

FORUM

for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education

Spring 1994

Volume 36 Number 1

ISSN 0963-8253

**National Curriculum and Assessment
English Coursework Campaign
Bullying
Sex Education**



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The next FORUM

School initiatives for students to control their own learning are the focus of two articles by **Antony Luby** in Scotland, **Ben Collins & Kath Lee** in Leicestershire. The importance of learning support systems within comprehensive schools is made by **Suzanne Taylor**. **Wynne Harlen** reflects on Scotland's primary curriculum and **Myra Barrs** on teacher assessment for language and literacy in primary schools. **Michelle Proux** offers a French perspective on multicultural education and **David Tombs** examines the RE guidelines in our multi-faith context. **Eric Robinson** considers school and curriculum change to promote social awareness and competence. Accounts of the Billericay 15-school Consortium and of parents defeating a second opt-out bid affirm support for LEAs. OFSTED responds to a critique of HMI reporting in *Forum* a year ago.

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Editorial correspondence, including typescript articles (1500-2000 words) and contributions to discussion (800 words maximum) should be addressed to: Nanette Whitbread, Beaumont Cottage, East Langton, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7TB, United Kingdom. Telephone: 0858-84 356. Please send two copies of contributions and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Books for review should be addressed to Clyde Chitty, 16 Elmfield Avenue, Stoneysgate, Leicester LE2 1RD, United Kingdom. Telephone: 0533-703 132.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(Volume 36, Nos 1-3, 1994), post free
Individuals, £12.00 (US\$24.00)
Schools, £15.00 (US\$25.00)
Libraries, £24.00 (US\$48.00)

This journal is published three times a year, in January, May and September. Those three issues constitute one volume. ISSN 0963-8253

Editorial

Curriculum Disaster

The National Curriculum is dead (at least in the form devised by former Education Secretary Kenneth Baker and his advisers), and surely few will mourn its passing.

Speaking to the National Association of Head Teachers at the end of May 1992, Professor John Tomlinson of the University of Warwick defined the National Curriculum as “the cure for which there is no known disease”. This is a clever remark and worth reflecting upon, but it naturally begs a number of key questions. There *is* a case for a national curriculum for the nation’s schools, but not the one written on the back of an envelope by Kenneth Baker and his civil servants back in early 1987 without any evidence of professional input. The manner in which the National Curriculum was introduced was a clear indication that the ‘partnership years’ in education were truly over. And by ignoring professional opinion and advice, the Thatcher Government was virtually ensuring that its new curriculum framework would be both flawed and short-lived. Speaking in September 1987, Peter Cornall, Senior County Inspector for Cornwall, attacked the DES for “paying only a dismissive lip-service to the professional enterprise and initiative on which all progress depends”. The Government now has to live with the product of its arrogance and incompetence: a national curriculum that in many respects is damaged beyond repair.

Writing in this number, Professor Denis Lawton argues that the National Curriculum and its related testing arrangements have structural defects which the Dearing Review has found it very difficult to address. At Key Stage One and Key Stage Four, the Government seems prepared to ‘reform’ the National Curriculum by simply *abandoning* it. At the same time, the work of Professor Paul Black’s Task Group on Assessment and Testing can be seen to have been an expensive waste of time and money.

During the period of the Dearing Review, teachers have clearly enjoyed the (unusual) experience of having their views, and those of their Associations, taken into consideration. But there seems to be little point in simply ‘slimming-down’ the requirements of the National Curriculum, unless this is accompanied by a genuine and far-reaching debate about the nature and purpose of the school curriculum. By abandoning parts of the original design and leaving other bits intact, the Government will be tinkering with a corpse that doesn’t deserve to be

resuscitated. And progressive teachers are surely mistaken if they imagine that the ultimate outcome of the Dearing Review will be a better deal for pupils. As we pointed out in our last Editorial, the focus on English and mathematics at Key Stage One, together with science at Key Stage Two, could, with simplified ‘pencil-and-paper’ tests, revive the Right’s ‘back to basics’ orthodoxy and self-fulfilling streaming, while failing to guarantee access for all pupils to a coherent and well-planned curriculum. Meanwhile, the differentiated structures that now appear to be emerging post-14 mark the end of any concept of a common ‘entitlement’ curriculum *beyond* the end of Key Stage Three. As Peter Watkins, formerly Executive Deputy Director of the NCC, has pointed out: “there is a danger that all this means a return to an *academic* route for the able and a *vocational* route for the less able”.

In this number of *Forum*, Shadow Education Secretary Ann Taylor argues that “it is important that the National Curriculum should *not* lay down the totality of a child’s education. It must ensure a child’s entitlements in terms of areas of experience”. And writing in a recent number of *The English and Media Magazine*, Cary Bazalgette, Principal Education Officer, BFI Media Education and Research, pointed out that there are both *good* and *bad* ways of arriving at a viable professional common curriculum for schools:

The bad way ... is to itemise minimal, testable skills and list study objects, within ring-fenced traditional subjects. The good way ... is to agree and summarise the essential principles for each area of a faculty-based curriculum which ... will enable and endorse purposeful teaching and learning across the full range of cultural experience.

It is sad, though hardly surprising, that the now-marginalised Baker does not feel able to concede in his recently published memoirs that the National Curriculum (indeed the Education ‘Reform’ Act as a whole) was one of the most damaging measures of his disaster-strewn career. Anyone less pachydermic would probably feel the need to retire to bed for a lengthy period of introspection. His successors have all proved themselves unfit to hold high office; but they cannot be blamed for the mess they inherited.

Schools *Can* Make a Difference

Ann Taylor

Shadow Secretary of State for Education since the 1992 General Election, Ann Taylor here introduces the Labour Party's recent Green Paper on Education. The Green Paper is also discussed by Liz Thomson in this issue's *Reviews* section.

Children, parents, governors and teachers have had enough of chopping and changing in education policy as this Government lurches from one ill-conceived educational experiment to another. Ministers have had the arrogance to make decisions without consultation and have insulted those who disagreed with them. That is why the Labour Party launched a Green Paper on Education in September 1993.

This Green Paper is the start of an exceptional type of consultation which has not been seen since the preparation of the 1944 Education Act. For the first time for years all those involved in education can have their say in developing a new consensus to guide policy making.

This Green Paper is not a statement of policies to be imposed by politicians. It is a statement of principles and values that should guide policy making to ensure a high quality education for all. We must expect the best from our children and provide the best for them.

The Green Paper sets out ideas for ensuring that everyone – from the toddler to the mature adult – can receive the education they need. The benefits all this will bring in building a civilised and prosperous society cannot be overstated. We must provide education suited to the needs of the 21st century.

The Labour Party has already embarked upon consultation before publishing the Green Paper. We now want to continue that process by inviting a wide set of responses to this document. We will be holding seminars, consultations and meetings on these issues. We will welcome responses in writing, to be sent to me at the House of Commons, from individuals and from organisations.

The consultation period will extend until the end of February 1994. We hope that parents, governors, teachers, lecturers, users and providers of our education, along with all those others interested in education will be keen to participate.

The Labour Party wants to arrive at an education policy that will enjoy widespread confidence so that in government Labour Ministers can work in partnership with those in education.

Schools can make a difference. People's lives can be transformed by them. Each of us knows someone who can show how a set of experiences at school opened up a new career or pointed them in a new direction. The Labour Party was founded upon the belief that good social policy can intervene in society and improve the lives of everyone. We were also founded on the belief that people can grab hold of their own destiny and their lives are not to be determined by their genetic or environmental background.

This whole Green Paper is based upon the presupposition that schools matter.

Too many of our youngsters underachieve and never have real choices. Our present hierarchical education system represents a series of hurdles that are designed to reduce the access to the next stage. Education ought to be about opening doors and keeping them open as wide as possible for as long as possible. We must help individuals to meet their aspirations but we must do more: we must release the talents that are rarely developed, stretch their abilities and extend their aspirations.

That is why we have placed such an emphasis on nursery education. No less than 50% of intellectual development takes place in the first five years of life. Research evidence on the long-term positive outcomes of nursery education shows the waste of human potential caused by the neglect of under-fives education.

Conservative governments have failed the country in many areas. The provision for children is amongst their greatest failures. They have placed their faith in the market's ability to create a network of provision. It has failed. The fierce debate about promoting standards in schools has centred almost exclusively on the implementation of the National Curriculum. In so doing it has proved all too easy to overlook the reform that could do most to improve standards in our schools: the provision of pre-school education for all.

In addition, early years education provides an excellent opportunity to identify, at the earliest possible moment, children who have special educational needs. The earlier such needs are identified, the more likely it is that the needs of the child will be met in a cost-effective and integrated education service. Developments, such as the comprehensive provision of *Ecoles Maternelles* in France, show the recognition of this by other countries.

There can be no doubt that nursery education is the best start that we can give our children and that must be our priority. However, at this time of social disintegration there is a greater urgency for nursery education, integrated with child care provision, not just because of the educational and social benefits to the child but also because of the potential for giving additional forms of support to, and education on parenting to, today's parents. Many of today's parents are young, some are single and frequently living away from an extended family and without a network of support. These circumstances make parenting even more difficult.

But we cannot just give the best start to tomorrow's babies. We cannot wait 20 years until they are adults and

the benefits of nursery education work their way through the system.

Today's youngsters and adults also deserve the best. We must, therefore, reform our system so that it genuinely provides the best for every child and adult of every age.

The task of the next Labour Government will be to construct and maintain an education system which enables every school to operate at the very peak of its effectiveness. Of course, different schools will achieve this in different ways. But each school must recognise this to be its main responsibility. Central government's role is not to construct a rigid blue print to be adopted by every school, but to create a framework within which each school can reach its full potential.

At the heart of effective learning and teaching is the quality of the curriculum. It is important that the National Curriculum should not lay down the totality of a child's education. It must ensure a child's entitlements in terms of areas of experience. There is need for much more debate before a framework of content can be agreed.

The curriculum should not be determined by testing arrangements. Assessment of pupils is necessary to diagnose and improve the progress of each individual. However, the Government is trying to use the same assessment for assessing schools as for individual pupils. Current testing arrangements are intended more to monitor schools and teachers than support pupils.

The regular reporting of assessment to parents should be part of a school's ongoing partnership between home and school. However, the notion that summative tests can summarise all progress is dangerous nonsense. Likewise, the idea that schools can be judged by the production of simplistic and flawed league tables is indefensible rubbish.

Parents and others involved in education are looking to the next Labour Government for two very distinctive things. Firstly, they want us to stop the bewildering range of experiments being carried out on the nation's children and the institutions/establishments that serve them. Secondly, they want us to reflect and develop a consensus for change in education. However fatigued we all are with the pace of recent change, there are few people who would simply

say stop and freeze our education system where it is now. The frantic chopping and changing must cease but that cannot mean a static system.

The next General Election may see the election of the Parliament which will take us to the year 2000. Our policies must prepare for the kind of education system we want to start the next millennium.

It must be based on the principle behind comprehensive education that the education of each and every child and adult matters. Under-achievement costs both individuals and society dearly.

Today many people feel they are living in an educational nightmare. Gone is any pretence of education being a partnership, of a community controlling its educational institutions. Instead we have a Secretary of State who strives to control everything.

The Labour Party is committed above all to a central government that will provide leadership in education but will not prescribe the detailed content of education in the way the present Government is doing. There are few other countries where the Secretary of State dictates detail equivalent to which Shakespeare plays should be taught to 14-year-olds, how many beads should be in a particular test for 7-year-olds or which capital of which countries 11-year-olds should know. When a headteacher makes a mistake it often causes real problems for a school. Recent years have shown that when the Secretary of State has total power the mistakes prove a disaster for the nation as a whole.

Our view is that education is not only about the learning of blocks of facts between the ages of 5 and 16. It is about developing personal skills and the self-confidence and self-esteem to apply them. It is about the spirit of enquiring and challenging ideas, uncomfortable though that can be for politicians as well as others.

The Labour Party does not wish to claim to have all the solutions or a monopoly on wisdom. We are committed to listening to all those involved in and concerned about education. We want to provide a lead in the development of a new consensus.

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Recognising Imagination: agenda for a new generation

Michael Armstrong

Last November the British Film Institute, in association with *The Times Educational Supplement*, organised a two-day Commission of Inquiry into English, held at the National Film Theatre, under the chairmanship of Mary Warnock. Michael Armstrong was one of the four witnesses called to address the fourth session of the Commission which was devoted to the theme *Future Visions: English 1998-2011*. This is the text of his five-minute address. It is to be published later this year in the Commission's final report.

The greatest need in education at the present time is to rediscover the imagination. If there is one thing which I would hope for children born today, it is that they might be taught in schools which recognise in the power of children's imagination the chief condition of learning and the crucial test of a curriculum.

From infancy onwards, children struggle to make sense of the world through a creative engagement with the various forms of expression which define our culture. Their earliest stories, poems and plays are evidence of that struggle and its outcome: the beginning of a critical practice that underlies and controls the entire history of learning. The business of education, as I understand it, is to excite, sustain and interpret that practice, week in week out, throughout a school life.

Here is Holly, at the age of six years, pondering in narrative form what it means to destroy a habitat:

*Once upon a time there was a hedgehog
He had a friend called Mr Caterpillar
They went to Mr Hedgehog's house in the hedge
The farmer chopped up the hedge
At the bottom there was a pile of leaves
They fell down, they sat on the leaves.
In the morning they were dead*

Elementary syntax and a simple vocabulary do not constrain this young storyteller. They have become an opportunity, the appropriate means by which to express her unsparing vision. So it is with every young writer. Teaching means recognising the creative achievement and seeking to advance it.

I want to draw attention to three consequences of looking at education in this way, each of which has been neglected by the National Curriculum.

The first is this. The development of technique, in matters of punctuation or grammar, argument or style, is dependent upon each child's developing imagination. The basic skills – a misleading term – are neither the prerequisite of a critical practice nor its complement. They are embedded in practice and advance by way of practice. Punctuation for example. Long before they master the standard forms children become adept at their own punctuating devices: radiating lines around a word requiring special emphasis; huge letters denoting a shout; a single large stop, or the words 'the end', to signify closure. A more conventional fluency comes

only as children see that their practice requires it if their intention is to be understood.

The second consequence is larger. Any curriculum is necessarily provisional. The shape of learning is determined by the interplay of authorised knowledge and naive inquiry within the classroom. To prescribe what books are to be read, which writers are reputable, what language is correct, what forms are appropriate for which purposes, is to ignore the innovative aspect of education. Education is a process which redefines culture in the act of handing it on. We look at the way young children begin and end their stories, how large a space they leave for interpretation, how readily they incorporate visual elements into their writing, and our own sense of narrative possibility is changed. No subject matter is quite the same after teaching it. A good curriculum undermines itself.

The third consequence concerns assessment. The critical evaluation of children's learning depends upon documenting and interpreting their intellectual enterprise, as displayed in their stories, poems, plays, mime, dance, conversation, argument, speculation. It is a matter of tracing the progress of their thought from year to year; identifying the themes, motifs and concerns that govern their practice; observing how they incorporate new material and fresh experience into their composition; examining the ways in which they exploit a developing technique. Its appropriate form is the edited archive: a body of work selected, arranged and annotated by teachers, in collaboration with their students, as representative of present accomplishment and indicative of future learning. The archive is the antithesis of the test. It emphasises uniqueness and individuality. It resists standardisation. In the archive learning is made manifest as nowhere else.

When I imagine a classroom at the turn of the century, I see it as a cooperative of writers and readers, dramatists and film makers, exploring the imagination in as many forms as come to hand; anxious to share their work with each other and with their parents, teachers and local communities; guided and directed by teachers but ready to challenge their preconceptions. A classroom in which the acquisition of knowledge is always in part a reconstruction of knowledge. In its present condition, and under its present leadership, our own society may not be capable of realising this vision. But I propose to go on working as if it were.

The National Curriculum and its Assessment

Denis Lawton

Formerly Director of the Institute of Education, University of London, Denis Lawton is now Professor of Education in the Institute's Department of Curriculum Studies. The following article was written shortly after the publication of Sir Ron Dearing's *Interim Report* in July 1993.

Sir Ron Dearing's 86-page *Interim Report* (plus five supplements) was released to the world amidst much publicity. Its reception was mixed: teachers' organisations had been impressed by Sir Ron himself, particularly his sincere capacity for listening, but many felt he had been given an impossible task and, as usual, too little time.

Some of the obvious problems had been carefully addressed – teacher overload on both curriculum and assessment, giving more discretion to teachers, as well as recommending improvements in the administration. These were accepted as helpful gestures, but to what extent had the real problems of National Curriculum assessment been solved? Sir Ron's brief had been carefully constructed to exclude some of the most contentious issues, including the central political question of league tables.

It may be useful to begin by thinking back to 1987 when a number of objections were raised in the debate about the National Curriculum, before we knew exactly what was eventually to be enacted in 1988 (Lawton & Chitty, 1988). Although it is artificial to separate curriculum and assessment, it will be convenient to do so for this brief analysis.

Curriculum

Most teachers by 1988 accepted, even welcomed, the idea of a National Curriculum in principle, but many were very critical of the obsolete ten subject structure which appeared in the Act – subjects might be useful for 'delivering' some aspects of the curriculum, but they were most unsatisfactory as a basic structure. Critics were told at the time that all would be well eventually because 'cross-curricular elements' would fill in all the gaps such as social and political understanding, economic awareness, health education etc. By 1993 this had been shown to be a completely empty promise. Whilst the National Curriculum Council (NCC) had produced some interesting documents on cross-curricular themes, Education Ministers after Kenneth Baker had either ignored them or openly sneered at anything not expressed in terms of subjects (Graham & Tytler, 1993, p. 126). After Graham had been replaced by Pascall as Chair of NCC, it was even rumoured that NCC officers were forbidden to mention cross-curricular elements or core skills. Moreover, those teachers who wanted to work on the principle that the National Curriculum was not the whole curriculum, were thwarted in their attempt to introduce cross-curricular ideas because there was little or no time left over from the requirements of ten foundation subjects. The second of these problems may be addressed by Sir Ron, but not the first. Cross-curricular elements still seem

to be virtually taboo – the only reference to cross-curricular themes occurs in the context of the CBI recommendation, not in the main structure of the report. The National Curriculum post-Dearing is likely to be as subject-based as ever, and headteachers will still find it very difficult to fill in the gaps between the subjects. One of the fundamental problems of the National Curriculum has simply been ignored.

The second concern expressed in 1988 was whether a National Curriculum would be a broad-based 'entitlement' curriculum or would be a narrow, back to the basics core. In 1988 it seemed that Kenneth Baker had won that battle to some extent. Since then the entitlement idea has been greatly diluted, especially at Key Stage 4 with art and music becoming 'options' rather than entitlement. The Dearing *Interim Report* occasionally uses the language of entitlement but leaves open the question of entitlement at Key Stage 4. There is a danger that the National Curriculum will effectively cease at age 14 with some 14-16 year olds being encouraged to take vocational courses. There may be nothing wrong with some kinds of carefully planned pre-vocational education, but we should be on our guard against some young people being fobbed off with substandard, narrow vocational training. Planning a curriculum 14-19 is long overdue, but it must be carefully thought out in advance, not just accepting whatever industry may chance to offer. If the idea of a 5-16 National Curriculum is to be abandoned, it should be because something educationally superior is proposed.

Another worry in the pre-1988 debate was that the National Curriculum would be dominated by assessment. One fear was that if you specified and prescribed a curriculum in too much detail, making it easy for assessment, this would get very close to the kind of 'behavioural objectives' curriculum which was already discredited. Sir Ron shows himself to be very aware of some aspects of that problem and has promised less detailed prescription. But Key Stage 1 teachers will still have 85-90% of their school day taken up with prescribed content, and even Key Stage 2 teachers will be constrained for 80-85% of their time. This does not seem very liberating, and we are not told how a curriculum can be constructed which will avoid the dangers of over-prescription. In many respects this still looks like a National Curriculum, with testing the major priority.

Assessment

The major concern before 1988 was that an assessment system of a detailed curriculum would mean that teachers would 'teach to the test', and that the curriculum would

be distorted. Some of us were reassured in January 1988 by the publication of the TGAT Report which promised the kind of assessment which would eliminate the danger of teaching to the test. We congratulated Professor Paul Black and his colleagues for providing an educational document rather than a political one. The TGAT version was a combination of continuous teacher assessment and 'standard assessment tasks' (SATs) which would not be old-fashioned, unreliable, paper and pencil exercises, but would be carefully constructed examples of good teaching and learning with built-in opportunities for standard assessment. Much of the discussion in the two or three years after 1988 concerned the nature of these SATs and their standardisation. It was clear that a good deal of time would be needed to develop and validate suitable assessment instruments. Unfortunately, by the time that Sir Ron was invited to undertake the review, the concept of SATs had been diluted to such an extent that they were very close to conventional paper and pencil tests: Kenneth Clarke had referred to the Key Stage 3 SATs as "elaborate nonsense". There is no indication in this Review that there is to be a return to the TGAT vision of integrated assessment. Testing is the dominant word in the Review ('assessment' is now confined to teacher assessment). The new jargon is, significantly, 'standard tests' or 'standard national tests'. Teacher assessment has at least been reinstated as of equal status to the standard tests, rather than subordinate to them, but the opportunity for a superior kind of assessment has been lost.

Another bold suggestion in the TGAT Report was that well constructed standard assessment tasks could be used for the diagnostic/formative purposes prioritised by teachers as well as for the summative purposes needed for local and national comparative data. This has proved to be very difficult to achieve, especially when the data are used for league table purposes. This problem is partly addressed by suggesting that teacher assessment should concentrate on diagnostic/formative purposes, leaving the summative requirements to national tests, but the price paid for this is abandoning the innovative idea of SATs and retreating to a reliance on the kind of tests which TGAT dismissed as unsuitable and which experts in the United States have now decided to abandon on grounds of poor validity (Black, 1993).

The real problem all along has been the politicians' insistence on using test results for market purposes – league tables so that parents can choose. Teachers and headteachers have forcefully criticised the use of league tables as misleading and unfair. Dearing is aware of this problem and has suggested research into 'value-added' schemes of performance tables. Value-added league tables are certainly more respectable than raw data league tables from a research point of view, but are they *educationally* any more desirable? Probably not. With any 'high stakes' assessment, the testing tail is likely to wag the curriculum dog with a variety of unfortunate consequences (Gipps & Stobart, 1993). And the price of value-added tables, according to the *Interim*

Report, may be tests at 5. Back in 1987 primary specialists were horrified at the idea of testing at 7. But testing at 5? This is a very clear example of ideology out-manoeuvring educational needs. Those critics in 1988 who said that the main purpose of the National Curriculum was to provide a framework for test result data for the market may have been right after all.

Summary

The Dearing *Report* represents an honest attempt to sort out a mess. An unnecessary mess created mainly by the ideological imperative of market choice. This was always likely to distort any National Curriculum, and has in addition, distracted attention away from real curriculum problems. Any National Curriculum has to sail carefully between Scylla and Charybdis – if you make your curriculum statements too general they will be untestable, but if you make them too specific they become trivial and atomistic. This problem has not been solved.

It is clear that the political priority is parental choice, despite the evidence that choice does not improve standards overall (Adler, 1993; Miliband, 1991) but does increase the performance gap between schools. We are left wondering whether the government really wants to provide good schools for all with a worthwhile entitlement curriculum for all, or are they settling for a quasi-market in which "what winners win, losers lose" (Hirsch, 1977). The challenge for any review of the National Curriculum would be to secure freedom from the dishonesty of pseudo-choice and a return to democratic planning. The trouble with this kind of hasty review is that there is a need to seek the 'quick fix' to prop up a thoroughly unsatisfactory structure rather than to start rebuilding the foundations. In supporting some amelioration of overload etc., teachers may be tempted to accept practices which would have been condemned had they been honestly put forward in 1988. It is said that John Major takes a personal interest in all educational issues: we should perhaps remember what he said to the Conservative Women's Conference in June 1993: "People say there is too much jargon, so let me give you some of my own: knowledge, discipline, tables, dates, Shakespeare, *British* history, standards, English grammar, spelling, marks, tests and good manners".

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What Price a National Curriculum?

Lyndon Godsall

A member of *Forum's* Editorial Board, Lyndon Godsall argues that primary-school teachers would be wrong to welcome the slimming-down of the National Curriculum if it involves acceptance of a limited core of traditional subjects.

In the introduction to *The National Curriculum and its Assessment: supplementary paper 4 – summary of correspondence*, many respondents point out that this is the first time that they have been actually asked for their opinions. They go on to warmly acknowledge the opportunity provided for practising teachers to contribute to the development of the National Curriculum. However, do they understand the political agenda behind such moves? Professor Lawton has clearly identified the rocky road that the curriculum has travelled. He refers to Brian Cox and the conspiracy theory he put forward in an article in *The Guardian* (15 September 1992). Cox claimed that rumours in Conservative circles indicated that the Far Right had been told that they could exert more influence over education, provided they did not rock the boat over Europe.[1]

The break down of those who responded (associations and organisations statistics listed separately) reflect a welcome change in the development of the National Curriculum, or are teachers being fooled? The responses certainly indicate just who was under pressure to deliver, and who felt strongly enough to reply with their advice:

Respondent	%
Classroom teachers	37
Head teachers	31
Governors	18
Deputy Headteachers	4
Higher Education	4
Parents	3
Whole school staff	3

If we look at the Report there is a strong identification by primary teachers of the need to slim down the curriculum and concentrate on the basics. In an article in *The Times Educational Supplement* (24 September 1993) Professor Jim Campbell of the University of Warwick points to his research carried out over several years and that of others going back to 1977, which shows that primary school teachers have tended to teach English and mathematics to all age groups for around half of the curriculum time available.[2] Research in Birmingham schools has also found that delivery of all subjects other than mathematics and English has been patchy.[3] This has indicated a lack of the expertise needed in curriculum-planning skills.

In the same number of *The Times Educational Supplement*, Professor Robin Alexander of the University of Leeds identifies "this country's historical 3Rs fixation". He favours a core curriculum that includes a wider array of critically important knowledge, understanding and skill, rather than the narrow idea of core subjects.

Such a solution is not favoured by the Right. Dr John Marenbom, for example, wants a minimal curriculum which takes up a considerable portion of school time, restricted to basic reading and writing, numeracy, elementary science and one or two foreign languages.

Why do teachers welcome a slimmed-down curriculum? One of the key issues here could be that primary teachers have been forced to deliver the National Curriculum through ineffective curriculum planning. This could be identified by many factors including a lack of training for curriculum coordinators, in a climate of perpetual change. Therefore, teachers have been led into the trap of wanting a limited curriculum that will actually disadvantage children and fulfil the demands of the Right. If we had started with a model that was created by researching the best practice, the one overriding feature that would have come out of the research would have been the need for high-quality curriculum planning and implementation with effective monitoring and evaluation policies. In effect we know from research that this would not be too difficult to achieve. Hargreaves & Hopkins, identifying "the twelve key factors of junior school effectiveness", point out that a key aspect is teachers' "active involvement in curriculum planning, developing curriculum guidelines, and participation in decision-making on school policy".[4]

In *The National Curriculum and its Assessment: supplementary paper 1 – analysis of responses of LEAs and sample schools*, under the subheading 'Management of curriculum changes', many respondents say that the constant changes have created serious problems in schools especially in terms of curriculum planning (38 per cent of the primary schools, 32 per cent of the secondary schools and 38 per cent of the LEAs responding). Duncan Graham, Mr Baker's choice for coordinating the creation of the National Curriculum, knew early on that the National Curriculum was going to grow into an unmanageable monster. To control such a beast, needed some careful thought. Those in control should have foreseen the problems schools were about to face and made plans ensuring there was adequate support and training in the area of creative curriculum planning skills, especially in the primary sector.

Graham does say that the National Curriculum was sadly under-funded. He says that we should ask again why are we educating children? And he put forward the following priorities:

1. Put pupils before subject boundaries.
2. Concentrate on the whole curriculum and balance.
3. Make testing internal to schools and diagnostic.

4. Encourage the use of a broad range of teaching methods, but with the emphasis on the individual and the group.[5]

The government could have successfully introduced a curriculum that would have been envied from afar. In Ron Dearing's report, there was great support from teachers for the idea of a National Curriculum. The climate was probably right for more direction and firmer policies regarding assessment together with the dimensions of monitoring and evaluation. Of course, no one could have ever come up with the 'perfect' model. But what we see now is a catastrophe of bad planning and implementation. Schools, especially primary schools, where the most devastating effects have been felt, have tried their best to create the most detailed and complex curriculum plans.

We have also seen the National Curriculum Council try to come up with some 'quick fix' solutions to curriculum planning, with their 'Unit' approach. Put all this together and what have you got? I would hazard a guess that schools are so jaded with the present situation that they are adopting a 'Carry on regardless' attitude, getting more and more frustrated with all the changes. A plea was made by those attending Sir Ron's conferences. It was for a period of calm. The message seems to have been heard!

However, the nub of the problem is that of expertise in curriculum planning at school level. Students and newly qualified teachers cannot recall a time when schools carried out their own curriculum planning, deciding what was to be taught, particularly in primary schools. Headteachers can also be heard to say that the days of the *ad hoc* topic have at last gone. But in reality, there were excellent examples of creative curriculum planning pre-National Curriculum. Now many teachers seem to long for a slimmed-down core curriculum simply because they cannot cope with all the changes.

Where to now? Should the primary sector look for appropriate training in curriculum planning and implementation skills, refusing to endorse the secondary

model of artificial subject boundaries? Can primary schools return to the excellent practice of creative curriculum planning and implementation that once underpinned their philosophy? In a speech delivered at the *Forum* Conference 'Unite for Education' held in London in March 1988, Michael Armstrong summed up a vision for primary education. Having travelled the highway of curriculum overload it is refreshing for us to reflect upon Armstrong's point that opposition to a subject-based curriculum should not be based solely on the need to find room for the primary school 'topic'.

It is rather that most of the really fruitful classroom inquiries, whether on the part of an individual child, a small group of children, or an entire class, have a way of moving in and out of subjects, conflating traditions, confusing boundaries, eliminating distinctions and creating new ones.

... In learning ... all the significant insights tend to come to those teachers and pupils alike, who are prepared to move freely between traditions and beyond traditions from science to philosophy to art to some new field of inquiry – without embarrassment.[6]

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Save English Coursework

Mike Lloyd

Head of English at Bournville Comprehensive School in Birmingham, Mike Lloyd has been coordinating the Save English Campaign since the early Summer of 1992.

It was Yvonne who started it, as far as I was concerned. At a Heads of English support meeting in March 1992 – where Zimmer frames and Paracetamol might have been the most valuable contributions – she asked, "What are we doing about coursework?" This struck a vulnerable spot. We had seen almost weekly in *The Times Educational Supplement* how Barnet had done this, how Essex had defied that, and how Avon was doing that. What was Birmingham doing all this time?

Individual Heads of Department and English teachers had written to press, SEAC and MPs, but Birmingham had not yet made any joint response, and by now it was nine months since John Major's *Café Royal* speech attacking coursework. We called an extra meeting of Heads of English and a dozen turned up at the end of a tiring Spring term. We wrote to *The Times Educational Supplement* and they published our letter in April: "Freeze the syllabuses for 1994 and allow more time for reflection". At the same time

we sent a questionnaire round our 80 Birmingham LEA and GM colleagues. As a result of this, we decided that 20% examination, 80% coursework was a reasonable compromise around which to build our part of the fight back to sanity. One timed, unseen comprehension along the lines of the SEG Paper One seemed a perfectly acceptable exercise in English, together with one other – what? Personally I could accept a second unseen, even dare I say it, an essay of 400-600 words, explanatory or argumentative, based on some material for which reading time is allowed, on the negative reasoning that there's no great harm in making a student write occasionally against the clock. To those who would call for 100% untimed and uncontrolled, I would reply: fine if you can achieve it, I wouldn't want to insist on one style of course or examination only. After all, we have had Choice and Diversity for the last five to fifty years. At the same time, I would think it unfair to expect other subjects to carry the full burden of training up 16 year olds to write under exam conditions, a skill which may possibly stand them in good stead in later life, whether in formal education or in more open situations.

As for assessment of speaking and listening, I could accept that this be weighted as 10% (i.e. one-eighth of the coursework component). That is a personal view, concerned more with recording and administration than education perhaps. I am open to sweet reason from those who can show me how to increase the amount without losing control of moderation in the eyes of Joe Public.

Fearing at this stage that to be prescriptive was to fall into the same bad old ways that Major's people were advocating, we added to our temporary and specific call for 20:80 a request for a review of the whole issue, and sent a letter off to all the schools in England.

I say all, but in fact I confined myself to LEA and GM schools containing GCSE pupils (mainly 11-16s and 11-18s with a handful of 14+s) and independent secondary schools with more than 150 pupils according to the 1991 Education Authorities Directory. First estimate was 4000, subsequently revised downward to 3950, till to my horror I recently recounted – it could be as many as 4035.

The letters began to go out in June 1992, initially through likely supporters, NATE area representatives and individuals who, having had letters published in *The Times Educational Supplement*, could reasonably be expected to be supportive in principle, even if penniless in pocket. And some fell among thorns and yielded no fruit. And others fell on good ground ...

During July, I wrote to 80 universities asking if they could accept GCSE certificates from a new, independent board of English teachers, supposing such a body to set itself up. Replies were encouraging. A third got the message straight away and said 'yes' no bother, a third said 'hmm', see what you're on about, quite sympathetic, but we would need to discuss further, and a third said 'no', it must be a properly recognised board.

Meanwhile the replies were coming in from schools. Some signed willing but mute; others gave tongue:

There are considerable misunderstandings about coursework permeating the media and, I fear, the Centre for Policy Studies. The cross-moderation process for GCSE 100% coursework is extremely rigorous, far more so than in many other examinations. It is read not only by the class teacher but by other teachers in the school, and other schools in the scheme. Two separate Board assessors then sample the folders of each school. Twice

a year all teachers in the school have to mark about 30 unseen scripts reproduced by the Board to ensure a national parity of marking. This is followed by schools meeting in groups to discuss the unseen scripts and to agree upon a standard. I consider this to be a remarkable statement of teachers' desire to make 100% coursework a reputable, thorough examination system. Where is there such rigour in the rest of the Government's National Curriculum?

The argument concerning plagiarism is untenable but it is one which the Government stresses. All examination systems can be cheated – coursework less so. A teacher is going to be the first to realise when a student is using a style which is not their own ...

What I really cannot understand is why, given all of the educational benefits of 100% coursework for the most able as well as the least able, the Government desires to end it. It is a much better preparation for real life, for decision-making, self-evaluation, problem-solving, flexibility and hard work than the old-fashioned terminal exam could ever be. SUFFOLK

And of course the CBI would agree with this, stating their belief in rigorously assessed coursework back in November 1991 and repeating it in January 1993.

I have yet to see a list of skills, tasks or qualities which are readily susceptible to testing through a written terminal exam, let alone more susceptible than through coursework. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

As a department, we believe that the best means of assessing students' attainment and progress is through an evaluation of coursework and not through jumping through hoops in a series of timed exams. HERTFORDSHIRE

By October 1992 there had been 2000 replies (50% response – a business friend whistled 'phew', just like that, said his firm considered a 6-10% response to a mailshot to be brilliant). Now it was time to tackle MPs, and I don't mean to sound smug. I know that up and down the land English Departments had communicated with their MPs in no uncertain terms but the DFE was still churning out the same three bits of 'evidence' despite these being summarily dealt with in *The Times Educational Supplement* way, way back in January 1992 ... and now they were adding SEAC Report February 1992 to justify the reduction of coursework and surprise surprise, it doesn't stand up to the careful reading that we endeavour to impress on our eleven-year-olds.

So a letter to all MPs with English constituencies, questioning the three pieces of 'evidence' yet again. Approximately 50 acknowledged it, the majority in formal postcards, but a blessed few showing slightly more interest.

By now it was December 1992, and *The Times Educational Supplement* carried snippets of hope from Sir Malcolm Thornton's speech in Leicester: Ministers would have done better to have called a halt after 1988 ...

And meanwhile the subplot had begun to develop – Key Stage 3 English, about which NATE and NAAE and Brian Cox and James Fenton ("someone on the National Curriculum Council is keen on tying up, torturing and killing little girls. I think whoever it is should be exposed") – have all spoken or written so brilliantly and succinctly.

But we were still there, sharing *The Times Educational*

Supplement's front page on 7 May 1993 with Marenbon – who's in, who's out – and by June 1993, our first anniversary, we had received replies from 2938 schools – over 73%. All except 25 wanted more coursework. And Hereford and Worcestershire, led by their Save English Coursework representative, had extracted replies from SEG, MEG and NEAB: yes, we are still doing all we can to get coursework restored.

"In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly." Who looked eastward into *The Times Educational Supplement* on 23 July 1993 to see the magnificent support for coursework (at A-Level, admittedly) from Cambridge Directors of Studies? This begins to make sense now. Say 75-90% coursework at GCSE English, coming down to 50% at A-Level. Doesn't this tie in reasonably well with all that we've learned in the last half-century about language and literature and learning, and at the same time allow for the honing of sharper minds or whatever it is that thinking Conservative (oxymoron) politicians are justified in calling for? But let NATE and NAAE and the universities chew this one over. I return to my simple tale.

A whole year after the new syllabuses had supposedly been established, Heads of Department continued to write: *My department is devastated by the destruction of the best thing ever to have happened in teaching.* HERTFORDSHIRE (again)

Anything less than an 80/20 weighting will narrow pupils' experience and understanding of English. DEVON

If those departments most committed to a restoration of previous levels of coursework declared that they were going to continue to prepare their Year Ten pupils for the old syllabuses, I wonder what would happen ... If there were enough schools willing to adopt such a stance, it seems difficult to believe that large numbers of our pupils would be denied a GCSE grade. LINCOLNSHIRE

And from Bury, worth quoting in full because it so clearly indicates the enormous depth of righteous professional anger two years on from the Café Royal (and let's not forget how many have resigned since then):

Our experience allows us to refute entirely any suggestion that coursework offers an easy option. Pupils have to read more widely and write more, at greater length and in greater depth than ever before. We have an accumulation of folders to prove this, from pupils of all ability levels. Staff have also had to work much harder. Not only is there more to teach and more to mark but many long hours of our own time are spent in the moderation process. Neither is it easier to achieve higher grades with coursework assessment. In our department, once a coursework folder has been completed it is remarked according to the criteria by the class teacher. It is then marked again 'blind' by a second colleague. If the staff disagree, even by one third of a grade, the folder is marked by a third colleague, and so on until a consensus is reached. The Inter-school Assessor and Review Panel processes ensure a fair result. Even if staff were inclined to cheat there would be no advantage, since to 'promote' one pupil is to risk 'demoting' another.

Yet despite rigorous scrutiny of our assessments

and the great burden of additional work to staff and pupils, we are certain that coursework assessment must be retained. Why? Because it provides the most accurate and the most thoroughly cross-checked and most frequently scrutinised system of assessment currently available; therefore it is not only reliable, but fair. More importantly, coursework assessment has provided opportunities to present pupils with far richer, more meaningful and demanding educational experiences. Those who assume that we only read easy books in such courses should examine the evidence. In fact 'the classics' feature heavily and more demanding texts than were often used in O-Levels are frequently studied.

We believe that 100% coursework assessment should be retained at the end of Key Stage 4 and that exactly the same form of assessment should operate at the end of Key Stage 3, if assessment at 14 is deemed necessary.

During July and August 1993 reminders went out to the 1000 schools which had not yet replied to the survey and by 29 September the total had reached 3185. Proportions, interestingly, remained virtually unaffected, i.e. 95% in favour of at least 80% coursework, and a further 4% for 50:50. There had been a 100% response from Ealing, Haringey, Hounslow, Lambeth, Richmond, Waltham Forest, Oldham, Barnsley, North Tyneside, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Bradford, Cornwall, Hereford and Worcestershire, and Leicestershire; and Brent, Harrow, Kensington and Chelsea, Sutton, Doncaster, Newcastle, South Tyneside, Dudley, Berkshire, and Shropshire were only one school short of 100%. (What nonsense this makes of league tables – so many other areas were only one more school adrift!) And among the independents, 100% response from City of London, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, Richmond, Bolton, Birmingham, Solihull; Northamptonshire and Staffordshire were only one short.

And so? The curse of it is that this article must be with the Editor by October 1993 for publication in January 1994. Thus I am writing it in September 1993 for readers who will not see it until January or February. Between now and then, what will have happened?

John Patten will have said more silly things at the Autumn Tory conference. He will have misquoted like nobody's business, just as I do now: "A figure appeared in the distance before long, and I soon knew it to be Emily, who was a little creature still in stature, though she was grown ...".

Keeping Shakespeare compulsory at KS3 will have caused English teachers much anguish and some illness, and very few outsiders will begin to understand what we're on about.

I shall have persisted in producing with my students a coursework folder of at least eight pieces both in language and in literature and shall go on hoping up until March 1994 that justice will prevail and that either the timed exams will count for only 20% (new syllabuses) or that I may administer my own unseen pieces (old syllabuses) between March and May. But whatever happens in 1994, Save English Coursework will go on:

*Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies.*

Further Steps in Facing the Problem of Bullying

Derek Gillard

Headteacher of Marston Middle School, Oxford, Derek Gillard's first article on bullying was published in the Spring 1992 edition of *Forum* (Volume 34, No. 2). Here he brings up to date the account of his school's attempts to deal with the problem.

I took up the post of Head Teacher in January 1989 and fairly quickly decided that my top priority had to be to improve the ethos of the school by tackling the problems caused by poor relationships. In the Autumn term 1989 we made a start by introducing a Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme for all pupils and by undertaking a project on Equal Opportunities.

Our work on bullying began at about the same time. There were a number of reasons for this: first, there was bullying in the school – not a lot, I felt, but then any bullying is undesirable and if we were really going to tackle the ethos of the school and the quality of the relationships within it, we could not ignore this aspect of the problem. Second, there had been an increasing level of media interest in the problem of bullying. And third, we saw it as an equal opportunities issue: pupils whose lives are being made miserable by bullying are not in a good position to take advantage of the social and educational opportunities offered by the school.

The Bullying Group

For all these reasons we set up a Staff Working Party on Bullying in the latter half of the Autumn term 1989. Seven members of staff volunteered and began by considering how we could find out the extent and nature of bullying in the school.

A Definition

We agreed as a whole school that bullying was "Any form of behaviour which causes unhappiness for another member of the school". Since then we have modified our definition to include the word 'deliberately' since intentionality is very much part of bullying.

The Bullying Questionnaire

The Bullying Group met again in March 1990 and decided that a questionnaire was the next step.

The results of this survey included the following:

Have you been bullied?

all the time	1%
often	5%
sometimes	30%
rarely	40%
never	24%

The Bully Box

The Bullying Group met again in June 1990 and agreed to set up a 'Bully Box', as an attempt to deal with the problem that many children who are bullied are too nervous to tell

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

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

The Bully Court

Further meetings of the Bullying Group in October and November 1990 were held to agree how the Court would be established. It was agreed that it should consist of twelve pupils, one to be elected by each class in the school.

The first elections were held in December and the inaugural meeting of the Court was held at the end of January. At this meeting the Rules and Procedures of the Court were agreed.

The Second Questionnaire

Results of this questionnaire, conducted in June 1991 included the following:

<i>Have you ever been bullied?</i>	April 1990	July 1991
All the time	1%	0%
Often	5%	4%
Sometimes	30%	28%
Rarely	40%	40%
Never	24%	25%

Is there more or less bullying than a year ago?

More bullying	6%
Less bullying	72%
About the same	22%

There seemed to be a contradiction here: the figures for bullying were almost exactly the same as the previous year, yet the pupils' perception was clearly that there had been a decrease in the level of bullying. The problem, we decided, was to do with the wording of the questionnaire: more about this later.

Changes since 1992

The Bully Court did not sit for six months after it was set up. This was not because there was no bullying in the school, but because we made the decision at the start that only

very serious cases would be dealt with by the Court. Herein lay a problem: someone had to decide which cases the Court should hear. In practice, when incidents were reported to me or to a member of staff, I tended to discuss the matter with that member of staff or with my Deputy and we always agreed that the matter could be resolved without the Court. I became progressively more concerned about this and so, after the first year, the rules were revised so that the decision as to whether a case should be heard was made by a group of four of the Form Representatives.

The Court has heard several cases of bullying in the past two years. On each occasion, we have been immensely impressed by the sensible and sensitive way the members have conducted their business. There has been no sense of wielding power; rather the members have been at pains to point out to defendants that what they want to achieve is a more harmonious school in which all can get on with their work and with each other. Some cases have been harder than others: in most, the defendant has admitted guilt; in some, the defendant has not and the Court has had to try to assess the level of guilt. In all cases, members have shown a willingness to be understanding but a resolve not to tolerate bullying. In some cases defendants have cried – perhaps an indication that the Court has been taken seriously.

Some pupils have been anxious about the inevitably public nature of the Court, and have felt that those who had been bullied might not want the problem aired in this forum – they might actually prefer the matter to be dealt with privately by, for example, a teacher. The members of the Court have discussed this and other problems at their half-termly Business Meetings and the rules and procedures have been modified accordingly. (It is now possible, for example, for a complainant to be represented by a friend and, in one case, not even mentioned by name.)

At the beginning of 1993 it was agreed that no staff would be present at the half-termly Business Meetings. Form Representatives are now left on their own to discuss any matters they see fit, reporting to me at the end of the meeting. This has resulted in more incidents of bullying being discussed and dealt with. The proceedings are now less formal: having identified a case of bullying, the Court sends for the pupils involved and talks it through with them. If they can't resolve the matter themselves they will ask for the help of a member of staff, but in most cases they deal with incidents themselves. I believe that this further shift of power to the pupils and the less formal approach have greatly improved the working of the Court: they are probably the two most important changes of the last two years.

The Third Questionnaire

I noted earlier the apparent contradiction in the results of the 1990 and 1991 questionnaire results. In June 1992 (the third time) we reworded a number of the questions, being more specific about the period to which the questionnaire related. The reasoning behind this was as follows: if you ask me today whether I have been bullied I say Yes. If you ask me next year whether I have been bullied, the answer will still be Yes, even if I have not been bullied in the intervening year.

The third questionnaire, with revised wording, was conducted in June 1992. This time, pupils were asked about bullying which had taken place within the past two weeks only. The basic findings were as follows:

Have you been bullied in the past two weeks?

<i>Old wording</i>	<i>New wording</i>	
All the time	Many times	2%
Often	Several times	7%
Sometimes	Twice	9%
Rarely	Once	20%
Never	Never	60%

Consolidating these figures into three groups, we get the following comparisons:

	1991	1992	1993
All the time/many times	1%	0%	2%
Often/sometimes/ rarely/once/twice	75%	72%	36%
Never	24%	25%	60%

Clearly the new wording produced a much higher proportion of pupils who had not been bullied.

1992/93

Pupils decided at a school assembly that they wanted to re-elect the whole membership of the Bully Court each autumn (despite the fact that I tried to persuade them that it might be a good idea to keep some of the previous year's representatives with their expertise). Accordingly, elections are now held in October each year.

The Fourth Questionnaire

In the fourth questionnaire (July 1993), the figures were as follows:

Many times	5%
Several times/once/twice	39%
Never	56%

These figures show a small increase in bullying over the previous year. The first point worth making is that the figures can be compared with the previous year's more logically, since they both relate to particular two-week periods. Secondly, the small increase in the numbers of pupils reporting bullying could be because there was actually more bullying during the two-week period this year or because pupils' understanding of what we mean by bullying is now much broader, so that many incidents are regarded as bullying which might once have been ignored. But however the results are interpreted one thing is certain: the level of bullying is still unacceptably high.

The questionnaire figures underline the fact that bullying is an insidious problem which is extremely difficult to eradicate. My own view is that as long as bullying is part of our way of life – from the way the West conducts its international relations to the way in which our society is structured – it will be part of school life. This does not mean, however, that we should tolerate it. The real challenge is to change society.

Postscript

Since my 1992 article we have had dozens of requests from all over the country (and from abroad) for further information. We do have a booklet which contains an extended version of the above article together with the text of our Bully Court Rules and Procedures and the Questionnaire. We are happy to supply copies of this booklet but would appreciate £1.00 to cover copying and postage. Copies are available from Marston Middle School, Old Marston, Oxford OX3 0PG, United Kingdom.

Sex, Lies and Indoctrination

Clyde Chitty

In this article, Clyde Chitty discusses the implications of the Conservative Government's campaign to undermine the provision of an effective and caring programme of sex education in schools culminating in the Sex Education Amendment to the 1993 Education Bill.

Introduction

Classroom discussion of issues concerning sexuality and sexual behaviour has always been fraught with difficulties. The problems are real enough when such issues are dealt with as part of a carefully structured programme of personal and social education (PSE) or health education. Far more difficult to handle, as is shown by the experience of the ILEA teacher John Warburton in the 1970s [1], is the situation where the teacher is more or less obliged to respond to questions of an intensely personal nature in a classroom discussion initiated by the pupils themselves.

The task of the enlightened classroom teacher has been made infinitely more complex by the educational (and other) legislation of the Thatcher and Major Governments. But before we look at this legislation in some detail, it is important to be clear about the background to the present situation where teachers are left feeling deeply uncertain as to their legal right to cover certain issues. Much of what follows applies particularly to controversies surrounding the provision of sex education in secondary schools, although this is not to deny the need to tackle ignorance early, and the Family Planning Association's recently published *Primary School Workbook* can be seen as a genuine attempt to provide teachers with suitable material at the primary level.

Background to the Right-wing Backlash

During the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the social movements of feminism, anti-racism and gay liberation began to make an impact on schooling – and particularly secondary schooling – in the form of equal opportunities and anti-racist philosophies. As Rachel Thomson points out in a recent paper:

In the absence of any constitution or bill of rights, these philosophies helped to construct the rights of minority and oppressed groups in anti-discrimination and positive images strategies. In the area of sex education, this was marked by a move beyond the biological model of sex education to social or rights-based interventions which attempted to educate against prejudice.[2]

This was the period when the ILEA, the only directly elected education authority in Britain, set up its 'Relationships and Sexuality Project'; [3] while, at the same time, *Something To Tell You*, a report commissioned by the London Gay Teenage Group, made available for teachers and parents the experiences of lesbian and gay pupils at school.[4] In some areas of the country, the underachievement of girls and ethnic minority pupils began to receive due acknowledgement; and tentative efforts were made to redress some of the worst aspects of social inequality through the education process itself.

All this proved too much for the Far Right of the

Conservative Party which was bitterly opposed to all participatory and consciousness-raising models of education. The neo-Conservative wing of the Thatcherite Tendency abhorred especially the concept of sexual diversity, and believed that all children should be taught respect for 'traditional' family values. In the view of the first Hillgate Group pamphlet *Whole Schools? A Radical Manifesto*, published in 1986, children had to be 'rescued' from "indoctrination in the fashionable causes of the Radical Left: 'anti-racism', 'anti-sexism', 'peace education' (which usually means CND propaganda) and 'heterosexism awareness'". To this end, schools should be "released from the control of local government", thereby "depriving the politicised Local Education Authorities of their standing ability to corrupt the minds and souls of the young".[5]

The pretext for retaliation that the Right was looking for came in the form of a whipped-up controversy over the alleged 'use' by teachers of an innocuous little picture book from Denmark called *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*. [6] This presented a positive image of two young gay men bringing up a five-year-old child, the daughter of Martin. The 'crisis' over this somewhat naive though well-intentioned book came in the early Summer of 1986 in the run-up to the first local elections since the abolition of the GLC. A story splashed over the front page of *The Islington Gazette* at the beginning of May was taken up by sections of the tabloid press with front-page headlines like VILE BOOK IN SCHOOL and SCANDAL OF GAY PORN BOOKS READ IN SCHOOLS.[7] All this conveniently ignored the fact that the book had been 'discovered' in a London Teachers' Centre (not, as was widely reported, in a London primary school) and that, moreover, the ILEA had specifically warned of the difficulties involved in using it with pupils. As a result of the controversy, the ILEA set up a new panel, chaired by its chief inspector, to look at all classroom material that might prove contentious. "It is not that we feel we have to go on the defensive; it is more that we are sensitive to criticisms", said David Mallen, the then director of education for schools. "Our concern is still to combat prejudice against all young people who are or may feel they are homosexual." [8]

The Legislation of the Late 1980s

At the time of the 'controversy' over *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, a new Education Bill was in the process of passing through Parliament; and in the House of Lords a number of Conservative peers demanded action on sex education, claiming that the kind of teaching which condoned homosexuality as a valid alternative to heterosexuality was not only undermining traditional family life and encouraging divorce but was also linked with the increase in rapes, attacks on children and sexual crime in general.[9] The fear engendered by the spread of HIV/AIDS

was used to justify a Christian approach to morality and an attack on homosexual lifestyles. In the words of Baroness Cox: "I cannot imagine how on earth in this age of AIDS we can be contemplating promoting gay issues in the curriculum. I think that it beggars all description."

Education Secretary Kenneth Baker bowed to the pressure from the Right, and a new clause was introduced into the Bill (Clause 46 in the resulting 1986 Education (No. 2) Act) requiring that:

The local education authority by whom any county, voluntary or special school is maintained, and the governing body and head teacher of the school, shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that where sex education is given to any registered pupils at the school, it is given in such a manner as to encourage those pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life.

It was the 1986 Education Act which placed responsibility for sex education with school governing bodies which were required (in Clause 18) to "make and keep up to date" a written statement with regard to their school's policy on sex education.

This new framework for the provision of sex education was then elaborated upon in DES Circular No. 11/87 'Sex Education at School' published on 25 September 1987. According to this Circular: "appropriate and responsible sex education is an important element in the work of schools in preparing pupils for adult life; it calls for careful and sensitive treatment." Yet, as many have commented [10], what was intended to be an authoritative statement of the Government's position in the light of recent 'controversies' was, in fact, notable for its lack of clarity and its inbuilt contradictions. There is, for example, a world of difference between the beginning and the end of Section 19. The opening clearly has the hand of HMI on it. It calls for facts "to be presented in an objective and balanced manner, so as to enable pupils to comprehend the range of sexual attitudes and behaviour in present-day society". The final sentence "Pupils should be helped to appreciate the benefits of stable married and family life and the responsibilities of parenthood" is there to pander to the Government's moralist faction. How teachers are expected to be 'objective' and at the same time 'help pupils appreciate something' goes unexplained. What is true is that the *dominant* tone of the Circular is narrow and homophobic; and in Section 22 we find:

There is no place in any school in any circumstances for teaching which advocates homosexual behaviour, which presents it as the 'norm', or which encourages homosexual experimentation by pupils.

The Circular makes special mention of the so-called Gillick Ruling on the provision of contraceptive advice to girls under the age of 16. In the Gillick case, it will be remembered, the House of Lords ruled that, while it should be most unusual for a doctor to provide contraceptive advice and treatment to a child under 16, without parental knowledge or consent, there could be circumstances where he or she would be justified in doing so. The Circular points out that such circumstances have no parallel in school education:

The general rule must be that giving an individual pupil contraceptive advice without parental knowledge or consent would be an inappropriate exercise of a teacher's professional responsibilities, and could, depending on the circumstances, amount to a criminal offence.[11]

The determination of Thatcher's ministers to appease the

forces of moral authoritarianism was further emphasised by the inclusion of what was to become the notorious Clause 28 in the 1988 Local Government Act. This amended the 1986 Local Government Act by laying down that a local authority shall not:

- (a) *intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;*
- (b) *promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.*

As many commentators have pointed out, Clause 28 was a key cultural and symbolic event in the recent history of sexual politics. Yet, despite the hostility and anxiety it aroused among caring and committed teachers, it is worth emphasising that its effect on the teaching of sex education in schools was, in fact, negligible. What Dame Jill Knight and the other sponsors of the measure simply overlooked was that the 1986 Act had already removed sex education from the control of LEAs – a fact which the Government was forced to concede in a Department of the Environment Circular published in May 1988:

Responsibility for sex education continues to rest with school governing bodies, by virtue of Section 18 of the Education (No. 2) Act of 1986. Section 28 of the Local Government Act does not affect the activities of school governors, nor of teachers. It will not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom, nor the counselling of pupils concerned about their sexuality.[12]

What Clause 28 was meant to achieve was the creation of a climate of paranoia around the teaching of sex education. As Rachel Thomson observes, it played an important role in undermining the confidence and professionalism of teachers:

The phrase 'the promotion of homosexuality' had the insidious effect of constructing teachers as the potential corrupters of young people and frightening teachers from saying what they thought was sensible and right out of fear of losing their jobs. [13]

And the emerging crisis of HIV/AIDS also made it easy for the moral lobby to insist that school sex education should be seized upon as an ideal opportunity to promote a prescriptive model of sexual and personal morality.

Yet despite all the difficulties, a number of teachers have refused to be intimidated by the various government edicts on sex education. Speaking, for example, at the World AIDS Day Conference in December 1991, Michael Marland, headteacher of North Westminster Community School, pointed out that Section 1 of the 1988 Education Reform Act specifically requires the school curriculum to be concerned with "preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life". How, he asked, could sexuality be left out of such preparation? [14] And others have used Section 19 of Circular No. 11/87 to argue that teachers have a duty to enable pupils to appreciate "the range of sexual attitudes and behaviour in present-day society".

Recent Government Initiatives

Despite its best legislative endeavours, the Government still fears for the moral health of the nation. We now have an education secretary who argues that although "we are all born with a sense of good and evil", family, school and Church can play an important part in helping us to *choose* "whether to be good or bad".[15] And both John Patten

and his deputy Baroness Blatch have it seems been profoundly influenced by the two-year campaign led by the 60,000-strong Christian Action Research and Education alongside the small fundamentalist Christian sect known as the Plymouth Brethren to *both* ban compulsory sex education in schools *and* remove all mention of the HIV virus and its transmission from the statutory National Curriculum.[16]

In April 1993 the DFE published the draft of a proposed revision of Circular 11/87 in which Section 19 appeared in a truncated version which no longer allowed for the recognition of lesbian and gay sexualities. But the ensuing process of consultation was overtaken by the Government's own shattering amendment to the new Education Bill passing through Parliament. As a result of this amendment (which now forms Section 241 of the 1993 Education Act), the provision of effective sex education is to be seriously impaired by the removal of everything but the biology of reproduction from National Curriculum Science and the granting to parents of the right to withdraw their children from 'compulsory' sex education lessons.[17] Teachers must, it seems, be 'punished' for refusing to provide sex education in the context of moral values and family life. According to Valerie Riches, Director of Family and Youth Concern, in a letter to *The Times* in July 1993:

The right to withdraw children from lessons must be maintained until the sex education lobby shows itself both willing and capable of promoting responsible attitudes towards sexual behaviour, marriage and family life.[18]

Both the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Kidscape, a charity which teaches youngsters how to deal with abuse, have responded by pointing out that the amendment could turn out to be 'an abuser's charter'. According to NSPCC policy officer Eileen Hayes:

We feel there is a potential danger that if parents were abusing a child and had the right to remove it from sex education lessons for whatever reason, it might be an advantage to keep that child in ignorance ... We feel that if children have some rudimentary sex education and information about their bodies, they are in some way protected against abuse. Otherwise they may be too ignorant to realise what is going on.[19]

Presenting a new draft circular to the media in December 1993, John Patten was at pains to point out that he expected very few parents to withdraw their children from 'compulsory' sex education lessons.

Conclusion

In 1987 a study by Isobel Allen for the Policy Studies Institute found that 96 per cent of parents wished sex education to take place in school.[20] Yet this is an area where many schools continue to sell their pupils short; and it is worth asking if we have really travelled all that far from Peter Ustinov's wry account of what passed for sex education at Rugby School at the beginning of the century:

The headmaster... summoned all the boys who had reached the age of puberty to his study, and after reassuring himself that the door was firmly secured, made the following brief announcement: "If you touch it, it will fall off". The boys were then invited to file back into their classes, now equipped to face adult life.[21]

A survey carried out by the Sex Education Forum in 1992 found that uncertainty and embarrassment among teachers constituted a big problem in more than two-thirds of the 87 local authorities taking part. This is a sad state of affairs, and in the light of recent legislation, it is clearly essential that all schools work to develop a sex education policy which teachers can support and implement, while at the same time seeking to improve communication with parents over the objectives of their syllabus.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the help I have received in preparing this article from Rachel Thomson, Information Development Officer for the Sex Education Forum. Teachers and parents can contact the Forum at 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE, United Kingdom (tel: 071-278 9441).

Notes

- [1] John Warburton was virtually dismissed by the Inner London Education Authority in December 1974 for responding to the questions of pupils who knew he had taken part in a demonstration organised by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.
- [2] Rachel Thomson (1993) *Unholy alliances: the recent politics of sex education*, in J. Bristow & A. Wilson (Eds) *Activating Theory*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- [3] One of the Project's first courageous ventures was to put together a resources guide to materials relevant to homosexuality: (September 1986) *Positive Images: a resources guide to materials about homosexuality, including lesbian and gay literature for use by teachers and librarians in secondary schools and further education colleges* (Materiography Series: No. 11). London: ILEA Learning Resources Branch.
- [4] *Something To Tell You*, by Lorraine Trenchard & Hugh Warren, was published by the London Gay Teenage Group in 1984.
- [5] *Whose Schools? A Radical Manifesto*, pp. 4, 13, 18. The Hillgate Group comprised Caroline Cox, Jessica Douglas Home, John Marks, Lawrence Norcross & Roger Scruton.
- [6] *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* by Susanne Bosche was first published in Copenhagen in 1981, and appeared in the United Kingdom in an English translation, Dec 1983.
- [7] *The Sun*, 6 May 1986; *Today*, 7 May 1986.
- [8] Reported in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 23 May 1986.
- [9] See Stephen Jeffery-Poulter (1991) *Peers, Queers and Commons*, p. 208. London: Routledge.
- [10] See, for example, Nick Baker (1988) Facts versus morals, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 22 April; Paul Davies (1988) Sexuality: a new minefield in schools, *The Independent*, 26 May.
- [11] DES Circular No. 11/87: *Sex Education at School*, p. 5, 25 September 1987.
- [12] Department of the Environment Circular No. 12/88, 20 May 1988, p. 5.
- [13] Rachel Thomson, op. cit.
- [14] *The Times Educational Supplement*, 6 December 1991.
- [15] John Patten (1992) There is a choice: good or evil, *The Spectator*, p. 10, 18 April.
- [16] See Emma Craigie (1993) Knowing in the Biblical sense, *The Observer*, 11 July. In 1991 the National Curriculum Science Orders were revised to include HIV/AIDS at Key Stage 3 (11-14 years).
- [17] Under this amendment, school governors of secondary schools no longer have the power to decide whether or not the school will provide sex education. They retain this power at the primary stage.
- [18] *The Times*, 17 July 1993.
- [19] *The Times Educational Supplement*, 16 July 1993.
- [20] Isobel Allen (1987) *Education in Sex and Personal Relationships*. PSI Research Report No. 665.
- [21] Peter Ustinov (1977) *Dear Me*, p. 58. London: Heinemann.

Stepping Out

Julie Coffin & Liz Newman

Julie Coffin is a primary school teacher and Elizabeth Newman is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the West of England. This article was developed when Julie was in her final year of a four-year BEd (Hons) from data contained in her dissertation.

She always dresses like a boy in straight grey trousers, a shirt and her father's tie. (Of course her father left them recently and I think she's trying to fill her father's role.) It's most unhealthy – she looks horribly like a boy. Her mother doesn't seem to understand how unnatural it is. She's going to have trouble with her later. I mean you can't deny the way things happen can you? In the song we're only doing what's normal. What does she expect me to do – pretend she's a boy so she can propose to Daisy? Oh it's ridiculous.

The speaker is a harassed teacher. She is describing Ann, a popular, confident, seven-year-old child who wore her hair short and was more friendly with boys than with girls. Ann was not happy at the role allotted to her in the Grandparent's Day Music Hall and her mother had arrived to express concern.

The class was to perform the song *Daisy Daisy*. This was to involve the enactment of a man's proposal of marriage to a woman. All the girls wearing pretty dresses and a headband of daisies, were to represent Daisy; all the boys, in 'smart' clothes, her hopeful suitor.

Ann's mother explained that Ann did not want to wear a dress or a daisy hat. The teacher's reply was that she could not *make* Ann wear a dress and she would not insist on her wearing the hat; but she was unable to see, "what all the fuss was about" and had no intention of finding a role for Ann with which she would feel comfortable.

This incident, recorded during our research into the implications of gender stereotyping in primary classrooms, reaches into a specific form of inequality. Ann was not only forced into a stereotypical role but also denied the freedom to 'be herself': to behave in the way in which she felt comfortable.

The values and attitudes held by Ann's teacher form the basis of her response to Ann's reactions; the child's opposition seems trivial to her, she can't see what all the fuss is about. However from the point of view of individual rights and equality of opportunity the incident has profound significance which might have a direct impact not only upon Ann's view of herself, but also on the other children's perceptions of themselves, and of Ann.

There are echoes of this incident in the work of other researchers.

Clarricoates [1] recorded similar attitudes amongst teachers. She writes about Michael, a seven-year-old who played with dolls. "He loved to bake and constantly sought the company of girls despite their insults." His parents were quite happy about his interests and behaviour, but his teacher felt it to be her responsibility to admonish him and "get him to behave properly". The teachers' staff room conversation revealed that they regarded Michael's behaviour as undesirable and deviant, with one teacher

commenting upon the future possibility of Michael needing to be 'straightened out.'

When the positive aspects of Michael's behaviour – that he was not a bully and showed imagination – were suggested to the teachers, this was refuted. Instead they chose to take a negative view of the child's unsterotypical behaviour, using phrases like he bites and scratches 'like a girl'. The headteacher, believing that Michael was confused about sex roles and had 'feminine' genes, saw his behaviour as a 'problem' which if not 'cured' might mean that he would in adulthood have to enter the world of the arts where 'that kind of behaviour' was more acceptable.

Michael's 'deviant' behaviour was seen to be caused by a personality disorder or biological malfunction. Both Ann and Michael were seen to have a condition which the teachers concerned viewed as somehow undesirable.

What seems to be feared by these teachers although it is not often made explicit is the idea that these children might be or become gay. To them the departure from stereotypical gender roles signals something undesirable. Their response appears to come from a 'common sense' viewpoint; one which they feel does not merit discussion either with colleagues or parents, because it is such an accepted and well established view.

The parents of both Ann and Michael were quite accepting of their children's behaviour, but the teachers in the incidents described felt it to be part of their responsibility to 'rectify' the conduct of the children. As teachers they appeared to see themselves as representing the dominant social attitude and therefore to be acting in the children's best interests.

Leeming's action research study on equal opportunities [2] in the primary sector reveals similar attitudes. In work related to equal opportunities she used an oral questionnaire encouraging staff to examine their own attitudes to gender stereotyping. The question which provoked the most discussion was, "can boys be gentle/girls be tough? How does society react to opposite extremes?" The responses indicated that teachers felt

all children should feel confident to express a range of emotions, however, because of societal values of sex appropriate behaviour, individuals were often labelled if they expressed an opposite extreme.

The teachers saw labelling as a fact of life for the children whose behaviour did not conform to the accepted norms. Their comments imply that the school's role is to help children to avoid labelling by adopting the appropriate behaviour. To limit children's individual freedom so that it fits within a narrow range of acceptable norms.

Classroom Atmosphere

In classrooms where traditional stereotypes are perpetuated, the majority of children feel comfortable: it is what they are used to. The experience of a minority however is quite

different: for them there is the feeling that what seems appropriate behaviour for them is apparently inappropriate in the social world of the classroom. Confusion is the inevitable outcome. When teachers adopt a negative attitude towards children whom they view as deviant, it colours their whole approach to the child and his/her parents. Implicit in their communications are undertones of distaste and disapproval. This was often apparent in the responses of Ann's teacher; immediately conversation or communication turned to Ann, she would cease smiling and her countenance would imply concern and disapproval.

A fear of gayness – homophobia – generally shows itself as an attitude of disapproval, disgust and sometimes aggression. It is a fear, often with a sense of unreasoned hysteria, leading to an irrational hate; we believe that there is an expression of homophobia in the way society constructs its underlying definitions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity'. This construction incorporates homophobia within norms of maleness and femaleness. Boys and men are under extreme pressure to be 'male'. Proving their maleness incorporates the notion of proving their heterosexuality. Askew & Ross [3] cite Morrison & Eardley (1985) who say:

Boys grow up to be wary of each other. We are taught to compete with one another at school, and to struggle to prove ourselves outside it on the street, the playground and the sports field. Later we fight for status over sexual prowess, or money, or physical strength or technical know-how. We fear to admit our weakness to one another, to admit our failures, our vulnerability, and we fear being called a 'cissy', a 'wet' or a 'softy'. The pressure is on to act tough. We fear humiliation or exclusion, or ultimately the violence of other boys if we fail to conform.

In their adherence to a narrow and stereotypical definition of masculinity, the teachers described by Clarricoates perpetuate this view of maleness by their non-acceptance of what they see as Michael's inappropriate behaviour. To achieve masculinity of the calibre desired many boys have to live a life in which they constantly 'prove' themselves to be heterosexual by behaviour which they believe reflects this. The school as a major agent of socialisation is seen to be playing a crucial role in the lives of both Michael and Ann.

The Effect of Labelling

Resistance to the pressure to conform to gender stereotypes can mean years of confusion and emotional turmoil, sometimes even suicide. Gay adults [4] have written about how they left school feeling their education (primary and secondary) had failed them both personally and socially. Their view is that their schools had upheld and perpetuated certain prejudices which at best meant rejection of any unsterotypical gender behaviour, and at worst fed into homophobic attitudes.

One gay man speaking of his primary school recalled how he was reduced to tears by a male teacher who instructed him not to play with the girls so often, "otherwise the others would think there was something wrong with [him]". He felt that his education not only affected his view of himself as well as others' views of him, but "singled him out as someone to be suspicious of." [5]

But this issue is not concerned only with the effect of homophobic attitudes on gay pupils or adults. There are

many significant influences on children's perceptions of gender even before they enter their first primary school classroom. Once in school stereotypical perceptions can be reinforced (as in the case of Ann and Michael) and perpetuated. Alternatively they may be challenged. If we wish to create an atmosphere in which all children see as full a range of human behaviour as possible, then issues of gender stereotyping in schools need close examination.

As part of our research we spoke to the headteacher of a large and busy inner city junior school, where he has been known as a gay man since his appointment. He felt that the fact that he was gay himself gave him an insight into the pressures experienced by other minority groups and made him a fierce advocate against all forms of prejudice. He emphasised the importance of staff ownership of an equal opportunities policy. In his school he felt that the staff worked to create

an atmosphere where the child felt safe and self esteem could develop. If they are actually threatened by what their natural behaviour wants them to do then their self esteem would be badly diminished. Creating an equal opportunity policy at the school we are not just recognising the need to present situations equally to all children, we are also making it safe to be yourself.

We know that around ten per cent of the population will turn out to be gay, and although there is no definitive view as to how or when sexuality is shaped, we do know that during their education the inevitable is likely to be made more difficult. For children negative images damage not only those children who feel uncomfortable in a stereotypical role (who may or may not turn out to be gay) but can also nourish prejudices which blight relationships between homosexuals and their family and friends.

A wider view of normality is needed in which the concept of deviant gender behaviour does not arise, one in which a range of emotions and interests would be acceptable in *all* children. This would create an atmosphere in the classroom where children could not only be themselves but also know and like themselves. As Bronwen Davies [6] explains:

Most children will need a great deal of support and reassurance in this extension of themselves into liberated forms of activity though the more they are surrounded by books which depict liberated behaviours as normal and by people who engage in liberated behaviours as if that is normal, the more secure they will feel in stepping outside of the traditional bounds and the less anxious they will feel that such stepping out compromises the accomplishment of their genderedness.

References

- [1] K. Clarricoates (1987) Child culture at school: a clash between gendered worlds, in A. Pollard (Ed.) *Children and their Primary School*. Lewes: Falmer.
- [2] P. Leeming (1991) Action research on gender issues, in *Education Review: a change for the better*, booklet. London: National Union of Teachers.
- [3] S. Askew & C. Ross (1988) *Boys Don't Cry*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- [4] J. Coffin (1992) Unpublished BEd. dissertation.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] B. Davies (1987) The accomplishment of genderedness in preschool children, in A. Pollard (Ed.) *Children and their Primary School*. Lewes: Falmer.

Making an Opportunity out of Religious Education

Lat Blaylock

What opportunities for comprehensive, integrated student-centred learning can be made from locally agreed Religious Education syllabuses? What goals are realistic at Key Stage Three? How can the Key Stage Four curriculum retain the best elements of Humanities work as the National Curriculum is implemented? These are some of the issues tackled in this article by Lat Blaylock, currently Head of Humanities at Alderman Newton's School in Leicester.

After five years, it is becoming ever clearer that two of the negative impacts of the Education Reform Act have been to fracture the curriculum into separated subject areas and to remove from professional teachers some of their responsibility for structuring the curriculum into a programme of study. Many teachers have been pressurised into dismantling schemes of integrated work in the last five years, not least at Key Stage Four. This has occurred in spite of a professional judgement that integrated approaches have enabled students to see themselves and their studies in a holistic manner that has greatly assisted their motivation, cooperation and achievement.

Many teachers have also felt that their former responsibility for matching their expertise in their chosen discipline to the needs, aptitudes and interests of their particular students has also been taken away. The concern from central government for rigour has failed to take account of the idea that much of the best student learning proceeds from experience, is motivated by interest, and is open-ended with regard to subject matter. The experience and interest of the teacher and the student seem to have been too much disregarded in the preparation of the National Curriculum programmes of study.

In this article, I shall propose that the legal requirements for Religious Education (RE), Personal and Social Education (PSE), and the study of the cross-curricular themes can provide an opportunity for work that reclaims three important professional responsibilities for teachers:

Someteachers can, through these three curriculum areas, reclaim the right to centre the teaching process on the needs and interests of students, to reject an assessment-led approach.

They can reclaim the right to encourage learners to follow the enquiry wherever it leads, rather than in predetermined straight lines.

They can recover the task of integrating the learning of varied facts, skills and ideas into a single process, rejecting the picture of learning as unrelated parallel lines. This can be done in a way that is 'rigorous' according to clear criteria.

RE, PSE and the cross-curricular themes share two important features which may enable them to become a focus for student-centred approaches. All three are legally required entitlements for all students. But none of them is to be assessed through National Curricular frameworks. These two special characteristics often present themselves as problems: What motivation can be offered at Key Stage

Four in non-examination courses like PSE? How can curriculum time be defended against the voracious demands of the National Curriculum programmes of study? But teachers who hold to the comprehensive ideal of student-centred learning may find an opportunity to integrate health education, citizenship, economic and industrial understanding, environmental education, RE and personal and social education into a fruitful, progressive experience for all students.

During a term's secondment as a Farmington Fellow at the University of Warwick in Summer 1993, funded by the Farmington Institute, I have made a detailed study of the implementation of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus for RE, since its publication in 1992. This has shown that a number of Leicestershire comprehensive schools with a strong tradition of integrated work, particularly in the Humanities, are currently seeking new ways of providing student-centred learning in the curriculum.

My research involved the use of a detailed questionnaire about RE, its rationale, resourcing, staffing, management and provision, which twenty schools completed, and the conducting of detailed semi-structured interviews with teachers responsible for RE. The aims were to identify the factors which contributed most to innovative good practice as the RE Agreed Syllabus was implemented. The research was not on a wide enough scale to draw any comprehensive conclusions, but it has suggested lines of thought which others may find it helpful to apply to their own situations.

Locally Agreed Syllabuses for RE have been required since the 1944 Act, which remained unchanged after the 1988 Act. The pressure to innovate in the curriculum following the 1988 Education Reform Act has been staggered in RE across the 107 local authorities of England and Wales because of the varying pace of local authorities in reviewing existing arrangements, and the varying time taken by Agreed Syllabus Conferences to produce their work. In Leicestershire, the new Syllabus was produced over a period of three years, being finally launched in November 1992. The publication of support materials continues currently.

RE has a special place in this kind of initiative in Leicestershire, because the publication of Leicestershire's RE Agreed Syllabus has placed a legal responsibility on all schools to address their provision of RE at this time, and innovation is needed in most schools, especially at Key Stage Four. The programme of study for RE is detailed and yet it leaves teachers with considerable freedom because

there are no levels of achievement specified. "More than two" religions will be studied at all Key Stages. Christianity is a primary example at every stage, but the other principal religions are also addressed at every stage. There is an opportunity here for careful multi-cultural and multi-faith work to be developed.

The early evidence of the OFSTED inspection process also suggests that the provision of RE, especially at Key Stage Four, is being exposed as inadequate, in terms of time, rationale and entitlement in many schools. This confirms the picture which my research revealed. It is a further pressure upon schools to seek manageable solutions to the curriculum challenge posed by the requirements for RE.

The research I conducted showed that there is a lively movement to use the new agreed syllabus in innovative and progressive ways. New programmes of study are being written, stimulated by a new wave of publishing from the educational book trade, and supported by a teacher's network that tries to share resources. These programmes, encouraged by the process model which is at the heart of the Agreed Syllabus, are active and student-centred in style. At Key Stage Four, the interest in combining RE with PSE and the cross-curricular themes has been great enough for the Midland Examining Group (MEG) to work on a syllabus for submission to SEAC which would enable these areas to be studied together, and certificated for a GCSE, possibly under the 'Humanities' title. The programme of study proposed at this stage would be flexible enough to accommodate the slightly varying demands of a number of different Local Authority Agreed Syllabuses.

At the same time, the Department for Education has been working with the SCAA to raise the standard of RE teaching, particularly in non-denominational schools. It is in such schools that the problem of delivering RE is often greatest, but where the comprehensive ideal is fully held, there may be staff willing to work towards a kind of RE which is student-centred and active in its learning style. The current MEG initiative seems to have two main pressures behind it. First, the OFSTED inspections will require more detail, time and content to be given to RE. Second, the Government intends to provide a number of model syllabuses to local Agreed Syllabus Conferences, to enable more national coherence to be built into the provision of RE. This should make it easier to get the examining boards to provide Key Stage Four courses which meet local requirements.

The net effect of these two new pressures to deal effectively with RE in each school and Local Authority area is, I suggest, to provide the comprehensive teacher with an important opportunity. The moment will not last for long, but there is a chance at present to reclaim some professional autonomy, if only in a limited area. Teachers may be able to negotiate a suitable time allocation in the

curriculum, on the basis of the requirements of the 1988 Act for RE, PSE and cross-curricular themes. Such a curriculum 'slot' could become an oasis of student-centred work, neither assessment dominated, nor driven by an excessive and somewhat irrelevant level of content.

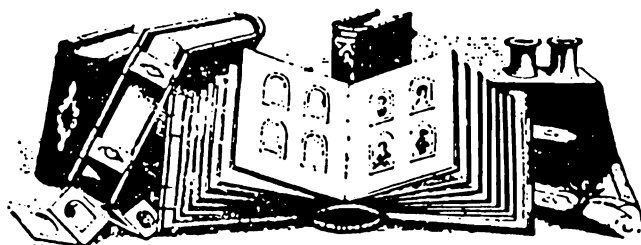
It is especially appropriate that RE should make a contribution here, because the provision of an entitlement to RE for all is dependent on a justification that places the student at the centre of the learning process. Theorists such as Michael Grimmett, or Mike Kincaid have shown that an RE curriculum free of indoctrination can be a liberating and challenging study for students from any background, including (perhaps especially) a secularised background.

The research I conducted in the Leicestershire area was designed to identify good practice, and not to attack low levels of provision. I found three responses to the publication of the Agreed Syllabus, which may be typical of responses in other areas. Many schools were worried about the lack of provision, specialist staffing, and curriculum time, but were awaiting more developments before tackling the issues, perhaps hoping the problems would be submerged in a tide of paperwork from the Department for Education. A number of schools were making minimal arrangements for the fulfilment of the law, perhaps by introducing tiny amounts of RE into the PSE curriculum or by teaching a 'module' of ethics as an entitlement to all students in Year 10 or 11. And a few schools were positively welcoming the chance to teach challenging, multi-cultural, multi-faith, student-centred RE to students who were, in part at least, welcoming the chance to pursue a study free of the constraints of over-rigid curricular control. Where this is being done well, I noted that the necessary preconditions were support from senior management, availability of good curriculum advice (usually from the LEA), and the clear allocation of responsibility for the RE curriculum in individual schools. These preconditions seem to be the achievable basics of good provision in any subject area, and this leads me to wonder why there seems to be such reluctance to use RE, along with the cross-curricular themes and PSE, as a way of continuing to provide comprehensive education with a commitment to relevance and participation. I think just such a provision can be made in the current situation.

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The writer would welcome correspondence on this subject:
Lat Blaylock, Humanities Faculty, Alderman Newton's School, Glenfield Road, Leicester LE3 3FU, United Kingdom.



Must Content 'Faze' the Mind?

Christopher Ormell

In this article Christopher Ormell, Senior Fellow in the School of Education at the University of East Anglia, argues that content often does, but need not, 'faze' the mind.

I am concerned principally with the problem of trying to reconceptualise 'content' in such a way that it will not be likely to 'faze' the mind, or at least not as badly as before. We may define a 'fazed' mind as one which has been overloaded with facts, and, as a result, has lost quite a lot of its previous capacity to react sensitively and intelligently to new situations and fresh challenges.

That 'fazing' in this sense occurs, and on a widespread scale, is not, I think, seriously in doubt. Long ago Paul Chambers, the Head of ICI, remarked that only the best *survive* a university education: his words have regularly been echoed by baffled industrialists ever since. HMI warned of the dangers of 'cramming in' too much factual content at A level. A 'fazed' mind is a stultified mind: a mind into which too much 'content' has been stuffed with insufficient attention paid to the cost – a reduction in freedom of thought and understanding. It is like a factory floor on which so many of the latest and most expensive machines have been stacked that production is impossible.

We should bear in mind that 'fazing' is the penalty paid by those pupils who are *bright* enough and *conscientious* enough to learn most of what they are asked to learn, and hence learn too much. George Orwell summed it up when he described the 'cramming' he had to endure as a boy at St Cyprians. The 'cramming' took the form of being forced to learn the answers to particular, anticipated, questions:

They were the kind of stupid question that is answered by rapping out a name or a quotation. Who plundered the Begans? Who was beheaded in an open boat? Who caught the Whigs bathing and ran away with their clothes.

The young George Orwell, we know, did however accept the 'fazing' effect – of which he was clearly conscious – of this cramming: and his reward was – a scholarship to Eton! Yes, it is the best students who suffer most from 'fazing': students who *believe* that they are being educated 'for their own good', even when they are somewhat conscious that the effect is diminishing their mental liveliness.

Many not-so-highly regarded students are less acceptance-minded, more aware of their own mental interest. As a consequence, they tend actively to resist the attempt to 'faze' their minds. In other words, they vote with their feet and *do not* memorise what the teacher or the syllabus prescribes.

So a 'fazed' mind is not the only penalty which pupils may pay for a poorly conceptualised curriculum. Those pupils who naturally resist the attempt to 'faze' their minds, inexorably, by that very resistance, condemn themselves to defiance of the educational *status quo*, and hence to a low level of subsequent confidence and self-esteem.

The danger of 'fazing' the mind of the pupil is, I suggest, the major danger we face as we enter a new regime of education in which the balance has unmistakably swung away from an official emphasis on 'process' towards an emphasis on 'content'. It has swung mainly for political reasons: but of course the emphasis on 'process' was diminishing anyway, as a result of careful evaluation of earlier curricula (e.g. the early Nuffield secondary science) which placed too much emphasis on 'process', and as a result, left many pupils at the end of their courses with a 'sense of vacuum' instead of a 'sense of knowledge'.

Today, however, there is an official tendency to swing back with the pendulum, and, as a result, to prescribe much too much content. The underlying premise seems to be that 'you can't have too much of a good thing!'. This assumption has been made by educationists of various political complexions. For example, Jane Martin, on the Left, speaks of a 'superabundance' of desirable curriculum content, which should, she thinks, reflect the cultural traditions of all the main ethnic and religious not to mention feminist groups in the USA.

How Can We Prevent the Excessive Prescription of Content?

The answer can only be, of course, by the widespread use of well designed, valid, credible *tests*, and corroborated *observations*, to look at the actual mental liveliness of students at the end of their courses. We must try to avoid the elementary howler which vitiated so many of the apparently splendid curriculum reforms of the 1960s and 1970s – of thinking that what you prescribe is what you will actually get.

Given credible tests for mental liveliness, it will be possible to 'pick up' the fact that a curriculum is 'fazing' the mind of the average student. Then one can do something about it, viz. *lighten* the content load and/or *increase* the presence of 'perspective forming experiences' within the curriculum.

But of course there is another pitfall, that of looking only at 'mental liveliness' in everyday or content-free contexts, like whether pupils can build load-bearing bridges with rolled-up newspapers! If *this* is the 'mental liveliness' we are after, we might as well give up compulsory education altogether, because there is plenty of evidence (from the candy-selling children of Rio for example) that children who do not go to school at all often become better at 'living on their wits' than their tamed and regimented contemporaries who put up with the disciplines and stultifications of school.

No, we need 'mental liveliness' *within* an informed and

educated view of the world: which means, in effect, *mental liveliness with knowledge*. The 'process' curriculum reduces knowledge to a minimum, and it may, when well administered, produce pupils who can 'live on their wits'. The trouble is, though, that they know woefully little! They may think that they know about 'the world', but what they actually know is their locality and their local patch of mainly commercial, surface values of their stratum of society. They often lack a basic knowledge of what other people expect of them in moral, social, personal health and psychological terms. All those items of a traditional curriculum which they have not 'covered' leave them finally with a serious deficiency of models about the sheer scale and wonder of things, the amazing dramas of the past, the funny things people have done in distant times and distant places, both successfully and unsuccessfully.

The 'process' curriculum, in a word, is not the answer.

We have got to move on to a third stage, a synthesis, in which we manage to build the kind of liveliness valued by process enthusiasts into the kind of knowledge valued by traditional liberal educators. Many, I think, are in despair. We seem to be being asked to square the educational circle, to reconcile the irreconcilable.

What we need are credible, valid, tests for the possession of 'lively content'. Given such tests it will be possible to argue in a hundred-and-one specific, practical, professional contexts that the curriculum is overloaded, and that it is having the effect of 'fazing' the minds of the pupils. We might find that this happened with one kind of teaching A, but not with another, B. Given such tests, you can modify the curriculum keeping the pedagogy constant, or modify the pedagogy keeping the curriculum constant. You can learn from experience. You have the inestimable advantage of formative feedback.

But the \$64,000 question is whether such tests are possible. Could there *be* such a thing as 'lively content'? Many teachers see content – by definition – as *unlively*, as the gritty residue which *cannot* be 'lively'.

And behind the problem of constructing tests is the problem of conceptualising the item to be tested 'lively content'. Unless we can do *that*, the search for tests will be in vain.

Can Content be 'Lively'?

The good news is that it can. The bad news is that the 'modelling' revolution which has been gathering pace since the 1960s, and which approaches knowledge in a lively way, has led to a cognitive style which is quite unfamiliar in schools. It also requires a level of personal mental vitality, even playfulness, difficult to sustain in the school environment.

The 'modelling' revolution is a way of conceptualising knowledge so that it can become a stage for thought experiments. We have had a deluge of sociological and 'politically correct' views emphasising the 'social' character of knowledge during the last thirty years. As a result, this quiet modelling development, which moves knowledge closer to mathematics, and hence takes it out of the pit of subjectivity and social one-upmanship, has arrived almost unnoticed by many commentators.

Where, then, can we find knowledge being used in the new, lively, 'modelling' fashion? The answer is in TV and film drama, the media, the advertising industry and innovative product development. In all these areas it is now commonplace to approach knowledge as offering a 'set of pieces' which we can cross-question in a huge variety of different ways. We can do thought experiments on it. The amazing quality and sense of realism of modern historical drama tells us that its authors have 'got inside' the characters and the 'feel' and assumptions and value system of the period they are depicting. The result is that it comes to life. Instead of being a dusty perusal of settled and disputed facts, history becomes an arena for all kinds of imaginative exploration. Of course we need firm conventions which will tell us which parts of a thought experiment are supported by evidence of various degrees of weight. But the *interest* derives from the exploration of the imaginative possibilities thus opened up. The verisimilitude of the contexts is much more important from the point of view of education than the literal correctness of parameters like whether the action took place in 1493 or 1497.

Fiction, it has been recognised for a long time, has a unique morally educative effect, because the author can tell you what only God knows in real life – what the characters' feelings and intentions actually *are*. The result is that the moral implications of an action or an attitude are much more vividly experienced in fiction than in real life. This is all encompassed in the idea of using narrative materials in teaching, which is gathering momentum at the present time. It is a kind of 'narrative wing', or 'narrative expression', of the new modelling attitude to knowledge.

The consequences of such views are quite radical. To test children for the liveliness of their knowledge we need a great input of novel and previously unseen imaginative contexts: contexts rooted in fact, but which pose thought experimental problems for children to solve. We shall need, I think, to recruit creative minds from *outside* education if we are ever to create the tests needed to check for lively knowledge. One can only measure liveliness *with* liveliness. And without those tests the result will be all too predictable: that children's minds will be 'fazed' on a scale, and to a degree, not previously seen, at least in modern times.



Education 1993: a view from the classroom

Terry Mott

Having trained as a teacher of sociology (which he still teaches to A-Level students) Terry Mott is currently Head of Technology at Stratford-upon-Avon High School, specialising in Information Technology for Years 7 to 12.

Viewed from any vantage point on the political spectrum there can be little doubt that the State education system in Britain in 1993 is in a state of crisis. Embittered teachers have shown their willingness to join battle with the Government over Key Stage 3 testing in a show of unity unprecedented in education history (in England!). The Government disparages the force behind the current dispute at its peril, especially given the stance taken by traditionally non-militant organisations like AMMA and the NAHT. In fairness it has showed a similar lack of vision in its dealings with every other public sector body it has come into contact with through the course of its recent reforms, listing the RCN and BMA amongst recent casualties. As if this were not proof of the Government's bullish approach to social policy, the failure of the Prime Minister to replace John Patten as the Education Secretary in the recent Cabinet reshuffle, forced by the unpopularity of Government policies, would seem to belie his assertion that listening and consultation are likely to characterise future Government approaches to policy making. At the 'chalk face' the crowning glory of Conservative Education Reform is a teaching profession unsure of its own identity, floundering beneath a tidal wave of paperwork and ill-conceived curriculum revision. It seems ironic that so much confusion and conflict should arise from ground in which some consensus could have been forged.

The driving forces behind the current crisis in education, the Education Reform Act (and its subsequent revisions) and the National Curriculum, should have generated debate within the education system, not confrontation and militancy. The idea of a National Curriculum, in particular, has found favour with all of the major teaching unions. If one accepts that "Conservative education embodies ideas about history, about learning about the nature of present-day Britain, and about its future which are warped by nostalgia and by the fear of democratic change"[1], it is, perhaps, unsurprising that the protagonists in the National Curriculum debate should adopt such confrontational stances. It is, after all, the curriculum which ultimately determines the work of teachers, and the experiences of pupils. Education has never existed or functioned in a political vacuum and as a political football has been soundly kicked around the park by both governing political parties since 1944. It is, however, the nature of the battle which is particularly worrying – the current battle for education appears to be one in which the winner takes all (so far, arguably Government policy), and the losers either accept the terms of defeat or leave the profession completely. That education should come to this is a clear sign of mismanagement at the highest level

– a conclusion supported by the recent rash of resignations of respected educationists from influential posts as government advisers and planners.

Whatever the evidence for mismanagement, the education profession would be ill-advised to rest on the strength of its case as a moral argument, despite the unpopularity of recent Government decisions about, and responses to, the testing crisis. A week is still a long time in politics, and the public has little evidence that the teaching profession has changed its spots significantly since the last round of confrontation (about pay) in the late 1980s. Many people still view teaching as a 'soft option', and remain genuinely concerned at the extent to which teachers are accountable, manageable, and ultimately sackable. Empowerment of school governing bodies and the extension of rights through a Parents' Charter may appear, to some people, an illusion but there can be little doubt that education has a much higher profile in the media and the public domain than it has had in the past, and that parents and the local community do have more power now than they did before 1988. Given the willingness of the media to bring educational issues to the fore, it is vital that the teaching profession takes its agenda to the public, and explains it in understandable terms, before it loses the opportunity.

Essentially the public debate over education continues to focus on standards. Whether there are 3 or 6 Rs is in some respects immaterial, as long as the public can be convinced that the basic issues of literacy, numeracy and moral discipline are the only areas worth serious consideration. It is, arguably, this focus which has enabled the Government to hold the high ground in the public debate so far. Advanced lines of academic debate, drawn from the far flung corners of the sociology of education do little to shift the boundaries of the public debate over education outlined above. In the end the consumer wants to be reassured that his or her child (implicitly recognising the powerlessness of the real consumer, the pupil, who has no political capital) will finish compulsory education with the mental equipment and qualifications needed to find useful employment, or continue on to successfully jump the next educational hurdle. The state of the economy, the changing demands of the shrinking job market or the usefulness of vocational education are likely to remain outside the public domain (though it is, ironically, the domain in which the outcomes of the debate will be most strongly felt).

How, then, is the teaching profession to respond to the crisis in education? How can it reassure a fickle public that it has the discipline and professional integrity required to make public education in Britain something to be proud

of, something which they should invest in? The answers to such a question are necessarily complex, and interdependent. The temptation is to hide behind conveniently inconclusive sociological conclusions, which recognise the strengths and weaknesses of both sides of the argument, yet advocate neither. That is the professional approach. It is not an approach which the public wants, or deserves. The education system should celebrate its strengths and own up to its weaknesses. It should acknowledge that there *is* truth behind some of the stereotypes about schools and teachers – there are bad teachers, there are bad schools. There are also bad managers in industry, and clear evidence of failing businesses. In the end there are bad and good organisations, successful and unsuccessful enterprises. Education is an organised activity, which, at its best, manages to be brave *and* enterprising.

The thrust of Government education reform, and social policy reforms in general, has been to reduce the power of local authorities, and introduce the laws of the marketplace into key social policy areas especially in education, health and housing. The application of the rules of the market has allowed the Government to put the spotlight on the economic cost of maintaining high levels of public expenditure, and ushered in a culture of thrift and sound financial management. For schools this has been driven by the Local Management of Schools (LMS), and the introduction of opting out as a further opportunity to escape from the economically, and ideologically, smothering embraces of local authority control. Accompanying these changes has been a decisive shift in ‘quality control’ in the form of a new, privatised, inspection body, under Ofsted (well described by Janet Maw in the Summer 1993 issue of *Forum* [2]) which performs the critically important task of introducing ‘rigour’ and outside influence to the previously in-house inspection of schools by HMI, which has, according to Maw, been “curiously exempt from professional evaluation and critique”. Armed with these weapons it would seem that the Government has amassed a considerable arsenal with which to sway public opinion. In particular, it could be argued that the Government could be ‘seen to be doing something’ in taking on the notoriously left-wing, ill-disciplined ranks of the teaching profession on a sinecure for life (barring unforgivable acts of professional misconduct), who cling to outmoded ideas of liberal or progressive education, inculcated during the 1960s and 1970s by unkempt radicals in colleges and universities. The cold winds of ‘the real world’ ushered in by LMS, Ofsted and appraisal, it could be argued, will root out the rot in the education system.

In the ‘real world’ of education there are those who would oppose the reforms outlined above on principle, regardless of their merits. There are others who would seize any stick to beat the ideologues of the Left with (despite

the different problems raised by the logic of New Right ideology). From the chalk face one suspects that the majority of teachers recognise the need for reform, accountability and change, but are unhappy with the rapid speed of current reforms, and the inevitable consequences of “programmes ...devised by people without educational experience”. [3] It is, at the chalk face in front of 25-30 five- to 16-year-olds, that the full force of the Government’s reforms are felt, by both teachers and pupils. It often seems, under these circumstances, that it is the twin imperatives of economy and control that drive education reform, rather than the simpler goal of improving educational standards (though it is, of course, argued that economic use of resources and strict outside monitoring of educational processes are the tools by which educational standards will be raised). It is, again, tempting to ask ‘why is there such confrontation?’, if there is a level of agreement in the teaching profession that change *is* needed in both the provision and management of education.

In order to promote an education agenda over which there could be agreement, which would encourage public support and participation, it is important that the teaching profession publicly opens up its side of that agenda. Teaching unions should, more widely, acknowledge that concern about standards is shared by the teaching profession. We are all, as teachers, concerned to enable pupils to learn to the best of their ability. There should be similar recognition that, despite some misgivings, Ofsted requirements *are* reasonable, and helpful. Teachers should perhaps accept that appraisal will, inevitably, be linked to performance, and that within reasonable boundaries, performance is likely to be linked to pay. In advocating these changes in public presentation I do not suggest that the teaching profession caves in and accepts all of the Government’s reforms meekly. There will, of course, be hard negotiations and some differences will appear irreconcilable. It is, for example, arguably ludicrous that schools should operate on their own without support from a well funded and managed local authority. If large private companies can operate successfully as organisations with multiple branches, answerable to the same central authority it seems patently absurd that public services cannot be similarly successful. There are still flaws at the heart of the Government reforms which are driven by nakedly political ideals, and these will remain obnoxious to the majority of the teaching profession. The profession will do little, however, to gain public support beyond those parents’ organisations who are currently embroiled in the debate, if it does not acknowledge wider public concern about the *simple* issues facing education standards and performance, and widely held views that education is a profession which *is* immune to the real economic and performance related pressures which affect people in other jobs (however misconceived those views,

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.

given the current rise in teachers being effectively laid off, and the increased use of temporary, often part-time, contracts as a way of keeping the books balanced from year to year).

Given the current crisis in education it is tempting to keep one's head below the parapets and continue as normally as possible, in the hope that the reforms will go away, or that everything will come full circle and familiar territory will once more appear on the horizon. But in order to create a working education system it is necessary to seize the agenda for change, and speak to it. It is, in the end, only by airing the cupboard, that the skeletons will leave it. *Professionals* in the education system must accept the

challenge of winning members of the public over on issues of public concern, which the public can relate to. Failing to do so can only strengthen the Government's hand, and deliver the education system up as a hostage to political fortune.

Notes

- [1] Ken Jones (1993) Whose English?, *Forum*, 35, pp. 40-42.
- [2] Janet Maw (1993) Quis Custodiet ipsos Custodes? Inspecting HMI, *Forum*, 35, pp. 42-45.
- [3] Ken Jones (1993) Whose English?, *Forum*, 35, pp. 40-42.

Punch Drunk Boxer

Brian McGuire

Brian McGuire is Head of Expressive Arts at Bedford High School in Leigh, Greater Manchester. He has published a number of plays for production in schools.

The basic philosophy underlining George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is that there will always be bosses and there will always be workers. The animals drove out their human bosses and established a democracy. For a brief moment everyone was happy. Very soon the pigs took over. They threw out the old ideas and brought in new ones. It meant a certain amount of extra work but the animals, and in particular Boxer the cart horse, did not mind. There was the windmill to build, the crops to harvest and of course the weekly meetings. There were plenty of opportunities to volunteer for extra duties. As the tasks piled up, Boxer worked harder. It was not long before the pigs felt that some of the new ideas needed to be replaced by some of the old ones that had been thrown out. The new old ideas would mean extra work but the garrulous piggy, Squealer assured the animals they would benefit everyone. Boxer accepted his load, got up earlier and adopted the motto of 'I will work harder'.

Now aren't there a lot of hardworking teachers just like Boxer? They do not reach the elevated positions of deputy or head or the even more elevated positions of government but they get on with the job. As leaders come and go with new ideas and 'newspeak' for old ones it generally means more work for the Boxers of the classroom. Yet, despite the sackfuls of paper directives, the sackfuls of ephemeral enterprises and the occasional sackfull of manure, Boxer still manages the day-to-day business of education. He organises extracurricular activities and suggests even more work for himself as he makes sure the pupils actually benefit from whatever are the present propositions. Revolutions come and go and the only real stability is Boxer and the only certainty is that the work piles up. Some feel they are chasing their tails, some shake their manes but the majority plod on.

What lies in store when the horsepower begins to peter out? With luck, Boxer could be in the right place at the right time and find the gate into the farmhouse garden of management open. He may choose to graze in the fields and plump for early retirement before some wise piggy realises it is silly to lose experienced workers so early. However, like the Boxer of *Animal Farm*, he could be carted off unceremoniously to the knacker's yard. Unfortunately, in recent years this has become more and more of a reality. Perhaps a complete change can be as good as a rest. So how about changing from a horse to a donkey? I am thinking of Benjamin, the cynical donkey from *Animal Farm*, whose minimal reaction to the revolution and its constant changes saved his sanity. Benjamin's attitude makes a lot of sense but it's difficult for some to go solo or ignore the carrot trail to the farmhouse garden.

So what about Boxer's future? Maybe it is necessary to realise why Boxer is motivated and acknowledge it as something worthwhile. Most teachers signed up because they cared about and wanted to teach kids. They wanted to share with them the rewards of learning. As they gathered experience, they realised the importance of good classroom teaching and more importantly that they could do it well. As they became parents they hoped for good sensible teachers for their children. Teachers, like themselves, who are central to the educational system.

After so many swipes it is time to regularly acknowledge the importance of the job, the intelligence needed to do it, the hours it takes up and maybe it is time to dole out carrots straight from the sack or would all that be too much of a revolution? In the meantime 'punch drunk' Boxer slogs on.

Education: a different version

Education: a different version

an alternative White Paper

TED WRAGG & FRED JARVIS (Eds), 1993

London: IPPR. 79 pp., £7.50, ISBN 1 872452 69 8

For those embattled in damage limitation as they struggle to cope with an endless onslaught of new Orders and Regulations derived from the 1988-93 legislation, reading this little book will be a tonic. It will restore confidence that a different system, based on a different vision of society, can be envisaged and achieved.

Ted Wragg & Fred Jarvis have put together this Alternative White Paper based on papers by fourteen professors of education who wrote to *The Guardian* before the 1992 General Election. They present a vision of the kind of education system and curriculum that could begin to equip all young people for living and working in the 21st century. Envisaging some of the key socioeconomic changes that will affect both employment patterns and family life, they argue for a broad education beginning in the early years and extending through the statutory phases into the post-school years, with opportunity for adult and community education and distance learning related to career changes, leisure and active retirement.

Current government policies, and the White Paper *Choice and Diversity* in particular, are indicted as “fundamentally flawed” and “trapped in an inadequate language of consumerism and an impoverished social philosophy of choice”. Quite different values are proclaimed on the basis of which alternative policy can be formulated.

The “values that should lie at the centre of any educational system” are identified as “fairness and cooperation”, respect for all “as persons worth educating”, equality and freedom linked with empowerment and the interdependence of people. Instead of totalitarian state powers and an imposed National Curriculum, what is needed is a democratic debate involving all interests for “a new power-sharing structure” to construct and implement policies at appropriate national and local levels. How this could best be organised is discussed on the assumption that democratic accountability at relevant local levels is essential, but the precise form and function of future LEAs needs to be debated in the context of a sensible degree of school management delegation.

Quality of education could be assured through school self-review on agreed criteria supported by “a linked national and local system of inspection and advice” and national sampling of pupils’ attainment rather than the current Key Stage mass testing and punitive OFSTED inspections. A new legislative framework for making a reality of parental participation and partnership is indicated.

From a close analysis of the present complexity of public and private educational provision, suggestions are made for greater equity with public responsibility over private provision and its relationship to the public sector.

The economic, social and educational case is made for adequately funded and coordinated pre-school education, the bottom line being the forgotten promise of a place for all three- and four-year-olds whose parents wish it. The

curriculum for the statutory and post-16 phases is envisaged as an expanding continuum of studies which allows for differentiation according to needs and interests.

Literacy would be central in the infant curriculum, supported by four major areas – numeracy, the arts, the world around us, and how the world works – with plenty of practical and topic work. These four would become more important at the junior phase, with more specific subject study and perhaps some specialist teaching and a foreign language from nine years. At lower secondary there would be about four core subjects and four broad areas where both specialist subject topics and interdisciplinary study could feature. A balanced core of seven subjects incorporating elements of choice would form the 14-16 curriculum on which post-16 studies could build coherently through modular structures in a unified system, without sharp division between academic and vocational, leading to a single qualification with different emphases.

Current fragmentation and the emergence of social divisions post-16 are unequivocally challenged by the notion that academic, vocational and recreational elements in youth, adult and community education and training must be brought together in a framework of complementary provision supported by a system for advice and counselling. This would require accountable and broadly representative Education and Training Authorities to coordinate all forms of post-16 provision.

The importance of a coherent 14-18 curriculum for everyone, whether as students or trainees beyond 16 years, is stressed; but it is not clear where the responsibility for ensuring this might relate to coordination of a post-16 and adult education continuum. Further thought is needed on the interface and necessary planning partnership between school and post-school providers. Indeed, more detailed work will be required on administrative and funding structures. Significant guiding principles are set out to inform such further work and the necessary debate.

National guidelines are seen as necessary to deal with assessment and resourcing to meet special educational needs everywhere. A broader definition is suggested to include all children who find difficulty, for whatever reason, in coping with the education system.

Recognising that “it will always be the teachers who actually create the quality”, the authors argue for a proper partnership between schools and higher education in the education and training of teachers and for the teaching profession to have considerable “responsibility for its own regulation and development” through a General Teaching Council.

It is impossible to do justice here to the bold vision and succinct arguments of this alternative framework. What is envisaged contrasts sharply with what is actually happening, yet is grounded in realistic analysis and humane common sense. Here is the basis for a broad consensus on which more detailed work can build for reconstructing a sane education system after the ravages of the past five years.

NANETTE WHITBREAD

Opening Doors to a Learning Society:

the Labour Party Green Paper

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, here she reviews the Labour Party Consultative Green Paper on Education.

The Labour Party Green Paper, aptly entitled *Opening Doors to a Learning Society*, was first released at the Labour Party conference early in October 1993. It is concerned with describing a vision for education. A vision that provides a framework for policy and communicates clearly the values on which such policy will be based. Not surprisingly, the policy is concerned with opening doors of opportunity; where each and every child and adult within our society will be accorded equal value. The concern is not only to "help individuals to meet their aspirations" but is also to:

release the talents that are rarely developed, stretch students' abilities and extend their aspirations.

(para. 1.6)

The Green Paper is designed to look forward to the 21st century. Its proposals are based on the premise that the 21st century will require individuals who are highly skilled and well trained with the application and flexibility to meet the demands of a highly competitive world market. The paper highlights the current cost to individuals and society of underachievement and sets out a blue print of what education needs to do to redress the waste and divisiveness of the present system. In so doing, the Labour Party states that its "first commitment will be to decentralise the vast range of powers" vested in the Secretary of State. A statement which is both welcome and critical to an approach which is based on a set of principles that are designed to empower individuals and develop education as a partnership.

For me, the most reassuring aspect of the Green Paper is not just the fine words and phrases, surrounding the principles and vision, but also the practical proposals which are concerned with articulating the vision and moving from rhetoric to reality. The six principles which form the basis for such practice are:

- A learning society*
- Access*
- Quality and equity*
- Continuing education*
- Accountability*
- Partnerships*

The principles are exemplified through the issues which the Labour Party consider to be important and which form the basis of chapters 3 to 9 of the Green Paper. These include: pre-school education and childcare; a national curriculum, linked to appropriate methods of assessment, which provides a framework for learning in schools instead of a strait-jacket syllabus; the need to consider every child's

education as special; the need to keep doors to learning open at 16+; and the need to develop education as a partnership.

The chapter on pre-school education refers to the inequalities of the present system; both within this country and compared with other countries in the EEC. It will not surprise readers to hear that in 1990 the UK was ranked second lowest of all EEC countries in its provision of nursery education for three to five year olds. This chapter also highlights the rag bag of different types of provision available in this country at the present time, and the confusion between education and childcare services for the pre-school child. The point is made quite forcefully that pre-school education is essential if all children are to receive the best start possible. Evidence is cited from the Highscope project in the USA, to show that pre-school education and enrichment programmes do make a difference to the aspirations and prospects of those involved.

A number of key questions are raised in this chapter and these include: whether the Labour Party should support full nursery provision in schools, with children starting formal schooling at the age of five, or whether they should consider the system adopted in a number of European countries where children go to kindergarten at the age of four and start formal schooling at the age of six. Other questions raised include the need to consider if unitary forms of training for nursery teachers, play workers, nursery nurses and other childcare workers are practicable and how they could be organised.

Whilst the Labour Party supports the need for a national curriculum, it disputes the current model which is described as "a prescriptive, outdated, content-specific national syllabus". The Green Paper advocates a national curriculum which offers a framework for entitlement; where the principles are laid down as a basis for development. The paper also highlights the need to agree the purpose of such a framework, which should be concerned with promoting a view of education as a means of understanding oneself and society through the achievement of confidence, skills and independent thought.

The Green Paper supports a consensus approach to determining the content of the National Curriculum and cites the recent developments in Scotland as an example of where such an approach has worked well. The overriding message from this is that there is a need to consult with all involved in the process; particularly if they are to have

any sense of ownership or empowerment. The Scottish model of assessment is also advocated, where teachers' professional judgement is regarded as being critical in determining the timing and appropriateness of forms of assessment.

Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of the Green Paper is the chapter on inclusive education and special needs. There is no doubt that the concerns raised in this chapter should be addressed and not marginalised. Those of us who remember the recommendations of the Warnock Report, and the consequent cop-out resulting from the 1981 Education Act, are only too aware of the need to match recommendations for developing inclusive approaches to special needs provision to resources. Similarly, the anomalies created by formula funding and the local management of schools (LMS) also need to be resolved on an equitable basis across all parts of the country.

It is good to see a strong statement on the importance of professional teachers and the need to retain graduate status. This is linked to a clearly articulated view of continuing professional education for all teachers starting with initial training and continuing throughout the different stages of career development. The notion of linking the PGCE year to induction makes sense, as does the proposal that all schools should draw up and implement a staff development plan. Even more important is the need for a General Teaching Council to act as a full partner in ensuring that the objectives for the continuing professional development of teachers will be developed, structured, funded and monitored, through such plans and programmes.

The rest of the Green Paper deals with access, the place of the school in the community and accountability in partnership. Many of the arguments for community

education are re-stated and re-worked within the current context. The notion of young people being able to return to education is explored and links up with the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. The section on parental rights and responsibilities seeks to develop these on a more reciprocal basis than at present, through setting up home/school associations and through the establishment of home/school contracts.

The Green Paper supports the need for a unified qualification structure which will absorb and work from the best practice of existing qualifications. It suggests the possibility of developing a General Certificate in Further Education (GCFE) and discusses the possibility of integrating GCSE and GCFE as part of a continuous structure for the 14-18 age group.

The last section on accountability through partnership explores the need for local democracy in education and discusses a future role for LEAs. In describing the kinds of partnerships which will be required, it is clear that there will be a need for responsibility linked to accountability for all those involved.

There is much within this Green Paper which is worthy of further debate, discussion and development. The emphasis on consultation and consensus is to be welcomed; particularly after the long, bleak years of Tory autocracy and assertion. However, there will be those who say that consensus is not enough. The exploratory nature of much of the document has already been criticised. Let us hope that the consultation process will result in a clear formulation and assertion of an education policy which is fit for those it is designed to serve.

Reviews

Politics at the Centre Power and Politics at the Department of Education and Science

IAN LAWRENCE, 1992
London: Cassell. 168 pp., pb.,
£12.99 ISBN 0-304-32607-0

With the debate on the National Curriculum, opting out and the boycott of national assessment testing currently in the forefront of educational news, there is a clear need to understand how policy-making in education is carried out. In this highly topical book, Ian Lawrence studies power and politics at the centre of the government of education from 1945 to 1992. The title is one of a number in Cassell's Education Management series.

Six periods of government are analysed with four constant elements under review: party policy in education as reflected in election manifestos; the politicians at Education; the leading civil servants and HMI at Education; and the extent and nature of actual policy implementation. Mr Lawrence clearly sets out his views in the

Introduction to the book when he states: "The rise and fall of the DES is ... a tragedy-comedy of unfulfilled ambitions, humiliating miscalculations and abandoned promise". The background to the formation of the DES in 1964 is placed in context by the first two chapters covering the Labour and Conservative administrations from 1945 to 1964.

In the immediate post-war period to 1951, external factors seem to have deeply affected what politicians and civil servants intended to do. Lawrence believes that Ellen Wilkinson and George Tomlinson were well-meaning education ministers, but less than visionary; and a permanent secretary of above-average ability, John Maud, was hampered by entrenched traditionalists in his Department. Even in the more optimistic era of expansion from 1951 to 1964 under the Conservatives, expenditure constraints continued and many areas were dealt with inadequately, most notably school buildings and the question of technical education. Both areas constituted time-bombs ticking away to explode in a later period. Looking closely at the government of education at this time, the author believes it was hampered by what was: an Eton and Oxford Cabinet of Ministers, supported by an Independent School and Oxbridge Civil Service.

In the third chapter, extended consideration of the period 1964 to 1970 points to the unfortunate economic restraints post-1968 which continued in the Conservative administration of Edward Heath, 1970 to 1974, dealt with in detail in Chapter Four. It is interesting to read about Mrs Thatcher as Secretary of State in Edward Heath's Government and about her early duels with her Civil Servants.

Chapter Five is an extended study of the 1974-79 Labour administration. This is a key period, as worries over the curriculum and the ensuing 'Great Debate' heralded many of the 'radical' reforms in education of the next decade. The next chapter looks at the period 1979 to 1992 and points to education firmly revolving around government economic strategies with a parallel shifting of power from the LEAs to the DES. The author concludes that by the end of this period, we have: the DES in the hands of transient lawyer politicians trying to maintain a public service in an enterprise culture and advised by civil servants with less and less experience of educational administration. (p. 145)

Lawrence honestly states that in a book of this size, it would, of course, be quite impossible to do more than just sketch in the background to events. Yet this publication will be invaluable as a source of

reference for those wishing to make an in-depth study or investigation of aspects of educational policy-making since World War II. At the same time, teachers managing schools, governors, local politicians and parents who are constantly bombarded with educational literature will be greatly enlightened by reading how we have arrived at the present situation in the early 1990s. Students and teachers of government and of politics will find many sections useful, particularly those dealing with the respective roles of ministers and top civil servants.

At the end of the book there are detailed lists of the relevant politicians and civil servants. The general theme of the book is that politicians and their advisers must become more expert, better informed and more decisive in educational matters. Yet the record of the DFE since Mr Lawrence concluded his survey leaves one feeling very pessimistic for the immediate future.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIES GRIFFITH
Kings Norton Boys' School,
Birmingham

Assessing Children's Learning

MARY JANE DRUMMOND, 1993
Primary Curriculum Series
London: David Fulton Publishers
£10.99, 195pp., ISSN 1853461989

This book should rightly be considered a classic, if not *the* classic, on the assessment of children's learning. To those aware of Mary Jane Drummond's remarkable talent for enabling teachers to change the way they think, it should not come as a surprise that she has chosen to examine this subject in the way she has. Other books and articles on the same topic will fade from memory as they deal with the superficialities of assessment. Effectiveness will never be achieved, as she says herself "if we conceptualize the task as a matter of making pragmatic decisions about formats, formal testing procedures and record keeping. Trying to understand the place of assessment in education makes moral and philosophical demands on our thinking". Assessment in this exciting, challenging book is not seen in the formal sense of checklists or mechanical testing, but in the deceptively simple sense of daily observation of children's learning, attempting to understand it and then making productive use of this deeper understanding.

Mary Jane Drummond takes each of these actions in turn and examines them in a way that should be accessible to every thoughtful classroom practitioner. She does not, as many authors do, forget in the discussion of children's learning, the pivotal influence of the teachers' own values. She suggests that it is of crucial importance that teachers ask themselves:

'what they would go to the stake for' – and why. For teachers to ask themselves 'What kind of teacher am I?' and 'Why am I this kind of teacher?' is to begin to understand why and how they are looking at children's learning the way they do.

Thus, teachers have to be prepared to query their principles and have their practices challenged: the responsibilities of the teacher, as the author sees it, include that of thinking as well as doing. Nonetheless the approach is not confrontation for its own sake but one of well structured argument sustained and explored step by step in each successive chapter. This argument is, as she puts it, that the practice of assessment bridges two main areas of concern: children's interests and teachers' choices.

In what can only be classed as a rare achievement, Mary Jane Drummond has written a book in which the underlying issue of rights, responsibilities and power are discussed seriously and at depth but in an entirely lucid and readable manner. It is blessedly free from jargon and her examples from classroom practice are both plentiful and illuminating.

In the first chapter, for example, Mary Jane Drummond relates the very telling example of a 7-year-old boy, Jason, attempting to comply with the demands of a standardised mathematics test. In a detailed analysis of his seeming failure to do anything other than write his name and numbers neatly, the author leads her readers towards the real reason for Jason's bizarre but earnest performance in which it is only too apparent that the child has understood very little of what has been asked of him. The emphasis in Jason's school career up to that point has neglected the core of what, in Mary Jane Drummond's opinion, is at the heart of a school's curriculum – "nail learning that results from everything they do (and do not do) in schools and classrooms". She recognises the hard work that teachers may have put into planning and teaching such children as Jason; the careful lesson plans, their well-provided and interesting classroom environments, the schemes of work etc. All to naught unless it is matched by a similar effort to understand and examine the process of children's consequent learning.

Mary Jane Drummond also tackles both the emotional and cognitive aspects of assessment with useful and wide reference to contemporary research. The interrelationship of both aspects is not just to be acknowledged by teachers but actively incorporated into the practice of assessment. Children's attitudes, their level of anxiety, security, motivation and interests are inextricably bound up with their learning or lack of it. She also directs the attention of readers towards Chris Athey's book *Extending Thought in Young Children*, in which teachers are encouraged

to look at the cognitive structure of what they are offering children and argues that children's learning might be considerably more effective if their classroom experiences were in a more arresting and challenging cognitive form, so that they become part of a child's developing conceptual framework of coordinated schemas.

This book is strongly recommended to anyone with a responsibility for the education of children: from ministerial level to advisors, lecturers, inspectors, governors and, most importantly, class teachers. It is courageous and inspiring and should serve to energise those teachers tempted to become demoralised by the present state of education in Britain. Mary Jane Drummond makes us remember that in looking at children's learning, however well we think we have done so, "there is always more to see" and above all doesn't shirk from asking fundamental moral questions about the whole issue of assessment.

ANNABELLE DIXON
Holdbrook JMI School, Waltham Cross

Be Aware

Bullying: a practical guide to coping for schools

MICHELE ELLIOTT (Ed.), 1992
Harlow: Longman. 182 pp.,
pb., £11.95. ISBN 058208024X

Considering that bullying seems always to have been a feature of British society and still is, from the government downwards, it is quite remarkable that, apart from the very occasional study such as Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, so little was written about it and so little research undertaken for so long. (Or, at least, that so little notice was taken of what was written.) This situation began to change about ten years ago, when evidence from other parts of the world, notably Norway, encouraged a number of educationists and others to begin taking the problem seriously here. In the past few years important research on the extent, nature, causes and effects of bullying has been done by Peter Smith at Sheffield University and others, and a plethora of books, newspaper articles and papers on the subject has been published. Bullying has been a theme in a number of recent children's novels. Media interest has been raised by a number of cases where pupils have committed suicide apparently as a result of being persistently bullied and a number of organisations have sprung up to try to help the victims of bullying, notably the Anti-Bullying Campaign and Kidscape.

Kidscape was founded by Michele Elliott, an American teacher working in London, and seeks to offer children support in cases of bullying and physical and sex-

ual abuse. It publishes a range of books and papers, some for adults, some for the children themselves.

Michele Elliott has drawn together papers from a number of respected authorities on the subject and produced an invaluable book.

Contributors include Rex Stainton Rogers, whose opening chapter 'Now you see it, now you don't' explores the social context of bullying and suggests that "We will need to 'clean up our act' in terms of the adult-adult and adult-child dealings we place before the young, for that is a precondition of altering the cultural resources the young themselves draw upon to construct their own dealings with each other".

This theme is taken up by Eric Jones, deputy head of an inner-city comprehensive school, in his chapter on 'Practical considerations in dealing with bullying in the secondary school'. "Many of these parents and children have been bullied already, by the society in which they find themselves, by the demands made of them, and the restrictions placed upon them ... There is a lot of bullying going on by officials enforcing regulations, by the comfortably-off towards the hard-up, by those in employment towards those who seek to work, by the literate towards those who find it hard to learn,

and by whites who were born in Britain towards young blacks who were also born in Britain." He goes on to discuss a definition of bullying and outlines some practical strategies.

Linda Frost surveys the problem from a primary perspective. She suggests, among other things, that the words 'just' and 'only' should be excluded from discussions of bullying incidents. "I was just playing with her ... I only tapped his ear with my foot". These phrases will strike a chord with many teachers.

Valerie Besag contributes chapters on 'The playground', in which she suggests that we need to recognise "the opportunity for young people to develop socially, and to learn from each other ... This being so, it is essential to ensure the highest quality of supervision, support and guidance, by qualified and committed staff, is available to them at these times", and 'Parents and teachers working together', in which she asserts that "It is every child's democratic right to attend school in safety".

Michele Elliott herself provides three chapters: 'Bullies, victims, signs, solutions', in which she provides a useful list of telltale signs of bullying and suggests that there are two types of bully – the 'spoilt brat' who is completely selfish and hits out

if anyone gets in his way, and the "victim of some sort of abuse or neglect. He had been made to feel inadequate, stupid and humiliated".

In her chapter on Bully Courts, she rehearses some of the arguments for and against and again provides helpful advice.

In the final chapter, 'A whole school approach to bullying', Michele Elliott summarises the steps a school should take in agreeing a policy on bullying. She deals with the thorny problem of continuing to implement the policy once it has been written and ends with some advice on breaking up bully gangs. The chapter includes a specimen questionnaire, letter to parents and ideas for personal and social education. This one chapter alone makes it worth buying the book.

The book is readable, informative and comprehensive. It is full of both sound theory and good practical advice and I hope it will find its way into staff rooms everywhere and be read!

DEREK GILLARD
Marston Middle School, Oxford

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0963-8253(199401)36:1;-Y