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Comprehensive Achievement
Post-16 Perspectives
Sex Education
Religious Education

TRIANGLE

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The *next* FORUM

The May *FORUM* continues to celebrate 30 years of comprehensive education since Circular 10/65 with a series of articles from individual schools: **Jane Collins** and **Freda Hussain** from Welland Park and Moat Community Colleges in Leicestershire; **Mike Evans** from Trinity C of E High School in Manchester; **Tony Mooney** from Rutlish School in Merton; and a staff team from St George's Primary School in Birmingham. The primary/secondary continuum is considered further by **Ann Lance**, and by **Jenny Griffiths** and **Lesley Jones**. **Anne Barton** from Hampstead High School and **John Dunford** from Durham Johnston Comprehensive both contribute on the 14-19 curriculum. Racialised identities in schools are examined by **Ian Grosvenor**. Topically, Professor **Harvey Goldstein** clarifies confusion about value added, **Annabelle Dixon** reacts to the revamped National Curriculum, and **Barry Wratten** explores teacher appraisal.

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The New National Curriculum: from tragedy to farce

There is a revealing passage in Kenneth Baker's 1993 book of memoirs *The Turbulent Years: my life in politics*. Right from the outset, Mrs Thatcher had been opposed to Baker's concept of a prescriptive, ten-subject national curriculum; and it seems that as late as October 1987 (just *three* weeks before the introduction of the 1987 Education Bill into the House of Commons), Baker was forced to use the threat of his resignation to prevent his broad-based curriculum being amended by the Prime Minister:

> *Margaret wanted the time for the National Curriculum to be reduced ... I saw her privately and said: "if you want me to continue as Education Secretary, then we will have to stick to the curriculum that I have set out in the Consultation Paper. I and my ministerial colleagues have advocated and stoutly defended the broad curriculum. We have listed the ten subjects, and I set them out before the Select Committee in April. You will recall, Prime Minister, that I ... specifically cleared my statement with you" ... This was a tough meeting, but I was simply not prepared to give in to a last-minute rearguard action, even when waged by the Prime Minister herself. The broad-based curriculum was saved – for the time being.*

From these inauspicious beginnings, an approach to curriculum planning and assessment was developed which sought to placate all the various factions within the Conservative Party but which ultimately succeeded in alienating everybody.

In its desperation, the Major Government handed the whole thing over to Sir Ron Dearing who was expected to solve all the problems inherent in the original design and, at the same time, restore morale within the teaching profession. Judging from the reaction in many quarters to the final version of the Dearing Report which appeared in January 1994, it might seem that Sir Ron had successfully accomplished *both* tasks; but it can also be argued that the Dearing proposals actually *create* more problems than they solve. The final, revised National Curriculum which was published in November is a flawed document which sees flexibility and compromise as the appropriate solutions to all our problems.

It is important to bear in mind that Sir Ron was forced to work within carefully prescribed limits. There was, for example, to be no debate about the desirability or otherwise of a ten-subject national curriculum. Teachers may have enjoyed the (unusual) experience of having their views, and those of their Associations, taken into consideration; but the consultation process was to be limited to two very specific purposes: essentially those of reduction and simplification.

On the issues of assessment and testing, the new proposals have nothing particularly constructive to say. Questions about the inherent tensions in an assessment system designed to be *both* formative *and* summative have not been properly addressed. Gillian Shephard has confirmed that tests for eleven-year-olds will go ahead in 1995, with external markers provided as a free service for schools. Add to this the Government's continued commitment to the publication of league tables at eleven and we have the prospect of all primary-school children being forced to take narrowly-focused external tests which show little concern for the issues of progression and differentiation.

At Key Stage Two the problem remains of teaching the nine-subject curriculum to classes of 30 and more covering the full range of ability. Many primary-school teachers are distinctly unhappy with the Government's attempt to turn them into subject specialists; others would argue that the Government really needs to address the serious problem of resourcing if primary schools are to make meaningful specialist provision.

Most problematic of all is the future of Key Stage Four which ties in with the Government's whole approach to the structure of post-sixteen education and training. It is now pointless to deny that the National Curriculum effectively ends at Key Stage Three, a development which was predicted in *Forum* as long ago as the Spring of 1992. The final Dearing Report talks in terms of the abandonment of Key Stage Four in its original form "allowing greater scope for academic and vocational options". It identifies three broad pathways in post-sixteen education and training – the 'craft' or 'occupational' linked to NVQs; the 'vocational' linked to GNVQs; and the 'academic' leading to A and AS levels – and argues that development of these pathways has implications for students aged fourteen to sixteen. In the words of the Report: "it will be a particular challenge to establish how a vocational pathway which maintains a broad educational component might be developed at Key Stage Four over the next few years as part of a fourteen-to-nineteen continuum." The Report moves on to recommend that the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) should be asked to work 'closely and urgently' with the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to identify whether various possibilities concerning GNVQs can be developed.

It will, of course, be interesting to see how the power struggle between SCAA and NCVQ develops. In the meantime, we seem to have moved a very long way from the HMI vision of an 'entitlement curriculum' for all pupils aged five to sixteen; while the more limited Baker version has been quietly put to rest by a government more interested in delivering choice and diversity than in providing first-class educational opportunities for all.

CLYDE CHITTY

Comprehensive Success for the 21st Century

Tamsyn Imison
Tamsyn Imison is Headteacher of Hampstead Comprehensive School in the London Borough of Camden. In this article she argues that only a comprehensive framework will facilitate the process of lifelong education.

If we are to survive and prosper, everyone must continue to develop and learn throughout their lives. Only a truly comprehensive framework for the whole of our learning experience will ensure this. We need to consider the whole of educational provision, not just selected bits of it. There will probably always be some fragmentation, inadequacy, deprivation, isolation, elitism and disorder. This will lock up and waste potential. But, within the vast majority of schools in Britain – comprehensive nursery schools, comprehensive primary schools, comprehensive secondary schools, comprehensive colleges and comprehensive universities – there is already the strength, and the means to realise the skills, talents and creativity of all our young people.

No Rejection or Alienation

I am writing this as a Headteacher who is at the interface between school and primary education, between school and higher education, between school and community. What schools like mine are trying to do must be done across the whole system.

At every stage we can label young people as low attainers, designate less resourcing to them and deny them access to relevant quality courses. We can use this power of 'prophecy' to inhibit their learning. We can recreate, writ larger at key stages one, two, three and four, the terrible labelling brought about by 11+ failure. Many people labelled in that way found it difficult to accept any formal learning. Surely today we cannot afford this scale of wastage. If we go back to such discredited ways it will be like shooting ourselves in the gut! Instead we must encourage and support all young people on meaningful programmes of learning and support delivered through equitably funded comprehensive schools and colleges.

Students Proud of their Schools

When I first came to my school a student came up to me and said, "You don't think we are as good as GSD up the road do you?" I replied obliquely that I intended this to be the best school possible. There is still such a selective school up the road but I would not swap places with the Head there. What we have is something priceless. A fusion of interest, commitment and joy which has come about because of our joint endeavours. This change of culture cannot be bought but it can be fostered and arrived at by those in comprehensive schools. Now no student feels that they are in a lesser school. They share, without arrogance, in our pride in them, in our pride in the school and in our joint determination to make it better.

High Expectations for All

By high expectations I mean to have a belief in the potential of others, to actively support the development of others, and to be able to share in the celebration of their achievement. It requires generosity of spirit.

Each day, in my comprehensive school, I see young people learning and developing their potential . As teachers at every phase, we have the power and the means to say and prove to students, "You can do it", to increase educational achievement and to access talent and ability. In my school we are looking for success. We are looking for growth points. We are only interested in saying you can do this, not in saying you have failed. We are also looking for fun, for excitement and challenge. This is not just for the students. It is for the teachers as well!

Our students, as well as staff, have constructive work reviews where they set themselves targets. Student feedback suggests that most of them find this to be a positive experience. It enables students, especially boys, to focus on improving their own learning rather than just on peer group priorities. They also value teacher directed mixed groupings within classes. As one of my students said, "Like when the teacher puts you in mixed groups so you are not working with people you are with all the time ... You can put all your ideas together".

Raised Achievement for All

In Scotland where comprehensive education is strongest, high achievement and parental satisfaction are facts of life much admired by all south of the border. This is due in no small part to the success of their comprehensive system.

Examination results and staying on rates have shown dramatic improvements in most comprehensive schools across the country.

Over the last ten years we have been monitoring the average GCSE performance scores of our banded entry. These performance scores are obtained by assigning 7 points for each Grade A at GCSE down to 1 point for each Grade G. We have always taken in 25% high attainers – Band 1, 50% average attainers – Band 2 and 25% low attainers – Band 3. All their GCSE scores have consistently risen and I am particularly proud of the increase in our low attainers' achievement – their score has risen from 8 in 1984 to 23 in 1994. Band 2 scores were 15 in 84 and are 34 in 94. Band 1 scores were 32 in 1984 and are 53 in 94 .This also needs to be set in the context of a rising English as a Second Language Cohort – only 20% in 1984 and now 55% of our roll. We have also been lucky to have nearly 150 refugees who, despite being only at the early stages of learning English, value education and school highly.

Much of this nationwide success is due to the well planned single GCSE examination set to clearly agreed criteria and where the breadth of attainment has significantly increased. Coursework encourages good work habits, allows for skills development and prevents students and teachers just working to the examination. Teachers in state comprehensive schools have also had the advantage of being well monitored and supported by local education inspection and advisory teams who have ensured that in-service training helps teachers to deliver better quality teaching.

Kate Myers, in an article in *The Times Educational Supplement* (November 4, 1994) on improving pupils' performance, recalled the four aspects of achievement proposed by David Hargreaves' team (1984) in Improving Secondary Schools – 1. remembering and using facts; 2. developing practical and spoken skills; 3. developing personal and social skills; and 4. developing motivation and self confidence. Kate Myers is concerned to "raise the status of the other aspects of achievement". This is already happening through the Records of Achievement which students prepare with their teachers and tutor.

Students Enjoying Learning

Education is the formal facilitation of the process of lifelong learning and professional development. We use new methods – information technology, distance learning and accelerated programmes. We try to include integral vocational elements. We have had success with modular courses. We use continuous assessment. The most powerful ingredient is active student participation and ownership. Higher education has initiated many of these techniques and has more to offer us. These allow students to enjoy learning while improving standards and quality and raising attainment.

While I was a head of year at Pimlico School, tutoring by students from Imperial College London significantly transformed my third year cohort's attitude and aspirations to science and education. This must support the personal development of the college students as much as that of the school students.

Teachers Enjoying Learning

Teachers in schools are already beginning to develop new roles. They act as mentors, facilitators and enablers. They are also being seen as reflective and enthusiastic learners alongside other learners. The Haggerston Conferences – the inspiration of Pat Collarbone – learning conferences of students, teachers, governors, parents and educationists are wonderful examples of how exciting joint learning can be.

Many of our teachers go on industrial placements to support school curriculum development. We expect this to enhance their own professional development. They are encouraged to follow this up by gaining Open University or RSA Certification for their action plans and evaluation. This year my school is involved, with several higher education partners, in joint postgraduate initial teacher training. Most of our departments have sent key staff on the mentor training programme at the Institute of Education. The University of North London regularly uses us to provide professional input into their PGCE Maths and Languages courses and we are used as History and Science centres for other initial teacher training. We have valued the formal and informal links that come with this kind of higher education involvement. We use the distance learning materials and computers provided by the Open University to support student teachers based with us.

Close involvement with higher education partners greatly increases our opportunities for further professional development. It raises the status of the whole teaching campus. This would not happen if we had opted to become an initial teacher training school without the support of higher education. Many colleagues, like myself, are studying for further degrees – MAs and doctorates. Our students appreciate hearing of our traumas in getting assignments in on time. They are waiting to see how I did in my written examination for an Open University MA! They share in our effort and joy in achievement as we do in theirs. It is difficult to combine study with work. Some of my colleagues have been lucky to get small grants. Camden is an LEA that actively supports this kind of professional development. Staff can negotiate for the option of going part time or even taking a year's unpaid leave. We are prepared as far as possible to help with this as teachers who are still learning are one of the greatest strengths in a school. We are saying, Do as we do, not Do as we tell you! We also find that the part timers open windows for students, have greater 'street cred' and do much more than the time they are paid for.

Teachers studying need quality support from local or flexible higher education providers. They need a variety of relevant flexible courses with well-organised programmes of study that can be taken in their own time or part time. They want credit transfer and credit accumulation. They value some opportunities for residential intensive work. I have been invigorated by just such a course! Good accommodation, green environs, good food and stimulating mental challenge for one week was a great way to start a holiday.

Our school appraisal system is sharply focused on professional development. Each member of staff, once appraised, is given their own professional development portfolio with sections including accolades, courses, further qualifications and published work. Our aim is to raise the status of all staff and to maximise opportunities for their development. For those of us running a business, a school or a college we know we are only as good as our weakest link. It is critical that everyone in an institution, business, industry, politics and society at large is developing and improving. This process can be facilitated by a supportive and responsive higher education sector which sees the enormous potential in supporting a school of learning.

In school we covet higher education facilities such as the excellent libraries and study areas, the ample resources, the on-tap technology, and the research expertise. These facilities are beginning to be made available to us as payment in kind, as closer structural links are made between us and our higher education partners.

A Broad, Balanced, Rich, Exciting and Relevant Curriculum

Comprehensive schools have led the way on the National Curriculum. Determined to break the stereotypical option 'choices' and determined to move in to the era of technology and the world of work we have provided a broad core curriculum offers from 11 to 16. This might reduce short term examination score gains but ensures all students retain all their choices post-16. It has led, in our school, to equal or greater numbers of girls in Maths, Physics and Technology A-level groups.

We benefit from constructive links with industry. Work

experience and work shadowing are an integral part of our curriculum for students at 15 and 17. We hope to do more with 12- and 13-year-olds before their attitudes and aspirations are fixed.

'Education Extra', Michael Young's term for extra-curricular activities, well describes the add on value given by the wealth of additional activities and opportunities being offered in many comprehensive schools in the gaps between the timetabled official curriculum and a much later end to school. Homework clubs allow the 'gifted' to extend and pursue their interests while ensuring that other students get homework done in optimum conditions with technological back-up and professional support. It also allows for a full creative and expressive arts programme, competitive sports, health and fitness activities from Alexander classes to philosophy and Socratic discourse. It spills out into residentials, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and gives community access to important resources. Tim Brighouse is taking this enrichment further for all students in Birmingham comprehensive schools by forming a 'University of the First Age'.

High Staying on Rates

In our school, vocational routes have given second chances to many students. In the past they would have been denied or discouraged from continuing their education beyond 16. When I came in 1984, there was a selective academic sixth form and a 30% staying on rate. For five years now *all* our 16-year-olds have moved on to educational courses in our own school, other sixth forms or local colleges. This is not just because of the dearth of jobs. It is because of our attitudes towards and expectations of those young people. We count it as a dire failure if we turn any student off education. This is why educational achievement can be so much lower than potential. We are already well over the national target of 50% getting NVQ3 by the year 2000. This wider spectrum of young adults needs a more diverse range of quality courses at higher education level now. We are only part of formal education. Our approach must begin in the primary school and continue post-17 and -18 into further and, in particular, into higher education.

Skills for the 21st Century

There is no doubt that we must get ready for big changes. Rapidly accelerating technology, new concepts of work, a global society, competitors who can undercut us by a factor of 15 or more, dwindling natural resources, devastating damage to the planet ecosystems and searches for new societies and a better quality of life will all impact on educational systems. We need to prepare now for the next millennium.

Our young people will need to be articulate, flexible, independent, proactive learners, technologically skilled, able to lead and work within mixed teams, bilingual or trilingual, with stickability and creativity, used to rising to challenges and able to challenge and improve on current poor practice in industry and commerce. These skills and qualities are achievable within shared existing and developing good practice in schools.

No school or institution can afford to remain static. We must all continue to grow and develop. The trends towards uniformity and insecurity must be reversed. State intervention has to be light handed or it will destroy more than it hopes to preserve. But there must be investment and funding to make good the ravages of neglect.

To be successful, we need political decision makers who are astute, truly value the people of this country and are brave enough to start and commit to this process. Our young people, working with a united education profession, will then have the skills, creativity, professionalism and stamina to do the rest.

Against Fragmentation

Sue Butterfield
Sue Butterfield is a Lecturer in Assessment at the School of Education, University of Birmingham. In this challenging article she looks at the evolving relationship between state power and professional power.

Whereas the 1944 Education Act created considerable local autonomy – for schools and Local Education Authorities – in the matter of curriculum, the 1988 Act has given far-reaching powers to Secretaries of State for Education to dictate not only the broad outlines of curriculum design, but also the detail of curriculum content.

One very important debate which surrounds the increasing intervention of the state in the detail of education policy centres on whether policy can be understood at a state level at all, or whether it is constantly recontextualised and reinterpreted at an institutional level. There is much evidence to support a theory of local reinterpretation. For example, the cascade training model by which the GCSE was introduced in 1986 was notable for the gap between the rhetoric that teachers were now to be trained by 'experts', and the amount of development work which in practice had to be initiated by individual teachers and by local cluster groups. Cascade training "was fundamentally a rational model that had validity for transmitting purely technical information in a well-defined, stable and consensual context. For GCSE, both the task and the context were rather different" (Radnor, 1987, p. 55). Bowe, Ball & Gold see the National Curriculum as "not so much being 'implemented' in schools as being 'recreated', not so much 'reproduced' as 'produced'" (Ball & Bowe, 1992, p. 114; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992, p. 120).

However, the influence of the individual school or teacher over curriculum may be very fragile in a context of systematic governmental policy to downgrade the position of professionals and to establish new forms of educational control. Hatcher & Troyna take issue with Ball, Ball & Gold's account of school-based re-creation. Hatcher & Troyna draw attention to the coercive nature of current education policy and the limited extent to which some

policies can be reinterpreted. Hatcher & Troyna identify assessment as particularly important in the limitation of teacher autonomy:

> *The imposition of national testing locks the National Curriculum in place as the dominant framework of teachers' work, whatever opportunities teachers may continue to take to evade or reshape it. (Hatcher & Troyna, 1994, p. 165)*

These are more than marginal, internecine disputes between different academic positions. They are central to an understanding of evolving relationships between state power and professional power. National Curriculum and testing has brought about in the UK what Apple (1986) has called *intensification* of work, along with a *technicisation* of the teacher's role. The quantity and unpredictability of curriculum directives generated centrally in the UK leave schools and teachers in a role of technical compliance rather than creative planning, while the national generation of test materials and training materials (and now the teams of external test markers) creates a layer of authority – of supposed 'experts' working to precise technical directives, separate from the work of teachers. The project of 'demystifying' (DFE, 1992, p. 8) the work of schools by making them more publicly accountable has been accompanied by the creation of national bodies accountable to the wishes of Ministers, and acting as what Schon might have predicted as "a breed of counter-professional experts" (1983, p. 342).

There are three aspects of this movement which need particular attention.

Firstly, there is the means by which state control is being implemented. Secondly, there is the central issue of *state versus professional* control of education. Thirdly, there is the *context* in which that issue is manifested.

The Means of Control

The role of assessment as the means of control should not be underestimated. The summative testing of National Curriculum attainment makes the development at school level of good formative assessment *for learning* increasingly difficult (Butterfield, 1993). Key Stage One teachers are now to be provided with specimen test material 'to inform teaching', elevating 'teaching to the test' to the level of national policy.

However flawed the National Curriculum may be – and the frequent and substantial revisions to date acknowledge major flaws – the imperatives of external assessment constrain reinterpretation or protest. Comparisons between schools on the basis of results rely upon vast assumptions about the validity of the curriculum as a measure of progression, and upon the reliability and validity of assessment procedures based on that curriculum. Such comparison may be built upon sand, and yet it manages to foreground assessment at the expense of discussion of the underlying curriculum. Value-added measures may even compound the problem – by appearing to provide technical solutions to possible unfairness of comparison. By addressing the assessment end of the issue, value-added discussion further diverts attention from curricular evaluation.

The Issue of Professional Power

Assessment policy has been about creating divisions among the professional bodies that constitute Education. Assessment creates the currency for competition between schools. In so doing, it is instrumental in the replacement of the Local Education Authority and rational planning by a fragmented market-place. The National Curriculum and its assessment legislate, also, for discontinuity between subject areas, and create the context for increasing separateness in the work of secondary subject teachers. The fragmentation of educational activity is strategically necessary to the erosion of the group identity of a 'profession'.

Teaching has ever been precariously placed within the catalogue of professional jobs, and it is therefore unsurprising that it should be identified for particular attention by government in attempts to establish the supremacy of the market economy. Professional power is at odds with a market vision. Professional incomes have been more closely related to claims of specialist knowledge rather than to supply and demand. Education, while having less control than some other professions over rites of entry, is nonetheless powerful in having access to the entire population at an impressionable age – and hence is arguably better able than most to perpetuate its own values and attitudes.

The attack upon professions is, moreover, from the radical left as well from the New Right.

> *The impressive corpus of radical and Marxist analysis of American, Canadian and British education has accumulated evidence, from many angles, against the liberal vision of schooling as a broad preparation for life, as an effective means to reproduce the kind of society and individual consistent with western humanist traditions ... According to left education theory, schools cannot truly serve workers and other subordinate groups because they are ... reproducers of the dominant relations of production. Consequently, Marxism has found its critique and even its language appropriated by the right which ... is entirely sympathetic to an economic interpretation of the function of schools... (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1986, pp. 5-6)*

The arguments around professional power and privilege are very complex in relation to the rights and powers of learners. If Bourdieu and Passeron's claim that educational processes reproduce existing social patterns is accepted, the concomitant is that teachers and lecturers have in some way been agents of that reproduction. Professional interests have, moreover, been very closely associated with the location of learning within institutional frameworks. Locating the cultural capital of knowledge with a particular group can be argued to restrict the definition of learning, and to marginalise those forms of learning which are not acquired in school or college.

It is in the general framework of arguments around professional privilege and authority, that the National Curriculum's claims about *learner entitlement* (DES, 1987) may be seen to have been so strategically important. Such claims may be no more than rhetorical. The National Curriculum is, as Clyde Chitty (1988) argued, a *core* curriculum not a *common* curriculum with general educational principles for all, such as that developed by HMI and others in the 1970s and early 1980s. Nonetheless, the *case* for giving learners access to information about their own progress independent of the views of their teachers is not an easy one to counter. While it is possible to adduce all sorts of evidence of the harm that testing programmes may do to learning opportunities, defence of the automatic right of teachers to be arbiters of educational attainment

and the gatekeepers of educational opportunity is less well developed. These are difficult issues.

The Context

So far, this discussion has focused upon the National Curriculum and schools. This, however, represents only one instantiation of government policy on education. The same kind of pattern is repeated throughout the education system. National Vocational Qualifications seek to redefine the relationship between assessment and curriculum – indeed they replace the idea of courses and the supremacy of institutionally-based learning with the all-importance of competence-based assessment. They deny the notion that learning might be in itself a significant experience, and hold rather that learning should be measured only by specific outcomes. Such a shift involves also a substantial redefinition of work within areas of further and higher education, with increasing emphasis upon the roles of the assessor and verifier – rather than upon the role of teaching. These are not marginal developments in post-compulsory training; they potentially have implications for much of the traditional work of further education and the universities, increasing the technicisation of delivery and assessment, and making university departments increasingly accountable to external awarding bodies. The context of government policy on education should, therefore, be seen as the whole of educational activity – rather than as isolated parts of it.

The Response?

One response is to consider the ways in which education might more effectively resist fragmentation and identify itself more strongly as a whole. At the moment, education is strategically weakened in resisting governmentally imposed policies because of divisions and discontinuities between phases and types of educational activity. However, the argument for a more unified vision of education does not, in itself, address the issue of professional power. A united professional group might be more successful in opposing governmental control. That does not, however, answer the question of whether such opposition would be used to strengthen its traditional authority at the expense of a wider view of student empowerment and the need for reconceptualisation of the locations and conditions for learning.

In any reassertion of professional influence in education, it is clear that such control must articulate very fully with the need to create a learning society' in which institutions and education professionals have key *responsibilities* but not single control in relation to knowledge and the processes by which it is shared.

The current policy climate – and the specific means of governmental control – have emphasised the importance (for good or ill) that assessment processes have in determining relationships and identities within learning contexts. New arguments for increased teacher influence in assessment (such as a return to more teacher assessed coursework in GCSE) need to be founded very explicitly on principles of independence and autonomy for learners – not for teachers.

The Gaps in the Market

Despite commitments (from politicians and teachers) to create greater parity of esteem for different kinds of qualifications – most specifically A-levels and GNVQs – there are still interesting discontinuities in discussion around academic and vocational education. These discontinuities have been illustrated recently in the Competitiveness White Paper (President of the Board of Trade et al, 1994). This document focuses in the pre-16 area on the 'stimulus to improvement' that parental choice gives to schools - a sort of cattle-prod description of educational provision. Whereas post-16, the language of 'helping young adults to succeed' takes over. The erstwhile invisible student comes of age and is suddenly able to act as an independent and highly motivated individual, making complex choices among a range of provision. Neither of these perceptions does justice to the nature of education or training, but more worryingly the contrast in discourses fails to acknowledge either the degree of independence needing to be fostered pre-16, or the extent of guidance and support needed for post-16 and adult learners. It is difficult to see who other than education 'professionals' are likely or able to take on the challenge of creating such continuity of experience. Programmes of testing, narrowly defined competencies, and a technical vision of educational work cannot begin to address the gaps within the Competitiveness White Paper. Even within the terms of the Government's own values of national competitiveness and the routes by which it seeks to establish it, there are far from technical jobs to be done.

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Policy Hysteria

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Professional life in Britain has developed a new vocabulary – innovation fatigue, early retirement, stress, overload, and breaking point. No more the measured security and modest rewards of the profession, whether in health care, social work, or education. Instead, professionals feel over-stretched and under-valued. Such is the pressure on teachers in England that Sir Ron Dearing calls for a moratorium on new developments in the National Curriculum. In Scotland, the largest teaching union contemplates a boycott. Innovation has become endemic, and it hurts.

Why has this happened? One reason is that we have fallen victim to what might be called 'policy hysteria', a notion emerging from recent research into patterns of innovation in vocationalist education in the UK. The research suggests that policy hysteria has a number of symptoms.

Shortening Cycles of Recurrent Reforms

Educational change in the 1980s and 1990s has been characterised by recurring waves of reform. These are increasingly short-term, often based on 3-5 year cycles of development. As innovation becomes more frenetic, real change becomes less likely. These innovations, however, are accompanied by very substantial changes in how education is governed, financed and managed. The result is a kind of endemic chaos, where innovation becomes less predictable and more prone to burial or subversion. There is growing evidence that even billion pound projects like the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative lack long-term impact for these sorts of reasons.

Multiple Innovation

In conditions of 'policy hysteria', multiple innovation becomes the norm, with the next set of reforming initiatives overtaking the last before their impact can be known. For example, in Scottish schools it is not at all unusual for secondary schools in 1994 to be doing 13 different kinds of vocational activity, most of whose educational or economic consequences are a matter of guesswork.

Nor are such innovations likely to be congruent. TVEI was contradicted by the National Curriculum in England and Wales, itself an apparently singular innovation in a state of constant chop and change. Similarly, the role of Education –Business Partnerships (a US import) is far from clear in Scotland in relation to diverse changes in the management and finances of local authorities and of schools themselves. The underlying problem is that education in the 1980s and 1990s has become a battleground between competing rationales and ministries, and contradictory sets of initiatives.

Innovation-without-change and Change-without-innovation

Two different kinds of 'development' have become the norm. The first is our old friend innovation-without-change – attempts to respond to various problems and pseudo-problems in education, society and the economy, by setting up short-term projects that have few long-term results. (Remember the Education for the Industrial Society Project in Scotland? The Careers Guidance and Education Project? Unified Vocational Training? TVEI Pilot even?)

The second kind of development, however, is a relative newcomer: change-without-innovation. In this version, you get the action: authorities are abolished, financial arrangements changed, professional training diluted, and so on, but without any real attempt to pilot the changes or anticipate the consequences. Attempts to experiment before introducing mainstream change are rejected, and the profession receives the ideology intravenously. Such a heady combination of innovation-without-change and change-without-innovation destabilises the whole education system. (You can only hope to predict and measure change if you hold some of the variables constant.) It also undermines professional allegiances which depend on traditions of service rather than conditions of employment.

Scapegoating of Systems, Professionals and Client Groups

Reform initiatives in these conditions also become more symbolic, answering a need to be seen to 'respond to' rather than *solve* educational problems. As a result simplistic diagnosis and prescription replace rational practice, and ludicrous connections are sought between loss of world competitiveness and 'trendy' ideas in teacher training (the Patten Thesis), or education's responsibility for industry's poor showing (the Everyone Since Callaghan Thesis). It is an indictment of our society, although a tribute to the power of the media, that a procession of Unemployed Youth, Lone Parents, and Trendy Teachers can be paraded before the public as plausible causes of moral and economic crisis. Prince Charles is the latest to join in this kind of populist debate, attacking the Theorists in the name of the 'ordinary' person. The consequence is that debate over educational issues is reduced to populist slogans and sound-bites, much of it revolving round a nostalgia for a mythic past (the Major Warm-Beer-and-Cricket Thesette), and a half-acknowledged terror at the possibility of a deindustrialised and impoverished future. Caught between that fear and the false reassurance of a return to old values, it is hardly surprising that present realities, as opposed to fantasies, seldom get a look in. The result is a pervasive amnesia as progressive developments in education are

replaced with cyclical ones which rotate the various themes of blame and cure in the case of vocationalism, from basic skills (early 1980s) to 'generic' skills (mid 1980s) to subject excellence (late 1980s) and now back to 'back to the basics'. And in all of this, researched belief – with its concern for testing current realities and future options – is displaced in favour of more convenient stories, or for the more judicious reporting of 'good news' to agencies who will not tolerate bad news.

The Multiplication of Meaning and the Division of Sense

An additional feature of policy hysteria seems to be that the core vocabulary of reforms begin to gather plural meanings. Within educational debate, words like 'relevance', 'enterprise', and 'student-centred' undergo radical shifts in meaning. For example, 'enterprise' starts off as a straightforward invocation of the need for education to build Lord Young's 'enterprise culture' – and ends up being redefined as just about any 'ability to make things happen'. The slippage in meaning is largely a result of professional attempts to use the language of the innovation (because that's where the money is) while simultaneously trying to make it mean something else – a kind of damage limitation or professional domestication that has some benefits and considerable costs. But it is no small concession to speak a new language, even if you are trying to reform its meanings from within. (We now 'deliver' a 'quality' curriculum and talk without irony about the 'value-added' of schooling.)

The result can be reminiscent of the anthropologist Droogers' account of Zairean primary school children learning to sing in another language:

> *The pupils sang in unison in a language that was neither French nor their own tongue. It was a curious gibberish which the villagers took for French, and the French for the native language. Everyone clapped.*

Nor are innovations themselves immune to this kind of semantic walkabout: Records of Achievement, for instance, has become the hitchhiker of the educational galaxy, forever being picked up and put down in a different place – as vocational guide, personal development, curriculum vitae, or individual action plan.

Endemic Credibility Problems

Given false diagnoses and cures, it is hardly surprising that 'success' is an effect of publicity rather than of pupil performance. The result is a paradox. On the one hand politicians claim success for each specific initiative (sometimes before it's really got started, as in the case of TVEI). On the other hand, there is an underlying accusation that Britain is falling further behind, that values are crumbling, and that it's somebody in Education's fault. Innovations always 'succeed' and the problem always grows worse.

That, then, is the nature of policy hysteria. It mainly involves a flux of evanescent and successive reforms, designed to construct short-term political support for current policies that address deflections of the real problems our society faces. Unemployment rising? These damn kids. Productivity slipping? These damn teachers. Discipline getting worse? Damn single parents. The resulting instability creates a kind of professional neurosis reflected in loss of morale, stress and overload. It amounts to a deliberate impoverishment of educational debate – and no doubt debates in other professional fields as well – and in the end is a corruption of democracy.

Populism v Professionalism

Finally, we should note that policy hysteria is part of a wider political development in recent times – the undermining of professional bodies of knowledge by more populist and ephemeral sets of belief about the apparent common-sense of 'relevance' or 'competence' or 'added value'- often related in the language of what deNuvo has called the 'sound-byte, hyperspin newspeak' of advertising and politics. In this deprofessionalised debate, the new owners and generators of educational knowledge are the politicians and the managerial and media chorus orchestrated by employers' bodies and right-wing think-tanks. Nowadays it is the CBI rather than the Academy that more confidently pronounces what ought to be in the 'national' curriculum – the secret garden has become a market garden policed by performance indicators, quality assurances, and league tables. In order to 'manage' this new educational unsettlement, it has become necessary to introduce a whole series of external measurements of professional processes and outcomes, most of which result in absurd expansions of bureaucracy and in meaningless sets of comparisons . But this is no golden age story – none of this should be taken to be a defence of the old 'owners' of the curriculum: their work was conservative, their methods oligarchic, their outcomes unimpressive.

Is there a cure? One possibility, of course, is the ballot box, although we should not make the mistake of assuming that only one political party is capable of combining deceit and self-deception in such novel and ambitious ways. We also need to get educational debate and policy-making out of its current populist prison, and to bring research and development into much closer alignment. Research will not tell us what to do, but it will tell us what worked or didn't work and why – provided there is sufficient honesty in the policy arena. Educational change, therefore, should follow three principles: it should be strategic, sceptical and collaborative, rather than the current chaos of ill-planned initiatives, marketing ploys and wishful thinking. Finally, we need a more courageous profession – because the education profession has 'bought' into a whole series of languages and practices of change that deny the professionalism of the teacher, the teacher educator, and the researcher. All three groups have been guilty of cowardice over the last 15 years.

Challenges Facing Teacher Education: a view from a post-16 perspective

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Government policy placing teacher training in schools and colleges is being complemented by the development of a national model of competency/work-based training within the NVQ framework which claims to be able to specify the minimal competencies required for qualifying individuals as teachers. The development of competency/work-based learning is quite advanced in further education and has important implications for schools as well as colleges. The combination of the thrust to exclusive school/college based training and the National Council for Vocational Education's (NCVQ) narrow interpretation of competencies represent a major threat to the teaching profession which could lead to a de-skilled and divided teaching force.

The contradiction for the FE sector is that whilst NCVQ competency-based training is effectively narrowing lecturers' training to specific technicist skills, curriculum changes such as the introduction of GNVQs are demanding different, broader skills, knowledge and understanding from the college lecturer. It is within this context that three key areas need to be urgently examined.

Firstly, there is a need to re-evaluate and define the skills, knowledge and understanding needed for teachers for a future curriculum/college. This will mean going beyond our traditional view of teacher as subject specialist. Secondly, we need to express these in terms of learning outcomes that meet the demand for professional standards to be clear and accessible yet reflect the holistic, complex and difficult mixture of skills, knowledge and understanding that teaching requires. Thirdly, we should aim to develop a new form of partnership which is more than just a division of labour based on the old split between theory and practice towards a coherent model of teacher training that looks to the future rather than the past and developing new relationships between initial, in-service training and research. This article examines the first two areas in more detail than the third, looking at different competence-based approaches to teacher education, comparing them with the skills and knowledge needed for the future.

Many beginning teachers and serving lecturers are looking for more than reflection on their practice and are searching for an understanding that cannot be generated solely from their own experience (Young, 1990). For many teachers their experience in a particular school or college can be negative; initial training can be more like a survival kit than an understanding needed to (a) deal critically with experience, and (b) change the practical realities and not be subordinate to them. Initial training is not just a question of coming to terms with the practical realities of becoming a teacher but also the opportunity to consider how to improve one's teaching in ways that are possible and desirable.

Competence-based Approaches to Teacher Education in the Further Education Sector

Competence-based education (CBE) has been introduced into a number of initial and in-service courses such as the City and Guilds 7306 Further and Adult Education Teachers Certificate and some Certificate of Education and PGCE courses. This is due primarily to the work of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). The major criticisms levelled at the NCVQ notion of competence are (1) that it does not give enough scope for knowledge and understanding, and (2) it does not emphasise that the individual is part of a team, a feature of the changing role of teachers which is of growing importance in today's educational process. The NCVQ interpretation of competence is task based and essentially behaviourist; competence is achieved through a series of atomised work based tasks. This interpretation claims that one can write specifications of competence that are clear and transparent and represent national standards. The approach marginalises the role of professional judgement in assessing competence by focusing on narrow and limited occupational roles.

But from even a cursory glance at existing courses based on competence models it is clear that competence has been interpreted in many different ways. It is the definition of competence that is crucial for teacher trainers not the debate about whether to use competencies or not. The absence of a constructive debate about alternatives to the approach adopted by the National Council for Vocational Education has left a vacuum at the heart of the move towards competence-based teacher training.

There are models of competence which see competence as relational and a mixture of knowledge, skills and understanding. An example of the more integrated or holistic approach to competence is being developed by the professions in Australia (Gonczi, 1994) where the approach to competency is quite different to that of the NCVQ. In this model of competence recognition is given to the complexity of practising in varying contexts and of avoiding the notion of there being one way of practising competently.

There is a body of research that can inform the debate about alternative views of competency. Dreyfus (1981), for example, puts forward the view that there are two types

of problems facing practitioners. He describes these as *objectively defined problems*, which would constitute easily defined areas such as using educational technology, ordering books, marking work, keeping records, subject expertise etc., and *situational understandings* that refer to far more unstructured problematic situations that cannot be predicted, that require judgements and personal interpretations. Clearly objectively defined problems are those that would be more easily defined as competencies rather than those types of situational judgements which are unpredictable and to which few facts apply. The notion of competence is not seen by Dreyfus as absolute but as one of levels; from novice, advanced beginner, competent practitioner, proficient and expert. At each stage different understandings are required moving from the analytical, non-situational, objectively defined understanding at novice stage to expertise stage where situational understanding, analysis and reflection are combined with experience to make the decisions based on intuition or commonsense knowledge. Of course none of these stages or skills is discrete and situational understanding of some sort may well be taking place at beginner stage.

Although David Hargreaves (1993) is often identified with government policies to place initial training in schools, he does raise some important issues when he suggests that the professional development and socialisation of teachers is best understood as attaining a professional commonsense knowledge that helps teachers to understand and contextualise what is happening in a school or college and that commonsense knowledge is best achieved through being in a school/college. Hargreaves poses the question: would it not be better for the beginning teacher to acquire their basic commonsense knowledge through practice, under known good teachers as supportive mentors before expecting them to research, discuss and deliberate in a highly sophisticated way?

The dilemma for teacher trainers is to be able to give students the commonsense knowledge that they require but at the same time have a model of good practice that gives students the knowledge to challenge and amend those skills that have on the whole been learnt through observation and imitation. The limitations of teacher training based on experience gained in one department in one college are obvious in that (a) it may not be an example of good practice, (b) it is unlikely to be practice based on the needs of the future, and (c) it provides no other experience to judge experience against.

There is little space in this article to comprehensively cover the research and writings addressing how teachers learn and develop. I merely wish to suggest that a body of knowledge is available to inform the search for a new, more coherent, model of initial teacher training.

The demand for competencies in teaching will not go away and must be faced squarely. Whatever one's attitude towards or interpretation of competence, the expectation of people for a teacher to have a basic competence and for the standards of competence to be available to them as consumers or parents is quite reasonable. Furthermore it is also a reasonable expectation that those who are deemed incompetent should not be given control over groups of young people or adults in education or any other sphere of professional practice. The difficulties of defining the complexity of competencies and the knowledge of the different levels of competence such as those of beginning teacher and those of an experienced one should not prevent educationists from defining these basic standards expected of a person licensed to practice in a college or school. The view that initial training is not rigorous enough and that incompetent teachers and lecturers are practising in our schools and colleges is one that must be faced not just by higher education but by all practitioners. Pupils, students and parents have every right to expect certain standards and to be able to hold us to account if these standards are not met.

New Skills for the Future: the context

An articulation of the skills and knowledge required by teachers and lecturers for the future curriculum is urgently needed. Through such a discussion with all partners a coherent new model of teacher education could emerge that would use competencies in a holistic way, and could work out a new relationship between higher education and colleges/schools in the training of teachers.

The preparation of teachers for both schools and colleges is complex and problematic. Teaching requires a broad range of skills and understandings which is formed through a mixture of knowledge and experience. Proper training must allow for the fact that effective teaching can differ from individual to individual and teaching in one context may require different methods and skills in another. The process of the professional development of teachers is not fully understood and the form of initial training is one where little consensus amongst educationists exist. Furthermore, teachers today are faced with a changing society that impacts on the curriculum and the organisation of the college. The preparation of teachers today is for situations in the future which cannot be seen at the time of initial training.

The pressure for change in education and training can be put within the context of a society that is undergoing massive economic and structural change. Mass production and mass consumption has changed from the early- and mid-20th century. The old is being replaced by a new form of production based upon new technology, smaller organisations and management structures which require much greater and more flexible skills on the part of the workers who are no longer specialists in the old sense but are multi-skilled flexible specialists.

Whatever one's views about the different analysis of economic and social changes, whether it is seen in terms of flexible specialisation or the notion that we are at the beginning of a new 'post-fordist' era, it is clear that new forms of work and production are developing that require new flexible skills and knowledge on the part of the workforce.

The concept of the teacher of the future being a 'flexible specialist' is one which is beginning to be used. Perhaps flexible specialist in educational terms is better expressed as 'connective specialist'. This would be a teacher who went beyond their own subject specialism and sought to create new ways of learning that broke down the divisions between subjects, the vocational and the academic developing a new relationship between theory and practice (Young, 1990). The question for teacher trainers is: What skills and knowledge would such a lecturer require and how could they best be learnt?

The notion of teacher as subject expert is fast becoming out of date. The influence of new technology with its faster flow of information such as electronic mail, CD-ROM and new portable computers mean that teachers will need to

broaden their skills to become managers of learning and course designers rather than mere dispensers of knowledge or expertise (Badley, 1991). The underlying theme of such a development is that of the learner becoming more autonomous and the teacher becoming a 'broker of knowledge', a flexible generalist committed to a multi-disciplinary approach to learning rather than narrow subject expertise. Learning according to this view should become more than the factual reproduction of existing knowledge or technical skill to one which encourages problem solving and critical thinking

Robert Reich (1991) argues that there is a similarity between many schools and parts of the national economy in the USA. He equates the standard assembly-line in production with that of a curriculum neatly divided into subjects and taught in predictable units arranged sequentially and controlled by standardised tests, "intended to weed out defective units and return then for reworking".

For Reich what we have is a standardised education system for a standardised economy yet the very economic base for which it may have been appropriate is changing before our eyes. In order to meet these changes Reich emphasises the following skills.

- Abstraction, which emphasises the need to concentrate on discovering patterns and meanings and to move beyond that form of education which involves committing discrete slices of other people's abstractions to memory to a state of affairs where knowledge is rearranged in new ways to suit new purposes. This means moving beyond a narrow specialisation to one of connective or flexible specialism.
- Systems thinking which emphasises the connectiveness and relationship between subjects. This way of thinking is the opposite of seeing knowledge as compartmentalised, or teaching subjects as discrete areas but is one which sees the whole and how things are linked together. Under the present education system areas of knowledge are separated from one another as is theory and practice, as if each area is distinct. Reich states that this may be efficient in conveying bits of data but not for instilling wisdom or for preparing people for the 21st century.
- Experimentation and the ability to find new knowledge and new ways of doing things. There is very little opportunity for most students to experiment and little room for trial and error. The very tools that are needed for the 21st century, the ability to find out and learn from trial and error, are discouraged because of the need to 'cover' certain fixed routes of knowledge.
- Collaboration, communicating and learning from others. Most things that are happening revolve around teams sharing ideas and problems. Yet students are not encouraged to learn one from another and to work in teams – on the contrary most assessment and study is individualised.

Historically, lecturers in further education have (along with higher education) seen qualification or expertise in an academic or vocational area as sufficient for teaching. The marginal place given to teacher training has been based on the view that knowledge of subject or trade and the discipline associated with it is more important than pedagogy that is far too woolly and too liberal for the more serious business of research or practical application.

Although the attitude towards initial teacher training in further education has greatly improved, the tradition of subject specialism being given primary importance has been perpetuated by teacher training organisations where specific delivery of subject has dominated the initial training and professional development of lecturers in further education (and teachers in schools). Yet the experience of further education with the introduction of new courses such as GNVQs has led to both the academic and vocational lecturer having to work together in new ways not only to embrace the teaching of 'core skills' but also to find ways of applying their knowledge and skills across previously uncrossed boundaries. For many staff the assessment criteria, the tutoring arrangements, the introduction of action planning, careers guidance and records of achievement have raised many issues about skills needed by lecturers over and above that of subject/occupational specialism.

Placing training exclusively within the schools and colleges on a model of work-based/competency national standards for initial training is best resisted by developing an alternative model based on a new relationship between theory and practice and articulating a view of the skills needed for the future. This would mean defining new broader and connective competencies which can and should be applied across subjects to form new and connective ways of learning.

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GNVQs, VET and Comprehensive Education

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Ron Dearing's final report on the National Curriculum places a welcome emphasis on the "need to respond to the many-sidedness of talent" (1993, para. 3.17) in the 14-16 range. However, instead of building on the entitlement to a balanced and broadly based curriculum outlined in the 1988 Reform Act, the Dearing Report goes on to refer to the "development of three broad educational pathways in post-16 education and training" – the occupational linked to NVQs, the vocational linked to the new GNVQs, and the traditional academic leading to A and AS levels (ibid.).

This could prove to be disastrous for secondary school pupils, for vocational education and training (VET) and for the comprehensive ideal since, against the background of the fierce competition for students between schools and FE colleges and the popularity of GNVQs fuelled by the glossy publicity campaigns of the NCVQ and awarding bodies, it is highly likely that Dearing's warning that "there is little support for a narrowly based vocational education before 16" (para. 3.20) will go unheeded. Indeed, there is every sign, as I feared when GNVQs were first introduced (Hyland, 1992) that, in the chaos and confusion surrounding Key Stage 4, a majority of 14-year-olds might end up doing half or part GNVQs as demand for the new qualifications doubles over the next few years (Tysome, 1994).

There is a positive side to these developments. GNVQs do herald a movement away from the mechanistic behaviourism of NVQs (Hyland, 1993) and from the narrow skills training which characterised the 'new vocationalism' of the 1980s. Even the CBI has now taken a stand against such premature occupationalism and has advised schools not to offer NVQ awards (CBI, 1994). In addition, there is clearly a case for including a vocational component – in the form of a broad introduction to working life (Chitty, 1991) – as part of a general curriculum for *all* pupils. However, the demerits of GNVQs could easily outweigh the merits as schools scramble to introduce experimental programmes which have still to be fully evaluated in the absence of any coherent general strategy for the 14-16 curriculum. The result would be a reinforcement of the vocational/academic divide and of the two-tier system characteristic of past tinkerings with the system in the form of TVEI, CPVE and YTS. In order to avoid this, we need to think in terms of a re-affirmation of the comprehensive ideal and of a broad general education for all of the kind recommended in the recent report by the National Commission on Education (NCE, 1993).

GNVQ Developments

Even before the first GNVQ pilots introduced in September 1992 had been evaluated, the NCVQ public relations machine was in action stimulating talk of "overwhelming support" and plans to "speed up the development of GNVQs" (Tysome, 1993, p.9). The official DFE endorsement of the new 'third pathway' was revealed in the pamphlet issued in summer 1993 announcing that Level 3 GNVQs were to be known as "vocational A-levels ... equivalent to two GCE A-Levels" (DFE, 1993, p.1). Since the new qualifications were introduced on a nationwide basis in September 1993, higher education institutions have been actively wooed by various NCVQ schemes designed to persuade them to interview GNVQ candidates for entry to suitable courses, and the awarding bodies (BTEC, RSA and City & Guilds) are competing with each other in their efforts to persuade youngsters that their own GNVQs are the ones most likely to lead to better employment and further educational prospects.

Although there can be no doubting the success of GNVQs in terms of take-up rates (our own survey at Warwick found that 78.8% of post-16 institutions had implemented GNVQs in some form; Hyland & Weller, 1994) the number of students registered can surely only be one, fairly crude measure of success. In terms of the quality of teaching and learning and the comparability of standards with other qualifications, a number of early studies have been critical of the new programmes.

A report issued by OFSTED in Autumn 1993 was highly critical of the work produced by GNVQ students, and the NCVQ responded by alerting schools and colleges to potential problems with the new courses (Utley, 1993). More recently problems have been noted in the externally tested components of GNVQs (Ward, 1993) and a Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspection team reported that GNVQ core skills were generally not effectively delivered and there were some technical difficulties in external tests (Utley, 1994).

In our own survey of GNVQ implementation in post-16 institutions there was widespread criticism of the unwieldy, cumbersome and bureaucratic nature of NCVQ assessment, and this confirms the findings of studies by Callender (1992) and Smithers (1993). In spite of the many improvements over the flawed occupationally-specific NVQs, the new qualifications still display a residual attachment to the more mechanistic and behaviourist features of the NCVQ system. Perhaps it is now time to abandon this approach in favour of something more like the GCSE and BTEC models of learning attainments and objectives.

In addition, if GNVQs are to achieve genuine (rather than alleged or stipulated) parity of esteem with

general/academic qualifications and their counterparts in Europe, the knowledge base will need to be strengthened substantially and the core skill elements expanded to cover far more than the mandatory three units. The fact that around 80% of the institutions surveyed in our study were concentrating just on these mandatory elements is a cause for concern and serves to highlight the dangers of abandoning the original GNVQ scheme which included five core skills and an optional foreign language (NCVQ, 1992). It seems that policy implementation has led to a similar reductionism in this area as in the case of national curriculum developments!

GNVQs and the 14-19 Curriculum

Even if all the current problems are solved and the new courses prove themselves, there is still the vexed question of whether they will help to improve the 14-19 curriculum, upgrade vocational studies and help bridge the vocational/academic divide. The signs are that the current incrementalist approach to reform will be no more successful than past tinkerings with the system. Indeed, if, as seems likely, GNVQs come to replace NVQs in many vocational spheres, those students working towards the occupationally-specific qualifications would be placed in a difficult position. In spite of the considerable pressures for reform and a unified post-16 curriculum, the DFE appears intransigent in its support for the A-level gold standard. The emergence of an A-level/GNVQ duopoly is likely to leave NVQ candidates out in the cold, thus relegating the occupationally-specific pathway to low-level vocational preparation on the periphery of the labour market.

There is now an emerging consensus that the problems associated with our 'low skills–low quality' education and training system will be solved only by merging the Departments of Employment and Education (now even supported by the Tory Reform Group, Ayer, 1994) and the combination of vocational and general education in the 14-19 curriculum. However, what is required is not the currently dominant policy of educational *apartheid* (separate but equal for vocational and academic routes) but a genuinely *comprehensive* programme in which *all* 14-16 pupils will be entitled to a curriculum which includes a mandatory and broadly based vocational component. To achieve this, we need something along the lines of the proposals contained in the 1993 National Commission Report which recommended the establishment of a General Education Diploma which could be awarded at ordinary (around 16) and advanced levels (18 or 19) and which would "replace the range of qualifications, including GCSE, A-levels, BTEC and both general and more specific vocational qualifications" (NCE, 1993, pp. 67-68).

Linking all this with the Dearing proposals, this would result in a 14-19 curriculum incorporating both core and optional general and vocational elements in which specialisation post-16 would not preclude overlap and transfer between the different components. Most important of all, it will be essential for all elements (especially the vocational ones) to be underpinned by the knowledge and breadth of learning which characterise the French 'baccalaureate' and German 'abitur'. Specific 'occupational' preparation could then be built on this foundation, perhaps in the form of the 'traineeships' recommended by the National Commission (op. cit., p. 273).

Conclusion

Lewis (1991) claims that VET is almost universally viewed in social class terms which accord inferior status to vocational pursuits, and describes this as the "historical problem of vocational education" (p. 96). This problem will not be solved by the educational apartheid of a GNVQ/A-level system, nor by a return to the tripartite system of the 1944 Act (which the recent Labour Party proposals for a General Certificate of Further Education did not quite manage to avoid!). Such approaches can only perpetuate the vocational/academic divide and the second-class status of vocational studies as suitable always for "other people's children".

This implies not only a compulsory vocational core for all 14-16 year olds, but also a Deweyan conception of vocationalism such as that recommended by Clyde Chitty in which the "full intellectual and social meaning of a vocation" is acknowledged. Criticising the two-tier vocational system of the past Chitty argues that

> *Vocational education in comprehensive schooling must be about the world of work as a whole and about all the jobs that people do. It must be education about work, not the socialization of specific groups into specific lower levels of work ... It must be about the need for full and active and wholly equal participation in local, national and international life (1991, p. 108)*

It is doubtful whether GNVQs could ever match up to such a conception of vocationalism.

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Realising a Policy?

Anne Buchan

This article draws on some findings from a current research project being undertaken at Leeds University funded by the ESRC (grant number R000233875). The project is studying how educational policy is realised. Attainment target (AT) 1 of the science National Curriculum at Key Stages (KS) 3 and 4 is the focus of the study.

At its conception none could have realised the controversy that AT1 in the science National Curriculum would generate. AT1 is concerned with 'scientific investigations'. Practical work, of which scientific investigations constitute one particular form, lies at the heart of school science and has done so for over a hundred years. However, the model of scientific investigation depicted in AT1 has a narrow focus which concentrates on the manipulation of variables. Whilst none would argue that this is not representative of one form of scientific activity, few would agree that this is all that is involved in the scientific enterprise. In fact the activity is so diverse that formulation into one single model has continually eluded historians and philosophers of science. Science teachers have had to attempt to implement this attenuated model of scientific activity, in their classrooms. How has this occurred? What has been the effect on science teachers and the science education our young people are receiving?

Few science teachers would consider a science course acceptable without the inclusion of scientific investigations. However, when faced with AT1 most found themselves unsure of how to incorporate it into their classroom practice. Uncertainty led to consideration of the assessment criteria rather than the wider descriptions of the activity contained in the Programme of Study.

Interpretation of the Statements of Attainment (SoA) soon proved problematic. What exactly did they mean and how did they translate into activities the pupils might do in the classroom? INSET training was limited, not least due to the fact that the 'trainers' were themselves in a similar position. NCC and SEAC regularly published pamphlets aimed at assisting teachers and trainers to understand the complexities of the Attainment Target.

The trainers, mainly LEA advisory staff and examination group officers, attempted to provide practical help in the form of examples of investigations, pupils' responses to investigatory tasks and their subsequent translation into National Curriculum levels. Unfortunately their credibility was limited. There were difficulties in obtaining exemplar material, particularly at the higher levels. Specific problems with some SoAs soon became apparent. Consequently there have been gradual alterations in the interpretation of the criteria. One such change allows the word 'and' to be replaced by 'or'. A minor difference on the surface but one which has significant implications for the work required from a pupil to achieve the level. Such a fluid situation, rather than assisting, often leaves teachers more uncertain. What are they to believe? Transmission of such relaxations to the 'rules' generally takes place during training sessions, attended by limited numbers of teachers. What happens to the science department not represented at the session? Even when changes are acknowledged are teachers meant to continually remark pupils' work in order to keep pace with the situation?

Inevitably teachers became frustrated. It is, therefore, unsurprising that many training sessions became the ground for venting anger and frustration. Trainers had to take the brunt of teachers' feelings with little power to remedy the situation themselves. Ultimately they relied on SEAC, and to a lesser extent NCC, to govern the interpretation of AT1. These centralised authorities rarely came face to face with the general populace and were thus 'shielded' from the reality of the situation.

Attempts to assist teachers in the implementation of AT1 can at best be described as fragmented or less charitably chaotic. This is not attributable to any one party within the system. Each has diligently done their utmost to fulfil their own particular role, progressing as best they can within the framework imposed upon them. The difficulties arise partly from the model of scientific activity contained within AT1, and partly from the degree of centralisation with respect to both the curriculum and its assessment.

What has been the effect on science teachers as a result of this maze of interpretation, simplification and manipulation? One strand of the research has involved lengthy interviews with teachers from schools in widely differing locations. The interviews were structured to allow teachers to express freely their thoughts associated with AT1, both with regard to their own situation and their classroom practice. The outcomes are disconcerting. Teachers feel exposed and ultimately deskilled. One head of department lamented the days when he used to be able to assist his colleagues; now he described himself as being "in the same mire as they are, trying to extricate myself as best I can". Teachers no longer feel in control of the activities within their classrooms. The situation was summed up succinctly by one teacher:

> *We didn't devise any of this originally, we as science teachers weren't involved, it was thrust upon us like most things over the past five years and we were told to do it. We were suddenly presented with a whole new framework for practical science and when teachers suddenly say help, nobody up there would come down and say this is it. And so as teachers we didn't know where we were half the time.*

These feelings are widespread. The developmental process associated with the introduction of AT1 has taken place in a 'black hole' as far as teachers are concerned. They have no knowledge as to who developed the Science Order, describing them as "mysterious figures" or "those people up there". Implicit here is the notion of a hierarchical model of curriculum development far removed from the ordinary classroom teacher. Official bodies such as SEAC were equally remote; a "central organisation that keeps telling

us things to do". Self confessed ignorance accompanied many such statements. Uncertainty has led some teachers to ask for a prescribed set of tasks which they can simply administer in their classrooms. This transfer of professional responsibility is not accompanied by any anguish. The whole process has left many feeling that they are gradually losing control over their own classroom practice. "Whoever said we were still professionals?" was a rhetorical but rather pertinent question posed by one teacher.

Despite this rather depressing scenario, teachers are working hard to introduce AT1 into their classrooms. Examination groups' officers, LEA advisory divisions, SEAC, NCC and latterly SCAA are all assisting. Some teachers, albeit a limited number, have been identified during this research who feel they have succeeded. Confidence is growing. Perhaps in a year's time teachers' responses may be very different. But the stark reality of some of the comments suggests that the process will leave lasting scars on some teachers.

Finally attention turns to the classroom. What are the pupils being asked to do? What impact is this having on the quality of their science education? AT1 consists of three strands and each usually occupies one lesson. The reality of the classroom rarely allows for more extended iterative tasks. The average one hour lessons in themselves provide limited scope for any open-ended investigative activity. With such practical constraints it is hardly surprising that advice indicating that AT1 be used as the vehicle for teaching the other three science ATs is rejected by the majority of teachers. Schools have tried to fulfil this requirement but the majority do not feel it has been successful. This leaves AT1 relegated to an isolated position within the curriculum, undertaken by most simply to generate marks for assessment purposes. A substantial number of teachers feel it is necessary to teach the 'skills' of AT1, but in many cases this simply comes down to "training them to jump the hurdles" so that progress to higher levels can be made. As one teacher stated "I thought they should know the rules of the game they were playing". It was felt that "kids aren't coached to be good investigators; they are coached to cope with AT1". Similarly another said "we're realising it is important to teach the skills to do AT1 ... unfortunately the skills we are teaching are not necessarily scientific skills".

AT1 investigations are introduced to pupils as 'What factors affect...' A phrase still relatively novel but when pupils are faced with such a diet throughout their schooling, their motivation must surely be affected. Similarly pupils have been observed in Y7 and Y10 doing exactly the same investigation.

Very little mention was ever made of effects on pupils during the interviews but when it did occur teachers used words such as 'frustrating' and 'traumatic'. Once again, little of a positive nature was expressed. Perhaps these are reflections of teachers' own feelings regarding AT1. One teacher considered that AT1 was "hindering my teaching of science"; others were quite certain it had "taken the fun out of science". It was "constraining teaching", not permitting pupils' interests to be pursued because "we haven't got time to spare ... we've got to do AT1". There is no doubt that for many the sparkle has gone from their lessons and they feel under great pressures of time.

AT1 was introduced with the highest ideals in mind. It has been described as "outrageously ambitious". Why then has it left such a trail of destruction? Perhaps it was too ambitious. More likely it is the model of the scientific activity depicted by AT1 and the process by which this particular policy has been realised that lie at the heart of the problem. Both these features need careful reconsideration if science in the National Curriculum is to be a true success. The recent draft proposals for science attempt to address the former but the wider and more general area of policy realisation remains untouched. Consideration must be given to teachers' professional situation if the outcomes of a National Curriculum are to yield success. At present, rather than stimulating, AT1 seems to be stifling much science teaching. There is little doubt that teachers' confidence is increasing. Pupils are achieving higher levels. But the questions of how and at what cost must be asked. The quality of science education and teachers' professional self-esteem are high prices to pay.

The Price of Ignorance

Clyde Chitty

In a recent *Forum* article (Volume 36, Number 1), Clyde Chitty looked at the Conservative Government's campaign to influence the classroom discussion of sexuality and sexual behaviour. In this follow-up paper, he discusses the worrying implications of the sex education clauses of the 1993 Education Act and of DFE Circular No. 5/94.

Introduction

By the beginning of 1993, government ministers in general – and education ministers in particular – were becoming increasingly concerned that they were *not* getting their message across about the need for schools to promote respect for traditional moral values and 'stable' family life. Despite the stern warnings delivered in the 1986 Education (No. 2) Act, DES Circular No. 11/87 and the 1988 Local Government Act, fears remained that teachers were preparing sex education lessons based on such dangerous concepts as: respect for different lifestyles, refusal to denigrate minorities and concern to redefine the family.

While they lacked evidence of widespread subversion, it seemed clear to John Major and his virtuous team at the DFE that a number of teachers had simply *refused* to be intimidated by the various government pronouncements on sex education. Speaking at the World AIDS Day Conference in December 1991, Michael Marland, headteacher of North Westminster Community School in the London Borough of Westminster, reminded his audience that Section 1 of the 1988 Education 'Reform' Act specifically required the school curriculum to be concerned with "preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life". How, he asked, could human sexuality be left out of such preparation?[1] This was just one example of using the Government's own legislation to good effect. Others pointed out, in similar fashion [2], that Section 19 of DES Circular No. 11/87 'Sex Education at School' actually contained (somewhat surprisingly) the unequivocal statement that facts about sex should be presented "in an objective and balanced manner, so as to enable pupils to comprehend the range of sexual attitudes and behaviour in present-day society".[3]

Anxious to demonstrate that it was still concerned about the moral health of the nation, the Major Government decided that *something* would have to be done about the more liberal and enlightened aspects of the 1987 Circular. Indeed, there was pressure on the Government to go even further and draft legislation *preventing* the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum. Both the then Education Secretary John Patten and his deputy Baroness Blatch were, it seems, greatly influenced by the campaign being waged by the 60,000 strong Christian Action Research and Education and by the small fundamentalist Christian sect known as the Plymouth Brethren *both* to ban all sex education in schools *and* to remove all mention of the HIV virus and its transmission from the statutory National Curriculum.[4] And James Pawsey, Conservative MP for Rugby and Kenilworth, was not alone in the Party in arguing that sex education should be banned since it clearly encouraged premature experimentation among the young. For Mr Pawsey, the issue was quite clear-cut:

> *Despite the growing emphasis on the teaching of sex, the rate of abortions continues to increase, and small wonder, for if we teach our children German, can we be surprised when they actually practise it?[5]*

In April 1993, the DFE published the draft of a proposed revision of Circular 11/87 in which Section 19 appeared in a truncated version which no longer allowed for the recognition of lesbian and gay sexualities. But the ensuing process of consultation was overtaken by the Government's own last-minute amendment to the new Education Bill passing through Parliament. This amendment now forms Section 241 of the 1993 Education Act.

As a result of this amendment, consideration of AIDS, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases and aspects of human sexual behaviour other than *biological* aspects no longer forms part of National Curriculum Science. Governors of secondary schools will no longer have the power, granted them by the 1986 Education (No. 2) Act, of deciding whether or not a school will provide sex education for its pupils [6]; though governors will continue to be required to develop a policy explaining how and where sex education will be taught and to make that policy available to parents. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, parents now have the right to withdraw their children from *all* or *part* of the sex education programme in both primary and secondary schools.[7] Parents do not have to give reasons for their decision; nor do they have to indicate what other arrangements they intend to make for providing sex education for their children. Once a request for withdrawal has been made, that request *must* be complied with until the parent changes or revokes it.

Right-wing fundamentalists clearly hope that large numbers of parents *will* withdraw their children from 'compulsory' sex education classes. Teachers must, it seems, be 'punished' for their reluctance to provide sex education in the context of traditional moral values and family life. According to Valerie Riches, Director of Family and Youth Concern, writing to *The Times* in July 1993:

> *The right to withdraw children from lessons must be maintained until the sex education lobby shows itself both willing and capable of promoting responsible attitudes towards sexual behaviour, marriage and family life.[8]*

Parental Attitudes towards Sex Education

The available evidence on parental attitudes will hardly provide congenial reading for the Conservative Right. A study by Isobel Allen for the Policy Studies Institute carried out in 1987 found that 96 per cent of parents were happy for sex education to take place in schools.[9] More recently,

a major survey of 1,400 parents carried out by the Health Education Authority has found that 94 per cent of parents support the idea of sex education in schools. Just one per cent of parents say that they intend to withdraw their children from *all* sex education lessons. The vast majority are in favour of sex education in primary schools, where they want pupils to learn about growing up and personal hygiene. A total of 44 per cent think reproduction should be taught to children in this age group. Subjects such as contraception, HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual relationships, moral values and family life can then be left to the secondary school. Around 80 per cent of parents want secondary schools to teach about HIV and AIDS and only 5 per cent are implacably opposed to this. There seems to be general confidence in the role of teachers in the whole area of sex education, although it would have to be admitted that this is not shared by a quarter of Muslim parents and 17 per cent of Hindus.[10]

Sex Education and Sexual Activity

Another right-wing myth that needs to be shattered is that sex education in schools actually *encourages* early sexual activity. It may suit the Right's purpose to promote this lie, but all the evidence suggests that countries with the most explicit sex education have the lowest teenage pregnancy rates and that the better the sex education, the higher the age at which teenagers first have sex. Contrary to what bigoted campaigners such as Dame Jill Knight and Victoria Gillick might have us believe, effective sex education appears to *postpone* sexual activity rather than *encourage* it.[11]

The Government really ought to take heed of the messages contained within its own White Paper 'The Health of the Nation', published in July 1992, which emphasised the importance of sexual health and identified it as one of the key areas in which substantial improvement had to be achieved. With the number of under-age pregnancies currently fixed at around 8,000 a year, the White Paper set itself the target of reducing this figure by 50 per cent by the year 2000. It also wanted priority given to lessening the incidence of HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The recent *Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles* survey interviewed 18,876 people aged 16 to 59. It found that the age at which the majority of 16-24-year-olds today first have sexual intercourse is 17, compared with 21 for those born 40 years earlier. It also found that sexual activity was lowest among those teenagers who gave 'formal teaching' as their main source of information about sex. According to Kaye Wellings, one of the Survey's organisers: "The data clearly belies the assumption that sex education in schools encourages young people to experiment earlier. In fact, it appears to postpone sexual activity".[12] Other evidence suggests that school programmes which promote *both* postponement *and* protected sex if sexually active are more effective than those promoting abstinence alone. School-based programmes are also found to be more effective when given *before* young people become sexually active and when they emphasise skills and social norms rather than mere knowledge.[13]

Definition of Family Life

The possibility that ill-informed parents might withdraw their children from school-based sex education programme is only *one* area of concern for teachers and sex education experts. And we must now turn to the singularly unhelpful advice that schools have been given by the Government in tackling this vital area of the curriculum.

The sex education clauses of the 1993 Education Act were elaborated upon in a draft circular published in December 1993 which eventually became Circular No. 5/94 'Sex Education in Schools', published on 6 May 1994. And much of the controversy surrounding these two documents has focused on TWO key areas: the exact meaning of 'stable family life'; and the risks that teachers take in giving contraceptive advice to girls under the age of 16.

Neither of the two documents reprints the opening sentence of Section 19 in the 1987 Circular which clearly had the hand of HMI on it. Instead we find in Section 8 of the 1994 Circular that:

> *The Secretary of State believes that schools' programmes of sex education should ... aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner, set within a clear framework of values and an awareness of the Law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should accordingly be encouraged to appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood.[14]*

Some might want to point out that there are many different types of families and that the stereotypical marriage concept may not necessarily form part of a person's individual framework of values.

Asked at the launch of the draft circular in December 1993 whether all children should be taught that it was better for parents to be married, that heterosexuality was better than homosexuality, and that fidelity was better than promiscuity, Education Secretary John Patten swiftly replied:

> *Yes to all three. Homosexuality is clearly undesirable; and parents should not choose to remain unmarried. We should also aspire to the ideal that if you get married, you stay married.[15]*

Of course the problem with sex education in Britain is that it has become totally politicised. In the view of Rachel Thomson, Information Development Officer for the Sex Education Forum:

> *People on the political Right see sex education as an opportunity for social engineering. They are worried about recent changes in sexual behaviour and see sex education as a chance to turn the clock back.[16]*

Contraceptive Advice to Pupils

Section 26 of the 1987 Circular took a tough line on the question of the provision of contraceptive advice to girls under 16:

> *The general rule must be that giving an individual pupil advice on such matters without parental knowledge or consent would be an inappropriate exercise of a teacher's professional responsibilities, and could, depending on the circumstances, amount to a criminal offence.[17]*

And this stern warning was repeated in Clause 38 of the 1993 draft Circular.[18]

The Sex Education Forum asked Allen Levy QC for a ruling on this warning and his advice was that the Government's statement was unduly alarmist. Releasing his judgement to the press in February 1994, Rachel Thomson said:

> *Allen Levy has concluded that a teacher is entitled to tell pupils where they can get confidential advice on contraception. That would not amount to aiding and*

abetting an offence if the teacher honestly intends to act in the young person's best interests. We agree it would probably not be appropriate at present for a teacher to go much further than this.[19]

In the event, the warning in Clause 39 of the final version of the Circular was toned down and seemed to imply that the issue might have to be tested in the courts:

Particular care must be exercised in relation to contraceptive advice to pupils under 16, for whom sexual intercourse is unlawful. The general rule must be that giving an individual pupil advice on such matters without parental knowledge or consent would be an inappropriate exercise of a teacher's professional responsibilities. Teachers are not health professionals, and the legal position of a teacher giving advice in such circumstances has never been tested in the courts.[20]

Even in its revised form, this ruling is an issue of real concern for many teachers; and the Department of Health is also thought to be worried that the Circular may serve to undermine its campaign to reduce the number of under-age pregnancies and combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. At the same time, a recent survey carried out for the Health Education Authority showed that most teenagers under the age of 16 would *not* talk to teachers about contraception if they thought their parents would have to be told. While 84 per cent said it would be helpful to consult a teacher, only 31 per cent said they would do so if they thought their families would find out.[21]

As a result of all this, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) on behalf of an informal 'consortium' of concerned organisations asked public law specialist Michael Beloff QC for a ruling on the issue.

In a 65-page judgement, prepared in collaboration with Helen Mountfield, the ATL is advised that a teacher need not seek parental consent before giving a pupil counselling or advice relating to sexual matters. And if a pupil reveals to a teacher that she is having under age sex, the teacher is not necessarily obliged to inform the child's parents or the headteacher of the school. According to the judgement:

We do not consider that the advice in the Circular seeks to impose an absolute duty to break confidences; nor indeed is the Circular binding in law. Accordingly, we do not consider that a teacher is bound to follow Circular advice if in the teacher's professional judgement, the child's best interests are better served by not doing so (subject to the parent's power to excuse from sex education lessons and the headteacher's power to direct).[22]

The judgement goes on to conclude that:

Circular No. 5/94 is advisory only and has no special legal status. Teachers are not obliged to follow its advice . . . We do not consider that a teacher who gave a child under the age of 16 advice relating to contraception, and who acted bona fide in what he or she honestly believed to be the child's best interests, would be likely to incur criminal liability.[23]

Conclusion

It is a source of much regret that the Government should have made such an unholy mess of giving schools and teachers sound advice on the all-important area of sex education. This is surely a part of the curriculum where young people should be encouraged to talk freely about values, emotions and relationships. The price of pupil ignorance is the very state of affairs that the Government claims to want to change.

Notes

[1] Reported in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 6 December 1991.

[2] See, for example, Nick Baker (1988) Facts versus morals, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 22 April; Paul Davies (1988) Sexuality: a new minefield in schools, *The Independent*, 26 May.

[3] DES Circular No. 11/87 (1987) Sex Education at School, p. 4, 25 September.

[4] See Emma Craigie (1993) Knowing in the Biblical sense, *The Observer*, 11 July. The National Curriculum Science Orders had been revised in 1991 to include HIV/AIDS education at Key Stage 3 (11-14 years).

[5] James Pawsey (1980) The sex education that isn't working, *The Daily Mail*, 22 August.

[6] Governors of primary schools continue to have the responsibility to decide whether or not the school should provide sex education. In this sector of schooling, the situation established by the 1986 Education (No. 2) Act remains unchanged.

[7] This does not apply to that sex education which continues to form part of National Curriculum Science.

[8] *The Times*, 17 July 1993.

[9] Isobel Allen (1987) *Education in Sex and Personal Relationships*, PSI Research Report No. 665.

[10] Report in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 4 November 1994.

[11] See Annabel Ferriman (1993) More sex in class, please, *The Observer*, 7 November. It seems that countries where sex education is unambiguous have far lower teenage pregnancy rates than those that apply to Britain: 9 per 1,000 in Holland, and 30 per 1,000 in Sweden, compared with 65 per 1,000 in Britain. (These figures apply to the 15-19 age group.)

[12] Johnson et al (1994) *Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

[13] M. Baldo, P. Aggleton & G. Slutkin (1993) Does sex education lead to earlier or increased sexual activity in youth? Paper presented at the 1993 Berlin Conference on AIDS.

[14] DFE Circular No. 5/94 (1994) *Sex Education in Schools*, p. 6, 6 May.

[15] Quoted in *The Independent*, 7 December 1993.

[16] Quoted in Annabel Ferriman, op. cit.

[17] DES Circular No. 11/87, p.5.

[18] DFE Draft Circular (1993) *Sex Education in Schools*, p. 9.

[19] Reported in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 18 February 1994.

[20] DFE Circular No. 5/94, p.14.

[21] Poll kindles sex education row, *The Guardian*, 30 March 1994.

[22] ATL: *Sex Education in Schools: joint opinion*, p. 40 (Michael Beloff & Helen Mountfield), p. 40. See also (1994) Sex secrets advice disputed, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28 October.

[23] ATL: *Joint Opinion*, pp. 64-65.

New Guidance on Religious Education

David Tombs

This article is a follow-up to David Tombs's paper on 'The New Right and RE' in the previous issue of *Forum.*

The 1988 Education Reform Act marked a crucial point in the New Right attack on progressive trends in education.[1] In religious education critics of multi-faith approaches gained moral confidence and political strength from the atmosphere created by the new legislation. As a result the demands of traditionalists that religious education should primarily emphasise Christianity and personal morality have assumed increasing prominence in recent years. Although new provisions for 'traditional Christian values' were not directly incorporated into the 1993 Act, the Government's clear support for the campaign was demonstrated by the promise that the issues would be addressed in new official guidance.[2] This new guidance has now been published as: *Circular 1/94* from the Department for Education (DFE), 31 January 1994; and the *Model Syllabuses for Religious Education* from the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA), 5 July 1994.[3]

Circular 1/94 for Religious Education and Collective Worship

Circular 1/94 (which replaces its predecessor, Circular 3/89) gives an early reference to personal values in paragraph 9:

> *The Government also attaches great importance to the role of religious education and collective worship in promoting among pupils a clear set of personal values and beliefs....*

However, it is the concern for Christianity that gets special attention in the Circular. The most important development marked by the Circular is the support given to those who argue that Christianity should have a privileged and predominant position because of its status as part of the national heritage.

This line of argument finds expression in paragraph 7. The aim of religious education is described as ensuring that pupils receive 'both a thorough knowledge of Christianity reflecting the Christian heritage of this country, and knowledge of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'. The privileged place for the Christian tradition follows from this and this is made clear in paragraph 35. According to the DFE:

> *As a whole and at each key stage, the relative content devoted to Christianity in the syllabus should predominate.*

The Circular is intended to pass on the DFE's interpretation of the law in accordance with legal guidance that they have received. However, in this passage crucial distinctions need to be made between: the law itself, the legal guidance that the DFE received and the DFE's own subjective interpretation. Paragraph 35 actually goes far beyond section 8(3) of the 1988 Act. In the Act the legal requirement is that an agreed syllabus should "reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian...". To claim that the only way for a syllabus to comply with Section 8(3) is for Christianity to 'predominate' confuses rather than clarifies the legal position. This suggests that the Circular's primary agenda is to bolster Christianity; clarification of the law takes second place.

John Hull argues that behind the Circular there is an attempt to introduce a 'Fundamental Distinction' between the Christian and 'non-Christian' worlds. If the Circular is intended to introduce a 'fundamental distinction' that is not present in the original, legal provisions, the confusing presentation makes more sense. The law is insufficiently distinguished from interpretation because the confusion between them is desired. The purpose of the Circular is to extend the meaning of the Act without resorting to further legislation. What might be called the 'fundamental confusion' permits the introduction of the 'fundamental distinction'! Hull argues:

> *... the government is seeking to obtain, through departmental circular, that which it failed to obtain through parliamentary process.[4]*

Paragraph 35 of the Circular is misleading because it promotes one possible interpretation of the 1988 Act as if it is the only legally acceptable one. It should therefore be emphasised that *the law is too vague to fix proportions between religions and does not support an insistence on the predominance of Christianity.* Even the DFE's own legal advice has only been selectively publicised. *The Times Educational Supplement* of 14 January reported that the DFE's legal advisers do not fully support the DFE's interpretation in the Circular. It cites the opinion of one DFE legal expert that:

> *It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a fair shorthand for or description of the requirements of section 8(3).*
>
> *Any shorthand is bound to reflect the views of the author as to the meaning of section 8 (3) ...*

Another forum for the New Right to advance the privileged status of Christianity is collective worship in schools. The Circular defines worship as "reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power" (paragraph 57). This clearly fails to respect the integrity of students who do not identify with any religious tradition. Moreover it seems to take Christian, or at least monotheistic, worship as normative. In many schools the guidance is therefore unlikely to satisfy the legal requirements in the 1988 Act that school worship should be appropriate for the pupils concerned (section 7 (4)).

A number of schools have openly stated their refusal to comply with this aspect of the guidance. Discrete criticism has also come from OFSTED in their response to the Circular. Even the Chair of the Church of England's Board of Education, the Bishop of Ripon, voiced concern at the continued imposition of daily acts of Christian worship. A survey by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) found that 8 out of 10 head teachers saw this approach to school worship as unacceptable. Despite the opposition John Patten, then Education Secretary, repeatedly insisted that the law should be obeyed when he addressed the NAHT annual conference in June.[5]

The Model Syllabuses for Religious Education

In March 1993 SCAA's predecessor, the National Curriculum Council (NCC), published a review of all syllabuses issued after the new 1988 regulations. The NCC's *Analysis of Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education* indicated that the new syllabuses showed very little change on the prescribed balance between Christianity and other religions; if the Government was to have its way the law would need to be tightened.

This posed a dilemma because the Government wished to avoid direct legislation on such a potentially controversial issue. However, minor alterations on reviewing local syllabuses were introduced by the 1993 Act which may promote the same end indirectly. The new regulations oblige all SACREs to review their syllabus every five years to ensure that it is in keeping with the law (1993 Act Section 256). Thus no local authority could continue with a syllabus that pre-dated the 1988 requirements. Furthermore, to 'guide' the development of new syllabuses SCAA was requested to develop and publish National Model Syllabuses.

The Model Syllabuses are a significant new development in official government guidance on structure and content in syllabuses for religious education. The clear trend is to move the subject into much closer relationship with other areas of the National Curriculum. Because of the unique position of religious education as a 'basic curriculum' subject alongside the National Curriculum there are crucial differences between the model syllabuses and the National Curriculum documents for other subjects.

First, the Model Syllabuses are intended for agreed syllabus conferences in reviewing and/or developing their local syllabus. They are not expected to be of direct relevance to schools since all county schools will continue to follow their locally agreed syllabus. The only possible exceptions to this are voluntary controlled and aided schools which have their own special provision and Grant Maintained Schools which under new provisions in the 1993 Act may opt to follow the agreed syllabus of a different local authority (Section 142).

Second, the models are not statutory but are offered only as guidance. It is up to the local Agreed Syllabus Conference to determine how much it wishes to take them into account in view of local conditions.

Third, the models do not cover the entire age range for which the subject is compulsory. This third feature is surprising since, unlike the first two, it is not required by existing legislation. There is no clear reason why the Model Syllabuses should limit their scope to years 5-16. Religious education is as much a compulsory part of a school's curriculum in the sixth form as it is in any other year. Since agreed syllabuses are expected to include provision for school sixth forms it is hard to see why similar model guidance is not considered appropriate.

In view of the worrying developments in Circular 1/94 the promise of model guidance raised considerable concern. Although the final authority for the syllabus is to remain at local level (where it always has been) the models are likely to be extremely influential. Superficial coverage in the media gave little reassurance. For example, on the day that the draft models were revealed the London *Evening Standard* (25 January 1994) welcomed the increasing focus on Christianity and explicitly linked it to the government's social agenda:

> *Ministers believe the move will underscore the need to restore traditional family values and help reduce the number of schoolchildren involved in crime.*

Thankfully the draft models themselves showed that although the traditionalist lobby had been influential in pressing for more Christian content the worst excesses had been avoided. This was confirmed when the final versions were published on 5 July. Two models are proposed and both appear to accept that religions should be taught separately and that Christianity should account for at least half of any syllabus. Regrettably an alternative third model, based on a thematic approach, was abandoned under political pressure.

Despite the lack of a thematic approach there is much else that can be welcomed by progressive educators. The general effect of the guidance should be to the long term good of the subject by firmly establishing its basis on educational principles rather than religious or theological foundations. In recent years critics of progressive trends in religious education have wrapped their objections in the rhetoric of respecting religious integrity and sustaining intellectual rigour. Multi-faith approaches have frequently been derided as 'mish-mash' and there have been strident demands that religions should be kept carefully apart and treated as entirely separate traditions.[6]

This is a very worrying development which could be used as a smokescreen to fundamentally alter the educational aims of the subject. During the last 20 years educationally based approaches to the subject have emphasised the non-confessional engagement with different religious traditions. The aim of religious education which has developed can be understood as *learning about* and *learning from* the major religious traditions. The intention has been that any student should be able to benefit from the spiritual riches of religious traditions regardless of their own personal backgrounds. Critics of multi-faith religious education often appear to be saying that children might continue to learn *about* religions other than their own but they should not be allowed to learn *from* them.

The logical extension of this line of argument is that anything more than a basic factual knowledge about a religion is increasingly irrelevant, except to those who are personally committed to that particular religious faith. If this happens religious education in schools will cease to be a process of critical exploration open to all and revert to the transmission of religious instruction along confessional lines. This would be disastrous for the educational status of the subject and equally unsatisfactory at a religious level. To treat religions in this way is not to respect them but to fatally restrict them. World religions presented in this way are likely to appear as closed ghettoes in opposition to each other. In this scenario Christianity would undoubtedly be the most powerful ghetto, since it

can be identified with 'the national heritage', but it would be a ghetto none the less. Traditionalist demands that claim to champion the place of the Christian tradition and the importance of religious education are in fact distorting and betraying the best features of both.

The most positive educational feature of the model syllabuses is that they set themselves clearly against the harmful 'ghettoisation' that some traditionalists appear to strive for. In both models the two Attainment Targets are unambiguously stated as: *learning about religion* and *learning from religion*. Furthermore, although both models are structured to teach religions separately it is acknowledged that there will be occasions when religions have to be studied together to make any sense. In these regards the models should offer a valuable foundation for developing good practice, if they are taken on with imagination and foresight.

Conclusion

Religious education has been subjected to a sustained period of political interference since the 1988 Act and the partisan pressure for 'traditional Christian values' has posed a serious threat to the educational foundation of the subject. In view of the campaign in recent years for the special status of Christianity it is essential to recall some of the original safeguards in the 1944 Act. An agreed syllabus "must not be designed to convert pupils, or to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils" (Section 26(2)). Everything in the recent guidance should be understood in the light of these educational principles and not vice versa.

Notes

[1] See David Tombs (1990) Religious education and social policy in the Education Reform Act, *Forum*, 32, pp.83-85.

[2] See David Tombs (1994) The New Right and RE, *Forum*, 36, pp.85-86.

[3] Department for Education (1994) *Circular 1/94: Religious Education and Collective Worship;* School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (1994) *Religious Education Model Syllabuses.* London: SCAA.

[4] John Hull (1993) The fundamental distinction: a review of Draft Circular X/94, p. 16, unpublished paper.

[5] See the extensive coverage in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 25 May and 3, 10, and 17 June 1994.

[6] See John Hull (1991) *Mish-Mash, Religious Education in Multicultural Britain: a study in metaphor.* Derby: Christian Education Movement.

Julie's Story

Pete Strauss
Pete Strauss has just spent a year experimenting with alternative approaches to assessing children's learning as part of his work for an action-research based MEd course at Nottingham Trent University. All the children in the class, including 'Julie' were given new names to preserve their anonymity, and all have read and approved what has been written about them in the research project. He teaches at Greythorn Primary School in Nottingham.

I would like to pick up a challenge made by Michael Armstrong, here in the pages of *Forum* some time ago. In his paper, 'Another way of looking' (*Forum*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1989) he provided a fascinating and detailed critical response to a story called *When I Was Naughty*, written by a six-year-old girl, and selected by SEAC as an illustrative example of a classic 'Level 2' piece of writing. Armstrong is merciless in showing how pitifully narrow and shallow are the National Curriculum statements of attainment in terms of doing justice to that little girl's rich and wonderful story. He concludes:

> *To rewrite the curriculum in a way which supports conversation will take a long time, and great political determination. I have suggested that a promising way to begin is to look at how we interpret children's thought. There are plenty of other ways too. Let the exploration begin.*

When I read this, I felt inspired to take a closer look myself at the story-writing that was going on in my Year 4 class,

Here is the story written by Julie. It was written both as part of our science-led topic on Energy and a language-led topic on Story Writing. She published it in a small-format book, with card covers. It is called *Save Energy Or Die: the Great Fire of Compton Acres*. I reproduce Julie's story here in full, with her original spellings and punctuations.

CHAPTER ONE

One day I was lazily going down stairs when I suddenly felt quite cold. so I asked my mum to put the heating on but she said it was already on and that there wasn't any Energy left. I said "oh no I won't be able to watch Home and away and I will just freeze to death." My mum said ? "We can still have a fire" so I said "I guess so." We had to walk to school and we took ages and I was late for school. When I finally got to school my teacher said "the new thing in the National curriculom is to be a pireson and we all said "Oh no" (by the way we were all wearing warm clothes). "The first thing we are going to do" began our teacher "is to have a School trip We Said "but we have no Energy for the coach" "but" said Mrs Elliot (Our teacher) "We are having a horse and cart." School time went quickly. When I got home there was nothing I could watch on television so I called for Laurn (My friend) We talked about Energy. When it was time for me to go home I said goodbye and left On my way home I saw people cutting down trees then I lookd more closely to see that oine of them was my dad. I asked him why are you cutting down trees he said for the fire. When I got home I stood still because my mum and older brother were chopping the wooden furniture up. I guessed that it was for the fires So I ran up Stairs and opened my half bedroom door to see that there was only

a mattress, windows, curtains, mirror and my cuddles. I sat on my mattress and fell asleep.

CHAPTER TWO

In the morning I got up early to walk to school. I got dressed but I could not find my shoes. So I walked downstairs and asked my mum where they were and she said she had used them to make something else I sighed and sat on the floor to eat my breakfast (Which we had grown from our back yard it was a orange) I walked to school with no shoes on it was realy uncomftorble. Miss Elliot said (when I got to school) we are closing the school down everybody said good. I could not wait to get home to tell my family When I told them they said of course becase they have stopped making money. I soon got bored so I made a list in my mind of things I could do. I thought of going to my friends houses but they were all out I made a list of lots of things but none of them worked. By the time I had got somthing to do it was tea time. We had My rabbit made into rabbit stew. After tea i went to bed.

CHAPTER THREE

I woke up in the middle of the night smelling smoke I walked to my window to see the whole street was on fire I cried out Mum, dad, Simon help I rushed in to all three rooms we started climbing out windows we ran to the lake to get water everybody was out except old man called Mr Strauss he said he had lived in his house all his life and if it dies then he will to. Soon his house was burnt and so was he. A girl who was mad about Gladiators said another one bites the dust. By this time most of the Houses in Compton Acreas were burnt my brother said it was like the great fire of London. we were trying very hard to put the fire out by using the water in the lake.

CHAPTER FOUR

It took a week to put the fire out but even with no fire's people were dying they drank dirty water and they did not have Hospitals and Special things for disabled people and we did not have inhalers and pills. people were dying all the time and they were being buried in gardens and parks most of the places you looked there were graves people wishes they had saved Energy.

The End

When I'd read the story, I immediately wrote down my initial reactions:

Why do I think this story is so good? Because of it's breadth of vision. Her ideas about a future world in which energy supplies have run out, encompasses power cuts at home; no transport for getting to school or school trips; changes to the National Curriculum; discussion amongst friends being dominated by concerns about energy; the use of trees and furniture for fuel; growing your own food in the backyard; recycling of everyday items like her shoe; the killing of household pets for food; the closure of school and the end of the money system; the boredom brought about by a lack of TV; large scale fires that take a long time to control; the contamination of water supplies, the spread of epidemics and disease; the shortage of health care; the lack of space for burial. The detail is amazing. The nightmarish quality of the world she has created is tangible.

Also, I like the humour. The insertion of a grumpy old man called Mr Strauss who burns to death because he refuses to leave his home, the throwaway line about not being able to watch Home and Away on TV.

I like the understated and yet sophisticated way in which the story hangs together and has a unity and coherence ... having to sit on the floor to eat breakfast (because the furniture has been chopped up).

I like her sense of authorship. The whole thing is written with a confident style, which is also reflected in her notes about the author at the back and the introduction at the front.

I like the way she struggles to make the story make sense to her readers by using brackets to explain details in retrospect.

I like the richness of the language – "lazily" going down stairs, "looked closely" to see if was my dad; and so on.

I like the pace of the story, how it builds up from the "lazy" beginning to the frenetic fire scene and then the bleak picture of death and decay at the end. The fast and furious pace of the last section is emphasised by the scarcity of full stops, as if Jenny herself was swept away by the story she was telling.

In terms of secretarial skills, the spelling is generally very good, with hardly any mistakes, except one or two careless ones and one or two very difficult long words. The punctuation is patchy, though speech marks are used correctly in about half the text. Full stops and capitals are erratic, though she has used commas impressively when listing ("Mum, dad, Simon...").

I really like this story, and think it is very well crafted in terms of content, style and presentation. As far as encouraging her to develop her writing skills is concerned, I'll be looking with Julie at trying to explore feelings a little more, and to try and develop characterisation a little.

This is all very well. Clearly, by paying proper attention to Julie's writing, I am more likely to have an insight into her learning than by simply allocating a National Curriculum level. But how about taking up Michael Armstrong's challenge that there are certainly other 'ways of looking' than just reading carefully?

The next day, I had a long conversation with Julie about her story, which I taped. Here is the transcript of that conversation, with my own introductory notes.

Julie is bright and articulate but a little nervous and seems shy in whole-class situations. She suffers from hearing loss in one ear, but is always very well organised about positioning herself so that she can hear everything I am saying. She has become increasingly 'sharp' in recent months, and I can see she and one or two of the

other girls are often enjoying a quiet joke at my expense. She seemed happy to talk to me, which I was relieved about, because often she goes all quiet on me if I approach her and ask her something.

PS: Tell me what the story's about.
J: It's about life without energy, and it's in the future but it's still got me in it, and I wake up one morning, and like, I feel cold, and mum says there's no energy left and from then on there's no energy, and there's this big fire and some people died.
PS: Are you pleased with the story? Are you pleased with the way it worked out?
J: Yes.
PS: What, very pleased or a little pleased or not very pleased or how pleased?
J: Don't know.
PS: Do you think it's a particularly good story or not?
J: It's quite good, yeah.
PS: What do you think's good about it?
J: I don't know ... you said it was good, so ...
PS: What, you think it's good because I said it was good?
J: Yes.
PS: So if I hadn't have said it was good then, wouldn't you have known what you thought about it?
J: I think it's good cos ... don't know ... cos, it explains things.
PS: How do you mean, it explains things?
J: Like, it hasn't got any energy in it, or things that have energy in it.
PS: I think it's a really good story. I'm really impressed with it and I think the ending is good. You know, like, this last chapter. Are they your ideas, or are they your dad's ideas?
J: They're my ideas.
PS: Are they? Have another quick read of the last chapter, and tell me what you think of it. [Julie reads it silently]
PS: What do you think of that last chapter?
J: Good.
PS: Why?
J: (pause) Don't know. It's like speech. It's a bit like a speech. Cos I like speeches.
PS: Like a speech!? How do you mean, it's like a speech?
J: I don't know. It's like a speech ... like the Prime Minister makes. It's like a speech. I don't know why it's....
PS: When you say you like speeches, what do you mean, you like speeches?
J: I like people making speeches.
PS: Really, what kind of people?
J Like, I like the speech that Elizabeth the First made when she (indistinct) the Spanish Armada. I don't know.
PS: Where did you see that speech then? Did you see that last year here?
J: No, my sister's got this book, and it's in it.
PS: What other speeches has it got? Is it a book of speeches?
J: It's a discovery book and there's a bit about Elizabeth the First, and it said she made a famous speech and I read it and that's what it is.
PS: I love speeches as well. What other speeches do you like then, apart from Elizabeth the First's speech? Is that the one where she says "I may have the body of a man"?
J: Yes.
PS Yeah, that's a great speech isn't it. What other speeches do you like then?
J: I don't know what other speeches there are, (pause) When my mum is watching the Prime Minister speaking on the TV, I like the speeches he makes.
PS: John Major? Do you?
J: Yes.
PS: Yes that's right isn't it, because speeches are different from normal speech aren't they. What is it you like about speeches then?
J: They have good ideas, and, just the way they say them.
PS: Have you ever heard anyone making a speech in real life?
J: No ... except for you (smiles)
PS: When have you heard me making a speech?
J: When we're tidying up.
PS: (laughing) Is that like a speech?
J: (nods smiling) ... (pause)
PS: What is it about that that makes you think it's like a speech?
J It's like powerful ... and mean ... like, I don't know.
PS: I agree. I mean it's like a very very powerful piece of writing, and I hadn't thought of it being like a speech before, but now that you say that I can see what you mean. It's short sentences isn't it.

[Julie agrees to read it aloud to me, as if she is making a speech]

PS: Yeah, it's that last line as well. It sort of sums it all up doesn't it.

Reading the story carefully, and responding to it in detail, could (as Armstrong had already demonstrated) take me some of the way towards a proper assessment of Julie's work. However, it was only really through *conversation* with Julie, that I came close to realising the full and true significance of her achievement. Not only did she open my eyes to the rhetorical quality of the final chapter (which I had only subconsciously appreciated), but she also gave me the privilege of an insight into her distinctive and well-developed sense of authorship. Julie doesn't just write good stories. She is a writer. Paradoxically, I needed to talk with Julie to find that out.

Michael Armstrong wrote, "Inasmuch as it depends on the recognition and promotion of significant utterance, education thrives on conversation" (1989). I would add that in particular, that conversation should be central to the business of assessment. If we are really concerned about doing justice to young children's achievements, about gaining insight into their learning, and about responding usefully to their efforts, then levels, statements and tests are unlikely to help us as much as a few minutes' good quality conversation.

Can We Renew Education Through Philosophy?

Chris Ormell

Chris Ormell describes a new philosophical–educational group (the PER) which has set itself the aim of triggering a 'renewal' of educational thinking. The author is Senior Fellow in Education at the University of East Anglia.

Probably almost everyone now agrees that the British Government's crusade to reform education on an 'anti-ideological', 'pragmatic' and 'realistic' basis – which began around 1982 – has lost its way. It was from the beginning, let's face it, an intensely anti-intellectual, seat-of-the-pants, populist exercise. Can you expect to conduct genuine education, which must be an initiation into the life of the mind, on a basis which is obliquely, if not directly, *rejective* of the life of the mind? Hardly. There is fundamental contradiction here: one from which there can be, in the end, no escape. For quite a long time the Government seemed to be defying this logic, and to be counter-intuitively 'making progress', of a kind. But now, like the working-out of Greek tragedy, the negativity and emptiness of the initial basis seem finally to have taken their toll. To travel in unknown country without maps (i.e. a 'theory' of some sort) is dangerous. To assume from the beginning that one is *unquestionably* going to find a major new route through unexplored mountains by this method, is quite presumptuous. It is certainly not 'realistic' to take such risks, which – to translate out of the metaphor – mean subjecting schools and teachers to repeated embarrassing climbdowns.

In effect, the Government conducted a massive, ill-judged and error-prone experiment on the system of education: something which is very difficult to justify on the Government's own principles. And this inexcusability of large-scale experiment is the basic reason why, contrary to all the anti-intellectual rhetoric of the 1980s, we do *need* 'theory' – of some kind – in education. We can't justify blind trial-and-error methods, either in curriculum or in pedagogy. (We can't even justify *theoretically well-founded* experiment, except on a very small, closely controlled basis.) If we try to change education in an *ad hoc* fashion, by trial-and-error methods, it is the children who are certain to be the victims. One can no more justify blind, theory-less experiment in education than one could in medicine.

So why did educational theory become so unpopular that the Government chose in the 1980s – for broadly populist reasons – totally to reject it?

The main reason is, of course, that the 'theories' and 'methods' which held sway in education for some 30 years have been judged by their 'fruits', i.e. their perceived educative effect (or otherwise) on more than a generation of youngsters. The common experience, I'm afraid, has been one of private and family disappointment. One cannot hide the effects of education on a child: the child's behaviour is an open book, showing at every moment glimpses of the quality of the inner mind – in degrees of articulacy, unconscious assumptions, willingnesses-to-learn, responsiveness to ideas, etc. On this purely consensual, informal, anecdotal basis, the educational methods of the 1960s and 1970s have been widely judged to be pretty *poor*.

Of course, the 'consensual, anecdotal' way of judging education is unfair. The 'educative effect' on the child as thus perceived by ordinary people is a product of many other media, social and political factors, besides the work of schools. Society itself has been, on most interpretations, staggering uncertainly from crisis to crisis during the same 30-year period. It may be the case that if the schools had managed to be 100% more actually educative (than they were) during that period, the results – as judged anecdotally – would have been almost the same.

But one cannot talk the fact of disappointment out of existence. It is often strongest in families where the other (out-of-school) influences on the child were mainly good. There is no escaping the overwhelming public perception that the educational theories and methods of the 1960s 'didn't work'. This is the main reason why educational theory, as such, has acquired such a bad name.

Of course, the fashionable theories and methods of the 1960s were not wholly and unrelievably bad. In fact they visibly possessed some good aspects. (Without that, of course, they would never have been popular in the first place.) But they turned out to have poor long-term effects on many children.

Why?

We need, I think, first to understand the fundamental reasons why the educational nostrums of the 1960s – which included Piagetianism, Behavioural Objectives, New Maths, Process Theory and Child-centred Education – turned out to be so defective. On any reckoning we need to begin by understanding what went wrong.

Today, it is evident that we urgently need a valid theoretical understanding of education, and the sickening feelings associated with the mistakes of the past are too strong and too fresh for bits of those old theories to be casually readmitted or rehabilitated. Not only is there no percentage in repeating old mistakes, there is a premium on giving them a wide berth.

But let's not underestimate the difficulty of finding a 'valid theoretical understanding' of education. There are certainly no easy answers. We are like climbers stuck in a deep theoretical crevasse. To look briefly at the case of curriculum, both the 'traditional content' approach and the 'process' approach have visibly failed. The former

underwrites a mindlessly wooden, 'take-it-or-leave-it', lacklustre, 'traditional' type of teaching, while the latter underwrote an equally mindless progressivist perpetual motion, a 'rolling stone which gathered no moss'.

If there is one common feature of the educational theories of the 1960s which stands out, it is surely that none of them was founded on a proper *philosophical* basis. Piaget, with his archaic (Cartesian) attachment to the idea of a metaphysical gulf between concrete thinking and 'formal' thinking, chose to legislate out of existence just those kinds of human experience which bridge this gulf. (Just the ones on to which we should be trying hardest to focus.) Behavioural Objectives rested initially on a simplistic, Watsonian interpretation of psychology, but then appeared to gain a certain amount of opportunistic support from the 'linguistic behaviourism' of Ryle and Wittgenstein. 'New Maths' rested ultimately on attitudes underlying the fudged foundationalism of the 1900s. It was fundamentally an impressive evasion, rather than an explanation, of the contradictions of set theory and the Cantorian transfinite. Unfortunately it was given a massive bogus respectability by the efforts of Russell and Whitehead. So in each of these cases there was a sort of fig-leaf of 'apparent philosophy' behind the theory.

The so-called 'process' and 'child-centred' theories of the 1960s, on the other hand, made little attempt to *pretend* to rest on a philosophical basis. They were, from the beginning, generally recognised as sociology-based approaches to the problems of education. (It is true that there were earlier philosophers, such as Hegel and Marx, who spoke of 'reality' as consisting of 'process', but that was a long way from the specific prescriptions of the educationists who claimed to treat the curriculum as 'process'.)

So why did none of the canonical educational theories of the 1960s rest on a proper philosophical basis?

The answer is, of course, that philosophy itself had come to the end-of-the-road in the previous decade. (Or if you prefer, it had effectively abdicated responsibility for discussing areas of 'essentially contested' and value-laden experience, except in a pedantic and arm's length manner.) After Wittgenstein's death in 1951, his extraordinarily penetrating insights – in the absence of serious opposition – began to exert a dreadfully truncating effect on philosophy, which now started to claim that it was 'only' a 'therapeutic' activity which cured 'headaches' caused by 'misunderstanding the logic of our language'.

This amounted to giving up any attempt to discuss human aspiration and the large contradictions which uncritical conceptualisations of aspiration visibly generate. One might say that the cultural pessimism which has characterised the 20th century came to a head: philosophy in the older, grand, untruncated, sense was widely considered to be 'dead'.

With the advantages of hindsight we can now see this as a striking example of immature and self-indulgent pessimism. Intellectual problems are always difficult, but there could be little excuse for not even *trying* to solve them. And even if philosophy in the older, 'grand' sense could make little progress, at least human aspiration was discussed intelligently, and thereby kept alive.

One direct effect of this abdication of responsibility was that others, chiefly Marxist sociologists, were emboldened to rush in where the philosophical angels feared to tread. The result was that for a brief spell there appeared to be a viable sociological substitute for philosophy. Unfortunately the so-called 'sociology of knowledge' which emerged from this impulse treated *power* as the fundamental, unanalysed element in society – a quasi-Marxist analysis which naturally held little appeal for non-Marxists. (Hence the parallel attempts by Piagetians, Watsonians and Bourbakistes to rush in to try to occupy the vacuum too.)

There was one beacon of light in the 1960s: the attempt of Peters and Hirst to create a proper philosophical basis for education. But they were constrained by their explicit acceptance of the truncated ('linguistic') interpretation of philosophy, which had by now established itself throughout academia, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world. They managed, with considerable skill, to *stretch* the 'truncated interpretation' of philosophy to the limit to achieve their position, but in the end it offered only a second-order wisdom about education. It was valuable as a counter-rhetoric to the theories listed above, but its weakness was that it was itself unable to generate a novel, positive, hopeful, creative sense of direction for education. Yes, education must rest on a raft of presupposed values, and if it was to serve as a proper initiation into the life of the mind it had to encompass a sub-initiation into each of the various categories of that 'life' *suis generis*. But this was not an account which could be easily driven to give more specific, practical, detailed insights. It was firmly locked-into a *second-order* role, of the kind which 'linguistic' philosophy routinely envisaged for each of the various specialist or 'applied' areas of philosophy (ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, etc.).

We can now see, I suggest, that this 'second order role' for philosophy was not enough. If education was to match the changing needs of a partially destabilised society driven by powerful but fitful aspirations (to social justice, open government, clean environment, resolution of scientific knowledge, women's rights, etc.) it needed to be related to, and informed by, an intelligent discussion of the mutual compatibility of those aspirations. It needed to be based on *philosophy* in the old-fashioned, genuine, 'grand' sense, rather than the 'truncated' modern sense. Of course there is no merit in going back to the woolliness and fantasy-abstractions of pre-Wittgensteinian philosophy. What is needed is the analytic rigour of linguistic philosophy but without the myopic remit.

The Crisis in Education

It is not difficult to see that the present crisis in education is one of unusual severity. A fundamental contradiction has finally emerged: between the anti-intellectual, philistine, materialistic *short-termism* which has been firmly in the social driving seat since the rise of the New Right around 1980, and *education*, the genre of practical human 'cultivation' with the longest cycle (from planting to harvesting) of all, a cycle which can only be sustained (if at all) on an idealistic basis of some sort. In other words, the sentiments underlying a short-termist attitude to life can never be consistent with education, because education begins with the premise that short-termism is not good enough. Everything about education tells us that it is a form of process in which we do things today which will come to fruition in a quarter of a century's time. Education has no option: it must reject the surface, the ephemera, the fashions of the moment, because we know, beyond any possibility of doubt, that these things do not survive that long.

What complicates the problem at this point is the fact,

long since discovered by the electronic media, that *novelty* is mentally extremely stimulating. The challenge is therefore for education to match the anarchic novelty of the media by fielding sustained, principled novelty, in a way closely tailored to the current learning needs of the children. This was the theme of my earlier article (Must content faze the mind?, *Forum,* 36, pp. 22-23).

We may eventually succeed in constructing a solution on these lines, but at the present time it is difficult to overstate the appalling difficulty of maintaining any kind of genuine education in a society which has allowed short-termism virtually unlimited sway. Short-termism has overrun and infected every aspect of society. One might call it the 'anti-patient' attitude to life. Education, on the other hand, is, virtually by definition, an exercise in patience: patience, indeed, of an all-involving and extended kind.

In international relations it has been a cliché of the last 20 years that negotiators must try to put 'confidence building measures' in place. In education too we urgently need some 'confidence building measures' – to permit the exercise of patience on the scale required. Many streetwise children can see instantly in the classroom what others can observe on every level of a freewheeling society – that you have to be a simpleton to cultivate long-term mental goals. A rampantly short-termist society shamelessly exploits the patient mind.

What, then, are the 'confidence building measures' we need? They can only take the form of a resilient, consistent, thoroughly conceptualised form of education. Education as a value-system must rebuild its shattered credibility. And there is, in the end, only one possible source of such fundamental credibility, namely, to achieve a proper *philosophical* basis for education.

It is a daunting task, because any movement on these lines must first counter the knee-jerk cultural pessimism of the 'Century of the Depressive Intellectual'. But what other option is there? Society rests in the end on education. A society committed to a predatory attitude towards the patient mind, will finally, and perhaps sooner than we think, stultify itself to a standstill.

A New Group

Thinking on these lines a number of us have recently formed a new group of teachers and educationists: the PER group 'for philosophic and educational renewal". The group is predicated on the assumption that the crisis in education is now so deep that a simultaneous 'renewal' of philosophy and education will be needed if education in any genuine sense is ever to climb out of its present hole. We need, in other words, to re-think education from the bottom up, bringing to bear on it a rigorous version of the kind of thinking which used to be described as 'philosophical' before the modern era.

The group is not committed to any particular 'isms' or 'instant panaceas', but simply to the need to set-up a creative tension between thoughtful teachers and philosophers of education of a new 'mark II' variety, i.e. philosophers of education in the philosophically untruncated sense. To engage in this process it is necessary to adopt a newly strengthened 'applicative' attitude towards philosophy: namely, that an 'insight' is not an 'insight' unless it visibly helps to generate ideas for workable progress in classrooms, curricula committees, examination boards, etc. Of course because the fuel which ultimately drives education must be some form of *idealism*, it is on the clarification of aspirations and idealisms that the main effort is likely to fall.

Work of this kind is unlikely ever to be a simple or a comfortable enterprise. People nowadays commonly find their identity, as people, in their commitments and idealisms. And the very act of commitment tends to be regarded as something which *ought to be* a headlong, uncritical, unprudential, total-emotional act. So to subject these idealisms to logical scrutiny – while still valuing them as the ultimate wellsprings of good teaching – obviously requires a degree of coolness and mental toughness which has not been seriously cultivated in modern times.

The group hopes to produce practical products: perhaps considered overviews of tricky issues, perhaps considered subject overviews, perhaps selected *examples* of practical classroom materials, e.g. narratives, embodying in crystallised form the essence of new, sustainedly exciting, educative perspectives.

Generally, though, the group's intention is to act as a *catalyst* for changed thinking and new methods in education. It will be happy to work with, and alongside, other groups with similar, though perhaps less starkly focused, aims: for example, the Philosophy of Education Society and the Society for Applied Philosophy.

If you would like further information, write to Chris Ormell (enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope) at the School of Education, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ, United Kingdom, or to Susan Wright (PER Chairperson) at the School of Teaching Studies, University of North London, 383 Holloway Road, London N7 0RN, United Kingdom.

Closing Doors to Equality in Education

Richard Hatcher

In the last number of *Forum,* Richard Hatcher reviewed the Labour Party's Green Paper on education and here he assesses the follow-up policy statement. The author teaches in the Faculty of Education in the University of Central England in Birmingham.

Labour's education policy statement, *Opening Doors to a Learning Society,* was adopted at the 1994 Party Conference. Like its predecessor, the consultative Green Paper with the same title, it represents the revival of a liberal social-democratic agenda for education.[1] It embodies the principal themes of the centre ground in education: the importance of nursery education, a commitment to the comprehensive principle, the notion of 'school effectiveness', the integration of special needs, the need to overcome the academic–vocational divide, a commitment to both 'quality and equity', and the emphasis on 'partnership'.

After 14 years of the Conservative education regime, this is clearly a welcome change, and has been greeted as such by many teachers, educationists and parents. However, it would be wrong to allow our relief at the sight, at long last, of light at the end of the tunnel to blind us to the limitations of Labour's alternative.

How should we assess Labour's policy? It is not enough to say that it's an improvement over the Tories' – almost anything would be. But neither is it enough to judge it by the criterion that is most prominent within the policy statement itself: that Labour's approach, unlike the Tories', is capable of providing the "high quality education for all our citizens" which is essential "to economic success for the nation" ... "in the knowledge-based economies of the modern world" (p. 3). Of course we want a high quality education for all, but taken on its own there is nothing distinctively socialist about that aim, nothing that, for example, any Liberal could disagree with. The most fundamental feature of British education is not that it achieves lower standards than some of its economic competitors but that it *systematically reproduces profound social inequalities, particularly those of social class* – and in this respect it is no different from the system in Germany, Japan or any other advanced industrial country. The raising of 'standards' in British state education to comparable levels may be an attainable medium-term objective, but on its own that would do nothing to improve the *relative* positions of the mass of children and students whose experience of education confirms their social subordination, while it effectively reproduces the privilege of the middle class. The Conservatives understand the question of class interests in education, and have attempted to implement a battery of radical reforms to defend and increase middle-class privilege. The acid test for Labour is: will its policies do as much for working-class children and students as the Tories have been determined to do to favour a privileged minority? Unfortunately Labour's reforming zeal is a pale shadow of that of the Tories.

Opening Doors to a Learning Society is full of the rhetoric of overcoming disadvantage and fulfilling every child's potential, but what it actually proposes to achieve is extremely weak. "Quality and equity" is one of the five principles underpinning the document, but only two modest proposals address the problem of "widespread underachievement". One is an increase in nursery education; the other is comprehensive education rather than selection. Of course these are essential, but to seriously tackle the massive social class inequality entrenched in the education system requires a far more ambitious and radical programme of reforms. *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* in effect, and in its conceptualisation, abandons this aim, and substitutes that of creating a 'modernised', but still class-divided, education system. This abandonment of the principle of equality is at the core of the Labour leadership's current course, as Gerry Cohen demonstrates in his incisive critique of two documents from the Commission on Social Justice which have recently been published by the left-wing think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research.[2] *Opening Doors to a Learning Society*, like the two IPPR documents, "bows before the success of pro-market and anti-egalitarian ideology that has helped to precipitate Labour's present crisis" (p. 8).

Of course, *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* does not announce "we are abandoning the struggle against inequality". What it does is to wish it away. It begins with a claim about society today: "A whole series of changes – economic, technological and cultural – has presented us with the opportunity of building a genuinely learning society – a society in which all individuals can fulfil their potential as active citizens in a prosperous, civilised, and caring community" (p. 3). Note, these economic changes have already occurred – in other words, Labour's vision is based on the *existing* economic order. This scenario, which promises that economic success goes hand in hand with social justice, is crucial to Labour's perspective for education. Modern capitalism, it claims, requires all workers to be highly educated, and that will provide the motivation which it sees as the key factor in working-class achievement in education.

This is a castle built on sand. In reality, the 'new economic order' combines high-skill jobs for some with low-skill jobs for many, plus permanent high unemployment, all shaped by gender and ethnic inequalities. An education system geared to this economic order will continue to reflect

those inequalities and de-motivate many working-class students.[3]

Labour's acceptance of the logic of the market, however idealised, exacts a terrible price. The Maastricht Treaty compels all the European states to reduce their budget deficits to 3% of GDP in order to compete with the low-welfare economies of Japan and the USA. But Britain's projected budget deficit for 1994-95 is £37 billion, nearly 6% of GDP. That (and not just pre-election caution) is the explanation for the absence of resource commitments in the White Paper. Nursery education is to be expanded, but only to half-time provision for 3 and 4 year-olds. Class sizes are to be reduced, but no targets are set. Special needs are to be met in mainstream schools, but no extra funds are guaranteed. No details are given of whether schools will be funded according to need rather than on a competitive numbers-led basis. The recommendation of Labour's Commission on Social Justice that student grants should be wholly replaced by loans, which should also include a fees element – a position worse than current Conservative policy, and certain to further deter working-class students – is a forewarning of future Labour government policy on funding education reforms.

Labour's acceptance of market logic, and its fear of offending dominant interests, also explains why *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* so often shies away from reasserting the principle of elected democratic control. The private schools – not mentioned in the document – will retain their privilege. The Training and Enterprise Councils will remain outside local democratic control.

But the most fundamental abandonment of the principle of a comprehensive school system under local elected democratic control – one that was only hinted at in the White Paper – has been signalled by David Blunkett, the successor to Ann Taylor. In his first statement as Labour education spokesperson he announced that he would disregard conference policy. Opted-out schools, along with City Technology, grammar and secondary modern schools, would not be abolished but treated 'equitably' by a Labour administration within "a flexible and acceptable framework to achieve their and our goals".[4]

The problem is that their aims and ours are incompatible. The GM schools have opted-out precisely in order to escape control by local councils. The grammar schools, and the GM schools that operate covert selection policies, are the antithesis of a comprehensive system. What Blunkett is really saying is that Labour represents no threat to either the GM or the grammar schools. This is no temporary aberration: David Blunkett, in his previous role as health service spokesperson, retreated from earlier commitments to scrap the NHS Trusts and the internal market, and made no provision for elected Health Authorities.

There are many positive measures within *Opening Doors to a Learning Society* which should be supported. But considered as a whole, as a programme for educational reform it is fatally flawed by its unwillingness to offer a serious challenge to the profound inequalities that inform the education system. Statements by Tony Blair at the time of its adoption by Labour Party conference, subsequently expanded by David Blunkett, are clear indications that Labour's education policy is making further accommodations to the Conservative agenda that it claims to replace.

Notes

[1] See my article (1994) Labour's Green Paper: the limits of consensus, *Forum*, 36, pp. 91-92.

[2] G. A. Cohen (1994) Back to socialist basics, *New Left Review*, 207, pp. 3- 16.

[3] This argument is developed in K. Jones & R. Hatcher (1994) Educational progress and educational change: notes on some recent proposals, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 42, pp. 245-260.

[4] *Education*, 4 November 1994, pp. 341, 348.

Book Reviews

The Promise of Reading Recovery

BARRIE WADE & MAGGIE MOORE, 1993

Educational Review Publications, Headline Series No.1 (General Editors: Clyde Chitty & Barrie Wade)

Birmingham: School of Education, University of Birmingham.

ISBN O 7044 1373 6. £4.95.

This small booklet is, in the main, a report of the authors' visits, in August and September 1992, to schools in New Zealand and two Australian states (Victoria and New South Wales) to judge the effectiveness of their Reading Recovery (RR) programmes; and, in particular, to see if these were fulfilling the prospective promises:

(1) to children with special educational needs and their teachers of:

– raising the children's self-esteem;

– inducing curricular change; and

– improving the quality of mainstream provision; and

(2) for school organisation and funding by:

– reducing the diversity of literacy abilities within a class, thus making mainstream provision simpler; and

– reducing the cost, stress and difficulty of later remediation by its early input, before failure has become ingrained.

The results of their findings are an overwhelming 'yes' to each of these identified elements, though the authors also point out that RR is "not likely to be the answer to all problems associated with early literacy".

At the heart of the booklet is a consideration of interview and discussion data responses of groups of people who have had central and direct experience with RR: parents of children who had been, or were currently, involved in the programme; RR teachers; other class teachers within the schools; school principals; and some of the children themselves. The authors argue that such qualitative data are as important as, and should be regarded as complementary to, the quantifiable and statistical studies of children's rates of progress as identified by measured scores etc. since the latter can tell us nothing about individuals.

Taken altogether, the views of those interviewed are all favourable to the pro-

gramme; whilst also acknowledging problems involved in its implementation. Common themes emerging from these interviews and discussions include:
– the increased confidence and self-esteem of the children who have been through the programme, not just in terms of reading but also in other areas of language learning such as writing and spelling, and a general encouragement of independence;
– the reflection by RR teachers that their own professional skills (especially in terms of observing individual learners, making formative and diagnostic assessments, and recording and monitoring progress) have been developed;
– the impact of the programme on other teachers within the schools; – the impact of the programme on reading standards within the schools, since 'discontinued' children have been able to function at levels of literacy that are average for their class group, and have retained these gains over three years without requiring additional tuition; and
– the fostering of home–school links.

The authors point out that RR received government support in this country largely as an outcome of the pre-election promises of 1992 and on the misapprehension that RR was a package of materials (a 'scheme') rather than a complex, and costly, programme aimed at helping those children who, after their first year in school, are identified as needing specific literacy support.

The message of the booklet is clear: RR can fulfil its promises if given sufficient financial, and, within schools, organisational support; but that such a programme also needs to be given time to establish itself if its potential is in fact to be realised. Promises look to the future for fulfilment: will the politicians keep theirs, or will RR, as a national programme with equal access for all children, go the same way as LINC (Language in the National Curriculum) and the National Oracy Project?

This is a very readable and accessible summary of the authors' fuller reports of their visits to New Zealand and Australia, and their emphasis on the importance of qualitative data when evaluating the success of such programmes as RR is to be welcomed.

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The Literate Imagination: renewing the secondary English curriculum

B.T. HARRISON, 1994
London: David Fulton Publishers
xiv + 224 pp.
ISBN 1-85346-300-0. £14.99

Though Harrison's primary focus is the teaching and learning of English, his study and the arguments that he advances have a relevance which goes beyond one particular subject area. In some ways, Harrison's book restates a familiar theme, in that its central proposition is that the most effective learning takes place within a context where there is the freedom to explore and to construct meaning which has individual, personal significance. This view might at first appear to be one that has been well and thoroughly aired already. But what raises Harrison's book above the level of the tired, if worthy, commonplace, is its detailed demonstration of, and its resonant elaboration on, this central idea. Drawing on a considerable range and variety of sources (but with no ostentatious parade of eclecticism), Harrison provides the reader with much more than what might otherwise have become a simple polemic.

Part of Harrison's skill lies in his ability to unify such a rich and diverse mix of materials. The bibliography (itself an extremely useful resource for anyone who wishes to pursue further any of the issues that are raised) testifies to the sheer breadth of reference that is made. In addition, Harrison makes extensive use of work from teachers, student-teachers, and students; and as befits a work which in a sense celebrates the egalitarian nature of imagination and literacy, every category of contribution seems to be afforded equal status on the page. A variety of modes are utilised in order to progress the overall thesis of the book. For example, a dialogue form is used to record discussions between the author and a fellow A-level coursework moderator, John Hodgson. Instantly the book assumes the texture of living Debate, the authority of the author's voice becoming tempered (not supported nor undermined, but balanced) by that of Hodgson. Similarly, a fascinating essay from a former A-level student which reflects upon her experience of studying Wordsworth is quoted from at length in order to explore (not merely to illustrate) the importance of a deeply personal engagement with a text. In this way a plurality of viewpoints and forms is introduced which seems to expand and to multiply the concerns of the book into unexpected areas. It does not seem too fanciful to suggest that one consequence of this technique of departing (to some degree at least) from the usual conventions which condition the delivery of this type of academic study, is to reinforce, through actual textual embodiment, one of the book's main tenets: that giving free rein to expression in all its forms can revitalise the process of learning.

This is not to suggest that the book meanders in some freely associative way. On the contrary, Harrison ensures that his readers follow the arguments by adopting a clear overall structure, and by highlighting the main points at the beginnings and ends of the chapters. Indeed the refreshing clarity of the work might serve as recommendation alone. Harrison is careful to define his terms from the outset, providing an introductory chapter which traces the philosophical and theoretical heritage of his key concepts. He also charts and reviews recent developments in the evolution of the National English Curriculum in order to locate the discussion in a more immediate, contemporary context. However, it is perhaps this very survey of the forces and opinions working to shape the English Curriculum which provides something of a final irony to Harrison's book. In his Preface, Harrison is explicit about the dual purpose of writing this book: one concern was to examine and to reaffirm the central importance of literacy and imagination within learning; another concern, indeed the book's "main utilitarian purpose", was "to influence reform of the National Curriculum for English in Schools". Undeniably, Harrison has met the first of his objectives with convincing assurance. However, as the publication of the new Curriculum for English makes clear, Harrison's book has regrettably been less successful in achieving its second ambition.

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