposals on evidence from the articulated teacher scheme which was introduced in 1989. This scheme was model led partly on the Oxford 'internship' approach where the PGCE course was extended to two years and students spent a higher proportion of time in schools supported by mentor teachers. In his speech Clarke quoted from the HMI report on the development of school based initial training [3] which stated:

There are sufficient courses which provide successful school based training in amounts significantly above the minimum to demonstrate that the principle of school based teacher training is sound and can be put into practice effectively.

However, HMI went on to say that there were a number of major practical problems to resolve before there was a general move to increase schools' involvement in teacher training.

Not the least being that the primary purpose of schools is to teach pupils, not students.

Whilst the initial focus of change was on the application of new criteria for the secondary PGCE course, Kenneth Clarke made it quite clear that it was his intention to promote changes to all forms of initial teacher training courses. These included the possibility of shortening the 4 year BEd course and establishing new criteria for primary training.

Shortly after the North of England speech, the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE), circulated a consultation document, setting out the proposed new arrangements, to all teacher training institutions and secondary schools. Meanwhile teacher training institutions involved in running secondary PGCE courses, were invited to submit bids for additional funding to support school based schemes starting on the 1 September 1992. The closing date for the consultation period was the 31 March, four days after the 27 March deadline for submitting bids to the DES.

It is hardly surprising that there was a certain amount of anger, frustration and cynicism at the time; particularly when considered alongside the list of common factors contributing to job stress. Inadequate time, basic differences in goals and values, multiple responsibilities, job insecurities, inability to utilise personal talents or abilities effectively – plus the FUD factor – these were all evident in some form or another during that period.

Another factor was that the proposals were made and the consultation period occurred during the run up to the General Election. Kenneth Clarke could afford to be portrayed as a bullish Secretary of State who was going to sort out the Educational Establishment. The Government's proposals appeared to be stuck within the cleft stick of a nineteenth century pure apprenticeship model and a twenty first century model of teacher training related to performance outcomes and the development of specific skills and competences.

Following the General Election, Kenneth Clarke was replaced by John Patten as Secretary of State for Education. The response to consultation indicated a need to recognise that the majority of HE institutions would not be in a position to implement proposals by the 1 September. The circular issued on the 25 June (Circular No 9/92) also indicated a compromise in the amount of time to be spent in school which was reduced to 66% of the course instead of the proposed 80%. In the event, six HE institutions started the new schemes for secondary PGCE courses in September, whilst the others are expected to begin in 1993. The new criteria apply to all secondary phase initial teacher training, including four year courses, and will be fully operational by September 1994.

Throughout the summer, those of us involved in primary teacher training awaited the announcement of new criteria for the primary phase. Circular No 9/92 indicated that whilst

the new accreditation procedures would apply to both primary and secondary phases the criteria related only to the training of secondary phase teachers.

In June it was announced that, with effect from September 1993, the articulated teacher scheme would be targeted to cover training for primary school teachers only. Previous articulated teacher schemes had been supported through GEST and it was expected that this would continue. However, the financial situation in a large number of LEAs was such that it was clear they would not be able to contribute their share of the grant, despite the 100% funding of bursaries by the DFE. Those HE institutions who had not been involved previously were unable to claim core funding due to changes in bidding procedures with the funding councils.

Funding School-based Training

The whole issue of funding school based training appears to have been fudged. The DFE have not set any figures other than the percentage of the £3750 fee income for each secondary PGCE student in training. HE institutions and schools are expected to set costs according to "local situations and existing arrangements".

In September the Secretary of CATE wrote to all initial teacher training institutions about the requirements for accreditation. The letter indicated that ITT courses for the primary phase should continue to apply the criteria set out in Circular 24/89, whilst the new criteria for the secondary phase, Circular 9/92, would apply from the 1 September 1992.

Speculation regarding the publication of new criteria for primary teacher training mounted. It was reported that CATE had recommended a two tier system of training for the primary phase; one for the specialist which would be via a slightly lengthened post graduate course and the other for the generalist within the existing BEd framework. In the event it would appear that these approaches have been rejected. On the 28 October, Baroness Blatch wrote to Sir William Taylor, Chairman of CATE, setting September 1994 as the date for the introduction of new criteria for primary phase teacher training. In her letter she referred to complex issues surrounding the training of primary teachers and the need to take into account advice from the National Curriculum Council and OFSTED on wider issues concerning the primary curriculum.

There is clearly a consensus that 'primary is different'. The practicalities of setting up a school based training scheme are reliant upon a scale of resourcing which is just not available in primary schools. In the rush to embrace the very positive aspects of school based training there has not been enough thought given to the range of experience students encounter currently on primary phase courses.

Students on the one year PGCE course at Bishop Grosseteste College complete school experience and teaching practices in five different schools throughout the course. This allows them to experience a variety of schools and pupils which would be extremely difficult to replicate in a system which was run predominantly by the schools. Students on our four year BA(QTS) course again experience a wide range of schools; including the opportunity to complete a residential practice in an inner city or inner urban area.

Both the one year and four year courses are constructed in such a way that students have the opportunity to plan, implement, reflect and act on their experiences in school.

Throughout the course they consciously develop the craft of teaching, building upon their knowledge and experience of teaching and learning in practical situations in school and in college.

One very positive aspect of the moves towards school based training is a re-examination of the notions of partnership between schools and HE institutions. It is important not to lose sight of the focus of such partnerships which I believe are related directly to the business of teaching and learning in classrooms. In this respect we are all concerned with:

- supporting the learning of children;
- understanding the learning process through the way we observe, reflect, question and act on our collective practice;
- contributing further to a shared understanding between students, tutors and teachers of what we are trying to achieve and how we all intend to do this;
- considering the vision of what primary education is and should be; particularly our individual responsibility to create, renew and articulate that vision.

Whilst there is no doubt that there are going to be changes requiring a greater element of school based training in initial teacher education at the primary stage, we do not yet know how this will be managed. Perhaps, instead of agonising over the organisational and structural arrangements for training new teachers, we should be looking at children in our schools and asking the question:

What sort of teachers do we want/need to give our children the education they deserve?

In posing the question I am conscious that it raises many others about who determines what and takes us directly into the debate about whether we are educating teachers to be professionals or technicians.

When considering this, it is worth looking at current forces to assess what this means within the present context and what the implications are if the prevailing political view of teachers as technicians is accepted uncritically. We need to ask:

*Do we want teachers who are compliant operatives technicians who carry out required tasks?, or
Do we want teachers who are able to renew and re-create their professionalism; thereby demonstrating a capacity to transform, generate and be creative within and about the learning process?*

The latest moves on initial training suggest that there is little place for the vital relationship between theory and practice. In espousing the cause for theory, I am looking at that which is not only illuminated by practice but which emerges from it. To eliminate the processes of observation, reflection and questioning through adopting a functional, instrumental view of teaching and learning, will, I believe, ignore the quality of mind which is vital to all of us in our work with children.

In asking the question:

What sort of teachers do children want/need?

the subtext is inevitably:

What sort of children are we aiming to educate?

For me we are aiming to develop autonomous learners, that is, those who have the capacity to make choices about what and how they learn. And within that concept of autonomous learning I would look for qualities of confidence, curiosity, a willingness to cooperate, perseverance, open mindedness, self-criticism, independence and responsibility.

I have to say that those are also the qualities I would look for in teachers. The kinds of teachers who are able to sustain the vision; to think, question, experiment, form hypotheses. Above all, as well as searching for meaning and understanding in developing children as learners, they are also concerned to make it better, to improve their practice; to redefine and renew quality. A powerful antidote I would suggest to the FUD factor.

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- [3] HM Inspectorate (1992) *School-based Initial Teacher Training in England and Wales*. London: HMSO.

Performance Indicators

Christopher James

Christopher James is the headteacher of Harborne Hill School in Birmingham. He has recently been researching into the implications of the increasing use of Performance Indicators in Secondary Schools.

The concept of simple, easily-managed indicators by which the performances of individual pupils and the school as a whole can be monitored is attractive, but unrealistic. Performance indicators can be used to add precision to evaluation and can be capable of offering objective measures of school improvement. Central to the selection of indicators is the question of values and the significance of the chosen criteria to the pupil, parent, employer and school as a whole.

Where an output is capable of precise measurement, performance indicators are often an integral part of the planning and monitoring process. One Birmingham firm calculates the 'value added' by each process in the manufacture of supermarket trolley baskets to one hundredth of one penny, but it is also essential that the baskets are identical. Not only are processes in education difficult to measure accurately, but there is rarely any attempt to produce a uniform end-product.

There is no shortage of lists of indicators for schools to measure. The 'DES 50' is well known and Minister of State Angela Rumbold recognised that for many years schools had been setting targets but *they have not always turned these into management goals with definite targets*. [1] CIPFA also contributed to the debate and suggested four models of indicator: an economic model (pupil-teacher ratios, costs per pupil and occupancy rates); an educational model (a more qualitative approach to learning processes and resourcing); a political model (community use of premises, involvement of PTA and governors) and a systems model (using input-output data to establish performance). [2] DES Circular 7/88 required LEAs to produce performance indicators for *financial and wider management functions*, but urged that they *should take into account the indicators used by school themselves*. [3] Coopers & Lybrand suggested that the use of performance indicators in schools is a contentious subject: "*At best [they] can only measure some aspects of a school (and at worst can be positively dangerous); nevertheless they can be a useful first filter, especially for the school itself*." [4] With planning now an established requirement for schools, performance indicators can aid appreciation of the need for change, offer suggested areas for targeted improvement, and need not be inordinately time consuming.

Six of the most frequently listed performance indicators

were considered for the Autumn term 1992 in a well-established, inner city, mixed comprehensive with 600 pupils drawn from a very large catchment area. No additional data were necessary; merely what was already being collected was examined more critically. The indicators chosen were:

- first preferences;
- attendance;
- punctuality;
- input-output comparison;
- placement at 16;
- placement at 18.

First Preferences

One indicator often used as a measure of popularity, and assumed quality, is the number of parents choosing the school as their first preference secondary school. At face value this seems sensible but there are a number of problems. Parents have a free choice but in a large city it is evident that there is a considerable amount of tactical nomination to ensure that a child is at least allocated to one of its three choices rather than being directed elsewhere. It is assumed that parents throughout the city have equal choice. It is clear that this is not the case. In some areas parents can choose from several excellent schools but in others one school is clearly perceived to be 'better' than others. A school voted a third choice in an area of great opportunity may well be performing 'better' than a first choice in a more deprived area.

The historic provision of schools is the prerogative of the LEA but affects individual schools dramatically not least in the actual size of the school and the provision of unequal numbers of single sex schools. Resources, swimming pools, sports halls, playing fields, sixth form provision and so on influence parents, yet are generally beyond the control of schools.

Not all pupils admitted to a school in September will have been monitored through the LEA selection system. Those moving into or within the city late in the school year or the summer holiday may be admitted directly into a school. These may be real first choices but unlikely to be recorded as such. In this example the school calculation is about a dozen higher annually than the LEA figure. Annual monitoring of first preferences is useful for internal planning of marketing.

Attendance Data

The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991 demonstrate a clear example of how data can be manipulated. Attendance figures are assumed to be objective and always have been meticulously recorded by schools. Individual figures are easy to produce and helpful indicators to potential employers. If presented as raw scores objectivity is emphasised. The 1991 Regulations introduced the interesting concepts of 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' attendance and permit a liberal interpretation of 'authorisation', yet to be tested in the courts.

Not all schooling takes place on campus and formal school activities conducted offsite have always been included in attendance data. The revised Regulations permit a considerable number of previous non-attendances to be counted. These include, for example, absence for bereavement, court appearances, temporary exclusions, annual holiday and non-school sporting, musical or theatrical appearances. The official definition '*Truancy: absence from school without leave from a duly authorized person*' [5] is very generous. Circular 11/91 placed more onus on parents and at the same time recommended an increase in the maximum fine. Figures can be modified retrospectively up to one month into the subsequent school term.

Size of the school is important in intra-school comparisons. One day's absence by one pupil in a school of 2000 reduces the school weekly attendance total by 0.01%. In the smallest Birmingham school this figure rises to 0.84%!

Punctuality

This is a statutory responsibility and can be a useful inclusion on a pupil's Record of Achievement as an adjunct to attendance. Criteria for lateness rather than absence from a session are determined by the LEA and it is important not to encourage pupils to have 'authorised absence' as an alternative to lateness merely to improve the figures!

Input-Output Comparison

The school does not have its own catchment area and receives pupils from up to 60 feeder schools. Records accompanying new entrants are very variable and often contain little about educational attainment or potential.

Input data consisted of 11 Richmond Tests, aggregated to provide a single figure for the number of tests on which the pupil scored average or more, plus a Schonell reading test and a standardised essay test. Input data did not measure motivation, aptitude, attitude or the degree of support from home. All were recognised as important contributors to success, yet difficult to measure. Output data consisted of GCSE grades aggregated into the numbers of AC and AG grades obtained. Raw examination data need careful interpretation, particularly between schools when a variety of actual examinations may have been used.

The attainments of pupils were tabled and then each pupil's performance carefully considered jointly by the head and deputy. For each pupil a subjective assessment was made

as to whether the output was greater than, equal to, or below that anticipated from the input data. The total numbers of pupils falling into each of these categories was calculated and an overall assessment of the cohort thus possible. It was estimated that 28 pupils achieved better performance than expected, 18 equalling it and 14 falling below, thus giving a crude measure of the overall performance of this academic dimension of the school. Annual compilation of these data can aid long term planning.

When SATs are available for all pupils, a more consistent input measure could be available. It is possible to perform a similar exercise for 'value-added' between GCSE and 'A' level by making assumptions of numerical values designated to various subjects and grades being equivalent.

Placement at 16

These data should be readily available but in practice it is difficult to track some pupils. The school sends a brief questionnaire with a stamped addressed envelope in September and where necessary in November. Employment placement is extremely important and can often be in co-operation with the careers service. With increasing emphasis on measuring performance this area should not be neglected. Staying-on rates are simple to calculate except where pupils move school and this was checked by the same questionnaire.

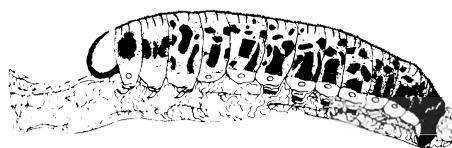
Placement at 18

Similar problems exist as at 16 and two questionnaires are sent encouraging further contact as circumstances change. Predictably responses tend to be good from pupils who are in higher education or doing well but less frequent from those in more modest occupations or retaking initial examinations.

Performance Indicators will always be criticised for being bland, impersonal, inaccurate, exclusive and in other ways unattractive. They can be helpful in the school planning cycle, but should be exploited cautiously in intra-school comparisons. The six indicators considered show the complexities in using apparently simple data. For each of the indicators targets can be set and none of the six measured involved work that was unrealistically time-consuming or in other ways expensive. With greater accountability being called for, possession of sound information is always helpful.

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- [1] Minister of State (A. Rumbold) *Speech to the Industrial Society*, 5 December 1989. Subsequently circulated to schools by the DES.
- [2] Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (1988) *Performance Indicators in Schools: a contribution to the debate*. London: CIPFA.
- [3] DES Circular 7/88, para. 115.
- [4] Coopers & Lybrand (1988) *Local Management of Schools*, p. 31. London: DES.
- [5] DES Circular 11/91, para. 51.



by Faye Branscombe

Attack on Local Democracy

Clyde Chitty & Peter Mitchell

A critique of the 1992 White Paper Choice and Diversity and the new Education Bill is presented by two members of Forum's Editorial Board. Clyde Chitty has edited and written several recent books on the curriculum, contemporary history and politics of education. He works in teacher education at the University of Birmingham. Peter Mitchell is Director of Education for the London Borough of Camden.

As far as education is concerned, the Major administration has set itself the regrettable task of completing the series of radical reforms initiated by Margaret Thatcher and her sycophantic ministers after the Conservatives' third election victory in 1987. In this sphere at least, Majorism is to be seen as the culmination of Thatcherism. And at the centre of the new government's crude educational thinking is the White Paper *Choice and Diversity: a new framework for schools*, published on 28 July 1992, which itself is the basis of the Education Bill published on 30 October 1992.

Launching the 64-page White Paper, much of which he apparently wrote himself, Education Secretary John Patten described it as "a blueprint for the state system for the next 25 years". He went on to claim, though without providing any supporting evidence, that "our proposals are radical, sensible and in line with what parents want". And in a separate letter to all School Governors, he further argued that:

The White Paper sets out the government's vision for the development of a system of schooling that will set international standards of excellence ... At the heart of the White Paper is the government's belief that schools should be enabled to run their own affairs, and that grant-maintained (GM) status is the best way to do so. The government is equally firm in the view that parents are best placed to decide when their school is ready to apply to become grant maintained.

In his foreword to the White Paper, John Major makes the following grand assertions:

Our reforms rest on common sense principles: more parental choice; rigorous testing and external inspection of standards in schools; transfer of responsibility to individual schools and their governors; and, above all, an insistence that every pupil everywhere has the same opportunities through a good common grounding in key subjects. Few people would now argue with these principles. They are all helping to shape a more open, a more responsive and a more demanding system of education.

And in his closing speech to the 1992 Conservative Party Conference, the Prime Minister emphasised that he was confident of public backing for the government's policy of 'redefining responsibilities' in order to provide a high quality education for all pupils:

We want high standards, sound learning, diversity and choice in all our schools. But in some, and particularly in the inner cities, Isaac Newton would not have learned to count, and William Wordsworth would never have learned to write ... We cannot abandon the children in schools like these. And we will not. So if the local authorities cannot do the job, then we will simply give the job to others ... In the place of the local authorities

which have failed, new Education Associations will be set up to run and revive these schools. Governments in the past have always shied away from it. But I am not prepared to do so any longer ... Yes, it will mean another colossal row with the educational establishment. I look forward to that. It's a row worth having. A row where we will have the vast majority of parents and the vast majority of good, committed teachers squarely on our side. They believe what we believe that children must come first.

The government clearly believes that it has a record to be proud of in 'reforming' the education system according to Conservative principles. The 1992 White Paper argues that five great themes run through the history of educational change in England and Wales since 1979: quality, diversity, increasing parental choice, greater autonomy for schools, and greater accountability. The proposals contained in the White Paper are claimed explicitly to complete the process begun by Margaret Thatcher's administrations:

The five themes have provided the framework for the government's aims, and together define our goal for Britain's education system. The measures necessary to achieve that goal are now largely in place. This White Paper and the proposed legislation that flows from it will complete the process. (p. 5)

In this article, we shall attempt to analyse some of the main proposals in the White Paper in the light of their anticipated effect on the quality of education provided for the nation's children in our state schools.

Raising Standards

As part of its strategy for 'raising standards', the White Paper announces that the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC) will merge, to be replaced by a new powerful single body: the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). The Authority will have up to fifteen members, including a chairperson ('chairman' in the White Paper) appointed, of course, by the Secretary of State, who will also appoint the first chief executive.

Bringing together the management of curriculum and assessment might well be welcomed *in principle*. However, if the curriculum is to become more examination- and assessment-led, the result will be not to *raise* but to *lower* pupil achievement. There is much work to be done on assessment if debates about standards are to lead to improved performance by children. Regrettably, the power of the Secretary of State to appoint the Chair of the new all-powerful Authority will probably continue the tendency to appoint 'non professionals' to preside over this important work.

Somewhat ironically, the text of the White Paper's chapter

on 'Raising Standards' includes interesting references to improvements in 16+ examination results over the past decade. The GCSE examination, introduced in 1988, has been much criticised by the government over recent months for including too much course work in its scheme of assessment and, by implication, for its reliance on assessment by teachers. GCSE course work is designed to increase student motivation and thus achievement; the government's wish to see examinations simplified runs counter to these 'progressive' developments. The GCSE is designed to provide a form of assessment suitable for use in all-ability comprehensive schools. The not infrequent calls for a return to GCE 'O' level (at least for the 'more able' students) conveniently ignore the fact that this was the examination, together with the CSE, which led to the United Kingdom having one of the lowest staying-on rates in Europe. It is certainly more difficult to manage the assessment process in GCSE and to build up a national picture of standards; but these should not be used as reasons for putting the clock back to a non-existent golden age.

Many aspects of the chapter on 'Raising Standards' illustrate clearly the general lack of consistency in government thinking about assessment. The lessons from the experience of implementing GCSE are being ignored; and it is unfortunate that the White Paper uses the measure of improved GCSE results to illustrate how standards are rising without apparently realising that government plans to modify the testing arrangements could demotivate *both* sixteen-year-old students *and* their teachers.

Specialism and Diversity in Schools

There is little about the school curriculum in the 1992 Bill, but the White Paper announces that all secondary schools, whether grant-maintained or still under LEA control, will be free to specialise in one or more subjects, in addition to teaching all the core and foundation subjects of the 1988 National Curriculum. The development of specialisation in a particular curriculum area, such as science, music, modern languages or technology, will depend on the quality of teaching the school in question is able to offer and on the range of opportunities to focus on that area. At the same time, and somewhat confusingly, the government plans to build on the work of the 15 City Technology Colleges (CTCs), already planned or in operation, by establishing both a network of maintained secondary schools with enhanced technology facilities, to be known as *Technology Schools*, and a network of schools established in partnership with business sponsors, to be known as *Technology Colleges*.

All this was presaged in an article by the Education Secretary published in *New Statesman and Society* on 17 July 1992, in which he argued with barely concealed delight that Socialists must learn to come to terms with the new Conservative concept of specialisation:

... selection is not, and should not be, a great issue of the 1990s as it was in the 1960s. The Sword for Socialists to come to terms with is, rather, 'Specialization'. The fact is that children excel at different things; it is foolish to ignore it, and some schools may wish specifically to cater for these differences, Specialization, underpinned by the new National Curriculum, will be the answer for some though not all children, driven by aptitude and interest, as much as by ability ...

Despite Mr Patten's soothing words, the idea outlined here

represents a clear threat to the comprehensive principle. For one thing, a school's decision to specialise in a particular subject area could well reduce the opportunities for pupils to follow a broad and balanced curriculum up to the age of 16. But, at the same time, the scheme can be viewed as simply another device for increasing competition between secondary schools. And the American experience of high status 'magnet schools' suggests that even when they are situated in 'deprived' areas, they become schools for the children of the more articulate and knowledgeable parents.

Opting Out and the new Funding Agency

Both the White Paper and the Bill are clearly intended to encourage large numbers of schools to opt out of local authority control and acquire grant-maintained status. The process is to be 'streamlined' and speeded up, with strict limits placed on LEA spending on 'counter propaganda'. As the number of opted-out schools expands in any area, a new Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) will have increasing powers for securing sufficient school places. As a first stage in the takeover process, when more than 10% of *either* primary *or* secondary pupils in a particular area are educated in grant-maintained schools, the Funding Agency and the LEA will *share* responsibility for providing a sufficient number of school places for the relevant age-group. When the figure rises to *more* than 75% for *either* primary *or* secondary pupils, the LEA will be relieved of *all* responsibility for securing suitable places for those particular pupils.

This is the section of the White Paper that has received the most bitter criticism from local authorities and teachers' representatives. There is understandable hostility to the establishment of a government quango which will introduce an additional level of bureaucracy into the management of education. The proposal also illustrates the paradox at the heart of much of what the government is proposing. For schools which opt for grant-maintained status are in effect opting into a form of nationalised funding while, at the same time, the government is keen to stress the virtues of LMS. In order to allow market forces to operate, the government looks forward eagerly to the abolition of all LEAs and is willing to legislate for costly and cumbersome administrative arrangements to fill the resulting vacuum. Yet nowhere in the White Paper is there any convincing evidence produced as to how the acquisition of grant-maintained status actually increases the *quality* of education for children.

Tackling Failing Schools

The White Paper proposed and the Bill confirms that the problem of *failing schools* should be tackled by new 'Education Associations' (or 'hit-squad' management teams), comprising five or six members and including retired heads, who will have powers to take over the running of schools deemed to be 'at risk'. Yet most people seem to find this idea simply comical. As Barry Hugill pointed out in *The Observer* on 2 August 1992:

The key to a good school is a strong head, motivated teachers, adequate funding and involved parents. A Dad's Army of retired heads and former managers from industry with time on their hands is not going to perform miracles. Failing schools need experienced inspectors and advisers to point out the mistakes and then draw up strategies. The government, however, is keen to curtail the Inspectorate and place monitoring in the hands of

privatized inspection teams which will have to tender for work. The best that can be said for the 'Dad's Armies' is that they will come cheap.

Partnership Undermined

The 1992 White Paper and Education Bill, when considered in conjunction with the 1988 Education Act, confirm that this country now has one of the most centralised and bureaucratic education systems in the Western world. Opting out can justifiably be viewed as opting *into* a form of

nationalised status. Yet we must never forget that a strong local education service can help to protect schools against the growth of power at the centre. Only a locally managed service can be truly responsive to local needs.

Fortunately there are large numbers of parents and governors throughout the country who are committed to the idea of a public education service managed at the local level. They wish to see a comprehensive community education service develop higher quality through a genuine partnership between teachers, governors, parents and the LEA.

Scottish Update

Aileen Fisher

An experienced Scottish primary teacher and Head of Castle Kennedy Primary School in the Dumfries and Galloway Region, Aileen Fisher writes periodically for Forum on current educational issues in Scotland. Here she explains how the Scots won saner 5-14 curriculum and assessment arrangements and opens discussion of the Howie Report.

Readers south of the border, beleaguered as they are by the extent and pace of change, could be forgiven if they had time to think about it at all for believing that north of the border, either nothing, or nothing different, was happening. In contrast, 'up here' we in education are becoming more than a little wearied of reading about 'the' National Curriculum, and of publicity material for textbooks and equipment which are apparently produced for no other purpose than to nourish the (English) national curriculum.

The answer to any questions which may have been stimulated by this preamble is that a great deal of change has been taking place in Scotland: although largely motivated by the same political principles, much of it has taken a very different direction from that in England. This can probably be put down to the degree of resistance to any change which was perceived by teachers, parents, academics, and other interested bodies such as the Churches, as imposition of 'alien' ideas and principles which might harm and ultimately destroy what they strongly felt to be the distinctive features of Scottish education. To put it more crudely, much proposed change was perceived as an attempted 'Englishing' of Scottish education.

We have therefore, for example, a 'national curriculum' called the '5-14 Programme', which provides guidelines rather than prescription; a system of National Testing (of which more later) which will (now) be administered at teachers' discretion, rather than a highly structured system of Standard Attainment Tests; parental bodies in the shape of School Boards, whose role is (still) mainly consultative and supportive, rather than powerful Governing Bodies, and we have a degree of devolved management of resources (DMR), rather than (as yet) full blown local management of schools.

Let us look, therefore, at the main events of the recent months in Scottish education, largely in the light of the preceding remarks. These main events may be seen as: the report of the Howie Committee on secondary education, with its proposals for radical change in the secondary curriculum; in primary education, the continued

implementation of the 5-14 Programme which, of course, as the name suggests, has also considerable implications for the first two years of secondary schooling, and has led to increasing, and cordial organised liaison between secondary schools and their associated primaries; what has been seen as a Government climb-down, in the face of opposition and boycott by both teachers and parents, on National Testing; the collapse of a large number of School Boards; the refusal of all but a tiny handful of schools, almost all threatened with closure, to take advantage of government encouragement to consider opting out – of these, only one successfully – and the post General Election event which may be seen by the battered, bloody, but not yet quite bowed teaching profession as the most significant of the year indeed the last three years, the departure to a Westminster post of the abrasive and cordially disliked Education Minister, Michael Forsyth, and his replacement by the courteous Lord James Douglas Hamilton.

The 5-14 Programme

The 5-14 Programme has been developed in response to the Secretary of State for Scotland's November 1987 consultation paper *Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: a policy for the '90s*. This paper identified the need for:

- clear guidance on what pupils should be learning in primary schools and in the first two years of secondary schools;
- improved assessment of pupils' progress;
- better information for parents about the curriculum and about their children's performance.

Review and Development Groups (RDGs) were set up to identify good practice in primary schools and in S1/2. This perceived good practice was used as the basis for guidelines in education in these years. Although, like the English national curriculum, each curricular area is presented in strands, with levels, and (in 5-14, fairly broad) attainment targets, there is room for a great deal of flexibility as to content. It has been suggested that where good practice exists, little need be changed. However, this does not remove the need, even in such exemplary schools, to review the whole curriculum

in the light of the guidelines, and schools are feeling overwhelmed by the demands of 'internal audit', identification of priorities, and the formation and implementation of school development plans. However, there has been assurance, both from the Government and from education authorities, that the complete 5-14 Programme is not expected to be completely established in every school for about eight school sessions, and that schools can develop the programme in the light of their own agreed priorities. Progression to secondary education is expected to be achieved, within the 5-14 framework, as a continuum, posing problems for many secondary schools in that primary school 'child-centred', rather than subject based approaches are required.

Testing

National Tests, to be administered at P4 and P7, were presented by the Government as an essential plank of the 5-14 Programme, and were introduced in session 1990-91. There was widespread opposition; almost total parental rejection, much from organised parent pressure groups, and boycott by significant numbers of teachers, especially members of the Educational Institute of Scotland, the largest teaching union. Many parents withdrew their children from school on 'Test' days. Others who did not, nevertheless indicated in a nationwide survey that they felt they should have the right to do so. In session 1991-92, opposition was as widespread, although many teachers, battle weary and lacking the heart to be disciplined again, caved in and administered the tests under protest. It has to be said that the actual test materials, which were prepared by seconded teachers, are attractive and one would find little in their content to object to. The main objections were: they would take an inordinate amount of teacher time to administer and mark; they would be disruptive of the class's programme; they would be difficult to administer in classes with more than one age group (of which there are a great many); they would provide no information that teachers did not already have, as they were to select the materials according to the level each child was already assessed as being at; they would serve no diagnostic purpose, or indicate appropriate action for pupils with learning difficulties, as had been claimed for them; they would prove stressful to pupils. Perhaps the most persuasive objection was that since the 5-14 Programme had not actually been implemented, it made no sense to administer compulsory national tests within its framework.

In May, after the second round of testing, with all its attendant stress and bitterness, the Government announced that it would drop its insistence on testing in P4 and P7, and Lord James Douglas Hamilton publicly acknowledged that parents feel tests in P4 and P7 to be "alien and threatening". Instead, the tests will be related to the five levels of the 5-14 Programme, and teachers would administer the tests (still only in reading, writing and mathematics) when they felt that a pupil, or group, was ready to progress to the next level. This approach was that which a great many teachers were arguing for all along. It of course could mean that pupils would have been tested as many as five times on completing S2, and will involve all teachers, not only those in P4 and P7. The change, while not universally welcomed, is seen by the majority as being more in keeping with the principle of continuous assessment.

The Howie Report

Secondary education in Scotland could soon face further overhaul beyond S2, as a result of the recommendations of the committee chaired by Professor John Howie, regius professor of mathematics at the University of St Andrews. This would mean the demise of the Scottish Highers' 'unbroken and distinguished history' since they were established in 1888.

The committee sees the Higher as being no longer sufficient preparation for higher education. (There is no suggestion that it be replaced by the English 'A' level, which is still perceived in Scotland as being narrow in scope, and dependent on over-early specialisation.) To report in depth on the findings and recommendations of the Howie committee would require more attention than can be given within the scope of this 'update'. However, the main findings and recommendations may be summarised.

The committee found that:

- only one in five of S5 pupils achieves the four or more Highers deemed to indicate 'broad attainment';
- 52% of S5 pupils leave with only one or no Highers;
- many with four or five Highers do not have a science subject or a modern language;
- although 29% of S5 pupils move on to S6, only one in three of these achieves even one CSYS (Certificate of Sixth Year Study) subject, meaning that only one in 10 secondary pupils experiences any real depth of study.

The main recommendations are:

- Highers and CSYS would be abolished and replaced by 'twin awards' – two new qualifications under a Scottish Upper Secondary Award (SUSA). These two qualifications would be a 'Scottish Baccalaureate' (ScotBac), and a 'Scottish Certificate' (ScotCert).
- ScotBac would be a three-year group award for 40% of pupils over 16. There would be 10 subjects at various levels, with a points system to indicate the overall score. ScotCert would be a two-year, mainly vocational course with a modular structure. It would be aimed at 60% of the 16-plus school population and pupils could leave school at S4 with ScotCert part 1.
- Pupils could switch between the 'twin' courses by means of a system of 'bridges and ladders'. 'Standard Grade', which secondary schools really only now, for the most part, feel to be well established, will no longer be the S4 leaving certificate but will become the upper end of the 5-14 Programme.

Not surprisingly, response to such radical proposals has been mixed. There was wide initial welcome, ranging from 'warm', to 'ecstatic', and even 'euphoric'. However, reaction against the proposals has been equally strong, some from those who, initially enthusiastic, later saw pitfalls and alarming implications. The main reservations, coming from such bodies as the teaching unions including the EIS and the Headteachers Association of Scotland, senior educational managers and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, appear to be that the adoption of these proposals would mean:

- the end of the comprehensive system and possibly the restoration of the old system of grammar and secondary modern type schools;
- that only very large schools could operate the new system;
- there would be downward pressure which would affect

the new 5-14 Programme in S1 and S2 (and possibly also affecting the upper primary curriculum);

- that the cost of the system would be vast.

Professor Howie refutes these criticisms and considers that they do not bear examination. He acknowledges the anxiety about acceleration in S1/S3, but considers that pupils could achieve more in the early secondary years. He also acknowledges the fears which have been expressed over divisiveness, but points out that this already exists, SCOTVEC not being seen as on a par with Highers. It is his contention that the system of 'ladders and bridges' will make the two track system less divisive, and he also asserts that a good ScotCert will have more credibility than a poor ScotBac.

The Howie committee would appear to see as one of their more persuasive arguments the need to move closer to Europe. Writing recently in *The Herald* (formerly *The Glasgow Herald*), Professor Howie states

I make no apology for the strong European flavour of our proposals ... I would certainly like to see our pattern of education, training and employment moving closer to European practices, and I believe that our proposals are entirely consistent with that desire.

The proposals have been presented as a 'consultation' exercise, the final date for submissions being 31 December. It could well be several months, or even a year, before it is

known whether the Government accepts the recommendations.

Cautious Optimism

These, then, are the principal events in Scottish education in the last year. It remains to be seen what the future holds for secondary education, but in the primary sector, the sense of being totally swamped by change has to a large extent been tempered by the fact that much of the change and development is seen as valuable (having been led less by dogma than by consensus, and developed principally by practitioners), and can be paced. Feelings of pressure and innovation fatigue remain, but tempered by a lifting of the sense of threat, denigration, frustration, and often sheer rage which dogged the profession under the predecessor of Lord James Douglas Hamilton, who has reopened dialogue with the Educational Institute of Scotland, the largest teaching union. Michael Forsyth, displaying a contemptuous and dismissive attitude, had declined to speak to them for most of his tenure.

The most contentious issue, that of National Testing, has been defused and this can be seen as a demonstration of, and victory for, what the Government had not perhaps foreseen in quite the way it has turned out, the growing sense of partnership in Scotland between schools and parents.

Is it a Man's World?

Beatrice Wortley

A piece of school-based research on the experience of boys in co-educational home economics classes at Ballynahinch High School, undertaken by Karen Doyle, head of the home economics department there, is reported by Beatrice Wortley, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ulster. In Northern Ireland secondary schools are selective, predominantly single-sex and include a larger voluntary sector than in England and Wales.

The study reported in this article was carried out by Karen, a female teacher in a rural 11-16 co-educational high school in Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland there is selection at 11+ when children who pass are qualified to attend grammar school, the remaining 70% (approximately) of children attend high schools. In this high school children are streamed by ability in the first three years and after this they study the subjects they have chosen to take at GCSE level. Karen has taught in the school since graduating as a specialist teacher of home economics in 1976 and has been head of the home economics department for nearly ten years. Unease about the situation of girls in mixed-sex classes of up to 30 pupils first prompted Karen to undertake this study. Using an action research methodology, she began with the issue that the presence of boys in home economics classes disadvantages the girls.

Historical Background

When Karen was appointed to the school, home economics was time-tabled exclusively for girls, while boys did CDT (Craft, Design, Technology). A change was effected in the

mid 1980s when home economics – food (as cookery is currently known) – was introduced for all boys in years one, two and three in single-sex groupings. The girls continued to take the full home economics course: home economics – food and needlework. The boys did technical drawing while the girls were doing needlework.

Teachers found it difficult to construct different syllabuses for boys and Karen admits that she offered the same material to both sexes with just a difference of emphasis. A boy challenged about his lack of interest in class stated that he saw no benefit to him in the set task, cake making: "I'll hardly come in after work and bake a cake. I want to know how to make a feed". It is noteworthy that during this period only girls were entered for examination. Karen explains:

The achievement of the two groups varied greatly. Girls were prepared for CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education) which they took in their fourth year. This was easy to do because the girls' practical work was always quicker and cleaner than that of the boys whose work created such a mess that greater time had to be allotted to clearing up. This obviously reduced the time available

for the related theory which is always taught when practical work and the resultant tidying up are completed. Perhaps the boys were deliberately messy to avoid the theory element.

This suggests a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). It is unlikely that all boys were incapable of taking the examination; but in a situation where the teacher anticipated failure, the boys reacted in accordance with the expectation. Mullin et al (1986) claim that many teachers have different expectations of girls and boys and the example bears this out. In fact, the inflexibility of the approach taken by Karen where she continued the pattern of the lessons despite her suspicions that the boys were playing-up and continued to ignore the possibility of boys taking the subject seriously suggests connivance. In terms of Kelly's (1981) work the under-achievement of boys in home economics (food) could be seen as socially constructed by the teacher.

Change was prompted by a general school inspection in 1987 which recommended that segregation of the sexes should be discontinued. The senior management team responded and home economics teachers found themselves with mixed-sex classes and with larger numbers in each class. The worst fears of the home economics staff, that the presence of boys would have a detrimental effect on the work of the girls, were quickly evident. In fact, this is what stung Karen into carrying out the research. She wanted data to prove to the senior management team that the existing conditions were preventing the home economics staff from properly preparing the girls as candidates for the GCSE examination.

Boys and Teachers' Attention

A great deal of data were gathered using different collection techniques. On one occasion, Karen's colleague in the department observed her teaching a top stream third year class made up of 21 girls and 7 boys. The results of the observation of a lesson employing an instructional pedagogy is in line with research findings by Spender & Sarah (1980). Boys received twice as many teacher comments as girls. Most of these were negative, such as reprimands, while others were made to avoid a culinary disaster or prevent an accident. By contrast, the girls were encouraged by being referred to by name, were invited to respond and reinforced for displaying knowledge or initiative. This corroborates Spender's (1978) work which found that boys and girls receive different messages about themselves through the process of linguistic interaction. However, there is one important difference: Karen's and Spender's work are mirror images of each other. It requires Spender's 'girls' and 'boys' to be transposed to fit Karen's findings, viz. "It is normal for the teacher to ignore the *boys* for long periods of time but not the *girls*", and "It is normal for *boys* to be addressed collectively, *girls* by their individual names".

School Organisation

The administration of the school may encourage bias. The registers prepared by office staff list girls' names first. This means that greater pressure is exerted on girls to finish work quickly as they are usually asked to submit their work first. Likewise, the register is used when selecting pupils for group

work or choosing individuals to carry out tasks. Further, girls and boys form separate lines outside the classroom. Girls file in first thus getting the pick of the 'best' tables leaving what is left for the boys to occupy.

Boys' and Girls' Physical Space

Mahony (1988) has remarked how boys tend to spread themselves, often encroaching on girls' personal space. Karen's data present a scene at odds with this. The boys in the third form class she studied always occupied a long sewing table at the back of the room. Unlike the purpose-built cookery tables, this bench does not have cupboards holding cookery equipment which means that the boys have to collect items from cupboards where additional utensils are stored or 'poach' from girls' tables. Being farthest removed from the focus of the class, the teacher's table where ingredients and scales are available, means that boys get less supervision. Reflecting on her research findings, Karen realised how uncomfortable tall boys must be working at a sewing table which is lower in height than the cookery tables. She went on to reason why the boys always work at this table. That it is furthest from the teacher's table is probably a consideration but equally probable is the feeling of solidarity it affords in the home economics environment.

Classroom Ethos

The home economics rooms were refurbished in 1989. Karen admits that the participation of boys in home economics was forgotten at the time the refurbishment was planned:

At the planning stage there was much consultation between myself, my colleague and the architect. We discussed the requirements in detail. When draft plans were drawn, we met the home economics inspector and the architect. All agreed that all the necessary aspects had been considered. Not once were the requirements of the male pupils voiced. This was a serious omission on my part. I doubt that the architect ever realised that boys study home economics.

Karen sums up the completed work of refurbishment with pastel pink, pale green and beige colour scheme as a style in keeping with female preferences. This does nothing to neutralise the stereotypical attitude that home economics is a girls' subject carrying with it a health warning for boys.

It seems this may be one of the last bastions of feminine rule. Mahony tells of unrelenting male dominance as she visits schools and hears about what takes place in them. In Karen's study, home economics is feminine in similar ways that Kelly designates science as masculine. In choosing to become a home economics teacher, Karen anticipated teaching girls. Some of her data suggest that a bias towards girls on her part is apparent to the pupils. A boy wrote: "Girls do the money and boys get a hard time". A girl wrote in similar vein: "The teacher gives the girls more responsibility like counting the money and going to the shop". Another pupil seemed to be justifying the bias: "Maybe she thinks girls are more responsible and don't take as much time" while another wrote: "Because the teacher wants the task done cleaner and neater".

Conclusion

This small research project has touched on several important

issues relating to equality of opportunity. It is interesting that Karen's starting point was a feeling that girls in her class were losing out in a mixed-sex environment. She was shocked when her data revealed how she discriminates against boys. Thus her original issue has been complicated. Having reached this point, it is time to plan for action. Clearly, remedial measures such as GIST (*Girls Into Science and Technology project*) that concentrates on one sex would be inappropriate. Indeed, reflection on this study provokes doubts that a narrow focus which tackles inequality in terms of one sex is ever appropriate. The way forward would seem to point in two directions. First, Karen needs to make representation to the senior management team in the school that an item addressing gender issues be included in the management plan. There is already a paragraph on equality of opportunity but nothing that touches on gender matters such as Karen has uncovered. Secondly, there is a need to design a curriculum that satisfies the aims of home economics education taking into account the differing orientations of girls and boys and also, the fact that they must be taught as one unit. Karen will achieve this latter aim by dint of hard work. Regarding the first one, she could find herself heading a crusade.

Acknowledgement

My thanks to Karen Doyle, Ballynahinch High School, for permission to use data from her case study. B.W.

Alternative Think-tanks

The following publications have been received by Forum:

- Breaking Out of the Low-skill Equilibrium by David Finegold
- Selection for Secondary Schooling by Geoffrey Walford
- Learning Before School by Kathy Sylva & Peter Moss
- Change and Reform in Initial Teacher Education by Tony Edwards (National Commission on Education *Briefing papers*)
- Managing Effective Schools by Elizabeth Monk & Alison Kelly
- Higher Education: expansion and reform by David Finegold et al
- Partnership in Change: enhancing the teaching profession by Michael Barber & Tim Brighouse (Institute for Public Policy Research)

Reviews

Analysis of the Radical Right Education Limited: schooling, training and the New Right in England since 1979

Centre for Contemporary Culture,
University of Birmingham, 1991
London: Unwin Hyman. pp. 340
hb: £40.00 ISBN 0 04 445312 4;
pb: £ 19.99 ISBN 0 04 445313 2

This volume can be seen as a continuation of *Unpopular Education* (1981) which considered education policy-making from 1944-79. Now it is the turn of Radical Right policies in education during the 1980s to be analysed by the CCCS at Birmingham. The book is in three sections: a critique of changes to the education system during the Thatcher years, followed by several case studies ranging from training programmes for post-16 year

olds to a consideration of the issues surrounding choice in education. The third section considers future developments in the public sector of education aimed to benefit all pupils.

Whilst there is a common theme throughout the book, it is possible to find oneself agreeing with some authors whilst wishing to debate ideas expressed by others. To that extent at the very least the writings will provoke discussion. There is also variety of style. Would that all contributors wrote with Andy Green's clarity of expression. His opening chapter provides a sound historical background to the 'peculiarities of English education', highlighting its comparative backwardness in terms of both provision and content since the introduction of mass schooling in the nineteenth century. He compares the reality, in which the state had to step in during that century to cope with the failure of market forces to provide a system of elementary schooling in England and do the same for secondary schooling in the twentieth century, with present day claims from the Radical Right that market forces will provide a better education system in the 1990s. Nothing underlies the relevance of an historical perspective more than this need to remind the present generation that the ideas of the Radical

Right, in spite of their new packaging, have been tried and found wanting on many occasions before.

Richard Johnson provides a detailed discussion of the 1988 Education Act showing how the persistence of Radical Right pressure groups from the Institute of Economic Affairs to the Hillgate Group finally came to fruition in the third Thatcher Administration with the launch of CTCs and opting out schools in preparation for the future privatisation of all schools. He points to the contradictions between the neoliberals and the neoconservatives, especially over the National Curriculum, which is anathema to the former whilst being welcomed by the latter as a means of providing the 'right knowledge' for pupils today.

The case studies include an examination of the perceptions of both teachers and pupils of the YTS, the changing nature of Training Schemes for young people in the 1980s, and the courses 'chosen' by post-16 year olds in further education which may reinforce the academic/vocational divide. There is a fascinating account of a school in Croxteth, Liverpool, closed by Liberal and Conservative councillors in 1981, occupied by a group of parents the following year and run by volunteer

teachers with community support for another 12 months before being taken back into local authority control. The limited aims of many parents are contrasted with the radical ideas of some of the teachers with both groups being drawn together by the need to prepare pupils for external examinations. The study helps to illustrate the limitations schools have for manoeuvring whoever controls them.

In looking to possible developments for future public education, Andy Green provides a range of suggestions which take account of what has been happening during the 1980s. He avoids simplistic notions of a return to a pre-1979 situation recognising that certain aspects, such as local management of schools, are likely to stay whilst others, such as the expensive schemes catering for a 'privileged' minority like the Assisted Places Scheme and the CTCs should go. The National Curriculum can be amended, and made to live up to its title by making all fee-paying schools provide these programmes for their pupils.

There will be points readers will wish to challenge. For example whilst some pupils may see school as infantile this could be due to the powerful influence of commercial popular culture which attempts to persuade an ever younger age group of children that knowledge of the current top ten records or purchase of a particular designer trainer is more adult, real and important than the knowledge promoted by schools ranging from an understanding of the importance of the Norman Conquest to our culture to present day environmental issues. Unfortunately, it is more often working-class pupils who are tempted to reject the curriculum and ethos of the school. They are often forced to pay the price later in the dole queues.

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Schooling and Sexuality Lesbian and Gay Issues in the English Classroom

SIMON HARRIS, 1991
Milton Keynes: Open University
Press
pp. 146, pb, £10.99
ISBN 0335 15194 9

Simon Harris sets out to examine aspects of sexuality as they pertain to current English teaching. In a fine introduction, he argues that the emergence of three recent events, the significance of which he explains, have forced the issue of sexuality to the fore of political and educational debate. These events are: 'Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, the advent of HIV and AIDS, and

the decision to transfer sex education to school governing bodies' (p. 2). This is followed by a set of definitions and acronyms, that should prove most useful to those working in this curricular area. It is a teacher's book with much of the text providing first-rate examples of pedagogical approaches, strategies and a comprehensive list of materials for use in work based around the issue of sexuality. He also includes cogently presented details of schemes of work.

Using Trenchard & Warren's *Something to Tell You*, a report commissioned by the London Gay Teenage Group, Harris sensitively cites lesbian and gay young people's experiences of schooling. It makes sombre reading: an account of institutional abuse, confusion, marginalisation and alienation. However, as he points out, it is important for educationists not to adopt a reductionist approach that sees gays and lesbians as mere victims or problems. Without wishing to appear patronising to the young gay students I have taught, unexpectedly, I have been surprised at their courage, honesty and emotional strength, living within such a hostile environment as England at the present time.

We are only beginning to understand the complex interrelationship between schooling and masculinity and femininity. More specifically, we can now trace how differentiated schools and curricula construct hierarchically ordered differentiated masculinities and femininities. It is within this framework that we need to locate gay and lesbian sexualities. A central theme that emerges from Harris's book is that the main problem in the schooling of lesbian and gay youth is not that of their sexuality but the phenomena of homophobia and heterosexism, which pervasively structures their social world and is mediated through the existing institutional framework that discriminates against all subordinated young people, as well as through the operation of 'sexually specific' mechanisms, such as the process of homophobic stereotyping.

In a cultural landscape in which there is a rich tradition of lesbian and gay theatre, novels and film, such work continues to remain outside the mainstream curriculum. Simon Harris suggests that it is a potential source of enlightenment for straight students and teachers, while at the same time a source of empowerment for gay students and teachers. I fully agree.

The book reminds us of the pivotal cultural significance of state schooling for the majority of young people in modern societies. It reads as an insightful critique of the New Right moral discourses with their vacuous pre- scriptions concerning the complex construction of the identities and destinies of the next generation. Here

we see exposed the limitations of the management imperatives of life in the market place: an imagined social landscape without individual subjectivity, emotion or sensibility; a world that systematically ignores the organising principles of class, 'race', gender and sexuality that help shape the day to day classroom reality. Outside of families, teachers are potentially significant others. One feels that Simon Harris's students, gay and straight, will look back at their schooling experience and remember their English teacher. I hope that they are able to communicate some of the mutual love and respect that they undoubtedly share.

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A Teacher's Vygotsky Vygotsky and Education: instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology

LUIS C. MOLL (Ed.), 1991
Cambridge University Press
pp. 439, hb. £35.00.
ISBN 0 521 36051

Luis C. Moll developed an interest in the work of Vygotsky when researching cross cultural cognitive ability as part of his minority education studies. His attention was drawn to Vygotsky's belief that an individual's cognition is embedded within the social and cultural world of their surroundings. He was drawn to Vygotsky's focus on the social origins and cultural basis of individual development. In editing this book Moll has attempted to bring together a collection of papers looking in particular at the educational implications and applications of Vygotsky's writings. The work of Vygotsky has gained a newfound visibility during the 1980s and this looks set to continue into the 1990s; however much of the work to date has focussed on his psychology and philosophy and has been short on its application to educational practice. The bulk of the book is devoted to studies which apply a Vygotskian perspective to current educational innovations and ideas. The book also provides an introduction to the sociohistorical school in general and Vygotsky in particular.

The book is divided into three parts, the first of which covers the historical and theoretical issues of Vygotsky's work. These six chapters help to place Vygotsky in his societal context and place his theories in an historical perspective. I found these chapters useful in helping to place Vygotsky in relation to other important twentieth century educational writers.

They were useful to dip into in order to gain a fuller appreciation of his life and times. Chapters five and six on children's self regulation and peer collaboration did not fit quite so neatly in this first section and could perhaps have been placed elsewhere in the book.

The second part of the book contains chapters giving a Vygotskian perspective on classroom practices. The chapters cover a neo Vygotskian interpretation of the Kamehameha Early Education Project (KEEP) the reading recovery scheme, the whole language teaching philosophy and the development of scientific concepts in children. This section is much more applied than the first and would be of use to those involved in looking for a new, critical way of analysing these approaches and schemes. The papers place Vygotsky's work in a contemporary context looking at it alongside currently fashionable theories and ideas.

The final section of the book is devoted to original research applying Vygotskian concepts in practice. The studies use a Vygotskian theoretical base in attempts to alter techniques of instruction. The chapters cover several topics: literacy instruction for preschool inner city children; teacher training; a community-based after school programme; science teaching; and literacy teaching for mildly learning disabled children. These studies focus on the mediating role of the teacher in structuring the learning environment of children.

This book could have given a more complete view of Vygotsky's life and work by covering special education and cross cultural, multicultural studies. The education of children with disabilities was important to Vygotsky, but is not well covered in this book. Moll was drawn to Vygotsky's writing through his cross cultural writing, but it contains limited references to minority or multicultural education.

Overall the collection of papers in this book provide a good introduction to the work of Vygotsky and particularly its practical application in the classroom. All of the papers provide a large number of references which would be of use to those wishing to extend their studies on this subject. The book also has a good subject and author index making the book easy to use. At £35 the hardback copy of this book is rather expensive except perhaps for the devoted Vygotskian scholar; however the recently published paperback version is more suited to the pocket of teachers, researchers and students.

Although Vygotsky's writings have been well covered in books by psychologists, this book begins to give a more practical grounding to the subject. For any one seeking to take a critical view of current innovations and instructional

practices using a Vygotskian perspective based on the sociohistorical approach this book could prove most useful.

LESLEY BARCHAM
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Beyond the Cox Model English and the National Curriculum: Cox's revolution?

KEN JONES (Ed.), 1992
London: Kogan Page. *The Bedford
Way Series*.
pp. 130. £9.95. ISBN 0 7494 0641 0

Focussing on the Cox Report as the basis for National Curriculum English, this book adopts an urgent and unequivocally critical stance. Through close theoretical analysis and practical example, the writers reveal the inadequacies and dangers of 'Cox' as a model of English teaching; and more importantly perhaps, go far towards explaining its seductive appeal and why so many teachers, in spite of knowing the conservative stable from whence it came, have been disinclined to reject it wholeheartedly. In the face of current moves to 'review' English teaching and to 'rewrite' the National Curriculum, many teachers may soon feel backed into positions even more defensive of 'Cox'; this book gives substance to original misgivings and proposes, often quite practically, a model beyond 'Cox'.

The underlying thesis is presented by Ken Jones in the first and last chapters. The argument is with Cox's conception of culture which while nodding at diversity (bilingualism, multiculturalism) remains resolutely unitary, 'national' and conflict-free. In 'Cox', culture (most centrally the 'literary experience') is something to which students are to be given 'access' – not something which is made and 'lived' in people's lives; issues of class (in 'Cox' called 'social groups') and how education should relate to popular, informal culture, are largely ignored.

To provide a political rationale or context to explain the 'Cox' phenomenon, Jones uses the Gramscian concept of 'passive revolution' where "hegemony is secured by winning not merely the acquiescence but 'the active consent of the governed'" (p. 17). This embraces the dual concept of revolution/restoration: things are changed, problems are dealt with actively (often using the left's agenda) so that hegemonically, they stay the same. Applied to Cox, 'revolutionary' change might include: rejection of the grammar model, the canon (to an extent), basic skills' approaches; validation of the 'progressive' centrality of talk, reader response, equal opportunities, democratic

approaches to Standard English, etc., things highly welcomed by many teachers, actively engaging their consent. The price to be paid however is high: there is to be no resistance, no raising of possible alternatives; equal opportunities and multiculturalism are deradicalised; towards issues of class, subcultures, advantage/disadvantage, there are only gestures, and certainly no recognition of inherent conflict. As Jones says, "Reform then becomes much less a transitional stage to socialism than an inoculation against more substantial change" (p. 7).

In a wry, entertaining yet serious chapter, Anne Turvey works through her misgivings about Cox and his attitude to literature: she asks how and what should we read; what is this notion of a 'collective identity' which Cox implies? Using several telling examples, she shows what happens when individuals really do encounter texts: the Jamaican girl who 'hated' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and taught them all more about a word ('marooned') than the teacher ever could; the girl who compared Jane Austen with Mills & Boon, showing an appreciation of both; and the girls who, again using Mills & Boon, showed a sophisticated understanding of genre, narrative and point of view likely to satisfy many an attainment target. Teachers will recognise in these examples the reality of the class-room experience.

In Chapter 3, 'Teaching Popular Culture', Chris Richards tackles the complex question of class and education which in 'Cox', and in much current debate, seems to have been buried under the consensus carpet. All the separations, alienations, and dislocations which are the experience of education for many students, are ignored; instead, a common class membership between students and teachers is assumed. Yet as Richards shows, the reality is very different: the question of what relationship education is to have with the popular, informal (often nonliterary) culture is very real.

In Chapter 4, 'The Multicultural Politics of English Teaching', Robert Owens points up the nationalism of the Cox model and the serious implications of the hegemonic imposition of 'our' culture on all. 'Multicultural' as it may claim to be, by the inclusion of 'ethnic' texts to show range and diversity, Owens fears in the National Curriculum that space is made for these "'other' voices and 'other' texts only to patronise their ethnicity" (p. 107). The reality, of much Commonwealth writing for example, is that it was written in opposition to the culture in which it is now 'allowed' space. How white teachers should teach black students a text like *Heart of Darkness*, which Owens considers racist, is a problem 'Cox' does not begin to address.

This publication speaks directly to

English teachers; the writers' plea is for classrooms where 'difference' is not just managed but where different cultures and knowledge engage with each other, "places where critical attitudes towards the dominant culture (are) generated, and where elements of an alternative, shared system of meanings might emerge" (p. 127). As arguments about the nature of English swell up again, this is a timely and important contribution.

PAULINE GREEN
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Plowden Restored? The National Curriculum and the Primary School: springboard or straitjacket?

JENNY RILEY (Ed.), 1992

London: Kogan Page
in association with the Institute
of Education, University of London
£10.95. ISBN 0 7494 0642 9

It seems strange to review a book printed in 1992 knowing that it is now almost out of date! The title poses the question that has been answered by David Pascall, Chairman of the National Curriculum Council. Yes the National Curriculum is a 'straitjacket'.

In the introduction the ideology posed by a rigid subject-oriented curriculum has risks as well as opportunities. Most primary teachers have felt those risks and the children have paid for them! It seems amusing that Riley quotes the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council of Education, 1967). The passage in question highlights the approach for topic work and states that it is "... designed to make good use of the interest and curiosity of children, to minimize the notion of subject matter being rigidly compartmentalized and to allow the teacher to adopt a consultative, guiding, stimulating role rather than a purely didactic one".

I wonder if Riley was writing with a crystal ball? She must be wondering as Pascall announced that he firmly believes that topic work will remain an important approach in primary schools.

The book poses interesting questions particularly for those practitioners interested in the current debate of whether the National Curriculum (NC) is workable. It draws attention to the covert ideological points hidden here and there. Tricia Connell in the first chapter on English points out the very use of the term 'English', to describe and define children's language experience. She emphasises the political and intellectual struggles which are involved in maintaining the dominance of a particular culture. Connell also specifies that according to the Cox Report bilingual and biliterate children may know more about language than their teachers.

Each chapter addresses many questions primary teachers have been asking since the implementation of the curriculum. For those new to this chaotic approach of teaching children in our schools today, the book gives a brief outline of the vehicle (NC) that teachers are grappling with. What fails to come through is the way a curriculum like this is inappropriate rather like someone giving you a mechanical road digger to attend to your window boxes! Furthermore, no one has given you the money for fuel and maintenance!

Good practice is prominent throughout the book and good use of the most up to date reports are referred to. Andrew Brown makes pertinent references to the Cockcroft report, and he quite rightly takes up the suggestion that mathematical work should take on various forms of organisation.

Each chapter offers the reader an exemplary reference list, which provides essential reading for both teacher and student. The book could also be of use to those outside the education world, putting the National Curriculum in some sort of perspective if that is possible.

In defence of the National Curriculum Jane Savage quite rightly indicates that before it was introduced, the lack of progression and continuity within science at the primary level was widespread. She points out that the National Curriculum Working Groups in all subjects had few, if any, class teachers or advisory teachers especially those with 'Early Years' experience.

Caroline Heal, writing about Humanities, makes many references to the problems concerning the approach to both Geography and History. She identifies the lack of guidance given for the narrow programmes of study. She states that this could ultimately create a model in junior departments at key stage 2 of an entitlement of the poorest sort, using the lowest common denominator to reach the understanding of what history is all about. The inclusion, at the last minute of some non-European history threw up the problem of relevant resources available.

To the practitioner the words of June Boyce Tillman must ring so true. She writes about the Music provision in primary schools all too often the poor relation! Reference is made to the smaller soundproofed rooms for practical music activities available in secondary and higher education. How on earth do you manage this in an open plan primary school?

The demands of the National Curriculum are enormous. The book poses a question of Springboard or Straitjacket? Would we, back in 1989, have believed what most teachers would answer today? A theme running through the book was that of resources and INSET. Maybe this holds the key?

Finally, I did not detect one reference to 'Hell' amongst the pages. Perhaps the

reader should consider the article in *Forum*, Vol. 34, No. 4, by Derek Gillard, asking the question of whether 'educational philosophy' exists? Are all roads leading back to Plowden? The Far Right philosophers have forged their views upon us all through the National Curriculum, but in a few simple words, could we not consider what is caught not taught?

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Environmental Education The Cambridge Schools Recycling Pack

SUE WOODSFORD &
MARK SHELTON, 1991
Cambridge City Council
£6.00, plus £1 postage & packing

Cambridge City Council has taken an initiative which other cities or counties might usefully emulate. The pack consists of two A4-size booklets intended for use with children aged 7-13, and is now available for schools elsewhere to buy: teachers or pupils would need to ascertain the relevant information on local recycling facilities and addresses for their own area in order to make full use of the pack, but this would itself be a valid educational task.

Part One is the 30-page *Information Book*, illustrated with line drawings and written in language and style for children to read themselves and to use as a basic reference source for some of the questions and tasks in Part Two, the similarly illustrated 40-page *Work Book with Pupil Activities*. Older children would want to seek further information in library books.

The pack naturally encourages integrated or cross subject work related to art and craft, history, geography, mathematics, science and imaginative writing; the suggested tasks require both individual and group work and could be readily undertaken with a wide mixed ability or age range. Some of the activities naturally lead to involvement in the local community.

The *Work Book* is progressively more demanding through the 40 activities, so that the second half is probably more suitable for upper juniors. The two booklets follow the same sequence in considering use, production, disposal and recycling of paper, metal cans, glass and plastics.

This pack is a fine example of environmental education in action, designed to encourage socially responsible behaviour.

NANETTE WHITBREAD
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