

FORUM

for promoting 3–19 comprehensive education

Autumn 1995

Volume 37 Number 3

ISSN 0963-8253

**Children and the National Curriculum
Education Post-16
Action Research
Teacher Education**



Contents

VOLUME 37 NUMBER 3 1995

Editorial. Searching for Guiding Principles	67
ANDY GREEN & GLENN RIKOWSKI. Post-Compulsory Education and Training for the 21st Century	68
DEREK GILLARD. Children's Needs and Interests and the National Curriculum	71
PHIL WILLIAMS. Confronting the Learning Lottery	73
SHEILA DANTON. Continuity and Progression?	76
T. A. HAYDN. Choice and Diversity: theory and practice	78
IAN GROSVENOR. 'Race', Racism and Black Exclusion	80
TONY MOONEY. The Need for Comprehensive Schools	83
MOYRA EVANS. Let the Action Begin!	84
ROY CORDEN. Small Group Work: use and abuse	86
MIKE OLLERTON. National Examinations: the same x-certificate	89
ROY LOWE. Time to Rebuild? Ways of Reconstructing Initial Teacher Education	91
<i>Review Article</i>	
CLYDE CHITTY. Diversity and Excellence: a recipe for confusion	92
<i>Book Reviews</i>	94

EDITORS

CLYDE CHITTY, School of Education, University of Birmingham (also *Book Reviews Editor*)
LIZ THOMSON, Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln
NANETTE WHITBREAD, WEA and Adult Basic Education, Leicestershire

EDITORIAL BOARD

MICHAEL ARMSTRONG, Harwell County Primary School, Oxfordshire (*Chairperson*)
MYRA BARRS, Centre for Language in Primary Education, London
ANNABELLE DIXON, Holdbrook JMI School, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire
MARY JANE DRUMMOND, University of Cambridge Institute of Education
LEE ENRIGHT, Emmanuel Middle School, Verwood, Dorset
LYNDON GODSALL, Westhill College, Birmingham
ANDY GREEN, Post-16 Education Centre, Institute of Education, University of London
DAVID MARTIN, Chenderit School, Banbury
ROGER OSBORN-KING, Triangle Journals Ltd
DAVID TOMBS, Roehampton Institute, London

HONORARY EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS
Edward Blishen, Roger Seckington, Brian Simon

The *next* FORUM

Among the articles in the Spring 1996 issue of *FORUM*, **Brian Simon** writes about the renewed controversy surrounding the nature of intelligence, **Myra Barrs** looks at alternative forms of assessment at the primary school stage, and **Michael Armstrong** writes about the teacher as interpreter of children's narratives. **Ian Duckett** contributes an article on developing core skills at 'A' level and **Liz & Alan Thomson** write about the ways in which a constructivist perspective can empower teachers and others involved in education. There will also be articles looking at a number of the issues that will need to be tackled by any incoming Secretary of State for Education.

Editorial correspondence, including typescript articles (1500-2000 words) and contributions to discussion (800 words maximum) should be addressed to: Nanette Whitbread, Beaumont Cottage, East Langton, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7TB, United Kingdom. Telephone: 01858-545356. Please send two copies and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Books for review should be addressed to Clyde Chitty, 16 Elmfield Avenue, Stoneygate, Leicester LE2 1RD, United Kingdom. Telephone: 0116-2703132.

Business correspondence, including orders and remittances relating to subscriptions and back orders, should be addressed to the publishers:

**Triangle Journals Ltd, PO Box 65,
Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0YG,
United Kingdom.** Email: journals@triangle.co.uk
 World Wide Web: <http://www.triangle.co.uk>

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(Volume 37, Nos 1-3, 1995), post free
 Individuals, £15.00 (US\$25.00)
 Schools, £18.00 (US\$30.00)
 Libraries, £28.00 (US\$50.00)

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

Searching for Guiding Principles

There is a contradiction in the current state of education which is particularly evident in the marked difference between the rhetoric and the reality of ministerial pronouncements and government actions. For some time now the great and the good have been asking for a period of calm and stability to counter the excessive legislation of the past few years, yet, in spite of these exhortations, the pace of change continues unabated. The latest moves, which have resulted in the merger of the Department for Education and the Department of Employment, are clearly an attempt to rationalise the existing dogs breakfast of post compulsory educational provision.

It is salutary to ask, as we did at a *FORUM* Seminar last February, what should be the guiding principles for teaching and learning in the 21st century. Too often we are inhibited and bound by our own constructions of such definitions, and these are clearly influenced directly by our past and present experiences. In recent years, we have not had much practice in developing our visionary powers; the gift of foresight is one which needs to be worked on and which is difficult to develop in a climate of reaction and expediency.

The first two articles in this issue arise out of the *FORUM* seminar which was concerned with *Redefining Principles of Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century*. Derek Gillard articulates the concerns of many of those present at the seminar, when he raises fundamental questions about the nature of learning and its relationship to the National Curriculum. This takes up a theme which has been rehearsed many times previously in *FORUM*: a theme which is concerned with the nature of the teaching and learning experience and its relevance to the learner and the teacher.

One of the questions posed at the seminar was 'What can a teacher offer that cannot be replicated in any other way?' A question which becomes more and more relevant when we consider some of the advances in computer technology and the implications for supported self study and distance learning.

Andy Green & Glenn Rikowski develop other important themes concerned with the future of post compulsory education. Their wide ranging and thought provoking article affirms the need for us to relate the principles of comprehensive education to changing social contexts. Their focus is on the future of work and the relationship of Education and Training to future patterns of employment and the development of new technologies. They too sketch out the kind of fantasy scenarios being enacted by technological enthusiasts on world wide webs and super highways; where teaching and learning realities are dependent on open and distance learning, and where the learner does not need to make direct contact with the teacher. In the quest for lifelong learning within a context of societal fragmentation, the need for human contact will become more important and, argue Green and Rikowski, will require more education and training "to socialise, instil values and cultivate the democratic skills of tolerance, communication and co-operation."

There is little real tolerance, communication and co-operation around in the pseudo world of competences and coverage. Roy Lowe's short article highlights once again the constant turmoil of Initial Teacher Education, where we are just beginning to see the effects of providing training without adequate resources, as a new generation of teachers embark on their teaching careers having experienced the *coverage* model of training. The coverage model of training relates directly to the coverage model of learning (espoused by enthusiasts for high levels of content, particularly at Key Stage Two of the National Curriculum); it appears to be concerned with ensuring that all subject content has been dealt with and competences have been acquired without any apparent regard for the process.

We have now arrived at a stage where *process* has become a dirty word and the currency of adjectives to describe processes of teaching and learning, like 'enabling' and 'facilitating' are devalued and derided by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

A refreshing antidote is evident in Moyra Evans' article on the action research group at Denbigh School in Milton Keynes. The strength of the group is clearly in the way members support each other and in the way that they listen to each other and are able to be constructively critical in a secure context. The excitement for the teachers is clearly in their own learning and the way that they are encouraged to articulate their insights into the complex processes of classroom interactions. Similar insights have been achieved by other teacher research groups, as Annabelle Dixon's article on the Longsearch Group in Hertfordshire showed a year ago. A further encouraging aspect is that there are parallel developments occurring in primary schools in Milton Keynes and in other parts of Buckinghamshire, supported by the sterling work of the National Primary Centre.

Terry Haydn's article challenges the rhetoric of successive Tory governments' reforms and examines the current reality of the market place for teachers and schools. His analysis of the current 'Not in my backyard' (NIMBY) syndrome evident in many middle class, professional voters (whether Tory or Labour) provides a useful setting for Clyde Chitty's review of the new Labour Party Policy document on education. Quite clearly the most disturbing aspect of my co-editor's recent correspondence with the Shadow Secretary of State, following an invitation he had received from a constituency group to debate the new document, is the extraordinary level of control and pressure exerted upon him to defend his stand.

The final article in the series to celebrate thirty years on since *Circular 10/65* provides a critical analysis, from a very personal viewpoint, of the success and failure of the comprehensive system. Again the need to acknowledge social difference and instil positive values and attitudes amongst all teachers and learners in schools are highlighted as providing the way forward.

Liz Thomson

Post-Compulsory Education and Training for the 21st Century

Andy Green & Glenn Rikowski

Andy Green is a Senior Lecturer in the Institute of Education, University of London, and a member of *FORUM*'s Editorial Board. Glenn Rikowski is a Post-16 Research Fellow in the School of Education, University of Birmingham; his previous experience includes working in youth training and further education.

This paper is based on an original paper delivered by Andy at a *FORUM* Seminar 'Redefining Principles for the 21st Century' and subsequent discussion, with some additional points from Glenn who was also at the Seminar.

Introduction

The principles embedded within a concept of comprehensive education must engage with contemporary economic, social political and environmental change if they are to be relevant to learning and earning in the 21st century. We need to think about the *social contexts* in which principles of comprehensive education are expressed. A number of recent contributors to *FORUM* have pointed to a need to rethink comprehensive education and training in relation to changes in the workplace and institutions within the wider society. The challenge is to redefine educational principles for the next century in a way which does not just bend to prevailing trends, fashions and limitations of the present. Ultimately, the way in which we frame future-oriented educational principles will depend on our political responses to changing economic and social contexts. In this article we explore some of these changing contexts and then sketch out some of the implications of these for post-compulsory education and training for the 21st century.

Society

Sociologists and economists view society as becoming increasingly mobile, privatised, consumeristic and individualistic. These trends are particularly strong in Britain, where the Conservative government of the last sixteen years has actively promoted consumerist values, privatisation and the dissolution of society. Increasing societal fragmentation has engendered cultural diversity and lifestyle differentiation to such an extent that postmodern theorists who talk about the death of 'community' and solidarity appear to be saying something profound. Pluralism in values and lifestyles has undermined subjective social class identification at the very time when social inequalities (resulting from regressive tax changes, labour market deregulation and anti-trade union laws) have increased.

Whilst these social and economic trends create fragmentation and dissolution in social life at the local level, at the international and global levels there appears to be a certain cultural homogenisation taking place. At one level, this expresses itself in the 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1993) of society with the internationalisation of cultural icons such as McDonalds, Coca-Cola and Nike. At another level global technological culture allied to the projects of powerful

media corporations (such as the Murdoch empire), a deepening marketisation in the mass media where the scramble for audiences has reached a new pitch, de-regulation of media products and the relative absence of transnational media policing has created a situation where homogenised 'global culture' thrives on multi-channelled airwaves and cables.

As atomised individuals retreat into the apparent and relative security of their own homes through fear of violence on the streets, labour market insecurity at work and time compression in their lives, beyond the hearth unprecedented threats to our collective existence abound. We live in the 'risk' society (Beck, 1992) where ecological disaster, national conflict and global war cast shadows across the rising generation. The ending of the Stalinist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has brought triumphalist speeches from Western leaders and declarations of the 'death' of Marxism (*The Financial Times*, 1991; Richards, 1993) but no capitalist renaissance which offers workers the degree of security and hope available during the 'golden era' of 1950-1973. Third world poverty continues to grow. Solutions to all these global problems, fears and insecurities seem remote.

Nation States

Economic and cultural globalisation put into question the role of the nation state. Two diverging trends seem to be following upon these forms of globalisation. Supra-national political and economic entities appear to be usurping some of the functions of the nation state (the EU, NAFTA). These developments have exacerbated or caused instabilities within some national arenas. However, the nation state remains at present the only major effective forum for political representation and political and economic control and accountability.

This last point has been embraced by the Euro-sceptics in Britain. Hence, although the EU attempts to harmonise economic and social conditions throughout the community through training and employment initiatives, the British government emphasises divergence through economic competition. Britain has placed itself in a singular position in its relations with the EU. Rejection of the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty has gone hand-in-hand with a

strategy of attracting inward (particularly Japanese) investment. One of the fears behind this strategy was that, although the Japanese might be tempted by our low wages, lax planning laws and financial inducements as a way to break into European markets, they might not be taken with our relatively poorly educated and trained workforce. The quality of the workforce is a crucial determinant of Japanese corporations' overseas investment strategies (Department of Employment, 1994). This places the quality of the British workforce at the forefront, and the drive to increase the quality of British labour power will be a key *motif* in post-compulsory education and training discourse towards and beyond the millennium.

The British case highlights the fact that, whereas national states appear to exercise less and less genuine control over many areas of collective life – multinational corporations, international finance where billions can be transferred across national boundaries in an instant through computerisation – there are no signs that societies can confront the major problems which collectively confront them without an effective public sphere. As capital in its money form hurtles around the globe at increasing velocity, and industrial re-location becomes less onerous, states have come to have relatively increased control over that other great class of commodities – labour power. This is why in recent years, and probably more so in the 21st century, states will concentrate increasingly on the quality of *human* capital as their control of other forms of capital recedes.

Work

The globalisation of finance, production and exchange has established *flexibility* as a key concept for the 21st century. Flexible, adaptable workers are at the core of this trend. Increasing international competition, particularly from China and the Pacific Rim nations, with the highest rewards going to countries most successful in promoting economic activity in the high-tech, high-value-added sectors, sets the global economic scene for the 21st century.

Rapid changes in technologies, products, markets and work organisation – the flatter hierarchies of post-Fordism – all put a premium on adaptability and innovation. This calls for an increasing demand for multiply-skilled and flexible employees. The rise of versions of the 'learning society' will attempt to provide the necessary learning infrastructure; universities, colleges, libraries and information networks – all with supporting technology and a mission for constant quality development within a cost-effectiveness framework – linked to the research and development efforts of corporate capital.

The current increase in service sector jobs and occupations involved in the handling and manipulation of information, data and concepts – the 'symbolic analysts' as Robert Reich, Clinton's economic advisor, calls them – will most likely increase until they too become subject to rationalisation and 'down-sizing'. There is no hiding place.

Retromodernism

The drive to increase the quality of labour power within the nation state and the associated strategy of de-regulating the labour market (through anti-trade union laws, decreasing labour protection and deliberate attempts to drive down wage levels through the abolition of laws protecting workers wage levels and social rights) will come into increasing contrast. The process is most underway in the USA and Britain. The British emphasis on increasing the quality of

labour power through *modernising* post-compulsory education and training must be seen against a background where labour market law and the power of capital in the labour market has been taken back to the late nineteenth-century in some respects. The de-regulation of the youth labour market ended the commitment by the state to protect young people from the 'operation of raw labour market forces' (Roberts, 1995, p. 15).

The modernising project to raise the quality of labour power through post-compulsory education and training can be contrasted with the *retro* labour market scene where British capitalists have greater social power in the labour market than at any time since the late nineteenth-century (Sampson, 1995). Retromodernism seems to be the concept which encapsulates the drive to constantly modernise education and training whilst throwing the labour market into *la mode retro*. This British trajectory may change with a Labour government committed to taking on the Social Chapter and framing new legislation on workers' rights.

Education, Technology and 'Fantasy Further Education'

New information and computer technologies – the information super highway and interactive computer technology – create many new possibilities in terms of learning which could radically alter the relationships between educational institutions, teachers and students. There is immense potential for 'individualising' the learning process inherent in these technologies. There is also an associated potential regarding turning education and training into a consumer good.

The rhetoric of the NCVQ is suggestive here, but the research output of the Employment and Trade and Industry Departments, as it touches on education and training, is also framed in a similar position. Together with output-related funding and attempts to create business cultures in the New Further Education, the managerial drive to see new technology as cost-saver rather than teacher and student learning aid will be a key contested field for the 21st century. The new technology could support growing numbers of distance and open learners working on individualised and customised learning packages. Reeves (1995) refers to a "fantasy currently exciting management in further education" (p. 106); the *Marie Celeste* college. This is a college where technology underpins a 'silent empty institution of the not-too-distant future' (ibid.) where all students are engaged on open and distance programmes and payment via the Further Education Funding Council zips its way through computer networks into the college account. Flicking through issues of *College Management Today* brings this fantasy to life.

Some Implications for Education

The implications of the social trends and trajectories sketched out above for post-compulsory education and training are immense. We can only summarise some of the main possibilities here.

Firstly, it is clear that education will become a lifelong activity. There will be a constant need for upgrading skills, knowledge and competences throughout working life. This implies the end of 'front-loaded' education and training. Educational and training experiences will be phased throughout the life-cycle thus undermining the notion of any standard transitions from school to work.

Related to the previous point is the need for more flexible

Children's Needs and Interests and the National Curriculum

Derek Gillard

A regular contributor to *FORUM* and a new member of the Editorial Board, Derek Gillard is Headteacher of Marston Middle School, Oxford. Here he assesses the value of basing curricula on children's needs and interests and asks whether the National Curriculum makes this more difficult.

At the heart of the educational process lies the child

This statement from the Plowden Report is significant not only for what it says but also for its position in the Report: it is the first sentence. Compare the 1988 Education Act which states that at the heart of the educational process "lies the curriculum". 'Child-centred' education is not new (it can be traced back to Rousseau in the 18th century), but it has always had, as its central theme, the idea that education must begin with the needs and interests of the child.

What, then, do we mean by 'needs' and 'interests'?

Needs

The definition of children's needs is not easy. Katz suggested that "one of the most salient aspects of the field of early childhood education is the sharp divergence of views among workers and clients concerning what young children 'need' as well as how and when these 'needs' should be satisfied" (Katz, 1977). Maslow identified three types of need: primary needs (air, food, sleep etc.); emotional needs (love, security etc.); and social needs (acceptance by one's peers etc.) (Maslow, 1954). An important point is the difference between needs and wants: "At all but the very basic levels it is impossible to distinguish what we need from what we want, or worse, what someone else thinks we ought to want or ought to have" (Kelly, 1982).

Roger Scruton appears to be in no doubt that he knows what children need: "Children have many and unequal needs: but no need greater than that for authority, discipline and example that will convey them – whether they like it or not – the knowledge and skill which are required in the social condition to which they are eventually destined" (Scruton, 1987). This is an attitude to children's needs which was dominant in the elementary school tradition of the 19th century, diminished from Hadow onwards, but, I would argue, is now making itself felt again very strongly.

In its response to DES Circular 6/81, Northamptonshire Education Committee produced the following list of the needs of primary school children (not in any particular order):

- to communicate with other people;
- to develop an awareness of self and an understanding of the need for the care and protection of the mind and body;
- to be creative and to appreciate the creative expression of others;

- to understand the immediate environment;
- to be helped to interpret experience and to consider ultimate questions concerning meaning and value in life.

Although hardly a definition, the ideas quoted above do give some idea of what is generally meant by children's needs.

Interests

I think we need to consider two meanings of the word 'interests'. The first is simple: they are those things which interest children or in which they are interested. But we need to include a second meaning, too: the sense in which something is in a child's interest. It is clearly in the interest of children, for example, that they should learn to read and write.

The definition may be easier, but basing a curriculum on them is not so simple. As Richard Pring points out, critics argue that such a curriculum will be too piecemeal and arbitrary. Each child will have his/her own interests, and, if encouraged to pursue them, the outcomes will be unpredictable to say the least. Planning and preparation, evaluation and assessment become very difficult.

Alternatives

A curriculum based on something other than children's needs and interests will be one of two kinds. It will either be based on a rationalist view of knowledge or it will be utilitarian.

The rationalist view regards knowledge as "having a status that is largely independent of human experience, as 'God-given', and thus as absolute and, for the most part, unchanging" (Blenkin & Kelly, 1987). There is no room in this view for the child other than as the recipient of this unarguably valid truth. This attitude is deeply ingrained in our society: "Belief in the superiority of certain activities and experiences over others is too deep within our way of thinking to be dismissed lightly" (Pring, 1976). The fact that the government gives subsidies to certain activities and not to others is a good example of this: some things are perceived to be of greater intrinsic value than others.

Utilitarians, on the other hand, have little time for theories of knowledge. Their view of education is that it exists to serve the needs of society – in particular, of business and industry. I would argue that this is the government's view of education – hence the NVQs, the GNVQs, the CTCs et

al "In highlighting what is taken to be a failure of the education system to meet 'industrial needs' and all but a small academic elite's perception of individual needs, it (vocationalism) is able to claim a resonance with popular consciousness and to prescribe remedies which might in other circumstances have been controversial" (Young, 1987). Bernard Barker calls this the 'Production' model of education, in which the child takes second place, this time to the needs of business and industry. This is not new: as early as 1813 Robert Owen (mill owner, educational reformer and socialist) said "These plans must be devised to train children from their earliest infancy in good habits of every description ... they must afterwards be rationally educated, and their labour be usefully directed." The danger is that this view of education is now being so powerfully forced on us again. "A 'back-to-basics' or 'traditional' outlook belong to an earlier period when board schools and mechanics' institutes were expected to civilise the working classes and prepare them for 'useful toil'" (Barker, 1987).

Kelly certainly has little time for vocationalism or utilitarianism and wonders whether these are "the proper concern of schools at all" (Kelly, 1982).

Child-centredness

If we dismiss these alternatives, however, because we don't accept the rationalist view of knowledge and we are not prepared to accept that the function of schools is to produce efficient labour for industry, we must still justify basing our primary curriculum on children's needs and interests.

Kilpatrick suggests that the starting point for education is "the actual present life of the boys and girls themselves, with all their interests and desires, good and bad" (Kilpatrick, *The Project Method*, 1918, quoted in Pring, 1976).

Pring regards Kilpatrick's work as of special importance because of the popularity of interest-based curriculum ideas, the good ethical reasons behind them, and because of what he regards as the inappropriateness of the alternatives. He identifies the ethical argument for such a curriculum as being the "underlying theory of value reflected in the concern for the interests of the child", but he rejects the idea that it is possible to do away with a hierarchy of values. "The child must come to see their value if they are to be valuable to him." His cognitive argument embraces an empiricist view of knowledge: "The meaning (and thus the truth) of what is offered is proportionate to its meaningfulness for each pupil (and to its 'working') for him." He rejects the critics' view that "knowledge does ... somehow exist independently of individual knowers" (Pring, 1976).

A fundamental aspect of a curriculum based on children's needs and interests is that it acknowledges that children already have active minds. "Their minds must be the ultimate reference point of any educational activity or programme" (Pring, 1976). And Wilson (1971) suggests that "However ridiculous a child's interests may seem, there is nothing else in terms of which he can become more 'educated'." Children bring much to school with them – their experiences, attitudes and aptitudes. To treat them as though they were slates on which to be written is not only an insult but is to do them, and the education we seek to provide, a grave disservice. "Learning is, after all, an individual matter, in which essential idiosyncratic elements must be supplied by the learner himself" (Gagne, 1971). Compare this with the view of Roger Scruton: "They come to the teacher unformed, ignorant and distracted; their existence as citizens,

and the rights and immunities which confer equality ... lie at the end of the educational process and not at the beginning" (Scruton, 1987).

Another feature of child-centred curricula is their emphasis on discovery. The child starts from his/her own interest and extends his/her field of enquiry outwards. Plowden suggested that this method had 'proved' to be more successful than 'being told' – a view which has been much criticised for being thin on research evidence. Many teachers, however, would argue that the experience of the past thirty years would back up Plowden's claim. Certainly it had the support of Bruner who proposed the hypothesis that "to the degree that one is able to approach learning as a task of discovering something rather than learning about it, to that degree there will be a tendency for the child to carry out his learning activities with the autonomy of self-reward or, more properly, by reward that is discovery itself" (Bruner, 1974).

Bruner was not suggesting, as critics would have us believe, that "the learner should be 'abandoned to discovery' without the caring preparation and guidance of the teacher" (Beswick, 1987). "A teacher who stands back and just allows children to pursue whatever interests come into their heads is practising ... a travesty of child-centredness" (Wilson, 1971). Rather, children constantly need "the kind of confidence to proceed which comes from receiving effective help. This help is the educative function of teachers". (Wilson, 1971).

The National Curriculum

My concerns about the National Curriculum in this context fall into two main areas.

First, it worries me that it is so content-based. Who decides what the content will be? It certainly isn't the children – it isn't even the teachers: it's some government quango. And once you've decided on such a curriculum, how will it be taught? Clearly, because the content is of paramount importance, so-called 'traditional' teaching methods will be appropriate – hence the pressure for streaming and class-teaching in primary schools. Margaret Donaldson noted that children in the early years of school "seem eager, lively, happy" whereas "large numbers leave school with the bitter taste of defeat in them, not having mastered even moderately well those basic skills which society demands" (Donaldson, 1978). Her view (and mine) is that the problem lies in the fact that, whereas primary schools base their work, to some extent at least, on children's needs and interests, in the high schools these receive less attention, while the interests of business and industry become predominant. Surely this ought to mean that we should investigate the possibilities for secondary education learning from the primary sector? Apparently not. "There is pressure now for change at the lower end of the system. And there is a real danger that this pressure might lead to change that would be gravely retrogressive" (Donaldson, 1978). If those words were true in 1978, how much truer they are today!

My second concern is about the assessment procedures. We have a flawed curriculum and now we have flawed assessment procedures to compound the problem. Because all that matters in the curriculum is content, all that matters in assessing it is how much content pupils have absorbed. We have just conducted Key Stage 2 tests. The Science test was little more than a reading test. I marked our pupils' English tests. How can you set a story-writing exercise without allowing any marks for originality, imagination or

creativity? SCAA can! SCAA should remember two things: that education is what is left when you've forgotten the content and that what is of value and what is measurable are usually at the opposite ends of a spectrum. Finally, there is the inevitable danger that teachers will look at the tests and decide that, if that's all children need to 'know', then that is all they will teach them. League tables merely compound the problem.

Of course I am not suggesting that teachers – and society in general – should have no say in the content of education. We do our pupils no favours if we don't teach them to read, write and add up and – these days – to become computer-literate. But there is a balance to be struck between imposed content and the needs and interests of the child. My view is that the National Curriculum makes getting that balance right much more difficult for teachers.

Don't forget the child is a living thing, with thoughts and beliefs, hopes and choices, feelings and wishes; helping him with these must be what education is about, for there is nothing else to educate. (Pring, 1976)

References

- Barker, B. (1987) Production and Progress, in C. Chitty (Ed.) *Redefining the Comprehensive Experience*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.
- Beswick, N. (1987) *Rethinking Active Learning 8-16*. London: Falmer Press.
- Blenkin, G.M & Kelly, A.V. (1987) *The Primary Curriculum: a process approach* London: Harper.
- Bruner, J. (1974) *Beyond the Information Given*, cited in Beswick (1987) *Re-thinking Active Learning*. London: Falmer.
- Donaldson, M. (1978) *Children's Minds*. London: Fontana.
- Gagne, R.M. (1971) *Learning Theory, Educational Media and Individualised Instruction*, cited in Beswick (1987) *op.cit.*
- Katz, L.G., Talks with Teachers, Washington NAEYC, cited in Gammage (1987) Chinese whispers, *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, pp. 95-109.
- Kelly, A.V. (1982) *The Curriculum: theory and practice*. London: Harper.
- Maslow, A.H. (1982) *Motivation and Personality*. London: Harper.
- Northamptonshire (1985) *The School Curriculum: a framework of principles*. Northamptonshire LEA.
- Pring, R. (1976) *Knowledge and Schooling*. London: Open Books.
- Scruton, R. (1987) Expressionist education, *Oxford Review of Education*, 13(1).
- Wilson, P. Interest and Discipline in Education (1971) quoted in C. Richards, *The Study of Primary Education*, Vol.1. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Young, M. (1987) Vocationalising tendencies in recent British educational policy, in C. Chitty (Ed.) *Redefining the Comprehensive Experience*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

Confronting the Learning Lottery

Phil Williams

Formerly a research officer with the National Commission on Education, Phil Williams is now a researcher for the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. In this article he sets out the main features of the National Commission's recently published booklet *After 16*.

Beyond compulsory schooling, education increasingly resembles a lottery – luck decides the suitability of the courses available, the quality of that provision, and whether or not financial support accompanies it. Through consultation the National Commission on Education has tried to assemble some principles for a sector that, unlike the compulsory years with the national curriculum, has no common agenda. Underpinning our report, *Learning to Succeed: After Sixteen*, is the concept of a learning society. Because lifelong recurrent learning is about unleashing individual potentials throughout society, we use our revised National Training & Education Targets to quantify progress towards this goal. A learning society, as Sir John Cassels points out, is "shimmering like a distant oasis" but the road to the visionary ideal is not yet built.

Encouraging Trends

The last few years have witnessed enormous positive changes. Consolidating the success of the GCSEs, GNVQ courses have been developed and are being enthusiastically embraced by students. 'A' level modularisation is a move away from 'blockbuster' courses and are also proving popular; and both types of modern apprenticeships are

serving the needs of the young by delivering high quality training leading to a recognised award.

Discouraging Results

We are though still failing too many of our young people. Look at the evidence. Full-time participation in education may well be rising but the number of 16 and 17 year olds successfully completing two years of post-compulsory schooling is not even 50 per cent. Even those who complete the revered A level may not necessarily emerge 'well educated' because of its defining narrowness. Students choosing the vocational route persistently suffer from the 'not-quite-A-level-material' stigma.

The stakes are even higher for those wanting to leave school at 16. Last year about 5 per cent of 16 year olds and 20 per cent of 17 year olds went into work with no training offered. Whilst Youth Training (YT) is guaranteed for those school leavers without a job, only a fifth of trainees leaving YT in 1992-3 achieved an National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 or higher, and half left with no qualification at all. The most alarming polarisation of all comes from a recent NACRO (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) report which

suggests that as many as 76,000 16 and 17 year olds are not engaged in any form of education, training or employment, and are not likely to come into contact with any agency which might help them. To age 24, the Labour Party estimate the figure to be around 750,000 young people. For those at foundation level, any mention of a learning society is more than a distant oasis. As an industrially advanced nation, we deserve better, and must strive to do better.

A Range War

The vacuum in the management of provision for 16-18 year olds stems from the overload of bodies providing for funding, examining, and verifying in the system. Funding follows the student and this can lead, quite understandably, to fierce competition for institutional survival. We know that illegal sixth forms are springing up to vie for the coffers in the kitty. Competition is not a bad thing per se, but where does the unplanned market in post-16 leave curricular coherence, quality assurance, individual choice (where in reality there is little), and the impartiality of the 'advice' given to the student?

The General Education Diploma

Coherence, for the Commission, starts by creating a new structure for student-led foundation learning – the *General Education Diploma*. High quality and credit-based, the diploma will cover a comprehensive range of academic, technical, practical and vocational studies, and will be forged out of the existing awards. Normally awarded at 16 (Ordinary level) and 18 (Advanced level), it will be a grouped award requiring students to demonstrate understanding and knowledge in a range of areas, including core subjects at Ordinary level. Demand for such an award comes not just from practitioners in the post-16 arena – although one can hardly sweep aside the consensus for change among unions, independent schools, awarding bodies, and educationists – it comes, moreover, from the students themselves, who do not want to specialise too soon. The requirement now is for mixing and matching to create individual learning plans, for much greater flexibility in study mode, for deferring choices until the time is right, and for the conferment of credit wherever credit is due. The triple track (NVQ/GNVQ/A level) allows for little personal tailoring of learning, and the high rate of course failure is symptomatic of this turgid learning process.

An award based on credit will necessarily initiate massive changes in provision for post-16, in terms of accreditation, collaboration between joint providers and the assurance of quality within the disparate unit elements that make up the individually tailored GED. We propose that partnerships are forged between the stakeholders in post-16. Ideally, we see a newly created Department of Education and Training playing a central role, yet the détente being developed between SCAA and the NCVQ is, in our eyes, a first step to their eventual merger.

The credit accumulation and core entitlement features of the GED will need arrangements for quality assurance which go beyond what presently exists. Where an individual's award is built up over time from a number of providers, no one provider institution can be responsible for the overall integrity of the award. There must, therefore, be national arrangements for maintaining and auditing quality. There is likely to be a greatly developed trend for institutions to operate in consortia. SCAA/NCVQ will audit

standards of qualifications content, internal assessment and external verification. Because also there is a clear curriculum entitlement for the GED, students must be offered the full range of programmes the award may offer. Some schools and colleges may not have the capacity to provide individually that range, so institutional accreditation for particular units may hold a way forward.

Guidance

By its nature, the GED offers a greater range of learning options than currently exists and with that comes the real need for impartial careers guidance. Recent findings by the FEFC and OFSTED show that 16-19 year olds had a better knowledge of the full range of opportunities in their locality, where there were consortium arrangements between schools and colleges, and they underline the importance of joint local ownership and autonomy in the organisation of guidance services. We applaud the fact that the Government has made £87 million available to entitle every 11-18 year old to high quality professional careers guidance; yet the recent contracting out of Careers Services may be counter-productive. The genuine fear is that the nature of competing companies in the market may not unite to ensure the highest quality of guidance given to students. In our original report, *Learning to Succeed*, we called for Community Education and Training Advice Centres (CETACs) to be established; their governing bodies will be composed of representatives from local education, business, and community affairs. This broad membership might be expected to offer impartial advice, free from institutional bias. We remain convinced that a service of this nature would have a valuable part to play in underpinning the development of a learning society.

The Learning Network

Learning Networks are becoming part of the local and regional educational focus. Because life-long learning calls for a full range of opportunities and routes both locally, regionally and nationally, we encourage voluntary associations between universities, colleges, schools, LEAs and TECs. It is true that the pooling of facilities, resources and expertise can provide a greater richness and variety of provision to students. For example, the London CAT and the Tamar Valley Consortia are both providing excellent examples of how commonality in courses and timetables are strengthening educational opportunities in regions and sub-regions. In this context, universities have an outstanding opportunity to give a lead.

Funding Inequity

Any society that considers itself to be one that encourages perpetual rather than block learning must, at least in part, financially stimulate its learners. At present there is gross inequity between funds available for students in higher education and those engaged in either foundation or non-advanced post-compulsory learning. Estimated public expenditure on HE mandatory awards for 1993-94 runs at some £2,747 million, and yet discretionary awards for HE and FE together total a mere £230 million. What is more, HE also attracts the Student Loan which makes available a further £273 million of public funds. The only loan option open to an FE student is the Career Development Loan (£40 million), and this has much harsher repayment conditions than the Student Loan. The full-time/part-time

dichotomy is an added factor in the race for funds. There is clearly a pressing need for reform.

HECON

We unswervingly stand by our original proposal in *Learning to Succeed* for the introduction of a Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECON) in which we believe it right that students contribute to some cost of the course which they stand *directly to benefit from*. We propose that a student will make an annual flat rate contribution to a national average fee cost, say 20%, and the rest to be funded from the public purse. A discount of around 15% will be granted to those students able to make advance payments and, on completion of the course, income-contingent repayments will be administered through the tax system. Those unable to pay may defer repayment. Similarly, a HECON maintenance allowance will also be available for those students wishing to take it, and that repayments will be through the same machinery as fee repayment.

Supporting Adult Learners

When we consider that there were an estimated 1.6 million enrolments by people over 18 on further education courses in 1993-94, we should be alarmed that financial support for this group wanting to be part of a learning society is a lottery. Learners are eligible for LEA discretionary awards and Career Development Loans, yet they are not mandatory and are subject to local discretion. We cannot create a knowledge society if we constrain support for those who want to get more out of their learning beyond school. The unemployed who wish to study have a particular barrier with the 21 hour rule, soon to be the 16 hour rule under the Jobseekers Allowance. While we would welcome the fact that the new dictum no longer requires those studying on benefit to "*give up their course should a vacancy arise*", we remain unhappy that learning whilst on benefit is seen by the government to be somehow dishonest.

Individuals Learning Accounts

Because we wish to foresee a society which will require continuous acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding by its members and which consequently rewards training and education on individual initiative, we would wish to see greater research into the feasibility of the individual learning account. The broad idea is that every employee would have the right to ask his or her employer to open such an account. Both employer and employee

would contribute amounts to the account and the fund would accrue. The account would follow the learner like a transferable pension, according to Sir Geoffrey Holland, to be used for education and training. Until any such cooperative scheme is up and running, we propose the following reform:

- no fees charged for courses providing basic education or courses needed for the completion of foundation learning (GED or equivalent) and,
- young people up to 24 year of age wishing to take courses to build on their foundation learning should no longer be obliged to pay full fees

Support for 16-18 Year Olds

Whilst not wishing to alter the *status quo*, whereby financial support for 16-18 year olds legally falls to their parents, the Commission is concerned that there are specific groups whose needs are not being met. Where families are on benefit, or just above the margin of Family Credit, real financial difficulties arise with meeting the costs of essential course requirements if young people opt to stay-on. Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) are under increasing pressure, as are discretionary awards at FE level, both administered by the LEA. We call for a greater equilibrium in support by recommending that funds available for both awards are pooled and administered locally, on a means-tested basis, but in accordance with nationally determined criteria. The element of luck, so characteristic in post-16, should then partially be removed at least for financial support for 16-18 year olds.

Working Together

Although brief, this article has shown by addressing the failings of the present system how piecemeal reform and innovations in provision and delivery can help on the long march to a learning society. The economic and social well-being of our citizens depends on the skills, knowledge and understanding they acquire, as Drucker rightly perceives. A lead from above in conjunction with cooperation on the ground is the message we have tried to deliver in *After 16*. All stakeholders in post-16 education and training must be responsive to the new demands placed upon them and, by working together, we may perhaps inch ever closer to that mass learning culture essential for national survival and national renewal.

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

*If so the Editors of Forum would like to hear from you
(see inside front cover for address)*

Continuity and Progression?

Sheila Dainton

A full-time official at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers since 1987, Sheila Dainton now has a key responsibility for education matters within the ATL's Policy Unit. A former primary teacher, she has also worked previously in industrial education and training and in higher education administration. This article is taken from the publication *Keele Studies in Education Policy: the National Curriculum* edited by Michael Barber.

The Conservative Party has been in government since May 1979. Putting to one side the fact that some Conservatives see the change over from Thatcher to Major in November 1990 as a change of government, this is the longest any political party has been in power since 1830 when Earl Grey replaced Wellington, ending 23 years of Tory rule. But if enhanced continuity and progression were intended to be a hallmark of the National Curriculum they have certainly not characterised those bodies responsible to Government for translating the broad brush of national legislation into a workable reality in schools.

There appears to be barely a handful of key individuals at a national level in the policy making and policy implementing process with a first-hand sense of history dating back to the early days of the National Curriculum when the Education Reform Bill (GERBIL, as it was then known) was being debated in Parliament.

In his fascinating analysis of what was then perceived to be the role of the political head of the education service, Kogan (1971) makes the obvious but important point that to work out and work through a new pattern of educational development requires time and expertise. Kogan quotes Anthony Crosland, Secretary of State for Education and Science between January 1965 and August 1967, on the time-scale of politics and policy formation. Crosland says: "I reckon it takes you six months to get your head properly above water, a year to get the general drift of most of the field, and two years really to master the whole of a Department."

On the basis of this analysis, since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988, only one of the recent secretaries of state for education has had an opportunity to 'master' the Department for which he (or later, she) was ultimately responsible. John Patten was Secretary of State for Education for just over two years. However, the extent to which he genuinely got a grip on education policy and 'mastered' the whole of the DES (and, later, the DFE) remains very much open to question.

There have been five Secretaries of State for Education since the National Curriculum was introduced in 1988:

Kenneth Baker: July 1986 – July 1989

John MacGregor: July 1989 – November 1990

Kenneth Clarke: November 1990 – April 1992

John Patten: April 1992 – July 1994

Gillian Shephard: July 1994

Aside from Baker (who had ministerial responsibility for education before 1988) Patten is the only political head of the education service in office for more than 17 months.

During the same period there have been four permanent secretaries at the DES/DFE:

Sir David Hancock: May 1983 – June 1989

Sir John Caines: July 1989 – January 1993

Sir Geoffrey Holland: January 1993 – January 1994

Sir Timothy Lankester: February 1994

In their relatively short lives (which, including the two 'shadow' Councils, whose span was from May 1988 to September 1993) the NCC and SEAC had between them four chief executives, one acting chief executive and six chairmen.

NCC

Duncan Graham, Chairman and Chief Executive: May 1988 – July 1991

Chris Woodhead, Chief Executive: July 1991 – September 1993

David Pascall, Chairman: July 1991 – April 1993

Sir Ron Dearing, Chairman: April 1993 – September 1993

SEAC

Philip Halsey, Chairman and Chief Executive: May 1988 – July 1991

Richard Dorrance, Acting Chief Executive: July 1991 – December 1991

Hilary Nicolle, Chief Executive: January 1992 – September 1993

Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, Chairman: July 1991 – April 1993

Sir Ron Dearing, Chairman: April 1993 – September 1993

SCAA's Chief Executive, Chris Woodhead, took on the job of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) from 1 October 1994 after barely a year in post. His predecessor at the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the former HMCI Professor Stewart Sutherland, left the job after only two years.

At the Department of Education and Science (DES) – as in all Whitehall departments – it was *de rigueur* for officials to be moved on from one job to the next, seemingly in a deliberate attempt to discourage any individual from getting to grips with, and taking an ideological line on, an educational issue. The culture of constant re-shuffling is no different at the Department for Education (DFE) which, having been created in July 1992, has already undergone a major structural reorganisation, largely as the result of the formation of SCAA. A review of the role of the DFE, commissioned by the Department and conducted by Coopers & Lybrand, has subsequently been undertaken (DFE, 1993) and at the time of writing yet further changes of key civil

servants at the DFE have been announced (reported in *Education*, 26 August 1994).

The irony, of course, is that this succession of ministers and civil servants has had statutory responsibility to design and implement a curriculum based on a philosophy of continuity and progression. Constant chopping and changing at national level, with successive ministers interfering with the detail of the curriculum, makes nonsense of the concept at the very heart of recent education legislation. It also fails to address one of the most serious flaws in the policy-making and policy-implementing process: the proclivity of those with both power and *de facto* responsibility to move on before they face the consequences of their own decisions and actions. Little wonder, then, that many teachers, having approached the National Curriculum with cautious optimism, now regard the decision-makers with increasing cynicism. Any school managed with the ineptitude shown by those responsible for the education service at a national level would be branded as 'failing' and quickly brought to heel – or closed down – by Government inspectors.

ERA: the definitive Act?

At the time of its passage through Parliament, the Education Reform Act (ERA) was heralded as the definitive piece of post-Butler legislation which would last until the end of the 20th century. But this was not to be so. Only three years later the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1991 created the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) and put an end to collective bargaining in the schools' sector. The following year the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 placed further and higher education in the hands of two new quangos – the Further Education Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council – and the Education (Schools) Act 1992 all but killed off Her Majesty's Inspectorate and created Ofsted.

The Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) was created under the Education Act 1993. The Act was heralded in Secretary of State John Patten's White Paper (DFE, 1992) as legislation that would bring us into the next century. Patten promised it would be "the last piece of the jig-saw", a phrase used two years later by Secretary of State Gillian Shepherd when Key Stage 2 statutory tests were introduced. The Act included sections on school admissions, the procedure for acquisition of grant maintained status, the provision of further education in grant maintained schools, and special educational needs. The final part of the Act comprises a lengthy miscellaneous section covering everything from nursery education in grant maintained

schools to the replacement of the NCC and SEAC by SCAA. Finally, the Education Act 1994 removed the funding of initial teacher training in England from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and established in its place a Teacher Training Agency responsible for providing information and advice on teaching as a career, and accreditation.

The picture on the whole jig-saw still remains unclear. As former Chief HMI Eric Bolton (1994) has commented: "No-one seems to have any idea what our education service might look like, or is intended to be, say by the year 2010". In particular, the interrelationship and the balance of power between at least four of the quangos set up by central Government (SCAA, NCVQ, the FAS and, importantly, the STRB) seems uncertain, as do the institutional and structural relationships between these quangos, Ofsted, the DFE and, of course, local education authorities. The situation is ripe for confusion, conflict, power struggles and in-fighting. The increasing spread of power and responsibility away from local education authorities and towards government-appointed quangos, all closely shadowed by the DFE, makes it all the more likely that the right hand will not know what the left is doing. This is not good for coherent policy development and sensibly-planned policy implementation, and it is certainly not helpful for teachers and schools.

Looking back, it seems that the absence of a coherent education policy within the Conservative Party or within the DES/DFE allowed a succession of education ministers to reach for the statute book every time they panicked or had a new idea – and before they had worked out the detail of what they wanted. The situation is one of chronic unpredictability and uncertainty. It is as if policy making in education has become some kind of ball game played on a muddy field with a lot of people pushing and shoving. Everyone has forgotten that the name of the game is to score goals.

References

- Bolton, E. (1994) Initial teacher training: the reforms, in *Report*, Vol. 17 No. 1. London: ATL.
- DFE (1992) *Choice and Diversity: a new framework for schools*. London: HMSO.
- DFE (1993) *DFE Review: a plan for action*. London: DFE.M.
- Kogan, M. (1971) *The Politics of Education: Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Back numbers of *FORUM*

A reader has kindly written to ask if anyone would like their collection of back numbers (Spring 1981 – Summer 1991, missing 24/1, 27/1 & 31/2) in return for the cost of postage. If you are interested please write to Mrs B. R. Judge, 9 Wellmeadow Road, London SE13 6SY, United Kingdom

Choice and Diversity: theory and practice

T. A. Haydn

Terry Hayden is currently a Lecturer in Education in the Department of History, Humanities and Philosophy at the Institute of Education, University of London. In this article he provides a strong critique of successive Tory governments' marketplace philosophy and the blatant inequalities of the reality as opposed to the rhetoric of 'choice and diversity'.

John Major stated at the 1994 Conservative Party Conference that what matters in education is that "they all have the same chance". The government's rationale for providing this equality of opportunity is 'choice and diversity', where a combination of market forces, parental choice and 'specialist' schools will ratchet up educational standards. This will also (so the theory goes), enable the 85% of pupils who John Major acknowledges perform badly compared with their counterparts in other countries, to catch up with the 15% who do well.

Recent OECD figures suggest that choice and diversity is not working, pointing out that in Britain there is a 63% difference between high and low achievers in Maths and Science at the age of 13, compared with a dispersal rate of less than 20% in most countries in Western Europe, and under 10% in France and Italy (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 23 December 1994). As Anne Corbett remarked, "It's a shaming pattern, reminiscent of the Third World and astonishing in a society where education absorbs so much of the country's resources and employs so much skilled manpower" (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 23 December 1994).

Choice and Diversity: theory

One of the principles underpinning the idea of the market in education is that parents would select good schools for their children, and bad schools would simply wither and die as funding dried up for the diminishing number of pupils in their care. Good schools would expand and offer enhanced facilities as parents defected from failing schools and funding followed pupils. Moreover, the development of differentiated secondary schools offering differing curriculum specialities and facilities would act as beacons for technology, languages, music etc., and would foster the development of excellence. This would be the death-knell of the grey, standard comprehensive school with its inherent levelling down, mediocrity through conformity, and resistance to competition and innovation. The system of fundamentally similar comprehensive schools would gradually be replaced by an array of secondary schools competing fiercely to attract custom and thereby offering parents a dazzling choice of specialisms, facilities and styles of education; (something for everyone, the right school for your child).

Choice and Diversity: practice

The present system of allocating pupils to secondary schools and evaluating the effectiveness of those schools puts a

substantial pressure on schools to try to maximise the number of pupils in the school who are academically able, well-behaved, and who have supportive parents. There is no market for 'pupils with problems' – most headteachers would forego the capitation which might be derived from attracting such pupils, in exchange for the enormous advantages offered in terms of school management and the maintenance of examination standards. Similarly, many parents are (understandably) reluctant to send their child to a school which has significant numbers of pupils with problems. The present system offers middle-class parents an easy way out, whether through the private system, or for those with socialist principles, through the knowledge and know-how to ensure that their child goes to a comprehensive school which does not have too many pupils with problems.

Instead of a 'Statue of Liberty' approach which would welcome whatever children wanted to come to the school, many schools opt for the practical expedient of attaining the state of being full, with a waiting list from which they can selectively cull children in the best interests of the school. If a school is full, with a waiting list, it can exclude difficult pupils and replace them with the brightest of those on the waiting list. A school which is full has a cast iron excuse for not accepting difficult pupils from other schools. Moreover, LEAs have no power to intervene in a grant maintained school's decision to permanently exclude a pupil. The LEA has to accept responsibility for placing such a pupil, and cannot direct a grant maintained school to accept a pupil who has been excluded from elsewhere. In Essex, more than 75% of permanent exclusions were from grant maintained schools (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 2 December 1994). In the South Manchester area recently, more than half the secondary comprehensive schools were full. (Haydn, 1994) It is possible that the main attraction of 'opting out' of LEA control will be the advantages it provides for excluding difficult pupils rather than any financial benefit.

The result of all this is that children do not have 'a fair chance'. As Dudley Fiske, former Chief Education Officer for Manchester pointed out, "Forceful and articulate parents used pressure to ensure that their children entered favoured schools ... parents are not interested in discussing the whole system, the problem of establishing efficiency etc. They are only interested in where their child will go" (quoted in Ranson, 1990). The main inequality of opportunity in education in Britain today is whether children attend schools which have been bureaucratically cleansed of pupils with

problems, or schools which act as a repository for such children. The present system tends to concentrate difficult pupils into a handful of inner-city schools, creating a *sauve qui peut* mentality where school fees come in the form of house prices and knowledge of appeals systems. In this sense, there is a real need for 'sink' schools- to make sure that pupils with problems do not interfere with the education of children with caring, well informed and articulate parents. If this analysis sounds overly cynical, it is supported by the absence of any school that has failed to the extent that it has been closed and its pupils redistributed elsewhere. The myth that all parents are passionately concerned (and equipped) to obtain the best possible education for their children, enables those with knowledge of the system, money to live in the right area, or both, to grab places at favoured comprehensives. This myth is nurtured by ministerial statements like "Parents know better than teachers what is best for their children", which is also perpetuated by idealists on the left who cling to a roseate view of a wholesome Orwellian working class, poor but are determined to do the best for the next generation. The reality of poor parenting which includes an indifference to, or neglect of education means that not everyone plays the system; the market which is encouraged by choice and diversity has led to divisions in the nature of schools as stark as those in the era of grammar and secondary modern schools. Jon Snow speaks eloquently of the implications and reality of choice and diversity:

Many of us wanted to ensure that our children enjoyed a mix of social and ethnic background which would leave them better in touch with the society they would grow to be a part of... This is the core of Britain's deepening division. A modern European society, able to compete with its trading partners almost certainly has to be an integrated community. An integral part of education surely has to be an awareness of how all members of our society live. Yet the withdrawal of middle class children from inner city schools is leading inexorably to 'selective' schools in a system which is still theoretically non-selective ... We are an inefficient, socially and economically divided society precisely because we have failed to lift the priority of education high enough up the political agenda. In part this is because the private sector removes from any campaign frontline the 10 per cent of parents who are traditionally from a group with exceptional political clout. To that number has to be added those who transfer their children into grant maintained schools and church schools. What imperative is there upon them now to exercise pressure for change? Our German counterparts do not lie awake at night fretting about where to educate their children, whether to change schools or how to find and finance extra out-of-school tuition. Why should we? (The Guardian, 6 December 1994)

In his analysis of GCSE examination performance in comprehensive schools, Dr John Marks reveals a disturbing ignorance of the way in which children are allocated to secondary schools, stating that his study was confined to comprehensive schools "to ensure that as far as possible, like is being compared with like" (Marks, 1993). Equally dismaying is the unctuousness of Labour's Margaret Hodge, when she states, "I would never deny my children the privilege of a state education" (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 16 December 1994). Does this mean an education at any state school? It is only those who can get

the pick of state schools who would make such blithe statements.

The other finesse of 'choice and diversity' is the idea of specialist schools, imbued with a degree of intellectual respectability with Howard Gardner's much publicised theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1994). Not only does this provide separate education for those gifted in music, language, sport, or with a technological bent, it can be used to justify the allocation of extra resources to fulfil the goal of excellence and achievement. Seductive though Gardner's ideas are, there are still many children who fit the category of what the Wood Report termed "the dull average child"; I am not aware of any plans to provide well resourced specialist schools for such children, or 'beacon' schools for 'pupils with problems'. and it is difficult to see how such schools might be marketed. As a Transport minister, Roger Freeman perhaps gave the choice and diversity game away when he talked of a 'cheap and cheerful' railway service for typists and secretaries, (and doubtless, teachers), and a more luxurious one for businessmen and executives. It is one thing if such diversity and choice is to be justified in the name of elitism, but another thing altogether if we are talking about 'them all having the same chance' and demonstrating concern for the bottom 85% of our children.

If those who shape education policy are serious about reducing under-achievement in British schools and providing 'a fair chance' for all children, there are several ways forward towards these goals, which do not entail additional state expenditure. Dr Marks is right to point out that differences between comprehensive schools are increasing, but these differences often have less to do with school effectiveness than the scramble for places in schools which have the advantages described above. There is no overall increase in achievement deriving from this process; achievement is concentrated in schools free from pupils (and parents) with problems. It is the concentration of difficult pupils in particular schools which leads to a *modus vivendi* of containment and damage limitation (even by the most dedicated and inspirational of teachers). As Claus Moser recently remarked, in many inner-city schools, teachers are doing little more than crowd control (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 9 September 1994); it is this reality which has led to the scramble for places in 'safe' schools. The first priority is to devise a system of allocation to secondary schools which disperses such pupils in such a way that will make it more manageable to address their under-achievement. There are still large numbers of parents who are sufficiently attached to the idea of comprehensive education for this to be achieved by administrative adjustment of rules and funding formulae rather than withdrawal of parental choice. It is the present rules of engagement that make possible the ghettoisation of British schools.

The posited move to value added league tables would be a first step, together with the reversal of extra funding, in its different guises, for GM schools. Radical changes need to be made to the regulations for excluding difficult pupils, which at present make it easy for some schools to abdicate their responsibilities for such pupils by dumping them on other schools. Amendments could also be made to the mechanisms of the assisted places scheme, so that the private sector could also play its part in reducing underachievement, where appropriate. As Eric Forth has suggested, the balance between the authority of the

classroom teacher and the rights of individual pupils could also be adjusted, to help ensure that pupils without problems have the right to learn, and that pupils with problems do not interfere with that right to learn (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 30 July 1993). The 270 pages of the DfE's six circulars on 'Pupils with problems' (DfE, 1993) with its suggestions of more merit marks and detentions, and fewer exclusions, "Carrots but no stick" as the *The Guardian* (5 December 1994) remarked could only have been produced by people with a limited grasp of the scale of problems in some inner-city schools, and whose children do not attend them.

Recent publicity accorded to the London Oratory School has overshadowed the fact that Cardinal Vaughn School, another GM Catholic comprehensive, which sets a written exam in order to try to achieve a mixed ability intake, has achieved a 71% GCSE A to C pass rate, compared to 54% at the Oratory (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 9 December 1994). This shows what can be achieved with a mixed ability intake. There are still thousands of parents who want a 'genuine' state comprehensive education for their children, but this does not extend to sending them to a sink school where indiscipline and its containment prevail.

The present rigged pseudo-market system does not provide for such parents, but they can generally escape its worst outcomes, leaving the sink schools to the indifferent and ill-informed. It will be interesting to see if Eton is successful in its £3 million bid for National Lottery money to upgrade its sporting facilities (*The Guardian*, 20 January 1995). Will this give an indication as to whether the government wants all children to have 'the same chance', or is this just the politics of envy?

References

- Department for Education (1993) *Pupils with Problems*. London: HMSO.
- Gardner, H. (1994) The theory of multiple intelligences, in B. Moon & Shelton Mayes (Eds) *Teaching and Learning in the Secondary School*. New York: Routledge.
- Haydn, T. (1994) Flaws in the market in education; differing performances in neighbouring schools-a case study of two comprehensive schools, *Education Today*, 44 (4), pp. 3-9.
- Marks, J. (1993) *Examination Results, Educational Standards and Under-achievement. 1. Comprehensive Schools*. Educational Research Trust.
- Ranson, S. (1990) *The Politics of Reorganising Schools*. London: Unwin Hyman.

'Race', Racism and Black Exclusion

Ian Grosvenor

Head of History of Newman College, Birmingham, Ian Grosvenor has long been involved in antiracist education as a teacher in primary, secondary and special schools. Here he sets the problem in the wider social and political context.

When Christmas charter flight YULE966 arrived at Gatwick Airport from Jamaica on 21 December 1993 more than half the 326 passengers were detained by immigration officials; forty-five were granted temporary admission, pending deportation or further inquiries and forty-eight were deported.[2] Until the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act became law in the previous July, visitors had the right of appeal against refusal of entry. Two-thirds of appeals were upheld. Statistics published by Customs & Excise show that in 1993 half of all passengers searched at ports and airports were black. Asked to explain the bias in searches a Customs officer told *The Observer* newspaper that blacks were more likely to be carrying large quantities of drugs. However, he admitted that he was unable to provide figures to support this assertion. Indeed, Customs statistics show that white suspects are more likely to be smugglers and three times more likely to be carrying drugs than blacks.[3] Since 1993 and the introduction of the Asylum Immigration Act the rate at which asylum seekers have been refused entry to Britain has leapt from 16% to 75% of all applicants according to the Refugee Council. Further, since the new legislation became law 96% of Zaireans, 97% of Angolans, and 84% of Sri Lankan Tamils had been refused entry. Before the 1993 legislation over 98% of Tamils were allowed to remain in the United Kingdom. The number of asylum

seekers awaiting a decision has also increased dramatically.[4] It is clear from these figures that immigration officials are keen to exclude black migrants at point of entrance to Britain.

Exclusion is also a feature of life within Britain for black people. In 1992 the DfE published figures which revealed that African-Caribbean children made up 8% of all children permanently excluded from school, but comprised only 2% of the total school population. All over the country, as Table I demonstrates, there is a pattern of high exclusion rates of black children from school.

Table I . The exclusion of black pupils from school

Location	Date(s)	Exclusions	School population
Sheffield	1990	6.7%	2%
Brent	1991	85%	17%
Birmingham	1990-91	31%	9%

Exclusion is not limited to the secondary years. In the London Borough of Lewisham, between the summer of 1990 and the spring of 1991, 61% of children excluded from primary school were black, but black children represented only 14% of the school population. These patterns of exclusion are not new. For example, the CRE carried out a formal investigation into the suspension of pupils from Birmingham schools between 1974 and 1980 and found that black children

were almost four times more likely to be suspended than white pupils. Black children represented 10% of Birmingham's school population and 45% of excluded children.[5] Indeed, the iniquitous use of exclusion against black schoolchildren was a critical factor in the mobilising of black community groups in the 1960s.[6] Finally, it is also clear, as the 1993/94 exclusion statistics for Birmingham show (black children representing 9% of the school population, but 33% of all permanent exclusions), that exclusion is set to continue as the 'educational experience' of many black youngsters.[7]

Exclusion from school is also paralleled by exclusion within school. Black youngsters are excluded from the curriculum. As the NUT commented during the consultation exercise about the ERA:

The act does not address the needs of the multi-ethnic and multicultural community which Britain has become. This again is a pointer to the conformist thrust of a national curriculum approach. Where in a syllabus of minimum content is there space for that which is not English, white and Christian? [8]

The Dearing reforms offer no improvement; the curriculum remains 'English, white and Christian'.

Finally, there is one other form of exclusion which black pupils encounter, that is an exclusion from the right to safety on the way to, from, and at school. In 1993 9,000 'racial' incidents were reported to the police. These reported incidents represent a 13% increase over the 1992 figure. Many more incidents were not reported. Children feature in many of these incidents. Indeed, as Reva Klein has observed, 'harassment involves schoolchildren all over the country'. So, for example, in Southampton where less than 5% of the population is black there was 100% increase in reported 'race' attacks in 1993; 550 schools in Hampshire reported a total of 1,200 'racial' incidents, ranging from verbal to physical assault. Nottingham Racial Equality Council reported children as young as five suffering 'racial' harassment.[9] Between September 1993, when Derek Beacon, a member of the British National Party, was elected as a councillor for the Isle of Dogs, and February 1994 'racial' incidents in the area rose by nearly 300%. Pupils at one comprehensive school in the area transferred to other schools because of 'racial' harassment. In 1992 the school was oversubscribed by fifty-nine, in 1993 it was undersubscribed by seventeen.[10]

The disproportionate number of black exclusions from school has been directly related to Conservative restructuring of the education system through the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Acts of 1992 and 1993.[11] It has been argued that a system has been created where white parents can, and have, exploited the 'market' for school places and avoided schools with significant numbers of black pupils. A parent's right to choose has become predominant over 'race relations' legislation and any commitment to equality of opportunity. Opting out and open enrolment provide the mechanisms through which racist parental choice can express its demands for 'Christian', all white schools. Schools, operating under the new market philosophy where they compete with one another for pupils, for money and for reputation among parents 'stirred up to exercise choice', are expelling those pupils who are seen as 'troublesome, too expensive, different'. [12] Children who are identified as having the potential to drive school examination results or attendance records down on the league tables are not wanted, and cannot be afforded, by schools.

In this climate 'teacher prejudices' - seeing black children 'as 'underachievers' or 'problems' - are resurfacing in the classroom, but instead of finding themselves in ESN schools, as happened in the 1960s, black children are being forced out of school. Finally, whereas in the past LEAs issued guidelines on racist behaviour and enforced them, governing bodies now have the power to decide whether to follow these guidelines. This analysis clearly engages with, and describes, the reality of state schooling as experienced by black children and parents in 1990s Britain. However, as an analysis it also prompts a series of questions. Why do teachers hold negative views about black youngsters? If such negative views are resurfacing, when and how did they first emerge? Why should questions of equal opportunities be entirely subordinate to the market? Why do some parents want 'all-white' schools? What are the connections between education policy and the conditions in which racism flourishes?

Over the last twenty years or so there has been an enormous literature generated by the multicultural and antiracist debates in education. Interesting and thought-provoking texts have been produced which offer insights into some of the questions posed above. However, much of the literature has been a-historical and a-political in that it has frequently failed to relate education policies and practices to the broader context in which these have been generated. The concentration in the literature on ethnicity, culture and 'race' has obscured the interrelationship between successive governments' policies towards black immigration and the framing of education policy. Or, to put it another way, there has been a failure to make connections between different forms of black exclusion in post-1945 Britain.

Since 1945 successive governments in Britain have introduced legislative restrictions on the movement of black United Kingdom passport holders. These actions have helped to create a climate in Britain where it is commonplace, indeed even 'common sense', to view black people as 'alien', as 'different' and therefore as presenting a 'problem' for society. This racist view of black migration and settlement has penetrated and dominated other areas of social policy including education.[13]

Education policy since the early 1960s has complemented the state's construction of black people as a 'problem'. Analysts of successive governments' response to the presence of black pupils in state schools generally identify three phases of development in education policy: assimilationist, integrationist, and cultural pluralist. There is an inherent weakness in this analysis in that it draws attention to the elements of change in policy rather than signifying the elements of continuity. These identified shifts in policy are more apparent than real; they exist in the sphere of articulation rather than in practice. In reality government policy towards black children in schools has been characterised since the 1960s through to the 1990s by an enduring commitment to assimilation as a policy goal. From an assimilationist perspective black children are seen as alien and a problem element in 'our' schools. Further, the 'problems' of black children are seen to 'lie deep within their respective cultures'. These cultures are themselves reconstituted through political and educational discourses as competing 'ethnic identities' on the basis of which resources are allocated and policy determined. Consequently, multicultural and antiracist initiatives have been viewed as solely appropriate to so called multicultural

schools and as irrelevant to 'white' schools. In this sense education policy must be regarded as a central force in the generation and reproduction of a discourse organised tightly around notions of culture and cultural difference and which links 'race', colour and culture in such a way as to fix a national identity where to be British is to be white.[14]

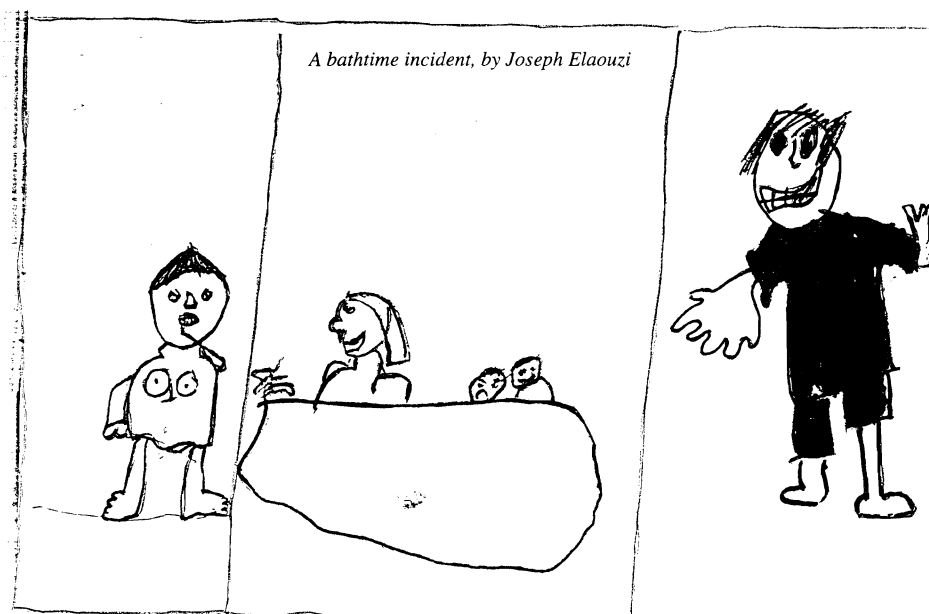
However, as already stated, accounts of post-1945 education policy focusing on the schooling of black children have viewed policy developments in isolation from the broader political context, as though politicians developed policy towards schools without any recourse to the political beliefs and values they apply elsewhere. In short, analyses are offered which present, for example, the 1988 Education Reform Act and the Asylum Immigration Act 1993, as isolated and unconnected pieces of legislation, rather than seeing them as part of a much wider political project grounded in a long history. A project which is based upon, and at the same time reproduces, a notion of Britain as a nation that is politically and culturally indivisible.

What are the implications of this analysis for antiracist politics? The failure to recognise the links between government immigration policy and education policy has had a number of consequences for antiracist politics in education. It has rendered the issue of immigration control and its destructive effects on the lives of black people in the UK invisible in multicultural/antiracist initiatives in education. Instead an approach focusing on cultural difference and ethnic identity has become the preferred way of tackling issues of racism and discrimination. This in turn has fostered and promoted notions of ethnic fixity and separatism, of mutually exclusive identities which are institutionally sustained and reproduced. Against this antiracist politics should insist on celebrating "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human brings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs".[15] Antiracist politics must challenge the routine reproduction of ethnicism in education. Challenging this is a political endeavour: ethnic separatisms can only be transcended on the basis of common and collective interests. To this end, teachers should be encouraged to make links with campaigns against racist immigration legislation and deportations, and those active in campaigns around such issues should engage with the

new partnerships which are gradually emerging between school governors, parents and teachers and children to pursue democratic forms of schooling and education. It is only through such concerted action that the market philosophy of education which is currently generating greater inequalities and discrimination can be effectively challenged. Antiracist politics has to offer something beyond a narrowly conceived dismantling of barriers to 'equal opportunity' and a celebration of cultural diversity. To be successful antiracist politics must offer an alternative social vision, one that embraces rather than excludes.

Notes

- [1] The concept of 'race' as an explanatory and descriptive social fact is contested and hence placed in inverted commas. The terms 'black' and 'white' are also contested, but are employed here because they are the dominant categories associated with the process of racialisation in Britain.
- [2] *The Guardian*, 23 December 1993.
- [3] *The Observer*, 11 September 1994.
- [4] *The Guardian*, 1 December 1994.
- [5] J. Bourne, L. Bridges & C. Searle (1994) *Outcast England: how schools exclude black children*, pp 39-42. London: Institute of Race Relations.
- [6] See I.D. Grosvenor (1994) Education, history and the making of racialised identities in post-1945 Britain. University of Birmingham, PhD thesis.
- [7] R. Klein (1995) Escape route from the fire of alienation, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 10 February.
- [8] J. Haviland (Ed.)(1988) *Take Care Mr Baker!*, p. 22. London: Fourth Estate.
- [9] R. Klein (1995) Where prejudice still flares into violence, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 6 January.
- [10] J. Martinson (1994) Racial attacks drive pupils out, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 25 February.
- [11] See Bourne et al (1994) Excluded from school, *Carf* 21, July/August 1994, p. 7; L. Bridges (1994) Tory education: exclusion and the black child, *Race and Class*, 36, 1, pp 33-48.
- [12] Bridges (1994) op. cit, p. 34.
- [13] For more details about legislation see B. Carter & I. Grosvenor (1992) *The Apostles of Purity: black immigration and education policy in post-war Britain*. Birmingham: AFFOR.
- [14] See Grosvenor (1994) for a more detailed argument.
- [15] S. Rushdie (1991) *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 394. London: Granta.



The Need for Comprehensive Schools

Tony Mooney

Following an extensive teaching career in inner-city comprehensive schools, Tony Mooney is now headteacher of Rutlish School in the London Borough of Merton, John Major's old school. Here he writes about the need for comprehensive schools thirty years on from *Circular 10/65*.

The pale and frightened little boy knelt on the cushions of the threadbare sofa looking out of the front window of his council house. The weather was fine and sparkling this particular Saturday morning in the Spring of 1955. After an early breakfast, the young boy would normally have been in the nearby fields trying to emulate his heroes in the local professional football team. But this Saturday was different and he and his mother and grandparents had known it all week. This was the Saturday that the 11+ results came out and they all knew that the shape of the boy's future depended on the contents of the brown envelope that was about to drop through the letter box. His teachers had told the boy's mother that, under normal circumstances, he was capable of passing the 11+ exam and going to a grammar school, so there was room for hope.

The little boy froze and started to shiver as he saw the postman turn the corner and deliver letters to the house at the end of the road. "He's on his way", said the grandfather and the others held their breath as the postman made his tortuous path to their letterbox. One single brown envelope dropped on to the carpet and lay there motionless with four pairs of eyes trying to work like X-ray machines to discern the contents. "I can't dad. You open it", said the boy's mother. With a sigh the grey haired grandfather stepped forward and carefully opened the letter. "He's failed" shouted the grandfather. "How can the bastards do this to him", he said with tears rolling down his face. The mother began to sob. The little boy ran out of the house, not to return until dusk when he himself had cried so much that he thought he would cry no further and so make a fool of himself in front of the others.

The above account is how, forty years on, I remember receiving the fateful news that I was not to take up a much treasured grammar school place. What 'the bastards' did to me with the contents of their curt little letter all those years ago was to fill me with feelings of inadequacy which I do not think I have ever overcome. Even now, with a first and two higher degrees behind me, I still experience pangs of embarrassment when, in certain company, I have to admit that I was an 11+ failure. Hardly a ringing endorsement for those who claim that children did not feel humiliated by their early publicised failures.

One compensation for my failure was that I was not to be parted from my friends. Almost all of us who were brought up on our working-class estate failed to achieve a grammar school place. I did not register the significance of this fact until later in my life when I read the results of government research in the late 1950s which revealed the social-class composition of our schools. While 71% of the

male children of professional workers went to selective or independent schools, only 18% of semiskilled and 12% of unskilled workers male children did so. Therefore, not only did the 11+ instil a sense of failure into large numbers of working-class children, it also prevented these children rubbing shoulders with their middle-class peers who are so important in helping to raise the achievement expectations in our schools.

I was at teacher training college when Tony Crossland issued his *Circular 10/65* requesting LEAs to submit plans for creating comprehensive schools. It was a time of much rejoicing. We had a Labour government in Westminster and our future comprehensive schools were set to lead the charge to dismantle the class divisions in our society. Heady days indeed. But thirty years on can we claim that our comprehensives have been a success?

The answer, in the terms of a school report, might read: "Satisfactory progress but greater effort is needed if full potential is to be realised".

Firstly, it must be recognised that comprehensive schooling rarely exists in its pure form. If a comprehensive school is a 'school for all', then the existence of single sex schools, denominational schools, grammar schools and independent schools means that our education system is still segregated. In addition many of our so called comprehensives have catchment areas which provide limited intakes in terms of social class and ethnic groups. Residential segregation is a major hindrance to the creation of pure secondary comprehensive schools. We need to take all these factors into account when reviewing the last thirty years of secondary schooling.

However, thirty years on, we can categorically say that even the piecemeal comprehensive reorganisation we have seen has had no overall adverse effects on the educational progress of our children. Some 80% are now free of the stigma of being labelled academic failures at an age when they themselves are just beginning to discover that things are possible through an encouraging education. Also, despite the rantings of right wing politicians, the examination results produced by our comprehensives illustrate that standards do not fall by educating all abilities together on the same site. If this was not so we would have seen a popular uprising against comprehensives. Yet the exact opposite is the case. Whenever Tory councils have tried to reverse the advance of comprehensives by reverting to a bipartite system it is the parents who have been in the vanguard to oppose the move.

What comprehensive schools have blatantly failed to do is to overcome the relative under-achievement of working

class children. Middle-class children consistently outperform their working-class peers so comprehensives have not been able to change the social class pecking order of pupil performance. What they have done is 'jack up' the performance of all pupils. Ken Roberts highlights the problem when he writes; "The same developments that have drawn more working-class young people up the educational and occupational ladders have simultaneously reduced the chances of middle-class children descending."

So why aren't our secondary comprehensives able to raise the relative performance of working-class children? Are children from these backgrounds so disadvantaged that schools will never be able to compensate? This might be the case, but before we teachers use this excuse as a 'get out clause' we ought to look carefully at the research which has consistently pointed out our own prejudices. Whether we consider comprehensive primary or secondary schools we find that teachers are prone to over-estimate the abilities of children from middle-class families. This is because teachers believe that home background plays a most important part in the learning of their pupils. Teachers therefore categorise pupils on social class lines from infant school onwards. King (1978) emphasised this point when he wrote: "in terms of teacher-child relationships, models of behaviour and forms of knowledge, infant education has a closer affinity to their equivalents in the families of the middle classes than those of the working classes."

In staffrooms around the country teachers will often refer to pupils as coming from 'good' or 'poor' homes without any first-hand experience to support their judgements. These findings have been reported consistently down the years but little seems to change. Goodacre (1968) wrote: "These findings suggest that teachers tend to think of the 'good' home as one which facilitates their task teachers of young children may be equating the 'good' home with middle-class values, and therefore discriminating against working-class children and their parents."

If pupils are, consciously or unconsciously, being discriminated against because of working-class

backgrounds then ability banding in secondary schools compounds the problem. There is an over-representation of working-class pupils in lower ability groupings in our comprehensives and since teachers are not generally enthusiastic about teaching these groups the pupils suffer accordingly. In these lower ability groups what is referred to as the 'truce syndrome' is likely to operate. Reid et al (1987) suggest that the lower ability groups in which truce syndromes are manifest tend to see different teacher behaviours to those seen in higher ability groups. Lower ability groups tend to be more poorly managed and

... pupil absence is ignored, pupils are sympathetically excluded from certain lessons and bartering takes place in classes for good behaviour by allowing individualised rather than mainstream programmes to be followed. This is all part of the 'anything for peace and quiet' ethos which is apparent in some classrooms.

So, thirty years on from *Circular 10/65*, an interim verdict about the comprehensivisation of secondary schools is that it has been a limited success. There is little doubt that comprehensive schools are here to stay but more concerted action, at both government and local level, is needed if they are to become genuine schools for all types of children. However, unless teachers are prepared to challenge their own attitudes about the capabilities of children from working-class backgrounds, then comprehensives are likely to carry on reflecting the social divisions in our society rather than challenging them and helping to eliminate them.

References

- Goodacre, E. (1968) *Teachers and their Pupils' Home Backgrounds*. Slough: NFER.
- King (1978) *All Things Bright and Beautiful?* London: John Wiley.
- Reid, K., Hopkins, D. & Holly, P. (1987) *Towards the Effective School*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Roberts, Ken, in Inge Bates & George Riseborough (Eds) *Youth and Inequality*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Let the Action Begin!

Moyra Evans

Deputy Headteacher at Denbigh School, Milton Keynes, Moyra Evans has taught in a wide range of secondary schools. She is currently undertaking research on how the establishment of communities of action researchers in Denbigh School can improve the quality of teaching, learning and management.

I have been working in my school as a course tutor to establish a collaborative community of 'novice' action researchers who have used 'story' to explore their concerns about their teaching or management practice and to come to a focus for their action research projects. They claim that not only has their practice changed as a result of the process with which they have been engaged, but also they are conscious that they have developed and changed as people, seeing their work and working relationships differently. This account tries to paint a picture of the process.

"I'm thinking about your stories", said Sarah, "because both of them were really thought-provoking and stimulating – especially as they were about students you're working

with currently, and both of the things you're doing has touched on my practice as well – so having gone through and completed the diploma, it's still very rewarding and stimulating to be part of the group. And that's why we come back because the discussion is so relevant to our own work in the classroom."

Sarah was contributing to the regular fortnightly meeting of action researchers on 26th April, 1995, at which we discuss each other's research interests in order to help the participating teachers understand their practice more fully and put into effect any changes they wish to make. On this occasion however, the topic on the agenda was, 'How can we give, in a written article, an insight into the action research

group in our school – the support and trust we have developed amongst us and the practical nature of the work we do? How can we show other teachers the great advantages this group has brought us? We eventually agreed that concrete examples would give the flavour of the group, and would serve to explain what it is, how it functions and what its purpose is. But perhaps an introduction is necessary first.

The action research group, consisting now of twelve members, has been in existence since September 1992. The literature which has informed our work includes that of Lomax (1989, 1990, 1991), Whitehead (1993), and Winter (1986, 1989), and each of our studies seeks to explore solutions to the question, “how can I improve this process of education here?” (Whitehead, 1993). Once the enquiry is complete, it is validated in a formal presentation to an interested audience, and then written up to be submitted for a post-graduate Diploma award, validated by Kingston University.

We audio-tape all the meetings, which gives us a rigorously kept record of our progress and data for reflection. Sarah’s point in the quotation above is that, having now completed her post-graduate Diploma, she, and others, still find sufficient intellectual stimulation and affective support from the group to want to continue coming and contributing. Sarah referred to the stories of Becky and Gail. I need to explain that we begin our enquiry in an innovative way. Each teacher is encouraged to write a story (see Winter, 1989, and Carter, 1993) about a pressing professional concern, and this is offered to the group for discussion. The purpose of the story writing is to help the teacher to get in touch with her values, which she does through the process of writing itself, and through the discussion which follows. At the end of the discussion, the teacher goes away to reflect upon the experience and to decide on an area of enquiry to pursue. The enquiry usually starts at the point of the teacher’s recognition that she is not living out her values in her practice, even though she previously thought she was. On this occasion, Becky’s story had enabled her to get straight into her enquiry but Gail’s was more problematic, and is outside the scope of this paper to discuss further!

Here is an example of how the group functions. Becky, who was in her fourth year of teaching, had video-copied a lesson with her tutor group and brought the tape for the action research group to study on March 22, 1995.

Many of the group’s initial comments when watching the video praised Becky for presenting a very good tutorial lesson with her Year 11 form, who had never been known for being particularly ‘easy’! The video was of a lesson about the effects of drinking and driving, and took the form of panels of students in the roles of friend, publican, advertiser and civil servant, who all had to account to the rest of the class for their part in stopping an eighteen year old from drinking, driving and eventually killing someone in a drink-related accident.

The action research group noticed that Becky praised one student for her comment in the discussion and talked about whether giving praise in classroom discussions might influence the pupils’ thinking. Becky discussed this dilemma in her written account of the meeting.

She says:

“I can see that by saying ‘good point’ to Donna, I have made a value judgement as to what is a good point I see that it might undermine what others have said, and

also, I shouldn’t say it to all students because otherwise it becomes worthless.

However, with all this in mind, I still feel overjoyed when I think of the positive contribution Kris made during the tutorial. Kris usually spends much of his energies off task and distracting others. Yet three quarters of the way through the tutorial, not only is he still on task, but he makes a positive, well thought out contribution. How can I possibly not praise him? This leaves me with a dilemma. Despite all that I have said about the problems of giving praise to just one or two students, and in contrast, the problems of giving praise to all students, I haven’t come up with an answer of what to do. If ever a situation arose similar to that of Kris making a profound statement, I will still praise him – it makes me feel good every time I watch the video.”

I have recorded the next part of the meeting as I would recount a story. I have used the audio tape for my account of what was said, but I have edited out unnecessary repetitions, ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ – otherwise the quotations in speech marks are taken directly from the tape, and I have added the thoughts I had at the time, and afterwards.

“Rose,” I asked, “Do you want to go back to the neutrality of the chairperson?”

“Yes, I don’t think you can divorce your beliefs from what you say to a class” replied Rose. “I don’t think I can ever be entirely neutral in a discussion when I feel very strongly about the issue. I couldn’t be 100% neutral. I could push a point like you were doing, Becky, to get them to respond and when a very quiet student says something I think is important, I will want to emphasise it and make them feel good about what they’ve said. And yes, I direct discussion to support my views. I’ll challenge things I don’t agree with more than I challenge things I do agree with. I’ll say things like, ‘yes, that’s really interesting’, ‘that’s really good’, and by doing that I might well be dismissing the things I don’t agree with or don’t think are relevant. And sometimes, I don’t let students continue to develop an argument; I jump in before they get the chance to finish it. But the neutrality, I don’t think I’ve thought about it much before, but I don’t think you can divorce yourself from the baggage you carry around about what you feel about things...” This self disclosure gave the opportunity for people to raise questions about managing discussion in their lessons...

Whether we’d been teaching four years or thirty years, this discussion touched our own experiences, and we were able to stand back from them and reflect.

The tutorial session was coming to a close on the video, and Becky began to summarise for her form what had been discussed during the lesson. Becky had told us that she was interested in improving the quality of feedback at the end of lessons. There was a breathtaking moment at the end of the action research meeting when Nicole said to Becky, “I question your definition of feedback ...the implication of what you’re saying and doing is that feedback is rounding it all up and telling them. But feedback should be from you asking ‘what have you learnt?’”

Becky looked very puzzled...

She takes this up in her account of the meeting:

“The impact from this comment by Nicole was enormous. It was like seeing one of those 3D pictures for the first time. It’s so obvious to the people that can see it and

it's such a delight when you eventually see it! I couldn't wait to share it with someone. I was astounded. I had mixed up the real definition of feedback. I had it in my head that my summary at the end of the lesson was feedback.

It was a huge realisation, with mixed emotions, when it actually clicked. At first I didn't want to admit that I had misunderstood such a simple concept. This didn't last as I was excited to realise what it was all about. Now I can't believe that I hadn't understood the concept of feedback in the classroom. Having made this realisation I couldn't wait to incorporate it into my next tutorial session."

I believe that this is a real test of continuing professional development – that teachers can find excitement in learning, and that they want to try out new ways of doing things. An important criteria of effectiveness of action research, then, is that the work we do – our professional development – should benefit children in classrooms or our colleagues in management roles. It isn't just for us to feel good about ourselves, although this is important.

I shall give the last words to Sally, who wrote a story called 'Parks and Gardens'.

"Wandering around the park the following afternoon, Sally noticed that three of the people who had been at the meeting were with Susan. They were engrossed in a discussion about the way in which plants could be grouped together to show the best in colour, size and scent Sally looked at the plants, and then watched the way in which they had been transplanted so that the larger ones sheltered the smaller ones. At the same time,

these very small plants provided a colourful background for the larger plants so in a way, it was mutually supportive.

Sally went home and mused. She considered she was a good gardener, yet now she was aware that there was much more to this gardening than she had thought. Where she thought she would get answers and instructions, she found she had suggestions which left her with more choice than ever. Nobody, she realised now, could give her all the answers. She had only herself to rely on. No, that wasn't quite right. She had friends. They would help her once she had made her decisions. With a satisfied smile, she lifted her trowel. Let the transplanting begin!"

References

- Carter, K. (1993) The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education, *Educational Researcher*, 22, pp. 5-12, 18.
- Lomax, P. (Ed.) (1989) *The Management of Change*. BERA Dialogues, 1. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lomax, P. (Ed.) (1990) *Managing Staff Development in Schools*. BERA Dialogues, 3. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Lomax, P. (Ed.) (1991) *Managing Schools and Colleges*. BERA Dialogues. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- McNiff, J. (1988) *Action Research: principles and practice*. London: Macmillan.
- Whitehead, J. (1993) *The Growth of Educational Knowledge*. Bournemouth: Hyde Publications.
- Winter, R. (1986) Fictional-critical writing, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 16(3).
- Winter, R. (1989) *Learning from Experience*. London: Falmer Press.

Small Group Work: use and abuse

Roy Corden

Now a Senior Lecturer in primary education at Nottingham Trent University, Roy Corden was previously coordinator for the National Oracy Project, and has taught in primary, middle and secondary schools.

My interest in small group work began many years ago, when, as a teacher, I recognised that organising the class in this way offered tremendous potential for dynamic learning to occur. As well as developing my practical experience of organising children to work collaboratively, I extended my theoretical knowledge and was fortunate enough, through my own research and my involvement in the National Oracy Project [1] to eventually work with some of the leading proponents of small group work. I am dismayed therefore, at the way in which it appears to be used indiscriminately and without apparent rationale in many primary schools. *Ironically*, this concern is shared by the very people who initially argued the case most strongly for the value of group work, such as Barnes in the United Kingdom, Wells in Canada, Reid & Forrestal in Australia, and Slavin in the USA.[2] I have heard people express the view that they, "would never organise their classrooms in any other way", and I once found myself listening

incredulously to an LEA inspector telling a group of teachers that effective learning can occur only in small group situations.

The reason that some of the strongest advocates of collaborative learning are so concerned, is that this kind of misinterpretation and distortion, has led to the whole notion of group work losing credibility and being disparaged by the tabloid press as a result of the idealistic rantings of *trendy educationalists*. Group work is just one of a whole repertoire of organisational arrangements within a classroom. As with any other arrangement, it should be used only when it is appropriate to do so. If children happen to be engaged in a task that requires individual attention and concentration, the educational milieu should reflect this need. What is the point of children sitting together, facing each other, if their educational need at that time, necessitates relative quiet and a little privacy?

Substantial research [3] into this issue of classroom

organisation has consistently confirmed the view that group work is either:

- used merely as a furniture arrangement, because teachers believe that it's how they are supposed to organise their classes, i.e. that it's educationally correct,
- used inappropriately, when there is absolutely no reason for the children to be working together, to be collaborating, or even talking at all.

The Work of the National Oracy Project

The National Oracy Project (1988-92) was a major curriculum development project, involving thousands of primary and secondary teachers in local education authorities, throughout England and Wales. A major thrust of the project was to investigate the learning potential of talk; to see how children's cognitive as well as social development might be facilitated through being given the opportunity to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups, to see whether given this opportunity they could assume more responsibility for their own learning and develop a sense of ownership over the learning process. The project drew out the implications of this for classroom organisation and the role of the teacher. The detailed and wide ranging outcomes of the investigation are well documented, but a number of overriding conclusions relating to group work may be summarised as follows:

- group work needs to be carefully planned, well structured and appropriate to the learning task,
- children need to develop and to understand the ground rules for small group learning,
- children need to be clear about what is expected of them in terms of both working practices and expected outcomes,
- appropriate and effective teacher intervention is essential,
- there is a potential repertoire of roles for the teacher to adopt.

Planning and Structuring Group Work

It very soon became patently clear to teachers engaged in the NOP that collaborative interaction won't happen, simply by seating children together and informing them that they are to *work as a group*. Children need to understand why they are being asked to work as a group and to see the relevance and usefulness of what they are doing. They also need to appreciate what it means to work in a group, to recognise the individual responsibilities and expectations of both other group members and the teacher. Getting children to discuss and to understand the potential benefits of collaborative learning and to negotiate and accept the necessary ground rules was found to be an essential pre-requisite to successful group work. Similarly, it was found that for group work to be successful, it needs to be carefully matched to its intended purpose and organised accordingly.[4] A variety of organisational strategies were adopted and developed by teachers in the NOP, such as *snowballing*, *rainbowing*, *listening triads*, *envoying* and *jigsaw*. Moreover, it was found [5] that pair or group work was a suitable form of classroom organisation only if the task required a cooperative response or enterprise, or if the children's learning was likely to be enhanced by working collaboratively.

Small Group Work Within a Framework for Learning

Building upon the work of others the NOP identified a useful theoretical framework, in which individual, pair, small and large group work all had a part to play.

Engagement (setting the scene)

Establishing a topic, issue or problem to be investigated, teacher and children establish existing knowledge, and understandings, new information and stimulus is provided.

Exploration

Relating existing knowledge and understanding (model of the world) to new information and stimulus.

Transformation (the main activity)

Engaging in activity in which the learner extends his/her knowledge and understanding (model of the world).

Presentation

Offering new knowledge and understanding to a critical audience.

Reflection

Thinking and talking about what has been learned and considering how the previous model of the world has changed.

It was recognised that at each stage, the children may be working individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class. The stage of engagement refers to the initial focusing of attention on a particular topic, issue or problem. During the exploration stage the children will be having their attention focused on the subject to be studied. They may be sharing a common experience, which could involve listening to the teacher, watching a video, or going on a visit. It is at the exploration stage, that the kind of investigative, hypothetical language, which Barnes, sees as being so crucial to the construction of meaning, is most prominent. At the transformation stage, the children may be organised in several ways, depending on the nature of the task. The teacher's main purpose should be to provide an opportunity for the children to use the ideas and concepts that have been explored and to share their understanding of these in some way, perhaps through a *jigsaw* activity. The presentation stage offers children a chance to gain feedback through constructive criticism and evaluation and this can occur on a one to one basis between children, between teacher and child, within a whole class scenario, or through the *envoy* system. During the reflection stage, children need to be given space and time to consider their own learning and to identify areas for clarification and development.

Teacher Intervention

This learning framework proved to be of immense value, when members of the NOP were attempting to analyse audio and video recordings of small group interactions and when examining the issue of teacher intervention. The initial thrust of the work reflected a desire to avoid a didactic approach and to encourage children's active participation in their own learning and the development of a sense of ownership over the process. Consequently, the general focus of attention was initially on the nature of activities and on children's interaction, either without the teacher's presence,

or with minimal teacher intervention. However, it became increasingly clear, that the teacher had a crucial and central part to play in scaffolding children in their construction of meaning and in enabling them to learn effectively.[6] It was found that a whole range of potential teacher-pupil relationships exist and come into being when the teacher responds contingently to children's learning needs. As these needs are diverse and dependent on the children's stage in the learning process, appropriate teaching roles will vary, with different roles being *more* or *less* appropriate at any particular time. Furthermore, it was found that a failure to recognise this repertoire of roles and to intervene, when necessary, can result in an impoverished pedagogy, which limits the teacher's effectiveness as an enabler of the child's learning.[7]

Successful Group Learning

The following example, is a two-minute snapshot taken from a total discussion which lasted 18 minutes before the teacher intervened and a further 16 minutes following her intervention. The children have been looking at various interpretations of the *Three Little Pigs* story. The class has been organised into small groups and each group has been given the task of discussing and designing a house to be built in a particular material. The material this group eventually had to work with was straw.

	Martin	Leslie	
Carl			Katy
	Sarah	Kerry	

Kerry *The door's here like this. the straw's got to go round the window*

Leslie *The straw's got to go round it hasn't it "cos it isn't a square door*

Carl *Yeah ... no ... but*

(all the children start to talk at once)

Martin *Just wait a minute and listen to Carl's advice*

Carl *Well ... the door'll have to be that high and then the window'll have to come about there (indicates on the drawing)*

Katy *I haven't had a speak yet*

Martin *Right ... Kate ... see what you can say*

Katy *Well do you want me to tell you what you can do for the knob just curl some of the straw around tight and put it in ... make a space*

(all the children start to talk at once)

Martin *Come on ... let's listen to Kerry*

Kerry *Could've been a bit of wool there rolled up*

Leslie *Or we could have a piece of cotton wool*

Sarah *Cotton wool ... cotton wool's better*

(The discussion continues until the children's attention is focused on the roof.)

Sarah *What we could do round there is get a piece of string and make it stronger right*

Leslie *show us*

Martin *Straw ... you mean tons of straw just bungled together?*

Sarah *No ... I mean like a piece of strong straw that isn't bent and we can tie it round with the straw on the roof*

Kerry *Like that? (demonstrates with a piece of straw)*

Leslie *Yeah ... I've got a book ... she's right ... she's right ... it is like that*

Kerry *It's not very good for tying round is it?*

Sarah *Yeah but you could get a long piece of paper and colour it an orange brown and tie it round*

(The teacher now joins the group)

Teacher *How are you doing?*

Martin *We're still thinking about the door handle*

Leslie *Because we don't know if it's card or wood*

Sarah *We could have a bit of tissue paper or straw*

Teacher *What do you think about a wooden door?*

Leslie *Oh yeah a wooden door*

Carl *A wooden door ... how'd we do that?*

Teacher *Do you want to have a look in the books we took the story from?*

All *Yeah*

Teacher *Sit where you are and I'll bring them to you*

This group of Year 3 children was part of a class of 39 pupils, in a city school. The class included one statemented child and a number with special educational needs. Small group interaction in this classroom is successful, because the teacher:

- establishes through negotiation with her class, the ground rules for group work,
- presents the group with appropriate tasks which requires collaboration,
- is aware of group dynamics in formulating groups,
- is explicit about the purpose of the task,
- provides adequate resources,
- intervenes effectively.

I believe that small group work does have the potential for offering a dynamic learning environment. However, the predominant practice of organising classrooms into group scenarios, irrespective of the task, or the individual's learning needs, should be challenged. Unless some kind of rationale underpins the way in which classrooms are organised, this kind of indefensible and ritualistic practice will prevail.

References

- [1] R. Corden (1991) The influence of pupil perception of teacher audience on small group interaction. Unpublished PhD, University of Keele; The National Oracy Project (1988-92) National Curriculum Council.
- [2] D. Barnes (1976) *From Communication to Curriculum*. Harmondsworth: Penguin; D. Barnes & F. Todd (1977) *Communication and Learning in Small Groups*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; J. Reid, P. Forrestal & P. Cooke (1991) *Small Group Work in the Classroom*. London: English and Media Centre; R. Slavin (1980) Cooperative learning, *Review of Educational Research*, 50, pp. 315-342; G. Wells & Chiang (1988) The literate potential of collaborative talk, in M. Maclure (Ed.) *Oracy Matters*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- [3] R. Alexander. R. (1992) Primary education in Leeds, in R. Alexander (Ed.) *Policy and Practice in Primary Education*. London: Routledge; D. Bealing (1972) The organisation of junior school classrooms, *Educational Research*, 14, pp. 231-235; D. Boydell (1980) The organisation of junior school classrooms: a follow up survey, *Educational Research*, 23, pp. 14-19; Oracle Project (1975-80); M. Galton, B. Simon & P. Croll (1980) *Inside the Primary Classroom*. London: Routledge.
- [4] R. Corden et al (1991) *Teaching, Talking and Learning in Key Stage 3*. York: NCC/NOP; K. Norman (1990) *Teaching, Talking & Learning in Key Stage 1*. NCC/NOP.
- [5] G. Baddeley et al (1991) *Teaching, Talking and Learning in Key Stage Two*. York: NCC/NOP.
- [6] J. Maybin et al (1992) Scaffolding learning in the classroom, in K. Norman (Ed.) *Thinking Voices*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- [7] R. Corden (1992) The role of the teacher, in K. Norman (Ed.) *Thinking Voices*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

National Examinations: the same x-certificate

Mike Ollerton

Mike Ollerton holds a joint appointment as Head of Mathematics at Orleton Park School in Telford, and Tutor in Mathematics Education at the University of Manchester. In this article he argues that national testing is subverting teaching and learning.

Just before February half-term 1995 I gave my Year 8 class a test. I first asked the students to write some questions they thought would test them on the main topics that we had worked on in the previous term and a half. I adapted some of these questions, devised additional ones and gave them the actual test paper three weeks in advance. A typical question was: "Explain what you understand about co-ordinates." The homework tasks for the intervening three weeks was to prepare for the test. The students had to explain in words and diagrams their answers, using whatever type of grid paper they required. Before the test I explained that I would be giving them 'new' pieces of paper to answer the questions; I did this to avoid students just copying out any previous revision notes they may have written. During the test there was a positive, work-like atmosphere. After the test I asked each student to tell me how much time they had spent at home in preparation. I was pleasantly surprised by the answers and by the fact that many parents had taken an active interest in their children's work; in all this proved to be a valuable experience. Everybody knew exactly what the expectations were and had ownership of the test. I felt the students were provided with a challenging, yet fair method for showing what they knew and had learnt. What I learnt was that I should have requested they hand in any revision notes they had done, so that I could see if their memory might have 'failed' them in answering a particular question during the test. I shall adopt this strategy on another occasion.

The form of testing that I have described is just one method that I can choose to use to inform my overall teacher assessment. I am opposed to national testing in its present format and I offer the above sequence of events to show "I am not against testing per se," (Peter Sanders, 'Key tests are hijacking the curriculum', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 23 June 1995) especially testing which supports learning and provides further evidence for my students and myself about their progress, about what they know and what they still need to work on. I believe, however, that national testing is subverting teaching and learning. The disheartening effect is one of *controlling* rather than *serving* the curriculum and narrowing teaching methodology. I believe this to be particularly the case at Key Stage Four since the demise of coursework at GCSE. As a teacher of mathematics I see much of the genuine hard work that those of us who took on the challenge of coursework based learning and assessment being eroded to a derisory 20%; similarly students who are capable of showing their mathematical talents through coursework are denied opportunities to show this in examinations because

assessment is reduced to a lottery of whether certain questions are asked and responses depend upon the style in which questions are written.

The recent outcry by many English departments over the Key Stage Three SAT results is perhaps nothing more than we might have expected. My regret is that the same didn't happen for mathematics. One reason for this is because mathematics is viewed, wrongly in my opinion, as a subject that can be assessed objectively with marks for 'right' methods and answers. The more subjective approach to marking the English scripts has clearly opened up differences in interpretation. Subjectivity seemingly has no place in the learning of mathematics especially with the perception that mathematics is an exact science. However if we stop to consider for what purposes within society mathematics is used, beyond that of making everyday numeric calculations, which I believe to be very important, we would find it is used as a problem solving activity. The problems in need of solution rarely have exact solutions. National examinations are therefore subverting the real value of mathematics and demeaning the nature of mathematics from a potentially fascinating, creative and imaginative problem solving type of activity to a trivial right/wrong mentality.

There are other issues about the cost of re-marking scripts. This of course has to be paid for. Yet how can a department afford this from already overstretched capitation? Of course those parents who can afford it will be in a position to pay to have their own children's scripts re-marked, which creates further inequality in a system intending to support our 'classless society'.

The fact that I don't intend to return any of my own students scripts shows how I have been ground into a numbed submission. The main reason, apart from the cost is that I have not yet looked at them; I've already spent too much time on Key Stage Three SATs in the first instance. However if anyone is interested in one idea that I have for using the marked scripts, apart from the more obvious paper recycling option, I have suggested that in 1996 when Year 9 will be preparing for their SATs, the then Year 10 students might do some paired SAT preparation and go through their paper with a Year 9 partner and work through what they got 'right', and what mistakes they made and possibly why. Silk purses and sows ears spring to mind here!

Peter Sanders' excellent letter in *The Times Educational Supplement*, that I referred to earlier, raises many of the objections that I have about examinations, about them hijacking the curriculum, and the cramming and emotional effects they have upon children. When I think of emotional effects, I am not primarily thinking about the worry and

the fear that some children may experience. I am also concerned with the drip-feed messages about what is important and what is valued; with the focus upon competition spreading further the disease of self-interest, rather than fostering co-operation.

Sanders asks "What are they measuring and for whose benefit?" These questions need addressing and I for one do not believe they are for children's benefit, and as for what they are measuring, I for one don't have any idea. There exists confusion and contradiction, as the following quotes from a recent OFSTED review, Science and mathematics in schools show:

In essence pupils learn tricks and 'games' which yield the 'right' answer in exercises. The repetitious nature of exercises generates boredom and too little time is spent remedying weaknesses.

The emphasis in teaching needs to change. For each of the three stages of learning facts, practising skills and developing understanding, a different teaching technique is necessary. Teachers also need to recognise that in the private world of the young, mental arithmetic is non-standard and idiosyncratic. Teaching needs to build on these non standard methods and algorithms. Similarly the public needs to accept that non-standard methods are just as acceptable ? as long as they yield correct outcomes. This means that teachers will no longer be able to measure their success by judging whether they have a class of well-drilled children.

The contradiction lies in the nature of examinations which promotes drill, repetition and denies the use of non-standard methods. Sanders gets to the heart of the matter when he writes:

From now on it will be a failing school that offers its children the broad, stimulating investigative curriculum where they are able to learn through doing rather than through chalk and talk alone. Successful schools will spend the final year drilling, going over past papers, in general narrowing down the curriculum to those things likely to come up in the tests in order to push their school's grades up regardless of the benefit to the children.

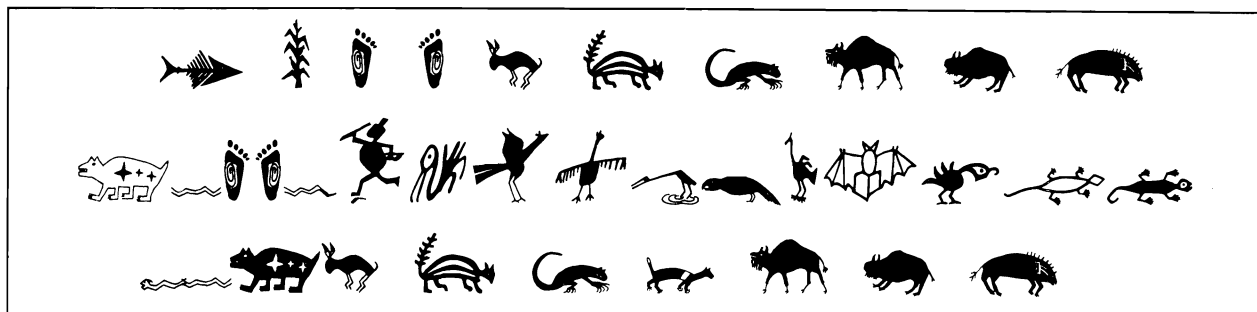
Demands upon examination boards from SCAA via the right wing of the Tory party are pressurising the system of examinations to make them more rigorous. Unfortunately, rigour is translated into harder questions that test more what children can't do than reveal what they can do. There has been a move to return to a more rote style of 'learning' and this 'slowly, slowly, catchee monkee' style, is infiltrating the way in which papers are being written. An example of this can be seen in the SEG Higher Tier Paper 6 question 16. The question asks candidates to describe the "geometrical effect of the combined transformation" of two specified matrices. In my un-settled Year 11 class I had spent some

time on transformations and some students had developed their work into transformations by matrices. It can be a wonderful area of mathematics for students to engage with and some students really developed their thinking in some depth. However, the question provided the students with slightly less than four (continuous dotted) lines of working out space. I happened to be reading through the paper during the exam and realised that many of my students would be able to access this question if they had been provided with squared paper. I asked the examinations secretary to phone the Board and find out if I would be allowed to issue squared paper. The answer from SEG was 'No' which was a clear indication that they wanted candidates to work out the answer in a specific way and were not prepared for students to use an alternative method. My understanding of one of the most important qualities that industrialists are looking for is flexibility, yet here is a clear example of flexibility not being allowed to be demonstrated. Again here the dogmatic approach to assessment by SCAA provides a confused picture of what is valuable for educational and employment needs.

In accepting that this question accounted for only 2 out of 100 marks, I am even more painfully aware of the lottery of examinations in that I had spent further time looking at transformations during the revision process, and in fact some students during exam study leave had sat with me whilst I covered a couple of lessons for absent colleagues, and we had 'gone over' transformation matrices – with shapes on squared paper.

Many adults view mathematics as a subject they could never do at school, as a collection of x's and y's, sums and misunderstood rules that held little or no meaning for them. If we are to educate future generations to see mathematics as a creative and imaginative way of thinking, and something that can be done, rather than cannot, then we must address the system of examinations. It is the narrow focus of examinations that drives the teaching of mathematics in ways that are more concerned with reading examination runes and passing tests at the expense of real understanding.

The current system of national examinations is divisive and one of the main reasons for narrow teaching methodology, disinterested and disenchanting students and under-achievement generally in education. Until the government puts learning at the top of the educational agenda, with a focus upon how teachers can support learning, rather than testing with a focus upon how teachers cram answers into children, then we shall be stuck in a time-warp seeking those halcyon by-gone days of warm beer and cricket on the village green that never existed. And even if such icons ever did exist, who wants warm beer anyway?



Time to Rebuild? Ways of Reconstructing Initial Teacher Education

Roy Lowe

Roy Lowe is Reader in Education at the University of Birmingham and has been involved in teacher training for many years. Here he reflects on what has gone wrong with initial teacher training and how it might be put right.

Initial teacher training is in crisis. The so-called government 'reforms' of the 1980s and 1990s have generated a situation in which school based courses are badly overstressing an already beleaguered teaching profession; are forcing too many students in training to focus on survival rather than developing a range of skills as young teachers; and are selling the nation's children badly short. If one of the keys to our future is the education which our children receive in school, the system of teacher training we have now is not well placed to guarantee the quality of that education. Why so gloomy a prognosis? What precisely are the shortcomings of a system which has many apologists? The answer comes in two parts: what is and what might be.

Several aspects of the present situation give cause for concern. First, the partnerships which are now in place between the teacher training institutions and a number of, often self-selected, client schools offer a chance for continuity and much closer contact between the validating institutions and the teachers, who now bear the brunt of day-by-day responsibility for their students. But it is a collaboration which is achieved at considerable cost. One has to ask whether it is appropriate, or even sustainable over any long term, for a smaller number of schools to be besieged by students. When one hears of schools which have more than twenty students training to teach over a more protracted period than used to be the case, one wonders what the parents of the pupils concerned have to say and what exactly is the effect on those pupils who find themselves repeatedly taught by students, in a range of subjects and year by year.

The new arrangements make all kinds of assumptions about the ability of the partner schools to support students, whatever the particular staffing and resource situations of the departments concerned. It is difficult to foresee how a profession in which experienced teachers are being shown the door and replaced by NQTs can generate the resources to take responsibility for initial teacher training, however well-qualified and committed are the teachers concerned. If, as is now frequently the case, a department has one or two newly qualified teachers in it, is it also able to devote proper time and attention to the students it takes on? Yet the new funding arrangements continue to marginalise experienced teacher trainers whilst encourage schools to continue and extend their commitment to initial teacher training.

Not only is there a significant impact on the schools

themselves: the reduced role given to college tutors leaves them with responsibility for validating what goes on in the schools, but little chance of playing a significant role in terms of regular support and supervision. No longer do tutors have the chance to move a student from a situation in which difficulties are developing to one in which he or she might have a better chance of developing as a teacher. The contractual relationships now in place make it impossible for tutors to exercise that kind of professional judgement. The very people who ought to provide a sustained oversight are all too often reduced to onlookers.

Perhaps most important, the student teachers themselves are placed under a new pressure which makes it harder for them to develop as teachers. Their range of teaching experience is now more limited than used to be the case and the dual demands of college assignments and longer teaching practices leave little time to reflect on what they are about.

What, then, might be done to improve things? It is time to ask ourselves what has been lost in the training of the nation's teachers. Three things come to mind immediately. First, and perhaps self-evident, but all too often lost sight of in the present situation, there are several key components of any course of initial teacher training. In my view a student at the start of a teaching career should be obliged to consider what it is that they are going to teach, why they are teaching it and how best it might be conveyed to different pupils in differing schools and at different points in their development. They need to know what is involved in the National Curriculum but must be constructive critics of it rather than slaves to it. Without that, there is little prospect in the teaching profession of the future playing a significant role in the development of the National Curriculum. To expect students to stand in front of thirty children and teach, without having first given serious thought to the intellectual demands of the subject they are teaching and the cognitive problems children face in understanding it, makes about as much sense as asking someone unfamiliar with car mechanics to strip down and repair a Rolls Royce engine. Yet all too often this is one element in the training process which is neglected in the new 'school based' courses.

When I entered teacher training I saw part of my role as being to broaden the horizons of young teachers by putting them in touch with a range of ideas on both subject content and how my subject might best be taught. If we close down the work of our young teachers within a tightly defined

National Curriculum, which specifies both content and to some extent delivery, then we run the risk of attenuating the experience of children passing through our schools. Yet this is the reality of too many methods courses at the present time.

Secondly, it is vital for students to have a proper range of experience as beginning teachers. Certainly the focus must be on work in schools, but it needs to be coordinated by tutors who are at one remove from the classroom, have a fuller oversight of the range of provision within the region as a whole and can coordinate visits, teaching projects and school practice. It is impossible for a single school to even begin to approach this task.

Thirdly, if we are to think in terms of teaching as a profession, then our teachers need to be critics, of themselves and of the system as a whole. This means that there must be consideration given to the social functions of schooling, to why schools differ so much, to why the education system

is divided into public and private sectors, primary and secondary. If teachers are not given the chance to develop a view of the appropriateness of the system within which they work, there is less chance of its improvement.

All of this has two clear implications. First, we need to start thinking again of courses which are college-based, but school-focused. Perhaps it would be better to say 'child-focused'. Secondly, we have to accept that the regeneration of teacher training has resource implications, both in terms of the overall cost and of the ways in which funding is disbursed. Initial teacher training in this country has become cheaper, but there is no need, nor is it right, for it to become a low-price substitute for a proper introduction to the teaching profession. It is time for teacher trainers and schoolteachers to reclaim their proper role as arbiters of, and full participants in, the debate on how best to prepare for the profession which they uphold.

Diversity and Excellence: a recipe for confusion

In this brief review article, **Clyde Chitty**, a co-editor of *FORUM* since 1989 and Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Birmingham, outlines his main objections to the Labour Party's recently published plans for reforming the British education system.

Diversity and Excellence, the Labour Party's blueprint (and I use that term advisedly) for the organisation of schooling in England and Wales, published in June this year, is a deeply flawed document which has already attracted strong criticism from all sections of the Labour Party, and beyond. Indeed, there is strong evidence that David Blunkett himself is acutely aware of the document's shortcomings and is therefore anxious to forestall public debate of its limitations.

When it was learned that I was preparing to criticise the document at a meeting of the Edgbaston Constituency Labour Party in Birmingham, I received an extraordinary letter from the Shadow Education Secretary suggesting that I might possibly be reacting to "press speculation" surrounding the document *without actually having read it*: in the words of the letter, "as someone working at Birmingham University", I might wish "to follow the usual rigorous academic standards of actually addressing the document rather than the press speculation around it".

This patronising and insulting inference was followed by an expression of shock that I was actually prepared to speak *against* the document and a request that I provide Mr Blunkett with 'chapter and verse' on the precise nature of my objections.

The Shadow Education Secretary claimed that he had inherited a situation that was "frankly bizarre". And it is true that previous policy statements talked vaguely about "a local democratic framework" but ducked the key issues surrounding selection and admissions policies.

Yet this is no excuse for producing a document that is quite simply a recipe for administrative chaos. And one of the reasons why its proposals are so ill-conceived is that,

unlike previous statements, this one was not discussed at the Policy Forum, representing all sections of the Party, or by the Socialist Education Association, which is the Labour Party's affiliated education body.

Let me now turn to some of the chief causes of concern.

Comprehensive education as such receives but one brief mention (on p. 11), and there is no policy for the phasing out of academic selection at eleven. The proposal for dealing with the 150 or so remaining grammar schools is both disingenuous and silly. In the words of the document:

Our opposition to academic selection at eleven has always been clear. But while we have never supported grammar schools in their exclusion of children by examination, change can come only through local agreement. Such change in the character of a school could only follow a clear demonstration of support from the parents affected by such decisions (p. 11).

The authors of the document claim that they have been encouraged by the fact that "the vast majority of grant-maintained heads have insisted to us that they do not wish to re-introduce selection by eleven-plus examination based on academic attainment" (p. 11). The point is, of course, that grant-maintained schools have no need to re-introduce selection by formal examination because they can achieve the same and (from their point of view) desirable end-result far more effectively by more subtle means. As many have pointed out, selection by examination and social selection largely overlap in their consequences but, of the two, selection by the schools themselves (invariably utilising the interview process) is the more invidious and indefensible.

New Types of School

Diversity and Excellence proposes three types of school status for the future:

- *community schools*, similar to those whose assets are currently owned by the LEA;
- *aided schools*, which are the present church schools (voluntary-aided and voluntary -controlled);
- *foundation schools*, which could include grant-maintained schools.

It is claimed that the foundation schools will offer a "new bridge between the powers available to secular and church schools" (p. 15). And we are told that:

Each of the options would be open to all schools to choose. Schools would be offered the chance to ballot their parents about the designation and future of their school. Such ballots would help the governors to decide on which of the three options was best suited to their school where disagreement is clearly expressed amongst the parents (p. 16).

Yet there is surely nothing to be said for a system where a group of parents can vote for aided or foundation status and thereby acquire publicly provided assets.

Writing in *The Independent* on 22 June, former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Roy Hattersley argued that "by building its policy around different classes of school, Labour is endorsing selection." And he made the obvious but important point that "once a hierarchy of schools is established, those perceived as 'best' always receive more than their proper share of national resources."

In my own reply to David Blunkett's letter, I expressed serious reservations about the very idea of "sanctioning different types of school in a state system where the obsession with choice and diversity – particularly in our large cities – already works to the benefit of the privileged and the

articulate at the expense of the vast majority of working-class and minority ethnic children."

Admissions Policies

The confused nature of the suggestions made for admissions procedures is perhaps the document's single greatest weakness. It is, of course, true, as the document itself points out (p. 10) that "if a school has too many applicants, it must make choices about which children to admit and which to reject." But the suggestion put forward of allowing over-subscribed schools to make their own selection decisions and then agree them locally is absurd. It is quite inconceivable that such a system could be made to work. The only way to achieve an equitable system would be to adhere to one simple principle: first preference to be given to children from the school's locality, with exceptions made for siblings from families that have moved out of the area.

The standard of writing throughout the document is not particularly high, but one sentence in the admissions section stands out as being extraordinarily bad:

Expressed preference by parents will always take into account the specialism and expertise that exists in a school, where a child has a particular aptitude (p. 11).

This sentence makes very little sense as it stands, though if it were to end with the word 'school', it might perhaps represent support for the concept of 'selection by specialisation' which former Education Secretary John Patten made much of in an article that appeared in *New Statesman and Society* in July 1992.

Conclusion

The total effect of the proposals outlined in this document would be the creation of a more, not less, divided system of education, particularly at the secondary level. What we have here is the Labour leadership professing to uphold the comprehensive principle while, at the same time, effectively abandoning it.

TRIANGLE JOURNALS

<http://www.triangle.co.uk>

Check out our World Wide Web site regularly for the past, present and future contents pages of all our journals. And don't miss the abstracts of individual articles and complete editorials.

Also...

How to contribute; How to subscribe; Editorial Boards; Related conferences; Associated learned societies; and some light-hearted pages about our people and their interests.

- the specialist journal publishers

British Journal of In-service Education Volume 22 - 1996 ISSN 0305-7631	Oxford Studies in Comparative Education Volume 6 - 1996 ISSN 0961-2149
Curriculum Studies Volume 4 - 1996 ISSN 0965-9757	Prospero: a journal of new thinking in philosophy for education Volume 2 - 1996 ISSN 1358-6785
Educational Action Research Volume 4 - 1996 ISSN 0965-0792	Research in Post-Compulsory Education Volume 1 - 1996 ISSN 1359-6748
FORUM: for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education Volume 38 - 1996 ISSN 0963-8253	Vocational Aspect of Education Volume 48 - 1996 ISSN 0305-7879
International Studies in Sociology of Education Volume 6 - 1996 ISSN 0962-0214	Women's History Review Volume 5 - 1996 ISSN 0961-2025
Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education Volume 5 - 1996 ISSN 0962-029X	Women's Writing: the Elizabethan to Victorian period Volume 3 - 1996 ISSN 0969-9082

We are always pleased to send free inspection copies

Triangle Journals Ltd, PO Box 65, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0YG, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1491 838013 Fax: +44 (0)1491 834968 Email: journals@triangle.co.uk

Book Reviews

Troubled and Vulnerable Children: a practical guide for Heads

SHELAGH WEBB, 1994
Kingston-upon-Thames: Croner Publications. 134pp, £9.95 paperback, ISBN 1 85524 275 3

Ask any Head Teacher and she/he will tell you that the number of disturbed pupils in mainstream schools has been rising dramatically in recent years and that the severity of disturbance is also increasing. In many cases, problems at home – often the breakdown of relationships between the adults – is the cause.

But educational policy and provision have made the situation worse: "One of the most unfortunate consequences of the 1988 Act has been the rise in the number of such children who are failing, or being failed by, the school system. Under the pressure of the new financial arrangements many schools are increasingly unable to help, or even keep, those children who are expensive in resources and teacher time." Permanent exclusions rose from just under 3000 in 1990-91 to nearly 4000 in 1991-92 and were over 3600 in one term in 1993. It was pointed out recently in a House of Commons debate that up to 10% of today's children suffer a significant degree of emotional or behavioural disturbance during their childhood.

Shelagh Webb has written this book, for Croner's *The Head's Legal Guide*, in an attempt to help Heads and other teachers to understand what is going on and to offer practical suggestions as to how schools can help.

Areas covered are: family difficulties and bereavement; homeless families; travellers and refugees; child protection and children in care; children as carers and poor attenders; children in need and children with special educational needs; working in partnership with parents; and children's rights in education.

In each case, Shelagh Webb describes the sort of problems children can encounter and the symptoms which they may display in school and then offers suggestions as to how the problems may be sensitively approached by the school.

The book ends with a section listing a large number of agencies who may be called upon for help and advice, and prominence has been given to organisa-

tions which have local branches or which are also available outside London.

This book is written in a simple, straightforward style and contains much good common sense and essential information for Heads and other staff. It will certainly find a valued place on my shelves and I commend it warmly to all who are concerned about the appalling situations in which so many of our pupils now find themselves. Shelagh Webb says it is "a modest attempt to offer hard-pressed Heads and teachers some practical help in meeting the needs of their neediest children." It is Shelagh Webb who is modest: her book is an important contribution at a time when schools need all the help they can get.

DEREK GILLARD
Marston Middle School, Oxford

Competence, Education and NVQs: dissenting perspectives 9

TERRY HYLAND, 1994
London: Cassell. 166 pp., £12.99 (paperback) ISBN 0 304 32932 0

In this historically grounded and philosophically informed book, Terry Hyland subjects the strategy of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to a relentless critique. He has provided us with an authoritative guide regarding how and why the NCVQ developed competence-based education and training (CBET) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) field.

Hyland commences his argument through an exploration of the origins of the 'competence movement' in American teacher training in the 1960/70s. He shows how these American CBET approaches became embedded within the 'new training culture' in Britain in the 1980s through restructurings within the Employment Department and through the legacy of the MSC, where notions of 'competence' and 'outcomes' emerged out of the flux of YTS discourse in the early 1980s. With the establishment of the NCVQ in 1986, CBET became the basis for the NCVQ's strategy and its development of NVQs.

Hyland provides substantial contextualised criticism of NCVQ strategy, CBET and NVQs. On NVQs, he argues that it is not clear that employers understand what they are, that they want them or need them. Neither do NVQs relate straightforwardly to the 'needs' of employers. He criticises NVQs for being a static form of accreditation which focuses on outcomes (rather than learning/teaching) in a supposedly Post-Fordist age (where flexibility and constant self-development would seem more apposite),

for denigrating knowledge (where all that seems important is whether someone can do/cannot do a particular operation) and for lacking in rigour and even meaning. Furthermore, a language has evolved around NVQs (performance criteria, units and the like) which seems more at home within the accountancy profession. Hyland shows how attempts by CBET protagonists to make sense of this discourse descends into nonsense and metaphysics.

The notions of occupational 'competence' and 'competences' are essential for understanding NVQs. In uncovering the ambiguities and inconsistencies within these concepts, Hyland strikes at the heart of the NCVQ CBET strategy which is premised on there being an 'objective', absolute and transparent view of competence and the competences required for occupations. Hyland shows how the assessment of competences enshrined within NVQs rests on a crude 'functional (job/task) analysis' and a simplistic behaviourism.

If NVQs and CBET are so flawed, then how and why have they appeared to be so 'successful'? Hyland has a range of explanations. First, the protagonists of CBET/NVQs have been adept at relating NVQs/CBET ideology to apparently progressive and student-centred concepts. Secondly, the notion that NVQs were relevant to employers' needs and were 'employer-led' were key selling points. Thirdly, Hyland points to a broad consensus, which emerged in the 1980s, that British PCET had to change in order to enhance Britain's economic competitiveness. The NCVQ strategy was therefore timely. Fourthly, NCVQ spent over £1 million in persuading employers and colleges that NVQs were the way ahead. Fifthly, FE colleges who shunned the new qualifications would suffer financially in the new Further Education Funding Council/TEC regime of output-related funding and training contracts. Finally, the NCVQ constructed a 'slogan system' to mobilise support for CBET and NVQs.

Having explained why and how the NCVQ established CBET and NVQs, Hyland moves on to an examination of problems surrounding the assessment of competence. As the notion of competence is unclear, and as competences within particular NVQs (shorn of reference to underpinning knowledges) do not reflect how workers actually think and behave in the workplace, then assessment becomes problematic. Hyland shows how pro-CBET and NVQ theorists' attempts to meet these problems through notions of 'generic' competences, transferable competences and rarefied 'meta-competences', spills over into the 'metaphysical' which the turn to behaviourism and functional analysis was supposed to quash.

Chapter 5 unpacks the philosophical baggage underpinning CBET. Hyland ex-

amines Ryle's 'knowing how'/'knowing that' distinction and notes that CBET and NVQs stress the former at the expense of the latter. He notes how knowledge is intimately related to relatively simple tasks. Atomistic CBET attempts to deny social context and underpinning knowledges. It is an impoverished and de-humanising form of vocational education and training argues Hyland.

Criticisms of CBET and NVQs are heightened when Hyland examines their potential impact on professional and managerial training. NVQs (at Levels 4/5) are beginning to make inroads in these areas. At this point, notes Hyland, the weaknesses regarding the undermining of knowledge become magnified. NVQs at these higher levels engender narrowness and 'unprofessionalism'.

On GNVQs, Hyland argues that they were introduced by the NCVQ partly out of i.e. Government's immobilism in the face of A-level reform but also in response to criticisms of NVQs. GNVQs are basically BTEC National 'revisited' and they have added a third track to an already confusing picture. Hyland does not see GNVQs (with their Core Skills) as breaking down the academic/vocational divide. On the contrary, in so far as GNVQs become successful alternatives to A-levels for getting into higher education, then NVQs will be left out on a vocationalist limb, devoid of status.

Hyland's proposals for change are sweeping. He advocates scrapping NVQs, GNVQs and A-levels and moving towards a General Education Diploma for all, awarded at ordinary level at 16 and advanced level at 18 and beyond. There would be academic and vocational elements within this and core skills (for 14-16). Academic and vocational 'specialisation' could occur after age 18. Hyland's proposals move towards a common curriculum for 14-19 students with an 'education for work' component which is not a crude vocationalism. He advocates a new commitment to active experiential learning.

The book ends tamely with a critique of market approaches to education and a brief analysis of the 'learning society'. Hyland argues that the NCVQ approach is poles apart from any movement towards a learning society.

Terry Hyland has provided us with a wide-ranging and substantial critique of the NCVQ 'revolution' in PCET. This book is a comprehensive, provocative and refreshing guide to another great British training disaster.

GLENN RIKOWSKI,
School of Education
University of Birmingham

Crisis in the Primary Classroom

MAURICE GALTON, 1995

London: David Fulton. 163pp.,
£12.99, ISBN 1 85346 245 4

Pnp, apn, seac, ta, bera, scaa, naep, prindep etc. etc. One of the favourite tests amongst early psychologists was to ask people to pick out, at speed, real words hidden in a list of nonsense syllables. Such syllables are to be found in Maurice Galton's latest book, set into the context in which these acronyms/'nonsense syllables' arose, for *Crisis in the Primary Classroom* explains in careful and telling detail how the undoubted current crisis has come about. Much of the worth of Galton's book lies in the clarity with which he describes the influences that have helped bring about this crisis. In the main, it's the usual sorry tale of various forms of human failings, such as prejudice, manipulation, ignorance and fear but he also tellingly demonstrates how changes in primary practice over the last 30 years, for example the move away from streaming and subject teaching, were less beneficial than they might have been because the adoption of alternative practice were not always monitored or thought through. Thus non-streaming, mixed ability teaching and a cross-curricular approach became easy targets for those who, for a variety of reasons, were hostile to such changes. This book will appeal particularly to those academics and teachers involved in primary education whose lives have been considerably affected by the changes in primary education in their own careers and will hopefully also give newer entrants a helpful insight into how we come to be where we are at present. Galton usefully summarises the relevant arguments, events and research and points the way to a possible way forward. He also reminds his readers that careful analysis revealed that 10% of all schools could ever have been considered 'progressive', a statistic that is rarely mentioned. He argues very persuasively for the adoption of a theory of pedagogy, one that, as he convincingly points out, has been lacking to an alarming degree in the discussions about primary education. It is this lack that Galton feels has led to opportunities being lost which, had they been taken, would have had considerable influence on events and balanced the other negative influences. Even so, the book does not address itself very much to moral and philosophical issues except towards the very end, and these are basic issues that do more than merely inform a theory of pedagogy. Psychology also gets a shorter shrift than it possibly deserves as by it he seems to imply in Chapter 5 that there is little else to the discipline except developmental psychology. In fact, teaching today could be revolutionised if all that was already known

about such psychological factors as attention, perception, memory, concentration and emotional and social behaviour were applied to the classroom. Nonetheless, Piaget is still given a mention, even if it is through the agency of Brown & Palinar who talk of "learning and theory change". Although there is considerable reference to relevant research, there is not a particularly critical approach to it, a wide variety of studies appearing to be given equal weight and credence. This may be because of a wish not to burden the general reader with detail, but conversely it may also serve to leave them unsure of the relative value of such research. As many studies appear to be post-1985 it also helps to perpetuate the academic canard that to be recent is to be true. There is much value however in the chapter on 'Developing Expectations in Teaching' which, amongst other things surveys the place of the newly qualified teacher through to the 'expert'. He usefully demonstrates how, contrary to expectation, NQT's are helped, not so much by experts, but by those teachers who have only two or three years' experience and how this holds true for each stage in a person's teaching career. The implication as Galton points out for in-service work and teacher training are considerable. Less helpful, if the wider audience of governors, parents, planners and teachers is genuinely intended, are the chapters on testing and assessment and the one concerned with an appraisal of the three-man report of Alexander, Rose & Woodhead. The former, though undoubtedly useful to a few is almost too detailed and technical and is demanding reading for any except those either trained or working in the field of test construction. The latter chapter though it clearly places the 1992 report in its historical context and is used constructively to illustrate Galton's analysis of the current educational scene, nonetheless seems insufficient justification for the devotion of an entire chapter on a report that will probably be chiefly remembered as a less than shining example of what can happen when terrorisation by deadline is effectively used as a government weapon of control. Overall Galton's book is undoubtedly timely and useful; he is persuasive in his analysis of the current situation and he clearly and helpfully identifies those elements that have led to the present confused state of thinking and practice that surrounds primary education in Britain. It is to be hoped that his appeal for the necessary reforms will be given due and serious consideration. One suspects that this will only happen when learning about learning indeed becomes 'theory change' amongst the powers that be.

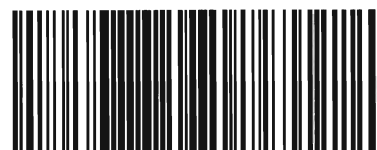
ANNABELLE DIXON
Holdbrook Primary School,
Waltham Cross

**The following back numbers
of *Forum* are still available**

Vol 22 No 1	The APU Threat
Vol 22 No 2	Comprehensive Education: the threat of government policy
Vol 22 No 3	Standards at Risk
Vol 24 No 1	Comprehensive Principles for the Eighties
Vol 24 No 2	Primary Schools within a Comprehensive System
Vol 24 No 3	Curriculum, Assessment and Approach for the 11-16s
Vol 25 No 1	Education and Training, 16-19
Vol 25 No 2	Special Needs within Comprehensive Context
Vol 25 No 3	Teacher Education
Vol 26 No 1	Curriculum and Comprehensive Education
Vol 26 No 2	Secondary Reform
Vol 26 No 3	The Curriculum: content and process
Vol 27 No 3	Central Control of the Curriculum
Vol 28 No 1	The Centralist Tendency
Vol 28 No 2	Anti-Racism and Community Education
Vol 28 No 3	The Teachers' Action
Vol 29 No 1	Goodbye to Sir Keith
Vol 29 No 2	Special Number on Primary Education
Vol 30 No 1	Primary School Special
Vol 30 No 2	Comprehensive Counter Attack on the Bill
Vol 30 No 3	Education Bill and Primary Teaching
Vol 31 No 1	The Education Reform Act
Vol 31 No 2	Opting Out, CTCs, National Curriculum
Vol 31 No 3	LMS and National Curriculum
Vol 32 No 1	AIDS Education, National Curriculum
Vol 32 No 2	RE and Collective Worship Symposium
Vol 32 No 3	Conservative Education Policy: the hidden agenda
Vol 33 No 1	Assessment
Vol 33 No 2	Into the 1990s: the state system under attack
Vol 33 No 3	Reflective Teaching
Vol 34 No 1	The Past, the Present and the Future
Vol 34 No 2	Curriculum U-turns, Bullying, Europe
Vol 34 No 3	Three Wise Men, Why Assess?
Vol 34 No 4	The School Curriculum: need for vision
Vol 35 No 1	Mixed Ability Applauded
Vol 35 No 2	A Return to Streaming?
Vol 35 No 3	Training Primary Teachers
Vol 36 No 1	National Curriculum and Assessment
Vol 36 No 2	Dearing's Legacy
Vol 36 No 3	Back to Basics
Vol 37 No 1	Comprehensive Achievement
Vol 37 No 2	Evaluating Schools, School Self-improvement



Copies can be ordered from
Triangle Journals Ltd, PO Box 65
Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0YG
United Kingdom
 Email: journals@triangle.co.uk
 World Wide Web: <http://www.triangle.co.uk>
 Single copies: £5.50 (individuals),
 £6.50 (schools), £10.00 (libraries)



0963-8253(199509)37:3;-G