

FORUM

for promoting 3–19 comprehensive education

Summer 1994

Volume 36 Number 2

ISSN 0963-8253

**Dearing's Legacy
Scots Innovations
Politics and Curriculum
Teacher Education
No Opting Out**



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The *next* FORUM

The main theme of the Autumn issue (Volume 36, No. 3, 1994) will be concerned with the continuum of pre-service and in-service teacher education. **Dave Hill** continues the debate on current developments in initial teacher training and **Paul Ducker** focuses on the way students become teachers through their practice in classrooms. **Lyndon Godsall** writes about developments at Westhill College on school-based partnerships and **Fran Griffiths** and **David Naylor** describe their current involvement in school-centred initial teacher training. There will also be contributions from the **Longsearch Group** (an action group); **Clyde Chitty** on the forthcoming sequel to *Halfway There*; **Suzanne Taylor** on learning support for special educational needs; and **Chris Tipple**, president of the Society of Education Officers, on the future role of the local education authorities.

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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

Mischievous Experiments

If there ever was any coherence in the hastily framed 1988 Education Act, that has by now been effectively eroded as key parts have failed to win anticipated support or have had to be patched up as successive Secretaries of State have attempted to salvage or bolster a structure built on the sands of prejudiced ideology. There remains the ghost of a flawed experimental structure which John Patten is desperately trying to shore up.

The City Technology College chimera is now largely extinct; the Grant Maintained bandwagon has failed to gather momentum, leaving a third of LEAs unaffected and with only three LEAs losing control of all primary and secondary provision. LEAs still retain responsibility for 71% of our schools. The National Curriculum has been subject to constant delays and revisions, has never been fully operational and has generally disintegrated beyond Key Stage 3. Education is too important for such experimenting.

Instability, chaos and confusion consequently prevail. The Government has inflicted serious damage by irresponsible and costly experiments with the nation's education. The repercussions of ever more desperately trying to induce schools to opt out from their LEAs has exacerbated the wasteful problem of surplus places. Now private sponsors are invited to open new Grant Maintained schools at only 15% of the cost. Planned provision of schools is sacrificed to the GM idol.

Deviously infiltrating central control comes the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS), another quango dependent on ministerial patronage. With a pro GM membership and a brief to foster GM schools, any objectivity in its planning role is suspect from the start. This latest experiment will affect schools in 44 LEAs. FAS will also experiment with a common funding formula for GM schools.

As *Forum* forecast, the myth of opting *out* for freedom is now exposed as opting *in* for central control. This has surprised and alarmed Brian Sherratt, head of the largest GM school. The siren call to GM is likely to prove ever more deceptive. Our article by a veteran campaigner against opting out is undoubtedly opportune.

But a further threat to many LEAs lurks in the Local Government Review. Increasingly viewed by divers interests as a pointless and potentially very expensive exercise that should now be abolished, this could dismember most counties and produce a plethora of unitary local authorities too small to manage strategic planning or effective support for educational provision. Neither these nor the amorphous FAS quango would have the clout or credibility comparable to France's départements or Germany's Länder in winning benefits within the European Community. Sir John Banham himself has become aware of the critical planning role of LEAs, but is floundering for credible solutions to the problems he risks creating.

Meanwhile, Sir Ron Dearing's efforts to restore credibility to the National Curriculum and its assessment has inevitably failed to deliver the miracle cure. So long as the crucial requirement is for assessment to provide data for league tables, the function of assessment will be distorted and the process inexorably flawed. Our first two articles explore the issues in Dearing's legacy.

This government's myoptic incompetence as prejudice-led legislation and experiments on one front confound policy on another was shown by the NFER's survey of discretionary awards. This revealed that capping LEA expenditure and cutting their resources has reduced spending on FE student grants by 8% and made these a chaotic lottery just when a 25% expansion of students in Further Education is supposedly intended and undoubtedly necessary for raising levels of education and skills. A 45% cut in support for tuition fees via the Further Education Funding Council quango worsens the problem.

Debate in the House of Lords on Part 1 of the 1993 Education Bill exposed the lack of evidence justifying the proposed creation of a Teacher Training Agency as a new quango designed to end the training partnership between higher education and schools. Despite informed criticism on the damage this will inflict on the quality of teacher education, the government is clearly determined to force the Bill through the Commons and there reverse even the marginal amending achieved in the Lords. This *Forum* carries an article on the issues involved.

By contrast with this government's legislative record, the Act passed fifty years ago this August, after careful construction on the firm ground of broad consensus and founded on partnership between central and local government, proved capable of evolving with generally constructive diversity. Over some four decades intervention by Circulars, rather than statutory Orders, served to guide local policy. Evolution was sharply halted in 1988.

Exasperation at half a decade of damaging mismanagement of and reckless experiment with the nation's education service has brought recognition of the urgent imperative to develop thought and debate for an alternative vision and supporting structures. In the previous forum we published articles evaluating the Labour Party's Green Paper, *Opening Doors to a Learning Society*, and the Institute for Public Policy Research's *Alternative White Paper*. In this number the third such report, by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation's National Commission on Education, *Learning to Succeed*, is considered.

Much work urgently needs to be undertaken to plan for the future, alongside determined efforts in classrooms and schools to frustrate the damage now being inflicted on so many aspects of this nation's education. *Forum* aims to play its part in both.

The Road Not Taken

Myra Barrs

Previously a teacher and an LEA adviser for English, Myra Barrs is Director of the Centre for Language Education which developed and published the Primary Language Record. Here she explores the key assessment implications of the Dearing Reports.

Reading the final Dearing Report was sometimes like watching a silent comedy. The straightfaced hero walked confidently into whole series of boobytraps, any of which could be seen coming from quite a long way off, and each time he extricated himself and kept on walking along, as if unaware of the trail of confusion he was leaving behind him.

We are now having to live with the consequences of that confusion. It is likely to be most marked at Key Stage 4, where Dearing casually demolished a common system of examining at 16+ which it had taken more than twenty years to establish. But the most problematic element in the final report was unquestionably Sir Ron's decision to retain the 10-level scale as the basis for National Curriculum assessment, despite much public agonising about its inadequacies. It is hard to see how we can go on working with a basic framework for assessment which is obviously so deeply flawed. What were the considerations that led him to his wrong decision?

These are painstakingly spelled out in the report. I take the main arguments for retention to be three, only one of which has any theoretical content – the other two are essentially pragmatic. The theoretical argument is heavily influenced by Professor Paul Black, the chairman of TGAT, who has continued to cling to the wreckage of the 10-level scale through all the storms of recent years. This is the argument about 'progression', about the need for an assessment framework which will not only enable us to indicate how far pupils have satisfactorily completed a course of study, or whether they have reached a particular level of attainment at the end of a Key Stage (which is what most of us thought the whole apparatus was for), but one which will provide a complete chart of what is involved in progressing as a learner from age 5 (or earlier) to age 16 years (or later).

'Progression' is an attractive idea educationally; anybody who queries it is liable to look unreasonable. As Paul Black sensibly remarks: "Anyone planning teaching has to have some way to decide in what order pupils' thinking should be helped to develop – it is inconceivable that a subject's teaching be planned without some model of progression as a basis". Yes indeed, but this is a far cry from being able to draw a detailed map of progress and development in every subject of the curriculum for all the years of schooling – something that we are still some way from being able to do, and for which in many areas of the curriculum there is simply no empirical basis. And it is still further removed from the possibility of defining 'progression' in some pure and abstract form, unrelated to age.

This chimera of 'progression' is what originally led TGAT to the concept of the 10-level scale. Repeating their reassuring mantra that "assessment should be the servant,

not the master, of the curriculum", the task group proceeded to develop a model of assessment which dominated all of the planning of the National Curriculum and its subsequent implementation. In some subjects the curriculum had virtually no existence outside the assessment framework – the statements of attainment and the programmes of study were one and the same thing. Had it not been for this over-ambitious framework, the curriculum working parties might have spent their time describing what might constitute a broadly appropriate curriculum for the infant/junior/lower secondary school, and what, at the end of the years spent in studying this curriculum, children might reasonably be expected to be able to achieve. But instead they had to spell out what was involved in 'progression' in each subject, and the proliferation of criteria which resulted from this exercise produced such an overloaded assessment agenda that it eventually became an unignorable problem. What we have had, in fact, since 1988, is not a National Curriculum, but a national assessment system, in which the role of curriculum has simply been to provide the content of assessment.

The chimera of progression has proved to be unattainable, yet it continues to exert an overwhelming attraction on managers of the system. As Sir Ron ruefully points out "the principle which underpins the current approach is sound" (7.24): it's only that this tidy system doesn't seem to work in practice. Yet it would be so convenient if it did that, despite all the evidence, the 10-level scale has been retained. For, after all, the arguments in favour of a model based on progression relate not only to curriculum planning, but also to measurement. What the 10-level scale would offer, if it worked, would be a ready-made underpinning for all subsequent calculations of the 'value added' by the school to children's performance. And it is clear from both Dearing reports that this latest refinement in assessment thinking has caught the imagination of politicians and managers, who are excited by the prospect of being able to relate input to output directly in this way. Once again the monitoring functions of assessment are shaping the design of the system as a whole.

So the 10-level scale has been reprieved, although not in its present form ("I do not think that the option merits further discussion" said Sir Ron). The other reasons he presented for retaining it were essentially pragmatic. One might be expressed in the words of Hilaire Belloc: "And always keep a hold of nurse/For fear of finding something worse". Though strongly tempted by other models of assessment, particularly end-of-Key-Stage scales, Dearing drew back when he reflected on the bugs that might be lying in wait in any new and untried model. His approach throughout both reports has been essentially cautious and conservative, and his very *raison d'être* is damage limitation. All of this made him unwilling to take any risks at all and

so we have ended up with the devil we know, what he sees as the 'least bad' option, rather than the fresh look that was needed.

Finally, Dearing was concerned that the introduction of a new model of assessment would take more time than was available. Unrealistic time lines have dogged the whole history of the National Curriculum and its assessment, and there is clearly no relaxation of the pressure on the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and its officers to get the whole stalled system up and running again. Dearing's priority is to deliver a workable assessment system, one which can begin producing as soon as possible the assessment data needed for the production of statistical comparisons and, particularly, league tables. Brian Simon was surely right, in his analysis of the key function of assessment in the creation of a marketed education system, to see league tables as the prime means by which parental choices were supposed to be informed, "so giving a (spurious) legitimacy to the education market". The government has accepted that, for the time being, league tables should remain in abeyance, but has made no promises on this score beyond 1995. The pragmatic question of the sheer difficulty of introducing a new assessment model in the short time available was the final consideration which seems to have pushed Dearing back to the 10-level scale.

Yet if the 10-level scale has survived, it has survived in a curiously hybrid form. It will not be used, it seems, beyond the end of Key Stage 3, and thus it is actually unlikely that many pupils will climb up to its top rungs at all. This decision was taken by Sir Ron almost *en passant*: "I do not think that we need the 10-level scale for the majority of students at Key Stage 4. I recommend therefore that it should not be used at this key stage" (7.64). What we will actually be operating with, therefore, is not so much a 10-level scale as a seven, or at most eight-level scale, a fact that is nowhere acknowledged among all the detailed deliberations of the report. What is more, there are likely to be moves towards subdividing the scale at certain levels in order to provide 'finer grading'; Dearing recommends that these moves should "build on recent decisions to subdivide level 2 in English and Mathematics at Key Stage 1 using norm-referencing" (7.43). It is this truncated and locally patched-up scale, therefore, that will actually be the basis of the national assessment system.

Teacher Assessment

The missed opportunities represented by the final Dearing Report include its failure to give teacher assessment the central place that it should have in this criterion-referenced system. The rhetoric of both reports has stressed the importance of teacher assessment, but that is an old tune now. What we know, from the experience of assessment at seven, is that the logic built in to the administration of the assessment system is far stronger than the educational rhetoric that surrounds it. SATs have consistently been given more weight in the assessment system than teacher assessment. Even where they have been carried out by the class teacher, they have invariably been regarded as more reliable than that same teacher's own continuous assessments. SATs have been used to moderate teacher assessment despite the fact that they have sampled many fewer of the statements of attainment. It seems unlikely that Dearing's recommendation that teacher assessment should be presented side by side with the results of SATs will change this state of affairs. We need to ask which set

of figures will be collected centrally? Which will appear in press reports and form the basis of league tables?

The lack of investment in teacher assessment as an integral part of the National Curriculum is one of the most short-sighted aspects of its myopic history. Guidance on record-keeping has been kept to a minimum. You could believe official assurances that this lack of guidance signals a benevolent permissiveness, a determination to leave schools an important area of freedom in an over-managed world, a desire to 'let a thousand flowers bloom'. Or you could assume that the millions of pounds (and words) spent on developing and administering SATs, and the tiny amounts spent on teacher assessment are a true reflection of the way they are regarded and of their relative status in the assessment system.

Criterion-referenced assessment requires the exercise of judgement if it is to be based on anything more than minimal criteria. Dearing has recognised that it was a mistake to try and specify too minutely sets of unambiguous criteria in the shape of discrete statements of attainment. He has pinned his hopes on a new kind of criterion-referencing, one in which statements of attainment are "gather[ed] ... into clusters to create a more integrated description of what a pupil must know, understand and be able to do at each level" (7.29). Yet he seems not to appreciate that this model is entirely dependent on interpretation for its effective implementation. The experience of using the Primary Language Record reading scales, which are based on such a model of 'level descriptors', suggests that they can be a reliable basis for assessment if they are supported by exemplars, in-service training, and above all the experience of moderation. Without these kinds of backup, interpretation of the descriptors may be uneven, and will tend to rely too heavily on the 'lowest common denominator' elements in the descriptors, just as the assessment of writing at Key Stage 2 has been too heavily influenced by the statements of attainment covering the use of full stops. Teacher assessment offers the best way of assessing children's achievement against the kind of broad descriptors that Dearing now says he wants to see, but it needs to be properly supported and developed, not left to bloom unaided.

Teacher assessment is, of course, often criticised for being 'subjective', and indeed this is one of its features, and potentially one of its strengths. Human judgement is indispensable in the assessment of complex abilities. It is the human element in teacher assessment which enables an assessor to interpret children's responses, to analyse what is going on in a complex assessment situation (e.g. a group discussion), to be sensitive to the intentions of the person being assessed and appreciate how far they are realising their intentions, or to respond to the differences between different learners' ways of going about a task. We need to acknowledge the personal element in teacher assessment, and the positive strengths associated with 'subjectivity', and then to consider how this kind of assessment can be developed so that negative effects of subjectivity can be limited and controlled. This can come about through various kinds of training and professional development activities, and through group moderation of the kind originally envisaged in TGAT, which is also a major means of professional development. Many years of experience of coursework-based assessment have shown us that it is possible for teachers to become more sophisticated and reliable assessors, and this experience should be drawn on.

Teacher assessment needs to take issues of bias seriously; assessors always need to be aware of the part that the assessor plays in the assessment process, and to become more self-conscious and self-critical in their own practice. But it is important to remember that no form of assessment is bias-free; so-called 'objective' assessments are just as likely to be biased or culturally loaded as any teacher assessment. In these kinds of assessment, the personal bias of the assessors is often concealed within an apparently impersonal test, while the basic assumptions of the assessment are impossible to change. At least in a system of teacher assessment, issues of bias can be addressed, and evidence of bias can be questioned and challenged if necessary. And this kind of discussion can go on in training courses and in moderation groups, both within and, above all, between schools, so that teachers can develop their judgements in collaboration with others who may work in very different kinds of contexts. Above all, assessment can't be a lonely process.

Lessons from the Primary Language Record

The experience of the Primary Language Record (PLR) suggests that the structures for observation built into the record are helpful in providing a common basis of evidence for assessment purposes. It seems likely that any adequate system of teacher assessment would require the development of common formats of this kind, so that evidence could be easily shared and compared. Such formats can be designed to be informative – many teachers have found that the PLR helpfully directs their attention to the way children learn, that it helps them to look, and to know what to look for (e.g. in reading or writing development, or bilingual development). Its varied elements – observational diaries, structured 'samples' of particular pieces of work, and conferences with children and parents – complement one another in building up broad pictures of children as learners. Without the support of these kinds of formats, many schools have been thrown back on the only structures officially available, which are those contained in the attainment targets, and the assessment process has been reduced, in Dearing's own words, "to a meaningless ticking of myriad boxes" (7.25).

What many teachers have discovered from the process of descriptive record-keeping, is that such assessment is truly 'formative', it shapes their view of learning, and shapes their teaching. In the words of one New York teacher using the PLR: "I use what I learn about the kids from observing them to help support them in their work. The observing makes me more precise. It also makes teaching harder (but more interesting as well) because it makes me demand more of myself and ask more questions about my teaching." As this quotation suggests, observation-based record-keeping is not primarily a way of collecting evidence for formal assessment purposes, although it can readily perform that function. Its main purpose is to help teachers to observe children's learning so as to be able to teach them more effectively. The teacher here is fully aware of the need to provide for 'progression' in learning; one of the recurrent elements in the Primary Language Record is the question that asks teachers to consider "what experiences/teaching have helped/would help development" in an aspect of language or literacy. This view of progression, based on the close analysis of individuals' patterns of learning, goes beyond the abstract visions of the 10-level scale, and feeds directly into planning. Teachers whose interventions and

planning are based on informed observation are more confident professionally.

Dearing states one of his aims to be to increase the reliability of teacher assessment and to enhance its status (9.1), but his final report fails to put in place the machinery that is needed to support effective teacher assessment, and to ensure that any system of assessment based on more than minimal criteria actually works. The reason for this failure lies in Dearing's overwhelming concern to avoid the kinds of workload-related objections to the assessment system which led to last year's teachers' boycott. In the interests of reducing workload the report takes a stopwatch to the school week, recommending the number of hours per year that should be devoted to each subject, and stressing over and over again the need to 'slim down' the curriculum through reviews of each subject. So the demands of moderation, which involve regular meetings both within and between schools, and some kind of coordinating system for organising this, are naturally frightening to Dearing. The stance taken by some teachers' unions, which have capitulated to the idea of short 'objective' tests, and given up on teacher assessment as too time-consuming, must have tended to harden opinion about moderation within SCAA. It is particularly galling to watch sections of the teaching profession shooting themselves in the foot on this issue at a time when, if there had been a professional consensus about the desirable shape of a viable assessment system, there might conceivably have been some chance of this consensus influencing the design of the new system.

If Dearing had been serious about giving teacher assessment even equal standing with SATs he would have recommended that, for the first time, real funds were put into teacher assessment. Some of the elements that would be needed to develop teacher assessment and support the development of common standards of teacher judgement are in fact mentioned in the final report. We find reference to the development of "exemplification material" by SCAA, and to the provision of "high quality standard task and test material" which could be used by schools "as a means of strengthening their own assessments" (9.5). (But one motive for producing these kinds of materials is, revealingly, said to be to "reduce the time teachers would need to spend in moderation meetings".) Apart from these gestures, the report makes no attempt to think through what might be involved in developing a reliable system of teacher assessment, but is at pains to stress that anything goes ("There are *no requirements to keep records in any particular manner*", Appendix 6).

There have been, in the history of the National Curriculum, two trends in assessment, one exemplified in the history of the SATs, and the other in the history of frameworks for teacher assessment, such as the Primary Language Record. These two trends have been divergent. The trend in SATs has been gradually to narrow down what counts as achievement. From the incredibly ambitious beginnings, these 'standard tasks' have now become traditional paper and pencil tests.

At the same time there have been important developments despite a good deal of 'meaningless box-ticking' in record-keeping and teacher assessment. These include the recently launched Primary Learning Record, which applies the principles of the Primary Language Record to the whole curriculum. This whole area has been one of rapid learning for individual teachers and for whole staff groups, and the consequence has been that record-keeping and teacher

assessment in many schools are now way ahead of the kind of external assessment represented by SATs, providing more information for teachers, and communicating more effectively with parents.

It is possible to imagine now how a coherent system of teacher assessment could build on this experience, and how it could be supported by the use of common record-keeping formats, by the provision of exemplars and materials, by in-service training, and especially by group moderation. Time and money would need to be invested in the system, but this could be amply justified by the fact that it would lead not only to improved practice in assessment, but also to more informed and effective practice in teaching. It is more than a pity that the Dearing Report chose not to explore these possibilities, and has left us instead looking back at the road not taken.

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Teacher Assessment post-Dearing

Brian Bartlett

A tutor at the Centre for Assessment Studies at the University of Bristol, Brian Bartlett has been involved with developing assessment, recording and reporting procedures in schools in a West Country LEA and is researching the effects of National Curriculum assessment upon learners in special schools and units.

Assessment is a complex issue that cannot be satisfactorily explained by a one line dictionary definition. WHO is being assessed and WHY they are being assessed will significantly influence WHAT it is in which they are to be assessed, HOW and WHEN. However, in essence, there are two alternative purposes – formative and summative.

The primary purpose of formative assessment should be to provide feedback and may be:

- *corrective* – identifying of areas of difficulty and designing strategies that will enable improvement to occur;
- *confirmatory* – demonstrating that the learner has acquired certain knowledge, skills and/or concepts necessary for undertaking future tasks.

By contrast, summative assessment occurs at the end of a period of study, a Key Stage for example, and thus comes too late for feedback purposes (Satterly, 1981, p. 58).

Both formative and summative assessments will also have informative and evaluative purposes. Typically, in formative assessment, the information gathered about a learner will be added to that which is already known and thus is part of a cumulative process. The evaluative aspect provides the teachers with some data about the effectiveness of the current teaching methodology and resources thus enabling them to make decisions about the necessity to revisit or re-address certain aspects of the learning programme.

In summative assessment the information will frequently be intended for other parties in addition to the learner and

the teacher such as parents, future educational providers and prospective employers. The evaluation will tend to be on a grander scale and may involve a consideration of the effectiveness of the whole course, curriculum or school.

The National Curriculum assessment arrangements consist of two quite separate elements: teacher assessment (TA) and national tests. A brief explanation of the latter will illustrate the importance of the former for, as will be shown, it is only through TA that the formative and diagnostic purposes can be provided.

The National Tests

The national tests seem to owe their very existence more to a political ideology that is determined to bring schools and teachers under the control of the state rather than to sound educational purposes. It will be recalled that the writers of the Black Papers believed that:

- examinations were essential for preventing teachers from imposing their own prejudices upon pupils (Cox, 1969);
- a nationally enforced curriculum would make schools accountable (Boyson, 1975);
- accountability could be increased by the introduction of national tests for children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14 and the publication of the results of those tests (Cox & Boyson, 1977).

Similarly, it is worth noting that whilst the TGAT Report (DES/VO, 1988) envisaged an “essentially formative” system of assessment (para. 27) and the use of teachers’

ratings as the “fundamental element” (para. 60) the government’s response was to introduce national external testing of 7, 11, 14 and 16 year olds with the results being published for parents and the wider public to make informed judgements about attainment in a school or local authority (DES, 1989). It is suggested (Cox & Marks, 1982; Chitty, 1990) that national tests and test results are essential to satisfy the market principle of providing parental choice.

It would, therefore, seem safe to suggest that the tests have, almost exclusively, a summative purpose, being intended to generate easy to publish data that have, primarily, bureaucratic uses. Given that the Dearing Final Report (Dearing, 1994) recommends that the tests should be further reduced in terms of the time required to administer and mark them (para. 7.10) then they are moving ever closer to Troman’s vision (1989, p. 289) of a “neat, quick, cheap and quantifiable” system.

Problems Encountered by Teacher Assessment

However, it is one thing to sing the praises of the potential of TA, it is quite another for that potential to be realised. It is essential for TA to be a quality process that is beyond reproach. Critics of teacher involvement in the assessment process (see Boyson, 1971; Pollard, 1973; Grant, 1982) suggest that teachers cannot be trusted to examine their own pupils because they are prejudiced, biased, and their judgements are influenced by their subjective opinion of and personal relationship with the pupils. Those views would appear to be just as prevalent today for Dearing (Dearing, 1994) is obliged to refer to the necessity to “increase the reliability ... and enhance” the status of TA in the eyes of parents, teachers and the community at large (para. 9.1). Some of the issues concerning quality can be addressed by teachers themselves and these will be explored later. However, there are other issues that are related to the construction of the National Curriculum itself and that must be addressed if TA is to be able to fulfil its purposes.

The subdivision of subjects into attainment targets and attainment targets into levels together with the lists of statements of attainment within each level have resulted in such a complicated structure that has been proved to be impossible to teach let alone assess – hence the Dearing Review.

Attainment Targets

Dearing recommends (para 4.33) that the statutory content of each subject be slimmed down and that there should be a reduction in both the number of statements of attainment and attainment targets, the latter with particular reference to Key Stages 1 and 2 (para 4.45). Certainly this is to be welcomed for, even with the current requirement at Key Stage 1, and proposed requirement at Key Stage 2, for statutory assessment to be limited to the core subjects until the new Orders are in place, primary school teachers still have to make fourteen summative assessment judgements for each pupil. On an annual basis, that is the equivalent of one assessment judgement every two and a half school weeks! Given the strong inference that statutory assessment of the non-core subjects will be reintroduced at Key Stage 2, if not Key Stage 1, there are major issues here for the curriculum reviewers if the TA aspect, particularly in the primary phase, is to be manageable. Reducing the number of attainment targets must not mean following the revision style adopted when the original mathematics and science Orders were reviewed. Transforming three, four or five

attainment targets into one or two fat ones will not equate to ‘slimming down’. What is required is for some attainment targets to be removed altogether.

Statements of Attainment

Quite rightly, Dearing criticises the statements of attainment for creating “fragmented teaching and learning” and generating a “burdensome and unproductive” tick-list approach to assessment (para. 7.11). The Report places the blame for this upon the Key Stage 1 task materials because of the way that they have focused upon individual statements (Appendix 6). Y2 teachers will be well aware of the irritating sentence punctuation requirement in En3 which can result in a pupil whose story contains elements of Level 3 actually being awarded a Level 1. However, SEAC (1989, pp. 21-23) must also shoulder some of the responsibility for encouraging the tick-list mentality because it was suggested that statements of attainments:

- should be identified in lesson plans;
- would be used as “indicators of a successful response”; and
- could be used as “the unit for recording”.

The problems caused by this approach will be familiar to every teacher. To begin with, even for the secondary specialists who are concentrating upon a single subject, assessing each pupil in each statement of attainment is unmanageable for, in any one class, there will be pupils operating at several different levels of attainment. As for the primary teacher, dealing with nine subjects, no adjective will suffice to describe the impossibility of such an approach. Secondly, some statements of attainment are so generalised that they defy any attempt to create comprehensible criteria for attainment.

The Dearing statement (Appendix 6) that “the teacher should feel confident when deciding on an attainment target level at the end of the key stage that it broadly reflects the child’s attainment across the statements of attainment as a whole” is, to be quite blunt, unsatisfactory. Consider, for example, the complexity of awarding ‘a level’ for science AT4 in which there are five quite unrelated strands. Can pupils be assessed at Level 3 if they do “know that a complete circuit is needed for electrical devices to work” but do not “know that the appearance of the Moon and the altitude of the Sun change in a regular and predictable manner”? Teachers will not just be asking, as they are at present, ‘how many statements of attainment must be achieved before I can award a particular level?’ but, more confusingly, ‘how many of which statements of attainment must be achieved?’

If teachers are to be capable of awarding attainment target levels then they must be provided with “tight descriptors” (see Black et al, 1989) that clearly and unambiguously identify the minimum performance criteria that must be met for a particular level to be awarded.

At this point, the issue of the ten-level scale surfaces. Dearing (para. 7.60) recommends that the ten-level scale should be retained but improved. That improvement should be based upon the creation of the tight descriptors as described above. The ten-level scale is intended to serve the summative purposes that have been discussed but its retention means that a major problem still exists. The diagrammatically neat but educationally questionable sequence of pupil achievement identified by the TGAT Report (DES/WO, 1988: para. 104) is a millstone hung around the necks of curriculum designers, test constructors and teacher assessors. The ‘average’ pupils will progress

two levels in their first two years of compulsory education, a further two levels in the next four years, and one and a half levels in the following three years. Quite how Key Stage 2 teachers will explain to parents that, in national numerical terms, their 'perfectly satisfactory' children appear to have taken twice as long to have made the same amount of progress as they did in Key Stage 1 is a chicken that is yet to come home to roost. A very similar difficulty will face Key Stage 3 teachers. The responsibility for explaining this in the clearest possible terms lies with the government and the Department for Education, not teachers and schools.

Quality and Manageability in Teacher Assessment

It is vital that TA is a quality product that is manageable and generates meaningful information. Sutton (1991, p. 39) warned that "quantity of assessment is no real substitute for quality". Indeed, one could go on to suggest that the greater the number of organised, systematic assessments a teacher attempts to undertake then, if only because of the time factor, the lower will be the quality of those judgements.

It is highly likely that the plethora of ticks and the mountains of pupil work that can be found in many classrooms today result from the anxiety felt by teachers to provide evidence of their assessment judgements so that they can defend themselves to present and prospective parents, governors, audit-moderators and OFSTED inspectors. To help to ease some of this anxiety the demands of TA must be rationalised.

It is neither necessary nor practical to attempt to provide evidence of every assessment judgement. Neither is it necessary or, indeed, desirable for every judgement to result from formal assessment activities. Teachers are professionals and, providing that they are clear in their own minds about the criteria for attainment, then as often as not the assessment judgements will be made informally and the evidence retained within the teachers' heads.

Of course, for the purpose of quality assurance, teachers will, from time to time, wish to gather *some* hard evidence to support *some* of the assessment judgements they have made for *some* of their pupils. It is important that teachers are selective with regard to the aspects of the curriculum for which they decide to retain evidence. There are some aspects that will generate meaningful and irrefutable evidence more easily than others. The assessments for those samples of work can then be agreed by colleagues and included in a school/department portfolio that will illustrate both the quality and consistency of the judgements whilst also removing the necessity to keep massive amounts of evidence.

The National Curriculum is dependent upon TA to deliver the formative purposes of the assessment procedure. But, if TA is to be a quality process then it must be manageable. It can only become manageable if the quantity to be assessed is reduced and the responsibility for that rests not with the teachers but with the curriculum reviewers.

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

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

Scotland's Curriculum Reform

Wynne Harlen

Professor Wynne Harlen is Director of the Scottish Council for Research in Education. Here she contrasts Scottish with English curricular reform.

An article by Aileen Fisher in *Forum*, Volume 35, No. 3, 1993, described the structure of the 5-14 Development Programme which is Scotland's equivalent of the National Curriculum. As reported there, in June 1993 what we then thought was the final document of the Programme was published and teachers then knew what was in store for them in putting it in place. At that point thirteen Guidelines had been published, relating to the five areas of the curriculum: for language (English, Gaelic, Latin, Modern European), mathematics, environmental studies, expressive arts and religious and moral education (with personal and social development as a separate document), and for testing, assessment and reporting. The final document was a revised version of the first to be produced in draft form, on the structure and balance of the curriculum. However it was not the last of the blue and white covered documents to arrive in schools; in January HMI circulated *5-14: a Practical Guide*, which was "to provide advice to head teachers and teachers on implementing 5-14 and to assist consideration of its implications for teachers and pupils in the classroom" (SOED, 1994).

The publication of *5-14: a Practical Guide* was coordinated with a ministerial announcement made in response to teachers' concerns about overload. That announcement dealt with the impact of innovations of other kinds which have coincided to increase stress in teachers to a point where it was a cause for concern. A research study into workload and associated stress found that on an Occupational Stress Indicator teachers score "higher than any other group for which norms are available" and that workload was one of the main causes of stress (Johnstone, 1993). This article deals only with the impact of 5-14, but the wider context should not be forgotten.

Similarities and Differences across the Border

Coming so close to the publication of the final report of the Dearing Review it might well be thought that *5-14: a Practical Guide* might be some kind of equivalent. The only similarity is in their common function of attempting to pour oil on the troubled waters stirred up by multiple demands on schools. There was no formal review of 5-14, equivalent to the Dearing Review, preceding the Scottish HMI document; such was hardly necessary since information about the impact of the Programme was coming from several sources.

The implementation of 5-14 was under the constant vigilance of HMI, formalised in meetings of a 5-14 HMI Committee chaired by a chief inspector. Many Regional and Island education authorities also established 5-14 committees which both planned and monitored local programmes of in-service training and of materials development to help teachers. The teachers' unions of course kept a close eye on the impact on teachers and indeed the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) commissioned the

survey of workload to which reference has already been made. Finally there is a national evaluation, begun in 1991 and extending to 1995, which has reported regularly to the HMI 5-14 Committee and has produced lengthy interim reports and a brief report (Harlen et al, 1994) of which two copies are being circulated to each school in Scotland.

It might be said at this point that all these sources of information also exist in one way or another in England and yet the system built up so much steam that the Dearing safety valve had to be used. Why the difference in practice? The answer has to be sought not only in the differences in the two curricula, their statutory status, their range and elaboration, and in the testing arrangements, but also in the social context, the history and not least the size of the countries.

Right at the start of the development of the national curricula we find significant differences in the tone of the initial consultation documents. The opening sentence of the Scottish document (SED, 1987) was "We in Scotland are justly proud of our school system". In contrast, the document for England and Wales opened with the words "The Government intends to introduce legislation this autumn to provide for a national curriculum in maintained schools ..." (DES/WO, 1987). The Scottish paper went on to note that advice was already provided to both primary and secondary schools by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC), a body which had been issuing guidance to teachers since 1965, unlike the National Curriculum Council (NCC) which was set up in 1989 to implement the National Curriculum in England. It was also recognised that in 1987 Scottish secondary schools were in the midst of a transition to a new form of examination at age 16 and it would not have been acceptable to include the years 14 to 16 in the new curriculum. Thus from the beginning the 5-14 Development Programme was fashioned to respect the tradition of compliance with national guidance, and thus did not need to be made statutory, and to retain continuity with the structure of the primary curriculum developed by the SCCC in 1983.

In relative terms, compared with the changes introduced by the National Curriculum in England and Wales, the change required in Scottish schools was evolutionary not revolutionary. The development offered "a programme of clarification and definition rather than of fundamental changes in teaching approaches and methods ... It will be a key aim of the programme that teachers should be supplied with adequate guidance on teaching the curriculum and on assessment" (SED, 1987).

First Reactions to 5-14

However, as the national evaluation showed, the innovation is nonetheless taken seriously and its implementation is stressful to many teachers. The main findings of the

evaluation in relation to primary schools can be summed up as follows:

- English language and mathematics were the only two areas to be widely implemented up to the end of the 1992/3 session.
- Most teachers found the content for English language and mathematics clear and sensible and recognised in the guidelines much of what they already did; this they found reassuring.
- The language used in parts was described as jargon and it took at least a year of working with a document before the terms and structure became familiar.
- Not surprisingly, headteachers were ahead of class teachers in studying the documents and were in general more favourable towards them.
- The guidelines were mainly being used in forward planning and in matching what was done to the curriculum. Changes being made as a result included a greater emphasis in English on speaking and listening, while in mathematics there was more problem-solving, practical work and information handling.
- Teachers were slow to give attention to the guidelines on assessment. (Note that these were solely concerned with assessment as part of teaching and not at all with national testing.) This was an area where headteachers recognised that there would have to be change in many teachers' practice, but there is as yet little sign of this beginning.
- The main concerns were about the time required to study and to begin to use the guidelines. 82% of teachers surveyed in December 1992 judged their workload to have increased considerably and the proportion was even higher for headteachers. However heads recognised the compensation that the 5-14 Programme was taking them in directions they wanted to go, particularly in better whole school planning of topics and programmes and forward lesson planning.

In secondary schools:

- Again English and mathematics were the first to be implemented.
- The guidelines were welcomed by virtually all teachers in that they provided a structure for planning and reviewing S1 and S2 courses and a basis for curriculum continuity with primary schools.
- Concerns were mainly about resources and workload.
- The possibility of further changes being introduced in the secondary school, as a result of the Howie Committee which was considering the upper secondary curriculum, was a deterrent to investing time in implementing changes in S2.
- There was a generally positive response to the assessment guidelines but concern about the time that proper implementation would require. These concerns were often based on a perception of assessment as requiring time-consuming record-keeping.
- By early 1993 implementation had been supported by appointing a 5-14 committee in half of the schools sampled and nearly all had established a 5-14 coordinator. Four out of five had also some structure for primary/secondary liaison in place.

Although secondary schools were initially slow to begin implementing 5-14, some regarding it as essentially a development for primary schools, once started they have made rapid progress. This is partly on account of size and departmental structure which enables parallel efforts in different curriculum areas, whereas primary school teachers have been overwhelmed by the vision of having to work on all areas at the same time.

As coordinator of the national evaluation of the implementation I would like to feel that the evaluation has had an impact on the decision, in publishing *5-14: a Practical Guide*, to set a reasonable pace for the implementation and to provide some guidance which will deter some of the elaborate planning and recording schemes we have seen in primary schools and which could only be described as 'going over the top'. However educational research is but one of the many factors which may impact on policy decisions. In this case, as mentioned earlier, there were many other sources of information. In a country of small population, where people in education know each other and where political sensitivities are sharpened by the different political complexions of central and local government, HMI have an important role in moderating the translation into practice of government policy. Hence it was they who stepped in to pour oil on the 5-14 waters, troubled not so much by the curriculum content as by the pace of its implementation.

Steadying the Pace

The document *5-14: a Practical Guide* sets out, for the first time, definite guidance as to how the implementation is expected to be completed:

"By the end of session 1993-4:

- all schools should have a strategy for the implementation of all the 5-14 guidelines ... and
- all teachers should be familiar with the 5-14 concepts and terminology of levels, attainment outcomes, strands and attainment targets.

By the end of session 1994-5:

- the guidelines on English language and mathematics should be implemented in all primary and secondary schools. Schools should have applied Assessment 5-14 to English language and mathematics. Teachers should be using 5-14 concepts and terminology in planning and assessing pupils' work in English language and mathematics and in reporting to parents.

By the end of session 1995-6:

- all schools should be extending the use of the 5-14 planning and assessment to those areas of the curriculum identified in their reviews of practice as being in most need of development. By this time, primary and secondary schools should be implementing the national guidelines in environmental studies or expressive arts or religious and moral education ...

In the session 1998-9:

- 5-14 should be in place in all areas of the curriculum ... " (SOED, 1994).

The *Practical Guide* also offers advice on planning within the context of school review and development planning. It gives examples of how the 5-14 guidelines might be used in short-term planning of topics or blocks of teaching and of record-keeping. These seem designed to counter the

'inflation' which has occurred in some schools where conscientious hours and hours have been spent on elaborate planning frameworks and ticklists. Some teachers will undoubtedly find these examples helpful, others may find them insulting in their over-simplicity compared with their own sophisticated procedures.

Implementing New Procedures in National Testing

Finally, what is happening to the testing? The new arrangements introduced in April 1992, following the disruption of previous arrangements by combined action of teachers and parents, require all pupils in P1 to S2 classes to be tested in reading, writing and mathematics when their teacher's own assessment indicates that they are ready to do so. The tests are thus described as serving to "provide teachers with the means to check their own assessments and [to] ensure more consistent interpretation by teachers of what particular levels of attainment mean" (SOED, 1992). There was consultation on the new arrangements and a promise to remove the regulation requiring testing if education authorities would cooperate in implementing the new arrangements and in pre-testing new test units. The regulation was subsequently removed at the end of 1992. New test material was required since the testing, previously confined to P4 and P7, would be extended to S1 and S2.

Whilst units existed to cover all five levels, they did not relate to contexts appropriate across years P1 to S2. Testing under the new arrangements was due to begin in primary schools in 1993 and in secondary school in 1994 but there is not yet much information about the pace of implementation (TESS, 1994). It is obviously too early to draw conclusions about the value of the new testing arrangements; this is an interesting area to watch.

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Early Years Curriculum

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Childhood is part of life as well as a preparation for the future. Tina Bruce (1987)

Early childhood practitioners profess a consensus in their approaches and place a great stress on the notion of education as being developmental and focused upon the child. However, closer inspection reveals confusion and disagreement between the rhetoric of early years principles and the practice that many young children experience. This article focuses on two of the major issues that teachers of young children are attempting to deal with and these are the problem of the downward pressure from the National Curriculum and the function of baseline assessment.

The range of provision for many under-fives is a complex picture, consisting of those children who attend full-time schooling in infant and primary reception classrooms, to nursery education and on to voluntary child care. This disjointed pattern is not a new one but it is being further complicated by the lack of an agreed coherent curriculum for the under-fives.

The National Curriculum has encouraged an emphasis on planning education in terms of its content, even in the early years, and on the related approach of viewing it in terms of its intended outcomes and its objectives. The danger of this approach is that it can lead to a lack of awareness

of the essential elements of the educational process and becomes more concerned with the 'man-in-the-making' or perhaps more appropriately, the 'Standard Task-result-in-the-making?' This downward pressure to teach a diluted form of content and knowledge encourages the view that education is a simple process and ignores the view of education as a subtle and sophisticated process of development which must be based and planned at every stage by reference to intrinsic principles rather than extrinsic aims.

Curriculum is now equated with the content of education and defined only in terms of subjects and skills. From this narrow perspective, it is assumed that curriculum planning is a purely technical problem which centres on how teachers can ensure that young children acquire the knowledge and skills that are claimed desirable. Uncritical planning of this kind is having an impact upon the work of teachers in early childhood education which is even more serious than the *laissez-faire* attitudes of the past. For it is promoting the idea that they must devise tidy, convenient programmes of instruction. This tendency runs counter to a main tenet of early childhood philosophy, that the child should be in control of his or her learning and leads to early years education being vulnerable to distortion. The notion that aspects of the curriculum can be pieced together in a

prescribed recipe is seductive in its simplicity but it is also misleading. For the dimensions of educational planning are interdependent and should be directed at helping teachers to refine their judgements in action rather than providing them with a tight prescription for that action.

It has long been accepted in nursery and early years classrooms that children need experience of first hand activity, different materials and provision for play. However, these activities are increasingly seen as a necessary method of occupying young children whilst the teacher concentrates on teaching 'the curriculum'. The general disregard of this dimension of experience ignores that a strong respect for children's ongoing development, thinking and being appears to be the best preparation for literacy (Payton, 1984; Wells, 1985), numeracy (Hughes, 1986) and scientific understanding (Richards et al, 1986). The pedagogical environment has a profound effect upon what children are able to do and the kind of thinking in which they can engage (Eisner, 1983). It is for this reason that the curriculum for the early years needs to be focused on developing varied and diverse ways of making meanings, rather than on narrowly conceived subject content. Professional planning will need to find ways of extending such experience by encouraging and developing the expressive forms of telling and listening, story and book sharing, music and drama, play and movement, collecting and sorting, counting and estimating, drawing and writing, building and modelling. This is not a method of easing children into schooling, as these forms of representation and symbolic modes are tools for thinking and are central to education.

The curriculum for the early years is human in character, rather than technical, and cannot be reduced to a simple technique or methodology. It depends upon the professional ability of the teacher; upon the teacher's ability to plan and sustain an educational context and upon his or her ability to make informed judgements about the kind of experience that will promote each child's learning. Alongside this professional understanding, must go the teacher's ability to create such a context in reality and to act upon such judgements in practice.

Alongside the difficulty of sustaining a sound early years curriculum in the face of pressure from the National Curriculum many teachers are also dealing with the need to measure the child's development, progress and attainment through the early years in order to justify the 'added value' of early years provision. Some headteachers perceive that there is a growing pressure to show evidence of value added to OFSTED inspectors and to validate Standard Task results at the end of Key Stage 1. However, the guidance notes for independent inspectors in the *Framework for Inspection* notes that, "inspectors will need to make a judgement on the validity and effectiveness of any such procedures" (p. 26).

Further difficulty is encountered if these assessment results are then used to compare one school's intake with that of another, especially if the assessment procedures are concerned with the development of the whole child and not just those aspects related to the National Curriculum. There is substantial support for baseline assessment from local educational authorities (LEAs) as the Worcester College survey in 1993 reported:

About half [of LEAs] include using the information for comparative purposes later on in the child's education.

The report went on to add:

It is worth noting that the TGAT report saw the assessment

of children at 7 as the baseline against which to see subsequent progress in National Curriculum subject. (DES, 1987, para. 146, appendix L, para. 11).

The survey concluded that:

There is substantial support for baseline assessment from LEAs. Generally these assessments are related to the development of the whole child and are based on observational assessments collected over a period of time that in many cases starts before entry to school. It would probably be better if the term entry assessment rather than baseline assessment was used, although it is how they are used not what they are called that is most important.

In order to relate assessment to the principles of early childhood education, it is crucial that there is a clear framework. The two most important aspects of the framework are devised from the decisions that teachers make and the procedures they adapt in relation to assessment – the evaluation of their planning, provision and practice and the assessment of the children's performance and development. In a climate where the demands for more and more tangible evidence of achievement are being made it is important that all teachers of young children maintain and strengthen their professional procedures for assessment.

The main objectives are:

- to focus on the children's individual needs from the very first day, to help in planning for the children's early school experiences;
- to ensure that all partners in the child's education perceive that this is the main objective and that assessment is not being carried out in order to facilitate an undesirable downward pressure to implement a more formal prescribed curriculum for the under-fives.

Early years education is concerned with more than the acquisition of knowledge, it is concerned with a range of learning that is wide and is involved in every piece of behaviour. The earliest learning in a child's life is the most profound and long-lasting, for it consists of the only learning he or she has and is constantly reinforced. All of this adds up to a comprehensive picture of the child as a learner with his or her urge towards increased competence, and above all, it indicates that we must start from where the child is focusing on what he or she can do and not assuming that there is any kind of learning that has not already begun before the child enters school. It is the search for continued growth of competence.

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The Case for Continuity

Ann Lance

Until recently Ann Lance was Headteacher of a large primary school in Handsworth, Birmingham, and chaired the local Headteacher Core Group of the National Primary Centre. She was seconded to that Centre to coordinate research and development of pupil transfer from primary to secondary school. Last September she took the post of Senior Lecturer in the Education Department of Westhill College, Birmingham.

Although the government purports to show concern about low achievement levels amongst young people leaving secondary school, its actions over the past few years have, I would argue, done nothing to help address the issue. In the great muddle that has surrounded the introduction of a hastily and ill-prepared National Curriculum, children's life chances have been put at risk and teacher morale has been destroyed. The government has also cluttered the system with so much unnecessary baggage that important issues which do not neatly fit into a curriculum area, and certainly don't find themselves at the top of schools' development plans, have lost the momentum that they had begun to sustain prior to the Education Act (1988).

The area of continuity between Key Stages 2 and 3, that vital point at which children transfer from primary to secondary school, is one victim of the overload which has become a feature of our education system. It is evident from research carried out during the course of 1992/3 for the National Primary Centre (NPC), that continuity at this point of transfer has not been a priority during the past few years. The demands of the Education Reform Act (1988) have sent colleagues from either side of the divide scuttling back into their own phase to cope with the changes within their separate systems. There's been a drive to 'get one's own house in order', 'keep afloat', 'get to grips with the national curriculum, assessment, local management', etc. In this climate of change, most schools have not identified continuity between primary and secondary phases as a major target in their whole school planning. The area of cross-phase liaison has been a neglected issue, and this is borne out by the recent NPC research. The comment, "Secondary transfer isn't a topic currently on our agenda", is one which might reflect the stance of headteachers in a number of primary schools. This is particularly disappointing in the light of the fact that considerable progress had been made in building up links between the two phases and in attempting to make the two systems more compatible in the 1980s.

As long ago as 1975 Birmingham's Education Development Centre had made recommendations in a report relating to continuity. Some of these still await implementation, even though the need for continuity is no less pressing. The efforts of primary practitioners, from nursery upwards, will surely be wasted if the progress a child has made is abandoned when s/he is eleven by giving 'a fresh start'. The experience of children from either end of the spectrum who are either bored because they are repeating work, or frustrated because they cannot cope, should not be ignored. "It is the pupils themselves, and their educational needs, that provide the strongest argument for insisting that continuity does matter".[1]

In the primary sector there is a professional duty to ensure that the efforts to maximise the potential of children

are not wasted, and that children's talents and needs are not ignored. From a secondary viewpoint there's a need for a much greater coherence in terms of the information transferred with children, for stronger links with primary practitioners. There's an urgent need to be able to respond to the different needs of children when they move to secondary school so that curriculum continuity can take place.

But while part of the problem relates to the need to meld together two systems which are radically different, there is an even greater challenge. There is an enormous gap in perception between the practitioners in either phase and this has emerged as a particular issue in the research carried out by the National Primary Centre. There's a need to tackle the mistrust and disrespect which exists across the divide between people who, after all, are members of the same profession. This contrast in culture which exists between professionals from primary and secondary schools is a barrier to continuity. On the primary side, there are practitioners who operate a child-centred approach, while on the secondary front the school's organisation is dominated by the subjects taught. The mistrust between teachers in either phase has been compounded by different modes of training and a lack of knowledge and understanding about how schools operate outside their own domain.

A starting point for a debate around this issue must be an acknowledgement of the differences. The NPC research includes honest comments from teachers on either side of the divide which illustrate the differences. Some of these comments are based in ignorance of the other phase, on misconception and misunderstanding. Some are cynical, and made after a long wet day when everything went wrong. But they nevertheless represent views expressed by colleagues, who genuinely believed what they'd said.

In relation to the perceptions of cross-phase initiatives, there was some contrast in the views from primary and secondary colleagues. Given their more flexible budgets and more favourable staffing levels, secondary schools are often the initiators of links programmes, and this leaves them prey to criticism from primary schools that they are merely trying to recruit pupils, or dominate the curriculum. The NPC research showed that while there was evidence of positive feeling about such initiatives, elements of mistrust and suspicion also crept into many comments which were made during interviews. "It's an enjoyable experience for the children, but time is precious. It's simply there to meet the needs of the secondary school in boosting their numbers." "It's purely a public relations exercise to encourage more children to go there" (primary teachers). One secondary headteacher was quite honest about this. "I have always seen the value in liaison work of this type. But a falling roll prompted me to promote this link with

feeder primary schools.” One enthusiastic secondary teacher who was responsible for promoting a links programme commented, “Although we hope that primary children involved in our partnership programme will come to our school, we welcome all children regardless of the secondary school they might choose. After all, it’s the links with the schools and its teachers which are important as well as our contact with the children.”

It is clear from the above comment, and there were others in a similar vein, that there is some positive feeling in teachers about their colleagues in the opposite phase. However, there is undoubtedly a difference in perspective between some primary and secondary staff. From the secondary point of view, what they are doing has a useful curriculum input, and provides meaningful learning experiences for the primary-aged child. While the primary perspective of it is that it is merely a means of recruitment.

It is my view that primary teachers should not be too cynical about the secondary schools’ need to have an eye to the market. Indeed, primary schools find themselves in a similar position of trying to find ways of informing potential customers about the facilities they have to offer. Given the secondary schools’ need to attract pupils, this could be a very useful lever for encouraging the development of links. If, however, this is the sole reason for establishing liaison, the initiative is likely to founder. In order to achieve sustained success, cross-phase links have to be carefully nurtured once set up. They require the establishment of a common set of aims between the partners involved. If there is negotiation by all parties, the presence of passive, cynical and uncommitted members will be avoided. The great sadness in all this is that before the Education Act of 1988, and all the overload that came with it, teachers had been working together to try to improve continuity.

Another major issue within the research related to transfer documentation. This is a vital element of the discussion about continuity between primary and secondary phases. If any consideration is to be given to the achievements which the child brings to the secondary school, then there must be an effective system of collating the information at primary level and passing it on to the receiving school. Because of the vast changes which have taken place during the past few years in relation to the curriculum, systems of recording have likewise been thrown into a state of flux. As a result of this, there is a wide variety of records or profiles for pupils in the city of Birmingham, and there is certainly no standardised format of transfer documentation. A group of committed teachers, headteachers and advisers spent a considerable amount of time and energy in producing a practical record of achievement for use in Birmingham primary schools in the late 1980s, but this time and effort was wasted because it was out of date almost as soon as it was produced.

There is evidence, once again, of professional mistrust on the part of practitioners from either side of the divide. On the primary side there is suspicion that nobody will look at the information which is being sent. “Some of the profiles, you need a wheelbarrow for them. Who looks at them anyway at secondary school? When we’re filling in all the information, burning the midnight oil, you wonder if anyone’s going to read it.” At secondary level there is fear that primary teachers overestimate the abilities of children. You can detect some of these elements of mistrust, suspicion and a lack of professional respect through the

words of the teachers. “There’s considerable variation in judgment between primary schools. You can’t always take what’s written as correct.”

These comments raise questions about the whole area of recording of pupils’ achievement. It’s important that teachers in both phases are proficient in observing children, making notes, keeping files, being analytical, being accurate in assessment procedures. It is also essential that teachers make positive use of the information which is passed to them from colleagues, at all stages in the child’s education, but crucially to this debate, at transfer between phases. Ray Derricott (1985) highlights the problem of mistrust which exists both within and across phases. “Teachers do not automatically refer to their pupils’ case records when teaching them for the first time in the same way that doctors are trained to do. Teachers suspect their colleagues’ judgments and prefer to rely on their own diagnosis.”[2]

What is evident from the NPC research, is that this is a complex issue. There is a problem in trying to create a partnership between two such different systems. “The lack of fit between the secondary subject based curriculum and primary cross curricular approach does not ease collaboration between teachers either on subject content, or on approaches to teaching and learning.”[3]

This whole notion of continuity presents a major challenge to teachers. It is not straightforward for a number of reasons. There is no natural framework for links for many urban schools. Schools with a large number of feeder primary schools face an enormous task in trying to forge links, as do primary schools sending pupils to ten or a dozen different secondary schools. But what seems to be crucial in all this is that teachers who are trained in different ways and who are involved in different systems are likely to feel ill at ease in trying to meld the two systems. In a recent article Gerald Haigh highlighted Bill Laar’s concerns about this issue. “Bill Laar’s thesis, after all, is not so much to do with the mechanics of transfer as with trust and a sharing of understanding and expectation, with schools learning from each others’ practice in an unprejudiced way.”[4] This government’s preoccupation with setting schools in competition with each other has not helped to encourage the collaboration which is critical to the bridging of the gap between primary and secondary colleagues.

So long as children have to cross these boundaries, teachers must work together to find ways to do more than just ease transition. They have not been encouraged to focus on this important issue in the muddle which has followed the Education Reform Act (1988), and in the creation of a competitive culture. It is the mishandling of the introduction of the National Curriculum, the many changes to its format, with all the implications which that has for record-keeping, which has put the cause of continuity between primary and secondary phase back, and even relegated it to a condition of total neglect. This vital issue deserves a greater priority.

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Independent Flexible Learning

Ben Collins & Kath Lee

Ben Collins, previously from Stantonbury Campus and Countesthorpe College is currently Deputy Head at King Edward VII Upper School, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. He has written articles for *Forum* on school based curriculum initiatives. Kath Lee teaches information technology and is currently responsible for an innovative 'Flexible Learning' programme in the school.

The sheer pressure to teach to the syllabus under the National Curriculum has restricted the scope teachers have to develop new courses and explore new learning approaches. At King Edward VII Upper School a team of teachers, working across a well established subject timetable, is introducing a course which is acting as a catalyst for change.

'Flexible Learning', 'Self-supported Study' and 'Independent Learning' are terms used to describe a development currently taking root in secondary schools. The continuing debate over differentiation, the use of Records of Achievement, student profiling and target setting techniques, coupled with the arrival of new low-cost teaching technologies, are having an impact on the way teachers view their task.

The 'Resource Based Learning' methods pioneered by some progressive secondary schools in the 1970s and 1980s are being reshaped and adapted to meet the new demands of the National Curriculum. If 'open learning' is no longer an option for older pupils, some of the techniques used then have been adapted and are being applied to a more directed curriculum. The skills of self-organisation, target setting, information retrieval, problem-solving and self-evaluation are as relevant, if not more so, to youngsters faced with the pressures of a subject-centred curriculum. In today's context these skills need to be properly taught if students are to become confident users of the tools and resources schools make available to them.

In the Spring of 1990, a group of teachers in the school embarked on an action research programme of classroom observation. As a result of this initiative interest grew in exploring teaching approaches that encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning. With encouragement from the Senior Management Team a 'Learning Policy' document was drafted and used for discussion by staff across the school. Departments responded in different ways to a policy that promoted classroom differentiation and the appropriate use of individualised learning strategies. Some found that the pressures of the National Curriculum restricted their scope for exploration while others were able to move forward. The 'Supported Study' course became a focus for innovation and a training ground for teachers interested in exploring new approaches.

High school parents and students coming fresh to the school needed to view the course as a serious opportunity to extend and build on skills developed in the primary and high school. Students would further skills that would improve their performance in GCSE courses and enhance examination success. With so much emphasis being placed on subject examination results, convincing parents of the merits of a non-examination course was an early challenge.

The school handbook explains:

Supported Study is a course in which students, in association with a tutor, identify their own needs, direct their own studies and take responsibility for their learning outcomes. It is an achiever course that caters for all students across the ability range. The course accounts for 10% of each student's time. Students receive study skills training, experience different research techniques and information handling skills. They use the time to consolidate their other studies across the curriculum and use a variety of revision techniques in preparation for their exams. The approaches adopted allow individuals to work at their own pace, select the most appropriate way of working on a task and learn at their optimum level. The skills they learn are transferable to all other subjects.

Independent Learning Centre

When the course was launched in the Spring and Summer of 1992 there was concern lest it be seen as a 'private study' option. A team leader was appointed to plan details of the course and the governors agreed substantial expenditure to convert areas of the library to provide facilities to support the course. The area was renamed the 'Independent Learning Centre'.

A committed team was brought together under the management of an energetic leader. It included teachers responsible for the library and information technology who were keen to extend their specialisms and teach students how to make best use of the facilities. The team met in intensive sessions during the term before launch to establish its programme and agree its first tasks.

- To help students develop study skills, research methods and problem-solving abilities designed to support their learning in all areas;
- To give students access to the wide variety of resources and equipment available in the school to support their learning;
- To give students the opportunity to take greater control of their own learning and give them confidence in their own abilities of self-organisation and to set targets to achieve success.

Teaching Study Techniques

At the start of the course it was envisaged that the emphasis would be very much on teaching specific study techniques. The skills of studying and self-organisation had to be taught. A tentative programme was drawn up with activities planned for the first term. Students would be set tasks designed to develop specific competencies. These were later to be applied in relation to their work in subjects.

The first term's activities focus on the following:

- Study techniques
- Presentation of work
- Time management
- Research techniques
- Information retrieval (traditional and electronic)
- Problem-solving

Students are introduced to both individual and cooperative group activities intended to make the work active and enjoyable in its own right and help them understand some of the concepts that are central to 'target setting', 'problem-solving' and 'planning'. A positive relationship with the tutor is important as both student and tutor need to get to know each other well.

Keeping a Log Book

At the centre of the process is the student's personal Log Book. Recording each lesson's activities on a log sheet and keeping track of progress through self-assessment procedures is essential. The supportive Study Tutor works closely with each student in reviewing and profiling progress. Gradually, as responsibility is passed to the student, planning sheets are introduced to ensure that the students practise their skills of organisation and management of time. By the end of the first two months the student is responsible for planning their focus for each lesson or a series of lessons. Subject teachers are encouraged to help in this process and appropriate study materials are gradually being built up for each subject in a centralised resources bank.

At times during the year whole class or group activities can be included as they are considered appropriate. For example, a focus on a specific piece of computer software, or on revision techniques in preparation for exams.

The Supported Study profiling procedures complement those of the school. Reviews of the student subject reports are a valuable aid to assist student and tutor to identify individual and common needs and direct the production of relevant supportive resources. Upgrading the library and availability of a wide range of facilities allow students to work appropriately in different areas. As they gain in confidence and self-responsibility students may leave the adjacent classroom where they are based for long periods of time to get on with tasks they have set themselves.

Teamwork and Coordination

In its second year the number of students opting for Supported Study has increased from 80 to over 120. Its popularity has resulted in a considerable load on the available facilities. A new team of teachers has been added to the original core team. A monthly team meeting has been incorporated into the calendar to ensure that the Supported Study teachers are informed of course content. Each member links to a faculty and brings information and fresh resources to add to available study materials for tutors to use. Progress is reviewed, ideas exchanged and improvements made.

Tutors speak positively of the relaxed relationships and positive working atmosphere in their lessons. For many students it is a time and place to get help with work they find difficult, or a time to do some research in the library

in order to complete some coursework, or find time to do some word-processing. The team is very clear that it is not a time to do homework although it may be a time to get some help with a problem and set off in the right direction.

Future Development

What are the lessons for those wishing to introduce similar schemes in their schools? The major challenge for the team is that of full integration of the course into the culture and curriculum of the school. In a large 14-19 school a course of this nature will need to go through a period of recognition. Subject staff have yet to fully grasp the potential of the study skills students are acquiring. Teachers need to be encouraged to make use of opportunities provided by Supported Study to set students appropriate independent work. The school needs to further develop its reporting system so as to incorporate individual targets into the teaching of all subjects. These targets could be better used in Supported Study sessions to inform student and tutor of the work that needs to be done.

Critics have said that a 'flexible learning' course of this nature will always remain on the edges. It is argued that independent learning should be an approach to study which permeates all subject areas. Our experience suggests that many teachers lack the confidence or time to explore new approaches within their own subject departments and need the catalyst of a new team to develop their ideas. 'Supported Study' has given us many a new insight into how students can be motivated to organise and study at their own pace.

The students themselves should be the judges of the course's success. Parents have clearly been getting favourable reports from their children. The following comments are taken from a recent survey:

I have enjoyed being able to study at my own pace.

I have enjoyed getting to know about CD-ROM and the software we have here.

I have learnt to use all the resources the school has to offer and new study skills.

I have found having extra time with a tutor to help me most useful.

I have learnt to work on my own by doing Supported Study.

Low-cost and accessible reprographic equipment did much to free the teacher from the confines of the textbook and the blackboard and allow the teacher to work more closely with the class. Information technology is starting to have a similar impact in schools. The potential is there but its uses will depend on access. We are just at the beginning. Time and training will be needed if schools are to make effective use of their investment. We frequently hear the need to train young people to become autonomous, independent learners able to cope with the growing information explosion. Change in practice is slow however. Our experience indicates that if you teach them how, they can do it, but you cannot leave it to chance.

Politics and Curriculum

Eric Robinson

Until 1990 Rector of Lancashire Polytechnic, Eric Robinson has served on the CRE and EOC and is currently consultant to the Fair Employment Commission in Northern Ireland and Vice President of the Socialist Education Association. He argues that a democracy needs a curriculum that empowers.

The Thatcher government's assault on public sector education proved more fundamental and more devastating than we socialists deemed possible even in our worst nightmares. It caught us unawares and left us in disarray. Our main reaction has been defensive with the danger that it has encouraged a perception that the Tories are the radicals and we are the conservatives in education policy. This has been most apparent in respect of the changes in the management, methodology and financing of education but perhaps more potent in respect of the content of education. The idea of the National Curriculum has divided us and the demand for 'back to basics' has for many echoed the Ruskin speech of James Callaghan and the educational primitivism of the Manpower Services Commission for which his government had much responsibility.

Our own divisions and uncertainties have inhibited our response to curriculum reforms that are blatantly political in nature. Traditionally the labour movement and the teaching profession have each maintained a liberal stance on the curriculum, generally insisting that it must remain 'impartial' and aloof from political controversy. We now must face the reality that the response to a political attack must be political and that political neutrality means political impotence. The politics of the curriculum is now here to stay and it is fundamental to the politics of education.

The Tory approach to schooling and the curriculum is not merely prescriptive, unimaginative, parochial, limited and limiting: it is aggressively authoritarian, intolerant, didactic, uncreative, anti-creative, anti-imaginative and anti-democratic; it strives to misrepresent ideas, interpretation, theory and opinion as fact and thereby seeks to deny alternative views of the world and debases ideas, theory and thought. The traditional values it is most concerned to promote are those of docility, obedience and piety.

The Tories strongly maintain that the teachers have been inculcating left-wing ideas in the classroom by encouraging children to be imaginative, creative, tolerant and, worst of all, questioning of authority and received opinion. Would that there were more truth in the charge.

I recently was asked to draft a British socialist response to a European questionnaire about our education practice. One question was "Do you teach and is it part of the curriculum of your country: (i) citizen democracy; (ii) human rights?", to which I responded "No. The Labour Party has attached low priority to this. The Conservative Party is firmly opposed to it on the grounds that it would encourage subversion". A further question was "How do you maintain democracy at schools in your country?" to which I replied "Generally the UK does not maintain democracy at schools". I should perhaps have replied that we have not even thought seriously about it.

The protection and promotion of democracy should be

central to our education policy and practice. Fundamentally the Tories are opposed to democracy. We, the socialists, are ambiguous about it and about what we mean by it. This uncertainty is at the heart of much of our thinking about education.

Worthwhile and meaningful democracy depends upon an informed and active population who feel and believe that day to day they have some real say and control in their lives and that the various institutions of their government are theirs. To reduce democracy to no more than an occasional visit to a polling station to express a preference for one or another omnipotent city or state machine is a travesty.

Ambiguities

Real democracy is not easy. It requires work, study and education. We are not born with democratic skills. We have to learn them and we cannot start too soon. Democracy should be taught and practised in the home and in the school. The essential foundations of democracy are not voting but tolerance and human dignity; its bricks and cement are understanding and cooperation. None of these have a place in the Tories' educational agenda; not all of them are always high in the priorities of socialists and teachers. We British are not internationally renowned for our tolerance of children and some of us would have difficulty in conceiving that dignity had anything to do with children other than perhaps as something with which to intimidate them.

Much, but not all, of this relates to the 'hidden curriculum', the ethos of the school. The progressives in our education system have much proud achievement in the development of schools with a genuine democratic ethos – tolerant, open, cooperative – sharply contrasting with the authoritarian traditionalism of the old style for which the Tories are nostalgic. Yet we are often less than confident in identifying and defending our own style and in ridiculing and condemning the dreary, oppressive regimentation in which our opponents find perverse delight. The left was less than unanimous about the abolition of physical punishment in schools and remains astonishingly ambiguous about the oppressive regimentation that is institutionalised by school uniform. We are fairly unanimous about freedom for teachers but sometimes less than enthusiastic about kiddies' rights. In some countries there is now growing interest in the idea of votes for children, particularly in the government of education, but this has stirred few breasts in this country.

Parental access and participation in school are essential components of schooling in and for democracy about which the left and the teaching profession have sometimes been unenthusiastic. Absurdly, yet mischievously and sometimes effectively, the Tories have tried to insist that poverty at home is no educational handicap. We know the importance

of parental support and involvement but we have to cultivate it and not be condescending about it.

We must not be afraid of direct confrontation with the right about the curriculum. 'Back to basics' is as useless and as hypocritical a doctrine for the schools as it is for the family and the boudoir. We have too passively accepted much nonsense about the 3Rs. Reading, writing and arithmetic are pointless without meaning and purpose. They are means, and not the only means, of communication between people. Many of the methods of teaching them in the past were very ineffective and much of the content of the teaching was of little value; some of it was simply wrong. Past emphasis on the teaching of writing whilst positively discouraging speaking (children should be seen but not heard) made a travesty of language teaching. The idea that arithmetic is just 'doing sums' is the cause of most innumeracy.

I have vivid personal memories of the brutal, tedious grind of pre-war teaching and learning in elementary schools in this country. Those who want to go back to that either do not know what they are talking about or they are not fit to have any part in the education of children.

Empower or Control

From the start of schooling the main aim of education should be to empower people effectively to direct and control their own lives. For this they need a range of skills and knowledge which are socially defined and through which they find social expression and participate in social action. All this is meaningless to those who proclaim that they do not believe in society. To those who fear social action it constitutes subversion. For them the main purpose of mass education is not to empower people but to make them amenable to direction and control. This implies a direct confrontation between left and right and there is no room for compromise.

The late Cyril Bibby ridiculed the idea of studying a subject 'for its own sake' with the riposte that "a subject does not have a sake". He insisted that education for liberation of the human spirit is education with a purpose that is meaningful not merely for the teacher but, just as important, for the student.

For the Tories the problem is to prescribe mass education which promotes conformity of behaviour together with carefully limited technically useful skills. Their solution lies in study, for its own sake, of ostensibly factual matter with implicit social values – their social values – together with practical vocational skills apparently devoid of values or social content. Even in their terms it does not work. Its outcome is bad academic education absurdly demarcated from bad vocational preparation. This is most apparent in the government's approach to the education of teachers in which the academic education of teachers is to have

minimum social content – social science graduates not wanted – and to be distanced as far as possible from professional training, which is to be acquired by sitting next to Nellie.

The Tories' commitment to A-level courses and their total separation from 'vocational' courses is entirely consistent with this. It debases not only vocationalism but purpose in education. In the humanities A-levels demand the regurgitation of received opinion and in the sciences 'factual' regurgitation and technical practice. Nothing is more remote from Tory prescription than the study and discussion of the purpose and social context of an academic subject.

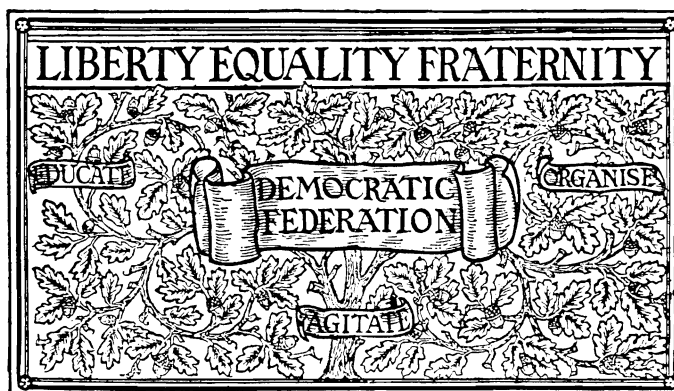
Such slogans as the absurd 'back to basics' can acquire popularity only in so far as people feel that schooling has departed from what children really need. Our response to this must be to base our approach on purpose and practicality with the imperative that this sense of purpose and practicality is shared with parents and the children themselves. This implies a continuing dialogue with parents and children in which we strive to raise their sights beyond their immediate concerns. This will be to little avail unless we maintain an active interest in their immediate needs and concerns.

That many of these needs and concerns have a political content cannot be evaded. If we are genuinely committed to a curriculum, overt and hidden, which empowers people then part of the curriculum must be political. To promote a living democracy we have to teach people about politics and this includes countering the political misinformation and obfuscation with which they are fed by the mass media and the advertising industry.

We have to start by giving the lie to the idea that teaching in schools can be made politics-free by sterilising the curriculum, by eliminating contemporary studies or by avoiding controversy. We must be ever aware that the Tories insist that their doctrines and their supporters are nonpolitical. They maintain a stance of 'not in front of the children' towards political study as though it were pornographic, whilst exposing our children to the most blatant political propaganda from all directions. If we are to have a national core curriculum then politics should be part of it or we are not serious about democracy.

To many on the left much of this will be 'old hat'. Many teachers will say that they have been trying to do all this for long enough; this is true, but much remains to be done and much to be restored. We need new initiatives and a

new confidence about it. Our response to the Tory curriculum 'reforms' has been muted and disunited. If the progressives indeed had the upper hand in British education before Thatcher then we must accept much responsibility for the political impotence and incompetence of the British people today. I make no apology for recalling some of the old tunes or even appealing to the left to re-examine – but not merely to go back to – its basics in education.



Design by William Morris

Teaching for Democracy

Antony Luby

Antony Luby is Principal Teacher of religious education at Aboyne Academy, Aberdeenshire. Responding to Brian Simon's article (*Forum*, Volume 35, No. 2, 1993) decrying the attempts of politicians to control education, he argues for a democratic approach to classroom practice to facilitate teaching for democracy.

Today many would contend that the nation state of Scotland is presently facing a democratic crisis. Political sections of the press speak of a 'democratic deficit' whilst educationists warn of "the removal of education from the arena of democratic debate and the subsequent threat to the democratic life of this country".[1] Nor is this democratic crisis confined only to Scotland. In the last year or so the educational press south of the border has been inundated with complaints from teachers implementing the National Curriculum, teacher trainers, educational researchers and other educationists. At the heart of this tirade is an anger and resentment at unwarranted political intervention, much of which is based on "... a stock of beliefs, attitudes and expectations... many of [which] are erroneous, prejudiced and simpleminded...". Moreover, as Peters (1979) continues, "one of the aims of education is to make them less so...".[2] Thus, it is insufficient for all of us in education merely to acknowledge that educational practice is a social activity influenced by political ideology; it is incumbent on us to rid said political ideology of its 'erroneous beliefs, attitudes and expectations'. How might this be achieved?

A suitable starting point is the ideal of democracy. If a national consensus can be achieved on the role of education in fostering the democratic ideal, then political ideologues can be removed from the educational debate. Gradually freed from the pernicious influence of political ideology, the focus of the debate will be on pedagogical strategies that best foster the ideal of democracy.

Democracy and Education

From a Scottish viewpoint inspiration can be drawn from the 1947 Report of the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland which envisaged democracy and education "moving between the same two poles of freedom and ordered unity, of individuality and integration... welcoming and fostering diversity, and being content with no unity less rich than that of orchestral harmony...".[3] Such a vision may be impossible to achieve this side of the grave, but nonetheless it is one worth pursuing.

Although this report is short on detail as to how to achieve the democratic ideal, it does give us a democratic principle. This is the principle of ordered freedom, described as moving between the two tenets of freedom and structure (ordered unity). Thus, an approach to classroom practice which endeavours to foster the democratic ideal would have at its core the democratic principle of ordered freedom.

Ordered Freedom

Since 1947 there have been various studies which have commended approaches to classroom practice centred, albeit unknowingly, on the democratic principle of ordered freedom. An early 1960s North American study of primary schooling referred to the democratic tenets of structure and

freedom as 'directed' and 'discovery' learning, and concluded by advocating a middle way known as 'guided discovery'.[4] In the mid-1970s some educational philosophers similarly proposed an approach to classroom practice in which the pupils experienced the optimum of both structure and freedom.[5] More recently, educationists in North America have pointed to the learner's need for both structure and freedom in the learning environment.[6]

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s the democratic principle of ordered freedom has come to fruition in three initiatives. Firstly, 'negotiating the curriculum' in which the democratic tenets of structure and freedom are referred to as 'non-negotiable' and 'negotiable' aspects of the curriculum. Although apparently well established in Denmark, it is the often trying but nonetheless inspiring experiences of teachers and educationists in Australia and the USA which provide the more insightful educational literature.[7] Secondly, 'flexible learning' a widespread initiative throughout British education in which structure and freedom are apparent in the emphasis that it places on the sharing of responsibility between the pupil and the teacher for the learning environment. Finally, 'the Borders model of enterprising teaching and learning', an approach to teaching and learning explicitly founded on the two democratic tenets of structure and freedom, which was fashioned by a reflective classroom practitioner throughout his 20+ years experience [8] and subsequently developed by the Borders Enterprise Initiative.

Having established the democratic principle of ordered freedom as a hallmark of an approach to classroom practice which fosters the democratic ideal, what other criteria should be met by a democratic approach to classroom practice?

Criteria for Classroom Practice

According to Hamilton (1990) a democratic society requires its pupils to have both reproductive and productive forms of educational experience.[9] The reproductive form of educational experience is to enable the pupil to gain the necessary knowledge and skills with which to successfully fit into society. The productive form of educational experience is to empower the pupil so that he may change society. How might these democratic criteria of reproductive and productive forms of educational experience be reconciled with a democratic approach to classroom practice?

Arguably, classroom practice has three functions, namely, technical, practical and emancipatory. The technical function of classroom practice holds that the nature of classroom life is instrumental, i.e. to bring about desirable educational outcomes such as pupils' assimilation of worthwhile knowledge and skills. Thus the teacher's technical function is to apply effective teaching principles in order to promote the pupils' assimilation of said

knowledge and skills. In the Scottish educational scene such a function of classroom practice is inherent in the 5-14 attainment targets; and in England and Wales its equivalent may be held to be the key stages of the National Curriculum. The second, practical function of classroom practice though, attains less prominence in educational initiatives. This function regards classroom life as being essentially communicative in nature, i.e. it is concerned with the exchanging of information, ideas and feelings. So, not only does the classroom teacher promote the assimilation of worthwhile knowledge and skills but he/she also assists the pupils to render such learning personally meaningful. Essentially then, both of these functions fulfil the democratic criterion that pupils experience a reproductive approach to educational practice; in that the technical function promotes assimilative learning whilst the practical function fosters learning for personal meaning.

However, the other democratic criterion, that of the productive educational experience, receives the least attention in educational initiatives. It asserts that the classroom teacher has an emancipatory function, which is to create a critically reflective learning environment in which the pupils are encouraged to take real responsibility for their learning, and also to produce work which displays initiative, imagination and originality. By taking on real responsibility for the learning environment and producing work of a quality which can sometimes surpass the expectations of themselves and others, the pupils experience learning for empowerment. In this manner, the emancipatory function of classroom practice fulfils the second democratic criterion of a productive form of educational experience.

So, in order to meet the needs of a democratic society that the pupils have both reproductive and productive educational experiences, a democratic approach to classroom practice attempts to balance the technical, practical and emancipatory functions. Furthermore, in achieving this balance across the three functions, a

A Democratic Approach to Classroom Practice

Principle: to create ordered freedom in the learning environment.

Tenets: to achieve ordered freedom through balancing and freedom in the learning environment.

Criterion 1: Reproductive forms of educational experience.

STRUCTURE – strategies to provide for the instrumental nature of the learning environment, e.g. the structure of the activity gives clear guidelines. The teacher has a technical function, to promote assimilative learning of worthwhile knowledge and skills.

INTERACTION – strategies to provide for the communicative nature of the learning environment, e.g. opportunities for feedback from pupil to teacher and between pupils. The teacher has a practical function, to assist learning for personal meaning.

Criterion 2: Productive form of educational experience.

ACTIVITY – strategies to provide for the critically reflective nature of the learning environment, e.g. pupils teaching other pupils what they have learned. The teacher has an emancipatory function, to create opportunities for pupils to experience learning for empowerment.

democratic approach to classroom practice applies the democratic principle of ordered freedom. How might this be realised in classroom practice?

Borders Enterprise Initiative

Within the Scottish educational scene there already exists an approach to classroom practice which both applies the democratic principle and fulfils the democratic criteria. This is the enterprising approach to teaching and learning as promoted by the Borders Enterprise Initiative. Based on the democratic tenets of structure and freedom it advocates three practical principles of effective teaching, namely structure, interaction and activity.[10] As depicted, these practical principles provide strategies which enable the teacher to both apply the democratic principle of ordered freedom and fulfil the criteria for a democratic approach to classroom practice.

The Way Ahead?

Accepting that the model outlined above is a framework for a democratic approach to classroom practice, how realistic is it to expect a widespread adoption of this approach? Upon first consideration the prospects seem rather bleak. This democratic approach to classroom practice thrives best in a self-critical educational community of reflective practitioners.[11] However, in Britain presently “the political reality [is] ... a climate which favours central control of education...” [12] and this is unfavourable to the development of such educational communities. Indeed, in Scotland the position is worsened by the tradition of central control of education exercised through the use of national working parties. As argued above, educational practice is a social practice influenced by tradition, custom and ideology, and this tradition of national working parties requires to be challenged on three grounds. Firstly, their educational aims are often superseded by administrative goals. Secondly, these national working parties are often open to the accusation that many of their members are out of touch with the realities of classroom practice. Thirdly, the most fundamental criticism to be levelled at the use of national working parties is that they take a problem-solving approach to the curriculum. This results in a “quest for a single orthodoxy... [that] must inevitably inhibit real school-based developments... [and] innovative in-service initiatives... [with] the emphasis on providing conditions which encourage and facilitate teachers’ reflection on and awareness of the ‘new’ approaches to teaching”.[13] Such inhibition of school-based developments, innovative in-service initiatives and conditions which encourage teachers’ reflection is inimical to the development of self-critical educational communities and a more widespread adoption of a democratic approach to classroom practice. For this reason the Scottish tradition of national working parties needs to be greatly modified, if not swept away.

Although such a fundamental change in the Scottish educational scene, and also perhaps the Scottish educational psyche, will be difficult to achieve, there are five reasons for hope. Firstly, there is a growing body of research evidence to suggest that a democratic approach to classroom practice promotes effective teaching and learning.[14] Secondly, Scottish education is not isolated from the rest of the world and the educational reform of ‘negotiating the curriculum’ is already making its impact here. Thirdly, a further potential democratic reform, that of flexible learning, is already established to various degrees in most Scottish regions.

Fourthly, in the Borders Enterprise Initiative there already exists the framework of a self-critical educational community of reflective practitioners successfully applying a democratic approach to their classroom practices. Finally, the prize to be gained is more than worthy of the struggle.

If some form of national network of self-critical educational communities can be established, with the aim of supporting classroom teachers to teach for democracy, then we can gradually remove political ideologues from the arena of educational debate. For politicians who attempt to undermine the ideal of democracy will be exposed as bankrupt ideologues. Ultimately, of greater consequence, classrooms will become seedbeds of democracy which produce young people empowered to render more truly democratic the unseen and unknown nation of the future.

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Teacher Education Reforms?

David Blake

Head of Teaching and Education Studies at West Sussex Institute of Higher Education, David Blake examines the problems in the government's reform programme for initial teacher education.

Since 1983, when government policy was outlined in *Teaching Quality* (DES, 1983), there has been rapid change in the teacher education sector. The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) was established in 1984 (DES, 1984), leading to the process of testing BEd and PGCE courses against national training criteria. An exhaustive process of HMI activity was set in train, as the sector came under more scrutiny than ever before. The original criteria were modified in 1989, bringing them into line with the National Curriculum, and a further process of course modifications was set in train. In 1988 the government announced its proposals to establish two new training routes: the licensed teacher scheme from September 1989 and the articulated teacher scheme from 1990. The proposals were controversial, especially those for licensed teachers which opened the possibility of non-graduates securing a licence to teach with a minimum of training. In 1992 the new criteria for secondary teacher training (DFE, 1992) made two-thirds of the PGCE and 32 weeks of the four-year BEd school-based. The criteria for primary initial training (DFE, 1993c) opened up the possibility of a three-year, six-subject BEd, identified the possibility of courses for specialists, semi-specialists and generalists and required more attention to be paid to the core curriculum. Also in 1993 the government announced its intention of

establishing a Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to replace CATE and take on responsibility for teacher education policy and funding (DFE, 1993a).

The teacher education reform programme illuminates key principles in the government's approach to educational reform in general. First the government seeks to establish a market in teacher education, encouraging schools to move into the lead in training and purchase what they require from higher education. Secondly, there is the intention of creating a diversity of routes, ending the monopoly of the BEd and PGCE, a move first signalled by the arrival of the articulated and licensed teacher routes. At one stage in 1993 the government proposed to establish a non-graduate one-year training route for teachers at Key Stage 1, a proposal it withdrew in the face of vociferous opposition from teachers, teacher and headteacher unions, parents' and governors' associations, and teacher educators. Thirdly, there is the process of denigrating the professional expertise of teacher educators, attacking them as part of a self-interested educational establishment only concerned with protecting its own producer interests. Teacher educators are portrayed as dogmatic theoreticians promoting an alien progressive ideology which contributes to low standards in schools. Fourthly, while engaging in rhetoric about local autonomy, there is a strong element of central control,

whether through CATE, the inspection arrangements of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) or the proposed new Teacher Training Agency. Fifthly, there is an attack on the continuing place of higher education in the education and training of teachers. Finally, there is the declared intention of moving more training and more of the funds for training into the schools. The pilot scheme for the school-centred training was declared a success even before it had been completed.

Two Examples

The direction of the reform programme is well illustrated by the speech of Secretary of State Kenneth Clarke to the North of England Education Conference in January 1992 (DES, 1992) and the government's proposals for the reform of initial teacher training of September 1993, subsequently presented to Parliament in the Education Bill (DFE, 1993a,b). The main proposal in the Education Bill was the establishment of a Teacher Training Agency.

Kenneth Clarke asserted that:

The college-based parts of training must be fully relevant to classroom practice. The acid test must be whether or not the models they offer can actually be made to work effectively by the average teacher in the real classroom. That is the way to break the hold of the dogmas about teaching method and classroom organisation which are now being challenged not only by me but by very many other people. (DES, 1992, para. 21)

The assumptions in the argument are: that one kind of relevance to practice is what teacher education should be about; that much college based work is irrelevant; that college based training is offering inappropriate models of teaching; that colleges are remote from the real world of the classroom and that they pedal dogmas about methods and organisation. No evidence is brought forward in support of any of these assumptions. Teaching and the training of teachers are presented as matters of plain common sense.

The Teacher Training Agency was to have responsibility for the central funding of all courses of initial teacher training. Consisting of eight to twelve members appointed by the Secretary of State, the TTA was to take responsibility for teacher training funding from 1995-6. New criteria for the accreditation of training courses were announced, with the intention of increasing the responsibility of schools for controlling and organising training. The broad intention of the TTA proposal was to reduce the involvement of higher education in the training of teachers and to transfer more responsibility and funding to schools. The government's proposals were damaging and wrongheaded. The fundamental problem was the damage they posed to the status and integrity of the teaching profession, a point fully developed in debate about the Bill in the House of Lords.

Evidence

The assumption underlying all the government's reform programme is that initial teacher education is unsatisfactory and requires reform. No evidence is brought forward in support of this contention. It is odd that the government is not ready to take more credit for the positive impact of its own accreditation agency (CATE) on the quality of training courses in England and Wales. The most recent evidence of HMI about the performance of new teachers in their first year of teaching provides a broadly encouraging picture. This is not to say that the picture is uniformly rosy, nor

that modifications and renewal are not necessary, but in the main the picture is satisfactory and improving.

The New Teacher in School (OFSTED, 1993) found a high level of satisfaction from headteachers about the quality of training. 94% of secondary and 91% of primary headteachers considered that the new teachers had been well prepared. High levels of satisfaction were expressed by headteachers about new teachers' professional competence, personal qualities and academic competence. 89% of the new teachers considered that their training had been a positive experience which adequately prepared them for their new posts, with high proportions (more than 60%) regarding that training as good or very good. When HMI graded the new teachers' lessons, using the same criteria as they use for more experienced teachers, they found 71% of secondary and 73% of primary lessons taught by new teachers to be satisfactory or better. This is a similar proportion as they find in the lessons of more experienced teachers, though HMI found new teachers were teaching a higher proportion of very good lessons than experienced teachers. HMI found the subject knowledge of new teachers was at least satisfactory in 83% of primary and 90% of secondary lessons. Pupil behaviour was satisfactory in 84% of lessons observed. When HMI awarded an overall performance grade to new teachers, based upon a range of professional competencies as well as the quality of lessons observed, they found 78% of primary teachers and 80% of new secondary teachers to be satisfactory or better.

Alternative Visions

There are alternative visions which build on developments in teacher education over the past ten years and give hope for the future. Two examples will be briefly reviewed here, that contained in the Labour Party's consultative green paper on education (Labour Party, 1993) and the proposals in the final report of the National Commission on Education (1993).

The Labour Party paper rehearses the case for reform but argues that there is a danger of losing the best of current practice if there is a hasty or ill-considered approach. An unambiguous case is made for the continuing place of higher education in the training process:

The distinctive contribution of education and training through colleges, and universities, is that it enables student teachers to draw upon a wider body of professional knowledge and expertise than is to be found in any one school. (para. 6.17)

It is also important that trainee teachers have a solid grounding in the concepts, principles, knowledge and purposes underlying good practice in education. The art and practice of teaching, effective pedagogy, demands that teachers are well prepared outside the classroom for their practice within the classroom. They must be able to reflect constructively upon it in order to develop professionally and to be better equipped as educators. Teacher education and training must therefore take place outside the classroom as well as inside it. The vital thing is to get the balance right, and to ensure that there is an effective partnership. (para. 6.18)

The Labour proposals then argue for a national core curriculum for teacher education and training, for diversity of provision to meet the range of potential teachers' needs, and for the development of a closer but complementary relationship between schools and higher education. A three

year BA (Ed.) is supported. The problems of the crowded PGCE route are acknowledged and solutions seen in a closer integration of this route with the often unsatisfactory arrangements operating in the induction year.

The National Commission on Education's final report, *Learning to Succeed* (1993), also sees the need for a strong higher education presence in teacher preparation. Teacher education is viewed as a key part of the educational reform programme proposed by the Commission. The idea of locating all training in schools is rejected:

However, to place all the responsibility for training on schools is impracticable and ignores the theoretical base: students can plan work and approach classes with more confidence if they have some knowledge of how children learn and which methods have been found successful in different circumstances. (p. 214)

The report then goes on, usefully, to spell out the respective roles of higher education and schools. Again, this is a practical and soundly-based approach which draws upon the best of existing practice and rests securely on sound training and educational principles:

The role of higher education institutions in initial teacher training should be:

- to operate a system of admissions training, to assess and support students and to administer and validate qualifications for entry to the profession so that quality is ensured;
- to provide breadth of perspective going beyond particular circumstances of individual schools and areas and providing access to a full range of educational research;
- to develop knowledge and understanding in trainees, not just about teaching the national curriculum, but also about how children learn, about stimulating better ways of learning, about providing pastoral and careers guidance, and about assessment, management, equal opportunities and cultural awareness;
- to allow economies of scale in such essential training facilities as information technology, libraries and staff expertise;
- to initiate profiles of students which will stay with them for the rest of their careers, and which will be continuously updated;
- to provide support and training for mentors;
- to provide consultancy, critical perspective in professional development, advanced degrees for teachers and educational research for the whole system.

The role of schools in initial teacher training should be to provide:

- practical experience for pupils in the classroom, opportunities to learn and apply skills, and a context for reflection;
- experienced teachers, whom students can witness in action and work alongside;
- an understanding of how a school functions and relates to the community;
- well-trained mentors, with sufficient time allocated in their own timetables to enable them to give advice and support to trainees;
- input into the assessment of trainees' suitability for teaching.

Partnership

What can teachers and teacher educators do in the face of government proposals which threaten the effectiveness and status of the teaching profession?

(1) We should continue to act together to point out the flaws and inconsistencies in the government's approach, alerting parents and governors to the problems we perceive. We should vigorously oppose foolish and ill-considered reform proposals.

(2) We should continue to argue for the creation of a General Teaching Council so that, as in Scotland, decisions about the training of teachers are based upon high professional values and standards.

(3) We should continue to work in local partnerships which devise good arrangements for teacher preparation and further develop good existing practice. We should devise mentorship training programmes which meet the staff development needs of teachers and contribute to more effective initial training. We should restate the mutual benefit in initial training and not simply see the transaction in financial terms. We should test simplistic notions of training specialist, semi-specialist and generalist primary teachers against the structure and personnel needs of our primary schools. We should continue work on the development of appropriate versions of professional competencies, identifying those relevant to initial training, induction and later professional development. At the same time, we should remain sceptical about an instrumental view of teaching competencies which is limited to training for the National Curriculum, is atheoretical and risks producing pedagogical technicians rather than rounded professionals. We should recognise that ITT is too crowded and probably attempts to do too much. Above all, we should recognise that good practice in teacher education begins on the ground in imaginative local schemes devised by teachers and teacher educators. We need to reassert our commitment to local innovation and soundly conceived reform.

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Campaigning against Opting Out

Elaine King

Elaine King is a parent and has been a governor of a Leicestershire High School for the past eleven years. She is Secretary of 'Keep Our Schools Local' and a member of the Campaign for State Education.

In 1991 I wrote an article in *Forum* (Volume 34, No. 1) called 'Keeping Manor Local: an anti-opt out view' describing the difficult process of mounting an anti-opt out campaign against a long-standing headteacher and majority of governors who made it clear that opting out was, in their opinion, the only way forward for the school.

To fight authority in the shape of the Head and Governors, if you are an otherwise very 'law abiding' citizen, and have loyalties to the school at which you are a governor, is bound to be quite traumatic. Governors who objected to the opt out in my school included a doctor, a magistrate, a local Councillor, a teacher governor, and a primary school governor. Hardly subversive, but we soon began to feel so.

They thought we were 'undermining' the authority of the school. We thought we were giving the parents a balanced view.

They not only lost that first 1991 ballot of parents, but went on to another one in 1993, which the parents rejected for a second time. That, then, is the background to this article, and why I was asked to write a follow-up.

When it first became clear that my school wished to opt out in 1991 a campaign group was formed. We were very strong.

Our membership included teachers from the other schools in the family, governors from both feeder and final schools, and parents with children at any or all three school levels, and included members from all the main political parties. We wrote and distributed leaflets, put up speakers in the school's debate, canvassed parents and were interviewed by the local media. After our second ballot of parents we had become seasoned campaigners.

So, when some other schools in Leicestershire proposed opting out, people who were alarmed at the prospect contacted us to draw on our experience.

During the past year we have been, to some extent or other, involved in all five of the anti-opt out campaigns which have been fought in Leicestershire, across the spectrum of education, including two Community Colleges, two Primary Schools and a High School.

In the five years since the introduction of GM, and of the campaigns which have been fought in Leicestershire, the picture has become clearer.

Basically the debate has not changed. Opting out still damages all schools by depleting central funding and by making it difficult to plan provision for children whatever their abilities. It also removes local accountability.

There are, however, some aspects of the argument which have changed. The flood of schools predicted to go grant maintained when the policy was mooted in 1988 has slowed

to a trickle. Out of nearly 25,000 schools in England and Wales, there will be under 1000 GM schools by April 1994, five years on. Hardly a sweeping success. As fewer schools go GM, the rest have become reluctant to be involved with a failing policy, and fear isolation.

Many of the first schools which opted out, did so NOT because they supported GM, but because they were under the threat of closure or reorganisation. This may be one reason why the Audit Commission's reports on the first GM schools have sometimes been critical of financial standards, and some HMI reports on academic standards have been disappointing.

It has now become clear that the initial, shamelessly high levels of funding for GM schools has fallen every year for the past three years. Even the Capital Grant, which used to be received by 95% of newly opted out schools, has dropped to less than 33% of newly opted out schools. Many governing bodies feel the extra hassle and responsibility is not worth the shrinking financial gain.

It could be argued that the success of local management of schools (LMS) has undermined GM. Now that LMS is mostly on stream, the majority of heads and governing bodies feel they have been given enough freedom to spend their money as they wish, whilst still having the backup of the LEA. In fact, experiencing the extra responsibility of LMS may well have persuaded many governors they do not want the absolute responsibility they must carry under GM.

Another fairly dramatic change has been in the local education authority itself. In Leicestershire some governors used to criticise what they felt to be a disproportionate number of advisers at County Hall. This has been cut back, and the new self-financing business units sell services to schools.

It is taking a little while for the 'nanny mentality' to fade on both sides. There are still a few schools wailing that they have lost their supportive LEA. In exchange, however, the LEA now argues they offer a slim, market-responsive authority. Schools may shop elsewhere for services, if they prefer, giving heads and governors greater flexibility, whilst retaining the umbrella of the local authority. One strong, new advantage to being in the LEA 'club' is access to a local Forum. This group of governors and heads has been formed to advise on and assist in the formulation of County education policy.

A clear pattern is emerging of the effect that an opt out campaign has on a school. I have had contact with other anti-GM governors from schools where the opt out bid has failed. They find their position on the governing body becomes extremely difficult. Two governors from different

schools have told me that they do not feel that they can go back into school. And governors in one school who spoke publicly against the majority of governors were asked to resign even though they had voiced the parents' view. Those governors have not resigned, and the tensions remain.

Something much more worrying, which has emerged as we have watched the opt out campaigns in Leicestershire, is the difficult position in which teachers may find themselves. In one campaign teachers felt so strongly against GM that they staged a walkout from school. The parents voted against opting out. The head and governors may well feel thwarted and aggrieved, which will make for difficult day-to-day working relationships. In a school where the teachers wrote to the parents recommending them to vote for GM, the parents did not take their advice. Teachers have interpreted this as a vote of no confidence in them.

Any campaign group going into an opt out ballot should have very serious regard for the vulnerability of the teaching staff in that school. It could be argued that staff should distance themselves completely. This does not mean that teachers from the family of schools, and in fact from much wider around, should not get involved. *In fact it makes it absolutely necessary* that they do. From 1 January 1994, when the provisions in the 1993 Act came into operation, their participation at all levels is absolutely vital.

The 1993 Act is a combination of 'stick and carrot'. The 'carrots' include nice new opt out information packs to all schools; large advertisements in the national newspapers; and new Information Centres in areas which have shown no interest in GM. (It has been calculated from the answers to Parliamentary Questions, that to promote GM has cost £10 per minute for every school day since 1988 – and rising.)

The 1993 Act allows governing bodies £700 plus £1 per pupil for running their opting out campaign. There is also the extra incentive of new technology money but only if your school has opted out.

The 'sticks' include obliging governing bodies to discuss opting out every year, and having to give reasons why they rejected GM in their annual report to parents. A strict limit has been imposed on the amount an LEA may spend on defending itself.

But what will cause most serious damage to any group who oppose opting out is that now only one vote of the governors is needed to prompt a ballot of parents. This has the effect of speeding up the whole process quite dramatically. From the day the governors vote to the time the ballot papers hit parents' doormats can now be as little as three weeks.

The Secretary of State's requirement that there should be "... access to a full and balanced debate to enable parents to make an informed and unbiased decision about their child's education and their school's future" (DFE Circular 18/93) will, if handled poorly by governors, turn into an unseemly scramble.

It becomes more and more important that everybody gets involved, at national level, at local authority level, and at school level.

At national level, the opposition parties must be aware that education, and GM in particular, will be a key issue at the next election. They should be making capital from the failure of the policy and announcing their own.

What can local authorities do? There are, of course, restrictions placed upon them. However, they are in a prime position to give information to parents in schools where an opt out is threatened. They are the first people to know when the governors are considering GM.

Immediately the LEA is informed of the governors' vote, and before any parent/governor meetings, they can send out literature, so that there is time for parents to formulate questions. In that literature they can let parents know that they should have a balance of information, and that the LEA would like to answer their questions personally, in the school, at a parent meeting. The LEA must 'beef up' the reasons why it is better to be a member of the 'club' than outside it, and generally blow their own trumpet much more. The LEA should also be offering contact details of campaign groups who can give an alternative view to GM.

As I mentioned, every governing body must have GM on its agenda once a year. This could be turned to advantage. If a school's governors decide against putting GM to the parents, they are voting to stay with the LEA. This information ought to be circulated widely – maybe through the school governors' magazine, or even the local newspaper. For every school which goes for a ballot of parents, dozens and dozens will not, and it is vital that this is made known to every other school and governing body.

In summary, in Leicestershire there has never been much parent interest in GM. It seems that if parents have a balance of information, they are much less keen to vote for opting out.

It is therefore vital that everyone opposed to opting out plays some part, in their own school or elsewhere. It needs a network of helpers to keep an ear to the ground for the earliest warning of a possible opt out. Sometimes just the rumour going round can make governors pull back.

It needs a network of helpers who can support any nucleus of anti-opt out people which forms in a threatened school. They can go to support meetings, write literature, fill envelopes, go leafletting, maybe canvassing, and generally offer practical help for the campaign. Weight of numbers can make up for the very limited time available.

It needs volunteers to speak on a platform inside the school, or at a local public meeting if the parents from the school do not feel able to do this. It is also important to involve the wider community which will be directly affected, people from the family of schools, from the local churches, and local County Councillors. In Leicestershire we have had speakers from Local Schools Information and some very good speakers from other groups, but invariably someone locally known to parents will have more impact.

A campaign group should also have contact with the local press and radio. This is a very effective way of getting the message quickly to a large number of people.

So, in conclusion, I have come to the view that there is no undamaging way to fight an opt out bid. The motives for opting out are power and money. It would be naive to expect that the debate would not be political. The stakes are high, and opting out hits at people's fundamental beliefs. This will always make for a very heated and divisive fight. However, in defending one you are defending all. I hope that every time parents vote 'NO', other schools will feel stronger and more able to reject opting out.

Inspecting HMI: a response

G. A. N. Smith

A research consultant to OFSTED and previously to HMI, George Smith responds to Janet Maw's article in the Summer 1993 issue of *Forum*.

Janet Maw's critique of HMI past, present and future (Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes? Inspecting HMI, *Forum*, Volume 35, No. 2, 1993) deserves a response if only to ensure that her comments do not go unchallenged as a fair epitaph on HMI past, or a reliable prognosis of OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) and HMI in the future. This is not the place to offer an alternative account of HMI's recent history, but rather to question the accuracy of several of Janet Maw's apparently firm conclusions, while not denying some telling points in her article on the more difficult questions of inspecting and assessing schools.

Before turning to more detailed examples there are four main reservations about Janet Maw's (henceforth JM) methods, which run through her presentation. The first is to draw on one of HMI's own central tenets of assessment – that of judging institutions, at least in part, in terms of their own stated aims and objectives – to suggest that she gives far too little weight to this aspect in her judgements on HMI and OFSTED. HMI and OFSTED are in part judged in JM's article on whether they conform to her own views of appropriate inspection methods, irrespective of their statutory roles and responsibilities. Second, there is in her account no clear historical perspective of the developments in HMI inspection over the period she reviews (roughly the late 1970s to date). But there were important changes during this period. Third, in attempting to explain away the apparent lack of critical professional comment on HMI's work, JM sometimes implies a concealed intent behind HMI activities that cast them in a potentially Machiavellian light, as if they were explicitly designed to snuff out such criticism at source. The important point here is to distinguish between the possible consequences that may follow from an action from the explicitly intended effects. JM does not always make this distinction clear. Finally, JM too often does not provide the empirical evidence to back her judgements. Instead she relies too heavily on simple assertion of her case.

HMI Aims and Objectives

HMI in the past should certainly not be viewed "through rose-tinted spectacles" (JM, pp. 42-43). Nevertheless it would be reasonable to expect a fair and accurate account. Thus the picture conveyed by JM's 'bottom line' judgement on HMI in the past – "they have been able to publish their judgements and walk away from their effects" (p. 45) – needs to be challenged. This was not the case either in principle or in practice. At the end of a formal inspection HMI presented their main findings to the headteacher in a face-to-face meeting. This is now built into OFSTED procedures: "the Registered Inspector must offer to discuss the main findings of the inspection with the governing body, and separately with the headteacher and other members of the senior management team as soon as possible after the end of the inspection and before the report is finalised".[1]

Also under both HMI and OFSTED procedures there is emphasis on what happens in the school after the inspection through the 'issues for action' agenda. And HMI in the past was certainly marked by a very high level of contacts with schools other than through formal inspections. Whether it was perceived to be so by schools and teachers must finally be for others to judge, but at least the high levels of expressed confidence in HMI and general lack of critical comment can be put forward to suggest that HMI was not generally seen as remote and out of touch or, worse, turning its back on schools. JM, however, has to explain away this lack of expressed criticism as a result either of HMIs' sleight of hand in presenting themselves as an 'educational élite' somehow above the fray, or their skills in 'self-presentation' to deflect criticism.

Part of the problem may be that JM does not seem to recognise HMI's formal responsibility, explicitly stated in the Raynor Report of 1982 as "its first and overriding duty ... to assess standards and trends throughout the system and to advise central government on the state of the system nationally on the basis of its independent professional judgment".[2] Failure to recognise this point leads JM to criticise HMI for making clear that its "assessments are not open to negotiation" at meetings with heads or governors. This she describes as "miseducative and undemocratic" (p. 44) as if HMI's role were principally consultative and advisory. The main problem to be avoided here is the potential confusion between the formal inspection role and that of counsellor or adviser. The HMI advice that JM quotes was explicitly designed to guard against such confusion. Moreover, no inspector is directly responsible for the running of a school, and must leave those who have that responsibility to exercise it.

Perhaps a similar difficulty lies behind JM's strictures on HMI survey work, where she does not distinguish the different activities that are sometimes grouped under the 'survey' heading. Thus she notes with approval the primary and secondary HMI surveys of the late 1970s as conforming to the canons of research, but is critical of the Senior Chief Inspector Annual Reports a decade later on the grounds of "spurious exactitude". But the exercises are rather different – the former were based on social survey type instruments on a specially selected sample of primary or secondary schools as part of a single exercise; the latter pulled together the full range of HMI work of all types across all phases of the education system into an annual report for that year.

HMI Methodology

JM does not give enough attention to developments in HMI's methods during the 1980s. She draws material from different times in the period she reviews, as if HMI methods were static. However these methods and the criteria of assessment used by HMI were increasingly made explicit and public throughout the 1980s, following the decision to publish

HMI reports from 1983 onwards. The OFSTED 'framework' document, now published by HMSO, clearly builds on this foundation rather than springing ready grown from the new organisation. The same might be said of HMI's published style, sometimes criticised as 'coded' during the 1980s, but taking on a more direct style to meet changing circumstances.

In passing, JM concludes that "HMI's role in curriculum policy and development has been heavily curtailed since 1988" (p. 43), though no evidence is cited for this assertion. Clearly 1988 marked a significant change in curriculum development with the introduction of the National Curriculum. HMI's influence on the curriculum would be a proper subject for historical study. But would HMI's role be seen to be any less significant after 1988 – though perhaps different – given HMI input to the subject working parties and HMI reports on the development of National Curriculum subjects?

HMI Intentions

JM's choice of language sometimes implies that HMI deliberately operated with a 'double agenda', carefully calculating the 'political' effects of any assessment it might make. This is part of JM's claim that any form of educational evaluation is necessarily 'political', though she does not distinguish between 'political' in the sense 'of public interest' and 'political' as 'politically coloured'. Thus, she suggests, the series of HMI reports on LEA educational expenditure during the 1980s "were likely to be well received by the teaching profession ... [and] ... would tend to increase the education profession's solidarity with HMI and deflect more informed professional critique" of HMI (p. 43). And even HMI becoming "very skilled in self-presentation during the period of increased exposure to professional and public scrutiny" (p. 43), which might sound like a compliment, is rather, it seems, designed to conceal their true role. This is subtly to translate what may, or may not, have been an effect into a deliberate intent.

Also careful analysis of local and national media would be unlikely to support JM's assertion that HMI reports were "frequently, indeed normally, used by the media to belabour the teaching profession" (p. 45). Indeed it is partially contradicted by her own claim that HMI reports on LEAs were well received by the teaching profession.

OFSTED and HMI

Janet Maw begins her article by reporting the view that the creation of OFSTED resulted in the "destruction of an independent professional voice". While she also accurately records that HMI are also now part of OFSTED, the

implication is clearly to query OFSTED's independent role. We can, of course, assert that OFSTED *is* independent and point to its statutorily defined role. There have been several recent examples of such independence, for example the publication of OFSTED's advice to the Dearing Review. But it would also be reasonable to ask JM to cite her evidence to the contrary. She also sees these changes as part of the destruction of LEAs. Yet in the first round in 1993 it is in fact LEA inspection teams that have won the largest share of inspection contracts.

Finally, in musing on the name OFSTED, JM claims that it implies a view that "the inspection of schools is a relatively simple matter of applying technical and economic criteria similar to those for assessing the water supply (Ofwat) or the telecommunication system (Oftel)" (p. 42). Whether or not these other regulatory organisations feel their work is straightforward, nobody in OFSTED is of the view that inspecting and assessing schools is a simple procedure. That is why OFSTED has a very detailed framework for inspections, which sets mandatory conditions that have to be met by agencies carrying out inspections. And this framework, with its public criteria for evaluation, and *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools*, which provides guidance on its use, are clearly being drawn on by schools in the search for ways of improving practice.

Anybody concerned with the evaluation of schools and school systems will be aware of the different ways that this might now be done, ranging from formal research such as 'school effectiveness' studies to local school self-evaluation and school improvement consultancy. HMI inspection methods represent one important group of methods on this continuum and one that has been significantly developed in recent years by making its procedures and criteria more explicit and by the incorporation of more quantitative information. This development is likely to continue under OFSTED.

The answer to Janet Maw's central question 'Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?' thus lies in the process of making inspection procedures and criteria more explicit as, for example, in the OFSTED *Handbook*; in the greater use of quantitative information; and in the regulation and monitoring of inspections by an independent organisation, OFSTED, itself subject to public scrutiny.

References

- [1] OFSTED (1993) *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools. Part 2: The Framework*, para. 15. London: HMSO.
- [2] DES (1982) *Study of HM Inspectorate in England and Wales*. London: HMSO.

Has your school been inspected by OFSTED?

Forum would like to hear about your experience.
(See inside front cover for address and details)

Learning to Succeed

A Radical Look at Education Today and a Strategy for the Future

National Commission on Education, 1993
London: Heinemann
458 pp., paperback £4.95, ISBN 0-434-00035-3

The National Commission on Education was established in July 1991, following Sir Claus Moser's presidential address to the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in August 1990. In this address, Sir Claus drew attention to serious shortcomings in Britain's education and training provision, and identified the need for:

an overall review of the education and training scene: a review which would be visionary about the medium and long term future facing our children and this country; treating the system in all its interconnected parts; and, last but not least, considering the changes in our working and labour market scenes.

Not surprisingly, the call for a Royal Commission (that much-maligned phenomenon of the so-called consensus years) was immediately turned down by the Tory government, though it soon became clear that there was some support for it both within and outside the world of education. Encouraged by the response, the British Association decided to set up an independent inquiry, with the support of the Royal Society, the British Academy and the Fellowship (later the Royal Academy) of Engineering. The work of the Commission was to be funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

The Commission's Report begins with the assertion that the most serious shortcoming of education in this country is to be found in its failure to enable not just a minority but a large majority of young people to obtain as much from their education as they are capable of achieving. As things are organised at present, a minority of academically able young people receive a sound, if narrow, education; while, for the rest, there are a number of variables at work which undermine the quality of provision.

The Report makes use of the research carried out by Andy Green and Hilary Steedman for the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) which looks at the percentages of young people achieving comparable school qualifications at the ages of 16 and 18+ in four countries. Both at 16 and at 18+, the percentages for England are far below those for Germany, France and Japan. When it comes to vocational qualifications and labour productivity, the picture is equally disturbing.

What, then, needs to be done to achieve the Commission's vision of high-quality education and training for all?

Among a number of recommendations, the Report argues that: the DFE should merge with those parts of the Employment Department which are currently responsible for training to form a new Department for Education and Training (DET); high-quality nursery education should be available for all 3- and 4-year-olds; and a new General Education Diploma (GED) should be introduced, to be awarded at two levels (Ordinary and Advanced) and replace the existing range of qualifications, including GCSE, 'A'

Levels, BTEC and the various vocational qualifications. All very sensible and constructive and capable of appealing to a wide spectrum of professional and political opinion (though clearly this would not include John Major and John Patten and their friends on the lunatic right-wing fringe).

The major shortcoming of the Report is that it seeks to maintain an all-embracing neutrality. In the Preface, we are assured that:

It is not our purpose in this Report to comment specifically on the educational policies of the day. Our stance is consciously independent and nonpolitical. It is our aim to promote a consensus about the needs of the future and to bring about the convergence of views which can at present diverge.

Yet this is a quite absurd and demeaning aspiration, and will remain so while the Major government continues to cling on to power. For it is specifically the political agenda of the Conservative Party which prevents the achievement of high standards in education and training.

The Report cannot bring itself to come out unequivocally in favour of a major prerequisite of future advance: the establishment at the secondary level of a national system of community comprehensive schools with no selective or independent enclaves. There is only one reference to 'comprehensive schools' in the index, and this refers to a brief specific mention in the historical section of the Report. There is an acknowledgement that "increased selection by ability must be discouraged if we wish to promote a less divisive society" (p. 183) but also support for the creation of schools specialising in particular subjects (p. 182). Admiration is expressed for "the enthusiasm which acquiring grant-maintained status has given some schools" (p. 353), along with concern that "a community school where the neighbourhood is not socially mixed" will not have "a broad enough social or ability range" to become a successful school (p. 182). It is true that the Report recommends the establishment of Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to act as an intermediate tier of locally accountable bodies between the DET and individual schools. Under this system, the distinction between grant-maintained and other state schools will be removed; and the 15 City Technology Colleges will also be brought within the aegis of ETBs. All this is sensible and enlightened; but one could wish for a more ringing endorsement of the comprehensive principle within a system of local democracy.

At the end of this Report, the Commission expresses the hope that its vision for the future will be shared by the government. This is wishful thinking of a rarefied kind. Nothing that has happened in the past fifteen years gives one any cause to expect that any significant part of the National Commission agenda for change will be implemented by John Major and his miserable team at the DFE.

Also available as a Heinemann hardback is *Briefings* containing the much-admired series of Briefing papers published by the National Commission between January 1992 and October 1993. This is priced £15.99 (ISBN 0-434-00107-4)

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Book Reviews

Teacher Education Partnership in Initial Teacher Training: talk and chalk

CLARE HAKE, 1993

The London File. Papers from the Institute of Education, University of London

London: Tufnell Press.

36 pp., £3.95, ISBN 1 8727 46 X

One may ponder where John Patten is getting his inspiration from regarding Initial Teacher Training (ITT). Clare Hake offers some interesting insights that may help us to understand the latest proposals. It was argued that 'rigor mortis' rather than 'academic rigour' was the norm in many colleges and university departments developing the talents of future teachers in the 1960s.

Some even suggested that the more academically competent or interested students were, the less successful they were in the classroom.

Hake lists some of Mr Patten's friends and their views of ITT. Oliver Letwin suggests "the fact is that the teacher training system still to a great extent embodies the ideas and methods which have made British maintained education the laughing stock of Europe". We have Sheila Lawlor writing in a Conservative magazine arguing that "Kenneth Clarke leads the campaign to regain the ground lost to educational theorists".

A large section of the book deals with the ITT programme operating from Oxford University. Hake describes in some detail the University's Internship Scheme, where she writes from personal experience. She states that Internship views teaching broadly, and the course makes this explicit in assessing teaching competence alongside "understanding of educational relationships", and "knowledge of the relationship of the school within the wider community". The course offered at Oxford appears to be highly commendable, making it very difficult to see where it would fall into the government's thoughts that all ITT is just a load of Lefties filling students with lots of wicked things!

There seems to be almost unanimous agreement that schools should not have sole concern for training teachers. Hake agrees that schools should not be burdened with this responsibility; theirs is the business of educating children. It is interesting to dwell on the idea of a teacher being trained and only having the experience of one school. Many student teachers have a wide degree

of experience in many different schools during their training and try to identify the type of school they would feel comfortable working in. How often do students who invariably go on to be very good teachers experience difficulty on one of their teaching practices because they are simply in the wrong school?

Clare Hake shares with the reader her experiences and feelings of moving from schools as a mentor to the life at the University as a tutor. She says that it was fascinating to see the different approaches interns came with towards "real teachers in schools" and the university tutors.

In her conclusion, Clare Hake acknowledges that all parties – teachers, beginning teachers and school pupils – benefit from a closer relationship in training. Most of those involved in education would agree with this view and see that universities and colleges have a key part to play in the training of teachers. This book sees that educational theory must play a part in the preparation of student teachers. Therefore, the training of student teachers will be impaired by wholly school-based training and it is hoped that LEAs will advise school governing bodies against this approach.

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Vested Interests Delivering the National Curriculum: subjects for secondary schooling

PETER RIBBINS (Ed.), 1993

London: Longman. 222 pp.

ISBN 0-582-09560-3

Back in the days when he was Chief Inspector for ILEA, David Hargreaves gave a lecture where he used the memorable metaphor of likening all the learning experiences of the school curriculum to bricks; the purpose of schooling was to help build these bricks up into a sturdy and lasting edifice which we could call an 'education'. The trouble was, he said, that for a lot of young people, they find themselves at 16 surrounded indeed by these bricks, but all over the floor in a mess around them. (He might have been alluding, ironically, to a popular song of the time about walls!) Be that as it may, that was before we had a National Curriculum.

Any book with 'National Curriculum' in the title immediately arouses anxiety and misgivings in me these days that it is going to be out of date. And, prepared in 1992, with never a thought of Patten, let alone Dearing, this one, in some respects, is. Nevertheless, it is an eminently useful and informative book, and well worth reading for a number of reasons. First, secondary teachers, locked as they tend to be inside

their own individual departmental interests (one of the points raised in the opening chapter), will be able to familiarise themselves with the issues confronting their colleagues in other departments. Secondly, heads, governors, students of curriculum studies, as well as anyone else wishing to know quickly what is concerning teachers in implementing their National Curriculum (NC) subject are given here some succinct, insightful and often very practical overviews, subject by subject. Thirdly – and this certainly addresses the 'out-of-date-ness' issue – these subject snapshots will be very useful for posterity and for educational historians like Goodson when they come to write the histories of the subjects in the 1980s and 1990s.

Eight subjects are covered in the book: English, mathematics, science, modern languages, religious education, history, geography and physical education. It is a pity perhaps that the editor did not go for the whole 'set' and include technology, art and music. The two opening chapters by Peter Ribbins and Clyde Chitty provide a context for the other chapters. In Chapter 1, Ribbins gives a brief history of the secondary curriculum over the past 150 years followed by three very concise 'explanations' for the rise of the subjects: (a) the philosophical-theoretical, citing the work of Hirst and Peters, that knowledge can be categorised logically; (b) the socio-theoretical, citing Michael Young, that what counts as knowledge is a function of power and control; and (c) the socio-empirical, citing Goodson and Ball amongst others, showing how, in reality, the rise of the subject has been evolutionary rather than either logical or socio-political. The question raised here, then, is whether the 'subject' is indeed the best organising principle for any curriculum, National or otherwise. In Chapter 2, Chitty looks at some of the alternatives there have been in the past and points to some of the curriculum innovation of the 1960s and 1970s in humanities, for example, and moves towards more integrated curriculums. He considers the HMI Red Books from 1977-1983 with their proposed "areas of experience" and the Lawton "selection from the culture" approach. In the final analysis, however, all these ideas were defeated and the subject-based curriculum, little changed from the Regulations of 1904, has now been enshrined in law. Like most people, Chitty and the other writers here acknowledge the importance of the cross-curricular themes: little real hope of their becoming truly significant is held out however. The initial question whether subjects should form the basis of the NC is then held in abeyance; the more pragmatic concern is the nature of those subjects which *are* designated NC subjects.

In many ways it does not really matter that since 1992 there has been,

"... time yet for a hundred in decisions/And for a hundred visions and revisions..." (T. S. Eliot)

However, they are written down in the NC – and thus to the uninitiated seem self-evident – the subjects in this book all have deep historical roots and the best chapters are those which take these as their starting point. The issues identified at the time of writing are also not ephemeral. The ideological struggles for control of the nature of the subjects (more intense for some than others); arguments over the most appropriate pedagogical approaches; deep concerns over time allocation and resources; practical concerns regarding teacher capability and implications for training: all these are deeply rooted too, and ongoing, and in these respects never out of date. At the time of writing, some authors were clearly happier than others with their NC 'lot'; some were fighting *for* revised orders, some were preparing to resist further revision. School history seems to have won the process argument (or it had at the time of writing); geography has been put back to the content (encyclopaedic knowledge) model "reminiscent of ... the early 1900s" to boot.

In itself, this is not a polemical book: apart from the initial question in the first two chapters, the subject writers are left to voice their own concerns. But the issue of whether the National Curriculum constitutes an education hovers in the background throughout. The quest for a National Curriculum is presumably a quest for an education (during the school years) which is coherent, holistic and not in bits all over the floor. Taking a metaview of the NC as represented by the subject chapters in this book, one cannot be very hopeful. Such are the varying concerns of the authors who have received their Statutory Orders via NCC subject groups working in the same isolation that characterises, as Ribbins says, subject departments in school; and such is the variation in the point of curriculum development at which the 'clock was stopped' in the writing down of the Statutory Orders: the bricks, I fear, may well still be all over the floor for a good many students. The need for 'mapping' – *à la* HMI or Lawton – does not go away just because the subjects have been chosen; there is still a need for

some kind of integrating mechanism to ensure that all these learning experiences *do* add up to an education which has the learner *at* its heart. The one unifying section of this book is the final chapter by Sue Butterfield on assessment. Up to this point assessment had been perhaps the least useful aspect of the book. The familiar arguments are rehearsed: coursework versus tests, the impossibility for some subjects to plot progression according to Statements of Attainment on to levels, etc. Many of the writers say, often with dismay or indeed anger, that they simply do not know what is going to happen. And that was *then*.

We now have the Dearing Report, and a new configuration of subject statuses, time allocations and assessment procedures with which to come to terms. This book provides a sound context from which to make sense of what is going on.

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A Vindictive PM
Education and Mr Major:
correspondence between the
Prime Minister and Fred Jarvis
London: Tufnell Press, 1993
59 pp., £4.95, ISBN 1-872767-07-9

In July 1991, Fred Jarvis, a former General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers and President of the TUC in 1986-7, embarked on a long and detailed correspondence with John Major, seeking to clarify the views and priorities of the Prime Minister on the subject of education policy. Some of this revealing correspondence has already been published in *Education Answers Back* (reviewed in *Forum*, Volume 35, No. 3, 1993), but it is good that we now have all the letters published in full for the first time, with a very useful Commentary and Postscript by Fred Jarvis himself.

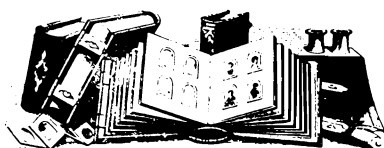
It was John Major's extraordinary speech on education delivered to the right-wing Centre for Policy Studies in July 1991 that prompted Fred Jarvis's first letter to the Prime Minister. That speech made a

number of sweeping and damaging generalisations and allegations without providing any supporting evidence: that the Left had deprived "great cohorts of our children of the opportunities they deserve"; that there were a number of city education authorities "employing more bureaucrats than teachers"; that the government was engaged in "a struggle to resist the insidious attacks on literature and history in our schools"; that it had become necessary to address "those criticisms of GCSE that gave rise to the suspicion that standards were at risk".

Fred Jarvis asked the Prime Minister to provide evidence for his grand assertions and was rewarded with a letter which assumed he was a member of the Conservative Party and suggested he seek further guidance from his local Conservative Association. A further letter from Stephen Yorke of the Prime Minister's Political Office made no attempt to answer any of Fred Jarvis's questions and consisted largely of a diatribe against Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Dewey and the 'politically correct' movement in the USA. So inadequate was this response that the Prime Minister's Political Secretary, the late Judith Chaplin, was forced to apologise to Mr Jarvis for "the gross incompetence" of her Office in dealing with his questions; and John Major himself admitted, in a later letter, that there was "no excuse for such sloppiness".

The point remains that all the letters emanating from Number 10 (and this correspondence continued until February 1993) were inadequate, ill-informed and vindictive. At one point, the Prime Minister writes of his "determination to reverse the failings of the comprehensive system and the cycle of low expectations and low standards which it has fostered". As Fred Jarvis himself points out: "it is regrettable that for all his sensitivity about attacks on his personal integrity, the Prime Minister appears, from this correspondence, to have little regard for facts and evidence when making statements about education, and is quite prepared to be economical with the truth if that suits his purpose".

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