FORUM

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Achievement in the Inner-City

TRIANGLE

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The *next* FORUM

There will be articles on all phases of schooling. **Myra Barrs** will explore alternative means of assessment at KS1 and KS2, **Derek Gillard** will suggest a more appropriate lower secondary curriculum, **John Butcher** will consider tensions between academic and vocational studies at 14-19 years and **Ian Duckett** will describe a project for developing core skills at A Level. **Jan Bridger** defends secondary Drama. **David Armstrong** will show how it is possible to reject anti-comprehensive principles in practice, **Jane Collins** will demonstrate how a family of schools co-operates to serve the local community and **Robert Crone** will examine the campaign for comprehensive education in Northern Ireland. **Annabelle Dixon** writes on teachers' professional development and **Stephen Ward** on partnership in primary teacher education. **David Hamilton** provides a critique of approaches to understanding school effectiveness. We also hope to explore approaches to the early years curriculum.

The Return of Selection

It has become fashionable once again to talk about the advantages of operating a divided schooling system at the secondary level. As Brian Simon argues, in an important contribution to this number, the extension of selection within secondary education will inevitably lead to a demand for legitimisation and this may well be provided by resurrecting the classic theory of human 'intelligence' as innate, fixed and measurable. On the so-called modernising Left and in the pages of *The Guardian* and *The Independent* the return of selection is justified as the only means of enlisting the support of large sections of the middle and professional classes for state education. Writing in *The Guardian* last August, John Gray summarised this perspective by arguing that "egalitarian opposition to selection in state education" could be said to "guarantee, in effect, the future of a privileged private sector through which all of Britain's worst class inequalities are reproduced".

It is certainly true, of course, that the Thatcher and Major Governments have made no secret of their fundamental desire to *undermine* and eventually *destroy* the comprehensive system of secondary schooling. But the difficulties involved in achieving these objectives represent in many ways a tribute to the resilience of the comprehensive ideal. What many political commentators based in London fail to acknowledge is that throughout the country at large the comprehensive system remains extremely popular.

Former Education Secretary John Patten favoured the concept of "selection by specialisation" as a means of subverting the comprehensive ideal.

In an article published in the *New Statesman and Society* in July 1992, he argued that "socialists must now come to terms with the concept of specialisation":

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

Patten's successor Gillian Shephard is clearly determined to see more specialisation and more selection. In an interview with *The Times* towards the end of November last year, she disclosed plans to encourage state schools to select more pupils by ability, as part of a radical agenda to accentuate differences from the Labour Party. At present, council-maintained schools can admit 10 per cent of their pupils according to ability in art, music, drama, technology or modern languages. Mrs Shephard would apparently like to let schools select more of their intake – probably around 15 per cent.

This is bad enough, but as Brian Simon points out in his article, the real threat to the comprehensive principle lies in the autonomy enjoyed by over-subscribed opted-out grant-maintained secondary schools. Research carried out by a team at the University of Leicester and published in 1993 revealed that a third of the first comprehensive schools to leave local authority control were already using some form of selection when over-subscribed, without going through the time-consuming process of applying for a 'change of character.' And a recent feature in *The Times Educational Supplement* (24 November 1995) showed that top-scoring comprehensives in the examination league tables who pride themselves on a non-selective policy are, in fact, choosing pupils with proven ability in certain selected areas. The country's 'top performing' state secondary, The Liverpool Blue Coat School, is applying to become selective for its 1996 intake. It is followed in the tables by three grant-maintained schools: Coopers' Company and Coburn, Havering; Old Swinford Hospital, Dudley and Hertfordshire and Essex High School for Girls, Bishop's Stortford. Although none of these schools holds entrance exams. pupils are interviewed to gain understanding of their suitability in terms of motivation and interests or ability in music, drama or sport. It is easy to see that these admissions policies amount to covert selection – and this itself casts additional doubt upon the accuracy of the information provided by the tables themselves.

Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, the then chairperson of the School Examinations and Assessment Council, commented in 1992: "if you give parents real choice in the education system, it is inevitable that the schools themselves will demand to choose the kind of pupils that come" – a remark which would seem to bear out the view often expressed on the Left that in a market system, *schools choose parents*, not the other way round. This is an issue that the Labour Party needs to tackle urgently, and we need a policy that goes beyond the bland assertions to be found in *Diversity and Excellence*. As I argued in the last number of *FORUM*, the suggestion put forward of allowing oversubscribed 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.

What we are witnessing at present is the steady advance of a form of social selection at eleven which is in many ways more invidious than the eleven-plus selection examination which dominated the education system in the post-war period.

Clyde Chitty

IQ Redivivus, or The Return of Selection

Brian Simon
In this major article Professor Brian Simon looks at recent attempts to resurrect the nature of 'intelligence' as both innate and measurable.

No other country throughout the entire world suffered so greatly from the application of mental testing to education as did Britain. No other country constructed a complete system legitimised by the ideology of testing embodying early selection (at 10-plus) together with rigid, hierarchic streaming in primary schools from the age of seven, or even, often, of five. In no other country was the hegemony of mental testing so complete as it was in England from the 1930s to the mid-1960s. In 1947, the then Labour Government knighted Cyril Burt, the movement's great panjandrum. Theory, then, seemed to be legitimated by practice, and practice by theory. A culture of low expectations for the mass of the children was this system's inevitable concomitant. Very sadly, we are still suffering from this syndrome.

Back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, those who believed in comprehensive education understood that, to achieve their desired transformation, it was absolutely necessary to challenge this hegemony by exposing the true character of intelligence testing, and especially by bringing into the light of day its fundamental, but unacknowledged assumptions. These are most clearly and precisely expressed by two quotations from Cyril Burt.

The first of these is a well-known statement made in 1933, stressing the inherited, unchangeable, measurable nature of 'Intelligence'.

> By intelligence, the psychologist understands inborn, all-round intellectual ability. It is inherited, or at least innate, not due to teaching or training; it is intellectual, not emotional or moral, and remains uninfluenced by industry or zeal; it is general, not specific, i.e. it is not limited to any particular kind of work, but enters into all we do or say or think. Of all our mental qualities, it is the most far-reaching; fortunately it can be measured with accuracy and ease.[1]

This implies that nothing education can do can alter the child's inborn intellectual, or cognitive level. From this, Burt drew the conclusion that each should, ideally, be allotted an education related specifically to his (or her) inborn 'Intelligence' level:

> In an ideal community, our aim should be to discover what ration of intelligence nature has given to each individual child at birth, then to provide him (sic) with an appropriate education, and finally to guide him (sic) into the career for which he seems to have been marked out.[2]

This deadly theory was reflected in practice in the entire school system as it existed at that time (the late 1940s and 1950s). Streaming in primary schools was followed by selection for secondary education and subsequent division of children into different types of school, and by yet further streaming within these schools. Only one type of school led to higher education and the professions – the vast majority dropped out in the earlier stages, so confirming low expectations due to lack of 'Intelligence'. This was a system precisely designed to maximise failure as the means of winnowing out 'the chosen few'.

This is not the place to chart the breakdown of this hegemony. It must suffice to say that this took place with extraordinary rapidity from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. First, as a result of mounting unease among psychologists themselves, the British Psychological Society itself issued a report (*Secondary School Selection*, ed. P.E. Vernon, 1957) which overtly rejected the classic theory of Intelligence as propagated by Burt. A few years later (1963) the Robbins Committee's path-breaking Report on the expansion of higher education totally rejected the concept of a strictly limited and biologically determined 'pool of ability'. If there is to be such talk, they concluded, "it must be of a pool which surpasses the widow's curse in the Old Testament" (when the more that was taken, the more became available).[3] Evidence presented to the Committee by P.E. Vernon (psychologist) and Jean Floud (sociologist) exposed in the strongest language the pretensions of the 'classic' school of psychometrists.

This, together with the popular surge towards comprehensive education, spelt the end of the hegemony of mental testing insofar as its application to education was concerned. And with this came a determination never again to allow schools, and the school system, to become subject to what now appeared as an ideologically determined pseudo-science. All this was compounded later when Cyril Burt was indicted for using fraudulent data to shore up the classic genetically determined theory of intelligence he (and others) propagated.[4]

But experience over the last 30 years has shown that IQ theory, and its application to education, won't lie down. It erupted in the United States again in 1969 when Arthur Jensen's notorious article in the *Harvard Education Review*, posited a relation between race and IQ (and social class and IQ) set the cat among the pigeons and triggered an immense controversy both in the USA and in Britain.[5] Psychometrists in Britain (Eysenck, Lynn, Burt himself) all contributed to the first Black Paper of 1969 which set out to rubbish many aspects of primary, comprehensive and 'progressive' education. Nevertheless, IQ theory and practice certainly never achieved their earlier dominance while the claims were increasingly, and almost unanimously, rejected by teachers and educationalists.

Over the last year or so, however, there has been what

seems like a concerted attempt, once again, to reimpose the hegemony of the classic IQ theory, and to use it, once again, as a guide to social policy. Late in 1994 the late Richard Herrnstein & Charles Murray published *The Bell Curve: intelligence and class structure in American life*, which restated Burt's classic theory of Intelligence as innate, fixed and unchangeable and reaffirmed the reality of both racial and class differences in 'Intelligence'.

Right-wing policy implications were spelt out in detail. Publication led to widespread controversy in the USA with many geneticists, psychologists and others rebutting the book's main thesis. Little impact was made in Britain, where the book received mainly critical reviews (except that by Hans Eysenck). However, what did make an impact was a brief article by one Dr James Tooley, apparently a philosopher and mathematician, in the journal of the Institute of Economic Affairs, the original right-wing think tank.[6] Tooley argued that, if the Bell Curve argument as to the genetic basis of 'Intelligence' was correct (which clearly he believed), then, since intelligence is a good predictor of 'work productivity' which concerns all employers, all children should take an IQ test at the age of 10 years and be then given an 'appropriate' education, just as Burt proposed for his 'ideal' community 45 years ago. There would, then, be no need for other forms of general school exams which could be abolished. The child's IQ at ten was all that mattered.

Tooley's *jeu d'esprit* (it was no more than that) received immense media attention which, while not altogether unexpected, seems to have surprised him. The idea was tossed around for a few days and then conveniently forgotten. It was hardly serious anyway, but the enormous publicity given it marks, in a sense, the way the wind is blowing. There seems to be an immense attraction for extremely simplistic, indeed numerical solutions to complex social problems.[7] After all, as far back as 1920, Burt himself remarked on the insistent demands then being made on psychologists to provide a simple 'mental footrule'. The IQ he helped to develop was just that.

Mention might be made of the publication, also in 1994, of a lengthy book by Adrian Wooldridge, a strongly right-wing journalist but also a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. This, *Measuring the Mind*, subtitled 'Education and Psychology in England, c1860-1990', combines a history of the mental testing movement with an overt defence of its role in the past and a plea that psychometric techniques be rehabilitated and utilised in educational practice in the future. 'How can raw ability be turned into marketable skills?', the book concludes. 'The psychometrists still have a lot to teach us'.

These attempts to rehabilitate the discredited theories of mental testing and to apply them to social and educational problems are taking place at a time when new selective systems and techniques are, almost surreptitiously, creeping back into the secondary schools of Britain. This is what needs watching, and with the greatest care. The two have not yet combined, but may do so in the future. Intelligence test theory aims to provide a legitimation of early selection. As this process creeps back, the temptation to find psychometric support grows. Unless we are careful, we may find ourselves back where we started, but, of course, on a new level.

Various attempts have been made over the last ten or fifteen years to destroy local systems of comprehensive secondary education – in Solihull and elsewhere. All have failed, some ignominiously. The latest attempt is the proposal of the last remaining Tory county council, Buckinghamshire, to build a new grammar school at Milton Keynes, the outcome of which is not known as I write. Grammar and secondary modern schools, of course, still exist in Kent, Lincolnshire and elsewhere, but these are the weak survivals of a discredited system. The great majority of the schools in the country as a whole are now comprehensive schools. But the weak spot, or, if you like, the Achilles heel here, one deliberately created by the government, lies in the over-subscribed opted-out grant maintained secondary schools. These select their own admissions, as is well known, but in doing so are expected to comply with the rules governing such selection, as laid down in Circular 6/93 'Admissions to Maintained Schools' (issued on July 8 1993), though, as a Circular only, this carries no statutory power. However, this permits grant-maintained schools to select a certain proportion ("about ten per cent") of their intake according to 'general ability' or, in certain areas, 'aptitude' (for music, art, drama, sport, and 'technology'). Admission schemes for such pupils have to be approved by the Secretary of State.[8] To date (end September 1995) 23 GM schools have been given permission to select 10 per cent of their intake on 'general ability', and a further 13 on 'aptitude', a grand total of 36 rout of a total of 634 grant maintained secondary schools (information from DfEE).

Although the Government's opted-out initiative has generally stuttered to a close, continuous attempts are made to revive it, the latest being a series of proposed measures announced by John Major in September 1995.

In his speech, delivered to 365 GMS heads, Major announced that the Government is planning to deregulate admissions to give full powers to the schools themselves. Circular 6/93 is to be redrafted to allow (or encourage) this step.[9] If this is carried through, and GM schools wishing to enhance their selective intake seize their opportunity, it would amount to building into the state system, in a new way, a complete selective sector. In this way the old grammar-modern bifurcation would be re-created *within* schools nominally described as comprehensive. Major has also made no secret of his objective – that *all* schools should become grant maintained.

If each individual school is made responsible for its own selective procedures for a part (or even the whole) of its intake, we return directly to the situation that existed in the 1920s and earlier. At that time each individual grammar school was directly responsible for selecting its own intake, mainly using crude subject exams and, of course, an interview (such exams were sometimes conducted by local authorities on behalf of their grammar schools). These procedures became impossible to legitimise, given their arbitrary nature and wide variation. This is why the then Board of Education threw its influence on the side of persuading local authorities to utilise 'modern', 'scientific' methods of selection; that is, to use the newly developed Intelligence and other like tests (English, Maths), claimed (then) to be 'objective'. These methods were seen as legitimising selective procedures, given the growing prestige of mental testing. It could now be argued that only the highly 'intelligent' were offered expensive grammar school places, the rest being relegated elsewhere. This was public money, then as now, and its use and distribution necessitated a generally acceptable legitimisation. The ll-plus and IQ testing provided precisely that. But they

brought with them, of course, the deadly theory of low expectations for the 80 per cent who 'failed', labelled at the age of 10.

The extension of selection within secondary education, as planned by John Major and the Conservative Government, will inevitably lead to a demand for legitimisation. This cannot be provided by arbitrary procedures now in operation and likely to be extended. Unless some new, brilliant discovery is made, legitimisation can be found only within the field of psychometrics, or mental testing, since this alone clings to the classic theories of genetic determination which insists on the fixed and unchanging nature of Intelligence and its accurate diagnosis. Early selection *demands* such a theory and *will have it*. Psychometricians are back, and are beginning to see themselves once more as arbiters of the nation's educational system and of each child's future. Such is the prospect facing us.

Do we wish to take this road? Or what *is* the way to the future?

We must, of course, oppose and reject the present insidious move to reinstate selection within local comprehensive systems. What it may lead to has already been outlined by John Major whose inveterate prejudice against comprehensive education has been brilliantly exposed by Fred Jarvis.[10] The long-term objective (perhaps not so long term) is to bring back selective systems of education in a new guise. Instead we must continue to fight to establish well-resourced fully comprehensive secondary schools based on and serving their own local communities. That system, in outline, we already have (though resources are lacking) – this has been the achievement of the last 30 years. It needs deliberately and consciously strengthening, as the central focus of educational policy. GM schools that introduce selection may feather their own nests according to the present dispensation. This takes no account of the knock-on effects on all other local secondary comprehensives. Martin Rogers, of Local Schools Information (LSI), was right when he protested at the tardiness of local authorities in officially protesting against all such schemes.[11] A strong and consistent fight must be waged against all attempts to enhance selective practices, especially since Major's September speech. This is one essential form of action in defence of comprehensive education.

And there is a related phenomenon on which we need clarity. Recently the argument has been put forward, on the whole by moderate, sometimes progressive people, that the only way in which a truly national system of education can be created is by assimilating into the state system a whole series of selective independent schools of various kinds – for instance the old Direct Grant grammar schools which went independent when this system was abolished by the Labour government in the late 1970s. Such schools would retain their selective status, even when so assimilated. Only this, it is held, will win back the support of sections of the middle and professional classes who now send their children there, paying the necessary fees. Arguments of this kind have recently been advanced, for instance, by Will Hutton in *The State We're In*, by Conservative MP George Walden, by John Gray and others.[12]

Such arguments may be put forward with the best intentions. And it is certainly true that the state system suffers through the separate existence of the independent system, with its smaller classes, greater resources, support through the Assisted Places Scheme and in many other

ways. Others (for instance, *The Guardian*) also argue that comprehensive schools must introduce streaming and early differentiation generally in their search for 'excellence'. What is proposed, it seems, is a transformation of the current system of comprehensive education into a generally selective system enhancing differentiation, segregating 'the chosen few', and providing specific educational procedures targeted at these and these alone. In my view these proposals, if well-intentioned, have not been fully thought through and their implications understood.

To take this road, I suggest, would be too high a price to pay for a 'national' system – a single system catering for all. That target, and it is both a desirable and a necessary one, can best be achieved by another route. What is that?

Comprehensive schools, given the necessary resources and expert assistance, have already shown themselves to be capable of effectively educating all their pupils. Many are functioning today under adverse conditions, but even so are doing well. Ideally (and we should define our aspirations) all secondary schools could and should be in a position to cater effectively for *all* their pupils, whatever the variety of talents and abilities these may have. The abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme, the integration of existing independent schools within local systems, all this could mean, if it were firmly but diplomatically carried through, that comprehensive schools catering for entire local populations could assimilate the pupils now attending independent schools which (unsurprisingly) now dominate the league tables reflecting academic success. Maybe some pain might be involved in making the transition. From the standpoint of the nation as a whole, however, the gain would be tremendous. For the first time we could claim a truly national system of education. That would be a foundation on which we could really build. Further, the growing threat of an IQ-dominated selective system – that vision of the past – would be relegated for ever.

Notes

[1] C. Burt (1933) *How the Mind Works*, pp.28-29. London: Allen & Unwin

[2] *The Listener*, 16 November 1950. Reprint of a popular broadcast series.

[3] Robbins Report, Vol. 1, p. 54.

[4] L.S. Hearnshaw (1979) *Cyril Burt, Psychologist*. The issue of Burt's use of fraudulent data first broke in Oliver Gillie's *Sunday Times* article of 24 October 1976. It was followed by Leon J. Kamin's devastating critique in *The Science and Politics of IQ* (1977). The best single critique of Burt's obsessive claims as to the heritability of Intelligence as a single unitary power of the mind is Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasurement of Man* (1979).

[5] Arthur Jensen (1969) How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement?, *Harvard Educational Review*, 39.

[6] James Tooley (1995) Can IQ tests liberate education?, *Economic Affairs, Journal of the Institute of Economic Affairs*, 15(3). Tooley contributed further short articles to *Education* (19 May 1995) and *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (7 July 1995) but these added little to the argument. See also Richard Pring's timely counterblast in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 14 July 1995.

[7] A point interestingly made by Polly Toynbee whose article in *The Independent* (28 June 1995) is sub-headed 'Renewed interest in IQ tests is part of a mania for magical solutions to human complexity'. The author reveals that she failed the 11-plus, later winning a scholarship to the University of Oxford.

[8] Such approval is also necessary if a school wishes to

bring about what the Circular defines as 'a significant change' in its function, for instance, a change in age range, from single sex to mixed, from non-selective to selective admissions, etc. (Para 39, Circular 6/93). Under this regulation, a GM school in Barnet (Queen Elizabeth Boys) was given permission to reintroduce selection on academic grounds for 160 boys a year (plus 20 on musical ability) – the second such school to gain approval to return to wholesale selection. A second Barnet GM school (Mill Hill County High) is now also-considering selecting half its intake (30 per cent on technology and mathematical grounds and 20 per cent on musical ability). The secretary of the Barnet parents' association is reported as saying that "people are very worried about us returning to the old 11-plus and the secondary moderns", *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28 April 1995.

[9] "We have allowed too much regulation to creep in", said John Major. "We propose to change that during the next 18 months". "You have made your schools the success

they are", he continued. "I see no reason why self-governing schools should not decide their own policy on over-subscription ... I am, therefore, today announcing a review of these procedures". *The Times Educational Supplement*, 15 September 1995.

[10] See *Education and Mr Major: correspondence between the Prime Minister and Fred Jarvis*, with a commentary and postscript by Fred Jarvis. October 1993. Tufnell Press.

[11] *Education*, 21 July 1995.

[12] Hutton, who presents a radical and generally progressive agenda, argues that grammar schools and grammar streams in comprehensives "need to be revived in order to attract members of the middle class back to the state system". He calls this "nationalising inequality in education" which he apparently regards as desirable in the present circumstances (*The State We're In*, p. 311). See alsoJohn Gray (1995) Labour's struggle to avoid class war, *The Guardian*, 10 August.

Policy, Practice and Post-Fordism: what future for education?

Howard Stevenson
Can post-Fordist analysis offer anything useful to those seeking radical change in education? Howard Stevenson looks at the issues. He teaches in a comprehensive community college in Leicestershire and is the Editor of *Education Today and Tomorrow* where a version of this article appeared last Autumn.

The year 1988 will always be considered by educational historians to be one of huge significance. The Education 'Reform' Act represented the most radical educational policy change since 1944, and marked a decisive break with the era of post-war consensus.

However, it would be a grave mistake to see the 1988 Act as a piece of discrete legislation, without a history of its own, and dreampt up by a cabal of New Right ideologues and Whitehall bureaucrats. Rather the 1988 Act was the iconoclastic manifestation of a number of developments that had been prevalent in educational discussions for a dozen or more years; certainly dating back to the era of the Callaghan Government and the 'Great Debate'.

For it was in the mid-1970s that capitalist crisis forced governments across the world to re-think accepted orthodoxies. It was from this time that we can chart the attack on the public sector, and attempts to re-define the whole basis of the welfare state. Thatcherism has put its stamp on developments since then, but it would be wrong to over-emphasise the role of a particular government. What might be broadly described as Thatcherite policies have emerged in one form or another in virtually all advanced capitalist countries. Often the political complexion of the government has been immaterial. The response of capital to its own crisis has been strikingly similar across the globe.

The changes that have occured over the last twenty years are far more profound than can be attributed to any one party, let alone one person. What we are witnessing is a new epoch of capitalist development, so different from what

went before as to require a new conceptual and analytical framework. Old certainties are giving way to new times. Some commentators have described a shift from an age of similarity to one of diversity, from a period of homogeneity to one of fragmentation. What was once called Fordism, the age of the masses, has given way to Post-Fordism.

What are the implications for education of these new times? How has education policy making been shaped by the new circumstances, and to what extent can future policy be shaped in a progressive direction? These are the key questions, but before addressing these issues it is first necessary to assess in greater detail the precise nature of Fordism and Post-Fordism.

Fordism

Fordism takes its name from the American car manufacturer Henry Ford. It was Ford who developed the assembly-line production that facilitated mass production (and mass consumption). However, Fordism was always about much more than patterns of mass production and consumption. Fordism itself was characterised by a range of features that flowed from the requirement to establish suitable conditions for the accumulation of capital.

Perhaps most visible was the development of the post-war keynesian welfare state. The state played a key role in maintaining sufficient levels of demand necessary for the mass production economy, and secured an accommodation between capital and labour by promoting centralised collective bargaining. A tri-partite system of education was

introduced which clearly sought to restrict educational opportunities to an elite, whilst simultaneously reproducing a vast army of workers for the semi-skilled jobs that awaited them in the factories and mines.

However, the Fordist regime was not sustainable and eventually began to creak under the pressure of its own contradictions. The commitment to full employment had altered the balance of class forces and the concomitant upward pressure on wages placed a strain on profitability. Capital accumulation was made yet more difficult as the welfare state on which capitalism had depended to provide workers for its factories and demand for its product accounted for an ever increasing share of national output. The tax revenues necessary to fund the growing welfare state were rapidly contributing to a fiscal crisis.

From Fordism to Post-Fordism

There exists wide-ranging debate as to the fundamental nature of what is referred to as post-Fordism. A short article such as this cannot do justice to all the competing perspectives, but it is possible to identify several issues over which there is broad consensus. Several key characteristics of post-Fordism relate to changes that have taken place in the organisation of work and the labour process. Faced with the dual need to respond to international competition in an ever more global economy, and to assert greater control over labour, capital has taken advantage of developments in technology to reorganise work and production. Economies of scope have replaced economies of scale. Firms have sought to gain competitive advantage by segmenting markets and targetting smaller production runs at market niches based on consumer life styles and identities.

These developments have in turn required changes in work patterns. The post-Fordist workplace is typically smaller ('non-core activities' are contracted out, whilst what remains is broken down into 'cost-centres') and flatter. The elimination of hierarchies supposedly allows more rapid responses to changing market conditions. The post-Fordist core worker is flexible, and multi-skilled. No longer bound by union agreed rules of demarcation, the new worker is equipped to work throughout the organisation – wherever, and whenever, the need is greatest.

Finally, the state itself is adjusting to the new terrain. Bob Jessop has convincingly argued that Fordism's Keynesian Welfare State is giving way to what he refers to as a Schumpterian Workfare State. The precise nature of this new state formation remains uncertain but key characteristics are already emerging. For example, the emphasis on full employment and the management of demand has given way to a new focus on the supply-side of the economy and facilitating product innovation (a development which in the education sphere has given birth to the school improvement movement). The welfare state and social policy are more than ever subordinated to the needs of labour market flexibility. The provision of universal benefits is giving way to selectivism. The poor become the welfare state equivalent of a segmented market – with about as much political power as they have purchasing power.

Education and Post-Fordism

Post-Fordism has been most closely associated with the private sector. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that a post-Fordist perspective provides a useful analytical framework to assess recent developments in the public sector, and especially education.

The structure and organisation of the education service in particular has developed along post-Fordist lines in recent years. A central objective of government policy has been the dismantling of major bureaucracies, and the devolution of power and control to self-governing units competing against each other in artificially created quasi-markets. The manifestation of such a policy comes not only in the form of LMS and GMS, but also in the removal of FE and post-16 colleges from LEA control and their incorporation as autonomous units.

The creation of internal markets, and the almost enforced adoption of a purchaser-provider role by LEAS is designed to unleash a spirit of entrepreneurialism within educational institutions. New freedoms, particularly in relation to the control of finance and personnel, are designed to ensure that schools and colleges respond more effectively to 'consumer demand'.

There is, of course, a gulf between rhetoric and reality. Decentralisation of power has been largely cosmetic. The introduction of apparently devolutionary measures has gone hand in hand with unprecedented powers of central control. Central government now possesses greater powers over finance and the curriculum than it has ever done. Schools and colleges are caught between a rock and a hard place, between the discipline of the market and the straitjacket of central government directives and imposition. The whole system is buttressed by the creation of a vast quangocracy staffed by blatantly political appointees.

Control is increasingly becoming the key issue. Not only are schools and colleges experiencing ever greater central control, but teachers too are being subjected to new control mechanisms. School and college managers are compelled through budgetary pressures to secure reduced unit labour costs, generally by reducing staff and securing increased output from those who remain (in the form of increased class sizes). Indeed, teachers have seen little of the flexibility and multi-skilling that are hallmarks of the post-Fordist labour market. Instead teachers and lecturers experience the new flexibility as de-skilling and job insecurity.

It is for these reasons that teachers have contested and resisted many of the changes that have taken place. The success of such resistance has at best been uneven, although there have been some significant achievements. School teachers for example have been extraordinarily successful in resisting the introduction of flexible and individualised payment systems based on performance. The development of plant bargaining has also been largely resisted. However, teaching unions have been much less successful in preventing the loss of teacher posts that has taken place in recent years. In FE colleges, where workplaces are larger, and plant bargaining more feasible, NATFHE remains locked in an apparently unwinnable dispute over new flexible (and local) contracts.

Perhaps the clearest (and most successful) example of teacher resistance to date remains the battle over national curriculum introduction. And it is in the area of curriculum development that some of the tensions within the post-Fordist debate are at their most explicit. The Right has conceded the need for a centralised national curriculum because of the control mechanisms over both schools and teachers that flow from its introduction. But such a development is at odds with the post-Fordist tendency to promote diversity of product range. However, the trend

towards increasing diversity is clearly emerging in the post-16 sector where the introduction of 'pathways' and a multiplicity of modularised and flexible learning packages is being introduced.

Such a development clearly does offer considerable opportunity for improving access to the curriculum. However, there are significant dangers. Increased flexibility in the FE and HE sectors is as much to do with 'efficiency savings' (especially in labour costs) as it has to do with meeting the curriculum needs of individual students.

Secondly, the drive for curricula diversity which manifests itself not only at 16+ but increasingly at 14+, represents a direct attack on the principles of comprehensive education. The emergence of occupational and vocational pathways clearly links the output of education to the worst post-Fordist scenario – a labour market in which vast numbers of workers experience temporary contracts of low-paid, non-unionised work, interspersed with frequent periods of no work at all. The core worker may be well paid and secure in employment, but on the periphery is an army of workers (often identified by their race, gender or class) for whom the terms flexible specialisation and multi-skilling are utterly meaningless.

Finally, curricula diversity is increasingly being matched by institutional diversity. Wrapped in the rhetoric of choice (now uncritically embraced by both Left and Right) there is a continuous drift toward differential funding arrangements as the government tries to establish a new hierarchy through GM status, CTCs and technology schools. There is no evidence to suggest that these schools are what the public want, but the growth of some of these institutions is steady enough to pose an additional challenge to the comprehensive school. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether Labour's proposals for ending GM status will be sufficient to end the threat to comprehensivism posed by institutional diversity and 'parental choice' – both concepts endorsed in the paper *Diversity and Excellence*. Comprehensive schools are viewed as the educational equivalent of the high-rise tower block – well intentioned 1960s planning, now desperately in need of replacement. Such a view cannot be allowed to go unchallenged.

Within further education the trend to institutional diversity is far more developed with an explosion of franchising contributing to an increasingly complex picture. A key task for those committed to universal provision and equal opportunity is to develop a much clearer analysis of the role and extent of diversity within the education system. New technology and more flexible working patterns open up new possibilities for delivering provision matched to individual student needs. This should generally be welcomed and encouraged. However, the degree of diversity is contestable and there are occasions when it is incompatible with traditional egalitarian objectives. If the Right can resist the trend to diversity in order to impose a centralised, mono-cultural and reactionary curriculum the Left can surely do so to achieve more laudable objectives.

Conclusion

It is clear therefore that major changes have taken place in all sectors of the education service in recent years. Such changes are not the whim of a particular government, they have been mirrored across the advanced capitalist world and been implemented by conservative and social democratic governments alike. However, there is nothing inevitable about the changes that have taken place. There are both threats and opportunities, indeed what is often a threat to one interest group is an opportunity to another (with increasing tensions between professional and 'consumer' interests one likely outcome). This can make developing strategies, and building alliances more difficult. However, it is critical that such alliances are developed.

There are already very encouraging signs of such alliances emerging. The campaign on funding and class sizes has been notable for the way it has involved parents and governors. It is now inconceivable to think of a major educational campaign being successful without the active involvement of these 'consumer' groups. Welding together consumer and producer interests must now be seen as a key objective.

Thus far it has been the Right, and the forces of capital, which have shaped the post-Fordist agenda. To this extent we have witnessed the ascendancy of a particular class strategy, in which the Right has sought to reduce the role of the public sector as a means of restoring the conditions for successful capital accumulation. It has also sought to re-shape education to reproduce a particular ideological configuration, one in which market forces and inequality reign supreme. This orthodoxy must be challenged – there is nothing inevitable about the new 'common sense'. However it is essential to engage constructively with the new times. It is possible to shape change – it is not possible to prevent it.

Local Democracy for Education

Stewart Ranson
Professor of Education at the University of Birmingham, Stewart Ranson has written widely on new forms of local governance and the concept of the Learning Society.

The Local Education Authority (LEA) remains in the eye of the storm of future education policy. The return of a Conservative Government at the next election would probably see the final demise of the LEA, while the present muddled education policies of the Labour Party suggest a weak role in relation to a motley array of quasi-autonomous institutions. Policy seemingly converges on a shared vision of a market place of diversity and choice. At stake are the universalist, comprehensive and democratic foundations of post-war education and the equal opportunities they strive to constitute against the traditions, never eliminated, and now once more accelerating, of institutional differentiation to reflect social and class interests. Does this matter? An argument is needed to recover the value of a local system of education and why its connection to and underpinning by local democracy is indispensable to educational opportunity. The story needs to begin with the Education Reform Act (ERA).

Although the ERA redefined responsibilities, both centralising and devolving powers away from the LEA, it nevertheless accorded it, potentially, a leading role in the reform programme. The challenge for the new style LEA was to set aside its traditional commitment to controlling the routine administration of local education and to concentrate instead on clarifying strategy, supporting and assuring quality in schools and colleges. A 'providing' authority was to give way to an 'enabling' authority. The system was maintained but authority redistributed within an integrated but devolved framework of institutional governance for post as well as pre sixteen local education.

Yet by 1991 the very conception of education government embodied in that legislation – of a strategic LEA leading an integrated though devolved system of institutional governance – was giving way to a very different vision of independent institutions supported, at most, by a 'service agency' LEA. The Prime Minister in May 1991, spoke of the need to break up the monolith of the local education system while a senior civil servant spoke of the need to 'plough the ground' a metaphor for dismantling the local system of education. A new quango the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) was conceived as the State's arm of regulating (it was hoped) a flourishing sector of self-governing schools.

The LEA remains beleaguered: its powers weakened, its functions diminished and its expenditure contracted. Even the quality assurance responsibilities accorded them in the 1988 reforms have been placed in the market place. Institutional fragmentation and the erosion of the scope and powers of local democracy in education are forming a new centre ground of education politics and policy. The regime of a (quasi) market place of diversity and choice seems pre-eminent.

Yet, markets cannot provide what is needed for education or society. The unintended consequences which follow from individuals acting in isolation ensure that self-interest is often self-defeating. More importantly markets are formally neutral but substantively irrational or biased. Under the guise of neutrality the market actively confirms and reinforces the pre-existing social order of wealth and privilege. The market is a crude mechanism of social selection. Markets are, therefore, the supreme institution of winners and losers, with the winners imposing their power on the losers without redress because of the structure of social selection: markets produce survivals and extinctions in a Darwinian zero sum game. Markets are politics: that is, a way of making decisions about power in society and they ensure that the already powerful win decisively. Individually, schools and parents are forced to play a game which can only disadvantage most of them and leaves them powerless to change the rules. The power of resources W valued above the authority of reasons. A system of governance is thus created in which public policy is removed from public deliberation, choice and action, the only processes through which a community can devise a system of education that can meet the learning needs of all.

Markets cannot resolve the predicaments we face: indeed they ensure that we stand no chance of solving them. Those problems – the restructuring of work; environmental erosion; the fragmentation of society; opportunity for all – present issues of well-being, rights and justice which cannot be resolved by individuals acting in isolation, nor by retreating because we cannot stand outside them. Markets will merely exacerbate these problems which are public in nature and thus all should have a right to contribute to their analysis and resolution.

The predicaments of the time are collective or public in nature and require public action to resolve them. Only the democratic processes of the public domain can help our society face the difficult problems we confront. As Dunn (1992) argues "In the face of the obscure and extravagantly complicated challenges of the human future, our most urgent common need at present is to learn how to act together more effectively". This renewal our society is looking for to sustain it into the 21st century will depend upon a cultural shift in favour of a learning society.

Only if learning is placed at the centre of our experience can individuals continue to develop their capacities, institutions be enabled to respond openly and imaginatively to a period of change, and the difference between communities become a source of reflective understanding.

The challenge for policy makers is to promote the conditions in which this 'learning society' can unfold: enabling parents to become as committed to their own continuing development as they are to supporting their children's, in which women assert their right to learn as well as support the family, in which learning cooperatives are formed at work and in community centres, and in which all are preoccupied with the issues of purpose and organisation of learning enough to get involved in the public dialogue about reform.

Such a society can grow only if supported by a framework of governance which has, as its foundation, a strong system of local democracy that allows citizens to play an active part in developing their communities and thus an education which meets its needs. Far from being a burden upon a community a system of local democracy is a key institution which can provide it with the freedom and justice to create the conditions for all to flourish. The educational arguments for democratic local government, or at least statutory community participation in the management of education develop in three stages:

(i) that learning is inescapably a *system*: learning is a process which cannot be contained within the boundaries of any one institution. Discovery and understanding occur at home, in the community, on a scheme of work experience as well as in college or school. Progress, furthermore, will unfold more securely between stages of learning when they are mutually comprehending and supporting. Improving achievement depends for its realisation upon enabling a wider system of learning: one element cannot be treated in isolation from another if each is to contribute to the effective working of the whole. Ensuring, for every school, the appropriate numbers of pupils, the provision of resources and teachers to support a balanced and comprehensive curriculum with choices at key stages to enable progression in response to diversity of need are characteristics which have to be managed at the level of the system as a whole, as well as the school, if all young people are to be provided with opportunities to realise their powers and capacities.

(ii) education needs to be managed as a *local* system: The system of learning is more effective if managed locally, as well as nationally and at the level of the institution. The different tasks need their appropriate tier of management and by creating a local system which delegated *and* enabled strategic leadership, the 1988 Education Reform Act enacted the conditions for excellence in the local management of education within a national framework. A local system of management is needed to ensure understanding of local needs, responsiveness to changing circumstances, and efficiency in the management of resources within geographic boundaries consistent with identifiable historical traditions. Such local systems need to be properly accountable and this requires location within a local democratic system.

(iii) education needs to be a local *democratic* system: if education is, as it should be, a public service of and for the whole community rather than merely the particular parents, young people and employers who have an immediate and proper interest in the quality of the education provided then education must be responsive and accountable to the community as a whole. The significance of learning for the public as a whole suggests the indispensable location of the service within a framework of democratic local government which enables all local people to articulate

and reconcile their views and to participate actively in developing the processes of their education service. The conditions for learning lie in motivation and the conditions for motivation have their roots in participation. We can make ourselves and our communities only when empowered by a discourse that recognises the distinctive contributions each have to contribute. Such a discourse will depend upon the existence of a strong, participatory democracy which legitimates and values politics, because it is only through such a system of governance that people can constitute the conditions for making a life that: acknowledges their values, recognises their differences; accords them identity; and sustains the material conditions of existence.

Developments which became preconditions for the educational development of many young people bilingual teaching, a multi-cultural curriculum, equal opportunities for a gender neutral learning, comprehensive schools – did not emerge from Whitehall nor from isolated individual assertion but bottom up through local discourse and public action in response to the articulated demands about the need to learn and an understanding of the conditions for learning. The task now is to reconstitute the conditions for a learning society in which all are empowered to develop and contribute their capacities.

Reforming the Local Governance of Education

A flourishing public domain requires the vitality which local governance brings to education. Upon the LEA lies the inescapable task of re-interpreting national purpose to local need and generating within the community the shared sense of purpose that underlies public confidence and commitment.

A more sophisticated system of governance is needed to realise this demanding task. The LEA of the future should, therefore, become a strategic authority complemented by a framework of community councils and institutional governing bodies. This will constitute a foundation for participation and representation to ensure decision-making is more accountable being grounded in wide public discussion.

While future reforms should restore the institutional unity of the LEA (by returning grant maintained schools and city technology colleges to local management), the tradition of hierarchical control should remain a thing of the past. The local authority will relate to a more diffuse system of councils, institutions and agencies with delegated decision-making powers appropriate to their functions and responsibilities. Although it will be accorded greater 'steering capacity' than under the 1988 Education Reform Act it must, nevertheless, largely seek to influence and to work in partnership with rather than direct.

The functions of the LEA should provide strategic leadership that will encourage the local education partners to develop a shared understanding of learning quality, of the system of management and of public service and accountability. The functions should include:

● *A vision of the learning society* for all throughout their lives, celebrating diversity of culture, and committed to the long term process of transforming the way people think about themselves and their powers; reforming local education so as to give access to a curriculum which empowers the learner to develop their capacities and the confidence to play

their public role as citizens in the development of their society.

● Strategic *planning and resourcing*: to ensure cohesion and direction through development plans from every part of the service expressing specific objectives while taking account of the local authority's mission. Specific grants targeting policy priorities and formulas for funding institutions and centres based on need rather than the per capita (quasi voucher) system can ensure resources support policy.

● *Support*: increasingly, the task, rather than service provision, is to offer support to the providers enabling them to realise their priorities.

● *Evaluating quality* by auditing and developing the quality of all its institutions and services, identifying good practice and achievement in the learning process, and acting as the catalyst and promoter of excellence by sponsoring research and innovation.

● *Partnership*: a process of working in partnership with a multiplicity of organisations. It requires the LEA to develop a culture of shared responsibility and collaborative working which encourages institutions to trust in more permeable boundaries.

● *Enabling participation*: with parents, employers and the wider public, to ensure services are provided which meet their needs; to report on (and hopefully assure them of) the quality of those services and most significantly to engage the public in a discussion about the purposes and process of education in the learning democracy.

A robust 'periphery' of democratic participation will be needed to support the learning society as much as a strong LEA or State. Organisation is a vehicle for purpose and if the principles of participation and local responsiveness are to be firmly established then mechanisms need to be developed to support the identification of local needs, facilitate participation and support the coordination of local services. A number of strategies introduced in other countries could be tried here to enrich participation. These ideas include: deliberative opinion polls, citizens panels or juries which meet to deliberate on policy issues; referenda; and electronic town meetings.

A stronger democracy in particular suggests the need for community forums with a wider remit to cover all services enabling parents, employers and community groups to express local needs and share in decision making about provision to meet them. Some schools have in the past introduced such forums to extend community participation,

and in some authorities forums have been established for specific purposes, for example to review proposals for school reorganisation, or more generally to consider educational issues. Public dialogue about change in the community is properly a primary responsibility of local forums but they should be able to exert influence and a limited resource giving capacity (delegated by the local authority) could be deployed in support of the learning needs of individuals and groups within the community. This would be an important strategy in enfranchising and empowering community education and reinforce service providers responsiveness to local needs. The mutual cooperation of services in support of the learning society will sometimes happen spontaneously. It is likely to be accelerated with the support of an area officer or adviser who encourages parental and group involvement in identifying learning needs and in deciding upon and organising appropriate development projects. Monitoring and evaluating progress, enabling the dialogue of accountability are crucial activities in the role. It is a networking role, in which the officer, or local community representative, works to link up the parts of the service so that the Authority and its institutions can make an integrated response to the needs of parents and the community. The role becomes the 'animateur' of the community as an educational campus.

Conclusion

There is no solitary learning: we can create our worlds only if we work together. The unfolding agency of the self always grows out of the interaction with others. It is inescapably a social and political creation. We can develop as persons only with and through others; the conception of the self presupposes an understanding of what we are to become and this always unfolds through our relationship with others; the conditions in which the self develops and flourishes are social and political. The self can find its identity only in and through others and membership of communities. The possibility of shared understanding requires individuals not only to value others but to create the communities in which mutuality and thus the conditions for learning can flourish. The telos of learning is to learn to make the communities without which individuals and others cannot grow and develop. A strong LEA within a flourishing local democracy is the condition for this vision to grow.

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FORUM:

FOR PROMOTING 3-19
COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

Vouchers for Four-Year-Olds

Gillian Pugh
In this challenging article, Gillian Pugh, Director of the Early Childhood Unit at the National Children's Bureau, expresses her grave reservations about the Government's new proposal for a voucher system for four-year-olds.

Whilst welcoming the Government's recognition of the importance of early education and the additional resources that are being made available, there can be few in the world of education who would have chosen to increase provision by the complex means that are currently being worked out by the Department for Education and Employment. In focusing only on four-year-olds, and in introducing a system of vouchers to enable parents to buy provision that is already being used free of charge by 85% of four-year-olds, the Government is creating an unnecessary and expensive bureaucracy and has missed an important opportunity to create a long-term policy for an integrated system of care and education for *all* preschool children.

My concerns can be summarised as follows.

A voucher system has not been found to work elsewhere

I am not aware of any voucher systems that have been introduced for universal nursery education, but research in the United States on vouchers for child care concludes that there is no evidence that vouchers achieve greater economy, efficiency or quality and that at best vouchers have no effect on either the supply or quality of day care; while at worst they work in the opposite direction (Parker, 1989).

In examining the costs of expanding day care and nursery education, Holtermann (1995) in a study for the National Children's Bureau argues that vouchers can work, but only if they cover the cost of a place, and if there is money for start-up costs and training, and for children with special educational needs. As noted below, these are not covered by the £1100 voucher.

The establishment of an agency to administer the voucher system is an expensive and unnecessary bureaucracy

At least 85% of children of four are already going to local schools, and in many authorities it is nearly 100%. The proposals for taking funding away from local authorities, finding and for setting up a private agency, for listing the parents of all four-year-olds, inviting them to apply for a voucher, drawing up lists of institutions that are thought to be of reasonable quality, keeping this up to date and dealing with the enquiries of confused parents, creates an additional and quite unnecessary layer of cost and bureaucracy. The Children Act already requires local authorities to consult with parents about what provision they want, to work in partnership with the voluntary and private sectors, and to provide information for parents, and there are in addition some 40 child care information services run jointly by local authorities, TECs and employers. Local authorities also already have responsibility for registering and inspecting the quality of all provision.

It has been argued that local authorities are not all even-handed in their relationships with the private and voluntary sectors, and the introduction of a private agency to administer vouchers can be seen as an attempt to by-pass them. However, the evidence of our work around the country is that there are growing numbers of authorities that are developing creative partnerships with the voluntary and private sectors, and that these developments could be built on and encouraged by requiring joint bids for new money. The current initiative threatens to create mistrust and competitiveness.

Local planning will become more difficult

Linked to this is the local authorities' responsibility under the Children Act to review and develop services in response to the needs of the local community, with particular responsibility for children in need. The proposed voucher system will make both short and long term planning difficult for local authorities and individual institutions. This difficulty will be exacerbated if the proposed abolition of the requirement to publish a notice of opening or closing of new nursery classes goes ahead. This will enable individual schools to demand nurseries which may be in conflict with the LEA's responsibilities to prioritise vulnerable children. It will also create problems for schools who will not know how many children to expect until parents present their vouchers at the beginning of term. Even two less children per class could have a dramatic impact on a school's budget.

As Holtermann (1995) points out, the initiative is likely to lead to the greatest reductions in the authorities with the most provision.

The quantity of provision may not increase

Whilst the additional funding may lead to some increases in provision, there has been concern from statutory, private and voluntary sector providers that the lack of funding for the start-up and capital costs of nurseries will lead to limited expansion, and could adversely affect provision for younger children. It is difficult to imagine how vouchers will create provision where there is none already. Local authorities describe the initiative as at best cost neutral. If every parent already using provision returns with their voucher, the same level of service could be maintained. But it is likely to become increasingly difficult to fund provision for three-year-olds, and private nurseries are concerned at the impact on their under-threes provision. As local authorities calculate the impact of the proposals, they are discussing cuts in their grants to playgroups, cuts to parents information services etc.

Services providers certainly should be encouraged to work more flexibly and there is evidence that this is already happening in many parts of the country. I believe that

increasing the quantity and flexibility of provision could better be achieved by building on what already exists, rather than introducing a competitive element as noted above.

Quality of provision could suffer

In her review of the effectiveness of early education Sylva (1994) argues that it is worth investing in this area only if the provision is of high quality, with an appropriate curriculum and well trained staff. There is evidence from countless studies in recent years that the growing number of four-year-olds going early into reception classes are not well provided for and that the educational outcomes are less favourable than those in nursery classes and schools.

The Government argues that £1100 will buy half a nursery education place or a full-time reception class place, and until recently only promised half a voucher for a playgroup. The different annual costs of these places (£2200 for a nursery place, £1700 for a reception class place, £325 for a playgroup place) reflect different ratios and levels of training amongst the staff, and different hours per week in provision. As Holtermann shows, if comparable high quality standards were available in reception classes and playgroups as well as nursery classes, the costs would be very similar.

£1100 will not buy even a half-day of nursery education, staffed by a trained teacher and nursery nurses. Some local authorities are already planning to expand their four-year-old provision without employing nursery trained teachers, and private nurseries and playgroups are not required to employ teachers and are unlikely to be able to afford to do so.

Taking account of these factors, and the proposed inspection regime and the proposals for deregulating the amount of space required, it seems inevitable that, in line with other voucher experiments, a market forces approach to expanding preschool provision will force down the quality of that provision.

Children's rights or parental choice

This initiative has been promoted as responding to what parents want for their children. Whilst services need to be responsive to parents' needs, the proposals seem to have taken little account of children's needs for continuity and consistency in their nursery experience. It is proposed that parents can transfer vouchers from one institution to another and mix and match provision much as many have to now, rather than looking at a more coherent approach within local areas. On the issue of parental choice, there is already a considerable amount of evidence from local surveys and the national OPCS survey (Meltzer 1994) that parents want more nursery education, services that are local and flexible, and increased day care and holiday provision.

As shown by responses to the recent SCAA consultation document *Desirable Outcomes*, an approach which is centred on outcomes does not show any real understanding of how young children learn or of the role of adults in supporting that learning. We need to have the highest expectations of all children, but as the Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) argued, the process of 'acquiring the disposition to learn' is as important as what children learn.

Training has been neglected

The key to improving quality is well-trained staff and a continuous programme of support and in-service training, and yet training has not been part of the current discussions about increasing preschool provision. The Early Childhood Unit's response to the Government's consultation on quality assurance proposed a new integrated inspection system, but also argued for an on-going programme of in-service training to be an integral part of all early childhood services. We also argued that there must be a trained early years teacher in every early years staff team, as well as early years advisors available to all preschool institutions.

Equal opportunities: will the most vulnerable children benefit?

It also seems unlikely that there will be sufficient funding to meet the needs of the one in five children who may require some additional support during their pre-school years. It is important that staff have the skills and understanding to identify early difficulties and plan accordingly, but also that additional help can be brought into the nursery if required.

There are also concerns that the need to apply for vouchers will discriminate against the most vulnerable families, including those for whom English is not their first language, travellers and families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

It also seems extraordinary that, at a time of financial constraint in the public sector, vouchers are being given to parents who are already paying for, and are prepared to go on paying for, private provision, rather than concentrating resources on areas of greatest need.

Parents are confused

Many parents are confused about what the voucher will buy, and some seen to think that it will buy them child care in addition to the state nursery place they already have. Whilst the voucher may give parents some purchasing power, it will be of little use if there is nothing to purchase. There also seems to be some lack of clarity over the number of sessions that can be purchased, and whether only five half-days (not more or less) can be purchased.

Conclusion

In summary, I believe that this scheme has been ill thought out, that the quality and quantity of services are at risk, and that the introduction of a voucher agency introduces another bureaucratic quango which will replicate what local authorities are already doing. The first phase of the initiative has attracted only three authorities, which is considerably fewer than the 10% that the Government was asking for, and decisions will be made about phase two (which will involve all authorities) on the basis of a tiny unrepresentative London-based sample – and well before any real lessons will be learned. I hope therefore that the Government will postpone the implementation of phase 2 until the considerable number of problems outlined above have been resolved.

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Partnership in Primary Schools: a way forward for the nineties?

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"The term partnership is set to become the buzzword for the 1990s" (Family Rights Group, 1991). As this quotation indicates, since it was written in the context of social work and the Children Act, 1989, the concept of partnership is all pervasive, appearing, as it does in many areas of social and political debate, not just in education. Indeed, the Labour Party Education Policy document published in June 1995, was entitled *Diversity and Excellence: a new partnership for parents.*

In educational contexts several overlapping circumstances appear to lie behind this development, and what Hargreaves has called "the new professionalism" (quoted in Fish, 1995, p. 187). These are:

● the greater involvement of parents in their children's education in school;
● the increasing number of adults other than teachers in classrooms; and
● the effects of recent legislation and government policies. As will be seen these different categories are inter-related, but all contribute to the changing pattern of classroom work.

Firstly, to take parental involvement, the roots can be traced back over thirty ears. Both Newsom (*Half Our Future*, 1963) and Plowden (*Children and their Primary Schools*, 1967), indicated the official acceptance of the importance of involving parents in their children's schooling. Indeed Plowden included a chapter entitled 'Participation by Parents' and proposed that schools should develop policies whereby:

● the head and class teacher met parents before a child entered school;
● there should be regular open days and private meetings;
● parents should receive school booklets and yearly written reports; and
● schools should be used by the community.

These radical, yet common sense proposals, appear as a basic entitlement to us today.

Since that time, of course, links with parents have developed considerably, and the very term 'parental involvement' now covers a range of scenarios from helping on the school trip, and working alongside a teacher in a curriculum area, to systematic participation in programmes that aim to raise children's achievement. Such initiatives have been supported by materials which recognised that schools needed guidance in developing these kinds of whole school approaches. Furthermore, it has been recognised that these scenarios reflect different models, from the "top down" version, with professionals controlling and organising parents, to more community oriented versions in which parents are involved in management and decision making and where their expertise is recognised (Tizard et al, 1981, p. 4). It is argued that the latter model, with its emphasis on two-way communication and what parents have to offer in terms of knowledge and skills, is more effective in creating partnerships (Powell, 1995, p. 104).

However, as well as parents in their classrooms, teachers now work alongside an increasing range of other professionals. These may include: colleagues in a team-teaching situation; peripatetic teachers for ESL or special needs; home school liaison teachers; integration/welfare/classroom assistants; speech and physio-therapists; educational psychologists (see Mills & Mills, 1995, for a discussion of several of these roles). In particular, the Warnock Report, 1978 (which also emphasised the importance of treating parents as equal partners) and the 1981 Education Act provided the impetus for the employment of integration assistants. "The picture of classrooms containing two, three or even more adults working together, represents a major departure from the stereotype of the classroom (one adult to one class) which the public probably holds" (Thomas, 1992, p. 3).

These increasing numbers have brought with them the realisation that roles and relationships may need to be reappraised for all parties to work, not only harmoniously, but effectively together. As Thomas notes, the team-teaching initiatives of the 1960s "atrophied due to inadequate attention to the working of the team" (1992, p. 2). Balshaw, (1991) similarly, points out dissatisfactions of special needs support assistants that may be the shared experience of many of the adults cited earlier, namely: insufficient time for preparation and evaluation with individual teachers; arriving to find the teacher unprepared and having to fit in as well as possible; being unsure about roles and responsibilities; needing training in some areas; having too much time taken with menial tasks.

Significantly, the NFER (Bourne & McPake, 1991) produced partnership teaching materials to support teachers in multilingual classrooms, noting that, "Most local education authorities have accepted the policy of providing

language support for bilingual pupils within the mainstream classroom.... However, language support within the mainstream has implications for classroom teaching styles and organisational strategies, and also for traditional school structures, if it is to be effective" (Bourne & McPake, p. 7).

In other words, productive ways of capitalising on these significant human resources need to be employed, and, if necessary, as these authors stress, there should be in-service training. It is not just, as a student wrote in her school evaluation, "a matter of common sense really". As with the models of parental involvement, proposed solutions, notably by the authors cited above, emphasise an ideology that is committed to sharing the classroom; involves all participants in the formulation of whole-school policies; ensures open discussion of concerns and expectations; builds in clear task and role definition; enables joint planning, focusing on individuals strengths and weaknesses, and regular, formalised evaluation.

Finally, let us consider government initiatives, particularly the requirements of recent legislation. Several Acts of Parliament, of which the 1981 Education Act, noted above, was an early example, have served to strengthen the impetus towards educational collaboration. For example, as David notes, the Children Act 1989, made it obligatory for "the different agencies within local authorities and the community and voluntary organisations [to] work together to provide effective services for children and their families" (1994, p. xv). Both the 1986 Education Act (which gave parents a greater role in schools' governing bodies) and the 1988 Act reflected the government's ideology of giving more power to parents. The trend has been to increase parental rights over choice of school; representation on governing bodies; and receipt of information from schools. At the time of writing this shows no sign of abating.

Such a view would seem at odds with the notion of a partnership role. Indeed, some government documents do not appear to have resolved this inconsistency. The Parents' Charter (DES, 1991) outlines parents' rights and then goes on to say:

... this charter will help you to become a more effective partner in your child's education. As a partner you have important responsibilities ... Your child's education is your concern and you will want to play your full part at every stage (1) ...

the biggest help you can give to your child is to show that you are interested and see the value of what he or she is doing at school. Such support can have a real effect on your child's performance (19)

Ironically, this is what appears to have occurred in many instances. Policies which were designed to put pressure on schools to respond to parental concerns and to transfer some of their powers, while undoubtedly doing just that, have also increased parental knowledge about their internal workings; the constraints they operate within; and boosted the sense of identification with particular institutions. Rather than blaming the local school, which they now help to run, for deficiencies, the protests about budget cuts during 1995 suggest that many parents now blame the government. Parents and schools have moved closer together in many cases.

A similar irony has appeared as a result of government requirements for teacher educators to transfer more training into schools. Far from a stampede occurring whereby schools swiftly set up their own school-based courses, both schools and colleges have realised that mutual support is needed

in such an enterprise. Schools cannot take the whole burden overnight. Colleges have expertise to offer schools.

In short, there is evidence of a mismatch between intention and outcome. At the same time there have been other effects on the culture of schools. Several commentators have noted "the potentially manipulative function of recent encouragement to be collegial" (Biott & Easen, 1994, p. 119). Thus, teachers are not only required formally to work together on the School Development plan, assessment frameworks, planning and the writing of policies, they actually "interpret the demands of the ERA collectively to help each other to cope creatively and to develop sensible ways of doing what is now expected of them" (Biott & Easen, 1994). Similarly, Brighouse & Moon note, "the National Curriculum demands a whole school approach and can be used to develop the capacity of teachers to act as a team" (1990). Moreover, as Biott & Easen point out, this way of working is more likely to be successful in schools where there is already an established philosophy of collaborative work, underpinned by formal and informal structures, both between teachers and between children.

In reviewing all of these impulses it would seem that teachers are in the grip of what Skilbeck has defined as "the partnership trend which emphasises the role of the teacher as a partner and co-operative worker" (cited in Fish, 1995, p. 186).It is this feature in particular that Hargreaves has designated "the new professionalism", noted earlier, and characterised as meaning "closer, more collaborative relationships with colleagues, students, parents, involving more explicit negotiation of roles and responsibilities" (quoted in Fish, 1995, p. 187). Hargreaves also charts the development of this new role in terms of trends, including the following:

● from hierarchies to teams: in which ... because of the reforms, and the need for a vast range of functions to be carried out, everyone has a leadership role to play;
● from liaison to partnership: in which the relationship between lecturers and mentors has changed, and where practising teachers will contribute more to design and planning of courses, be trained ... and share in assessment; and
● from survivalism to empowerment in which the structures that nourish the new professionalism are also, by mistake as it were, empowering schools and teachers. (quoted in Fish, 1995, p. 188)

Moreover, as was noted at the beginning of this article, such trends are by no means limited to education. Elliott notes that this different professional image is evolving in other professions along with "collaboration with clients in identifying and clarifying their problems; the importance of communication and empathy with clients" (quoted in Fish, 1995).

These, then appear to be some of the forces that are propelling teachers into working with others collaboratively and in teams. And there are now a variety of joint working situations that are called "partnerships". A random sample of my own has discovered the following projects employing this term: collaboration between secondary and linked primary schools to provide continuity between age phases; links between a hospital school and local primary schools to improve inter-agency support; closer working relationships between a special school and mainstream schools; developing team work in an infant school to teach science in Key Stage 1; a group of primary schools

co-ordinating their approach to baseline assessment; nursery schools sharing procedures in identifying and monitoring special needs. Readers will be aware of many more examples.

What features do these situations have in common that warrant the designation "partnership"? Is the term set to become an educational cliché, an unsubstantiated euphemism for any relationship of two or more people in a school context? As we have seen before in education, when an innovation becomes associated with a catch phrase (such as "progressive", "mixed ability", "team-teaching", "real reading") either a distorted interpretation becomes rife or the label is applied indiscriminately to inappropriate situations.

The development of parental involvement in the 1980s prompted De'Athe & Pugh to define the fundamental principle behind a true partnership as, "sharing; a sharing of knowledge, of power, of resources, of information, of expertise, of experience and decision making", which might involve the need for "professionals to rethink their roles and perhaps act as a catalyst, enabler, or supporter rather than the teacher, healer or fixer of problems" (1984, p. 85). As the examples cited earlier indicate, partnership is with us in many shapes and forms. However, do such examples reflect the qualities of empowerment implicit in this definition or are they merely token relationships under the guise of a fashionable word?

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A Different Achievement: excellence in the inner city

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It happens during the last week of every August. As the national General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) 16-plus examination results are announced, the local city newspapers are full of the success stories and photographs of glowing school students with their stratospheric grades – mostly those who attend suburban secondary schools. Some have gained ten or eleven subjects at the highest points of 'A' grade and the reports reflect their own and their parents' pride and praise. This is achievement, we are persuaded – its ultimate confirmation and popular expression, and as the government, step-by-step, re-shapes knowledge into the grim official plastic of its National Curriculum, continually tests young people on their inclination and ability to internalise and maximise it then commissions OFSTED to police and enforce it, finally publishing its raw results in the form of school examination league tables – a new and deformed version of 'state education' begins to emerge.

This is not to decry or to devalue the huge effort and mental stamina that these young examinees have shown and proven, but it can only ever be just one part of the whole educational narrative. Maurice Bishop of Grenada, musing upon the frequent gulf between examination success and its usefulness in a speech on teacher education in the Caribbean, once observed that there were "many certificated fools in the world".[1] Such success needs to be measured within a much broader and many-sided exercise of experience and understanding, which breaks through and goes far beyond the walls of state-licensed and market-oriented knowledge and curriculum in a narrowly 'national' context. As poet of Tobago Eric Roach declared of democracy, so his words also speak of schools and education: "Be large, be critical!"[2]

But where are the inner city young people in all this rejoicing of examination success? Some are there too, and their achievement against all the social odds has been a truly formidable one. But the sky-high results are few and exceptional in the streets and estates on the other side of the city. This August, as with others, the celebrations are largely a middle class ritual.

What is Achievement?

Yet here in our inner city school and in hundreds throughout Britain, every minute every day there is an astonishing and continuous expression of achievement – a common achievement, a genius in the ordinary. Children of ten and younger have developed an ability to speak two languages fluently, moving in and out of each from one minute to

the next as if they were switching existences. Thousands of teenagers who have lived in, studied in and absorbed into their brainpower and consciousness, into their very beings, two cultures, two nations, two peoples, two lives and who manage every day to cohere and order them, yet still move in and out of them as two separate worlds. The result is a control over living and use of language that the suburban child, with all his or her effective routines of study and examination proficiency, will know nothing of and be unable to penetrate. It is the difference between the assimilation of narrow fact and official knowledge as education, and the living of life as education. Which is the greater achievement? Yet which counts for all in the presently organised state system of education, and which counts for virtually nothing? That is the reality of the class distinction, cultural insult and permanent racism that is at the centre of the way achievement is recognised: the denial of the creative language reality and syncretic genius of hundreds of thousands of inner city young people, a reality of mass exclusion and institutionalised ignorance.

A Pakistani child who accompanies her mother to the DHSS and translates into Panjabi for her, unravelling the massive social inequality within the complex bureaucratic word-maze of her second language, and bringing it into meaning and sometimes additional benefits for her mother: what a testing! Yet what reward or recognition, beyond a service of love – while a middle class child of the suburbs gets an 'A' in a 'modern language' like French or German, which she learns dutifully through books and teachers but rarely speaks or uses in any organic, life-centred way. While a Yemeni teenager spends his Saturdays and Sundays every week teaching Arabic to younger members of his community in the supplementary school organised, administered and staffed by volunteers in his community – what acknowledgement is there for him in the qualification power-house of the system? What accreditation? How will his expert and committed work help his entry into university? Yet rote-learning and swotting in the suburbs, endless phrases learned by heart and put down again on an 'A' level examination paper – and university is yours!

Yet such living achievement has often reached a long way down a journey for the inner city student: the young man or woman who has arrived – sometimes having tramped across the scrubland of northern Somalia to cross a frontier and reach refuge from war – and those who have gone back in order to go further in their lives. Here a boy speaks of his coming, from a village in the mountains of southern Yemen:

> Yesterday we had packed up everything. All our relatives were at our house, they were wishing us good luck. People like my Grandma and Auntie were crying because they couldn't bear to see us go. My Mum was really upset and worried at having to leave her family. Me and my brother enjoyed playing with our friends in the sand, but they knew that we were leaving. I felt nervous and very excited about what to expect to find and do in England.
> My Grandma would say to us:
> 'Where is this country, England?'
> I told her, 'Oh, it is an island, very far away.'
> And my Grandmother said, 'what kind of country floats in water?'
> I explained to my Grandma about it. She didn't understand, but I knew that she only asked these questions because she was deeply upset at having to say goodbye

to us. I also knew that I would miss my Grandma and friends. I knew I would be quite lonely as there was only my Dad who I knew in England.
> Then the arrival in England, a time for the fusion of reconciliation and strangeness:
> Then for the first time in three years I saw my Dad. He was waiting for us and I ran towards him and hugged him. He kissed me and then kissed my brother Nageeb. He gave us sweets and fruits. The sweets I didn't even recognise and they were not like I had tasted before. And I ate an apple and a banana, then my Dad took us to the taxi.
> The people in England seemed really strange and different. They talked in a language that made me feel lonely as I could not understand what they were saying. My Mum found it really good and easy to cook and get the food, but she was very lonely as my Dad was working in the factory. She had no one to talk to but us. m en after a few weeks another Arab family moved into the neighbourhood and my Mum became good friends with that woman, and that took her mind off her mother and family.[3]

There is a lifetime of childhood here: an exchange of nations and peoples and the grasp of a deep learning experience at such an early age. The same is true for the child who returns. She finds a life and a country she had not expected under the myths that her new consciousness itself uncovers. It is an education of the mind and heart – as George Lamming wrote, "to make the mind feel ... and to make the feeling think."[4] That is the process that thousands of inner city young people explore on journeys to and sojourns within the lands of their parents. For it is an affirmation found in a country which is now theirs too:

> When I finally arrived in Yemen I was surprised at what I saw because I had imagined it like a great dump with snakes and insects everywhere you looked. My first impressions were beautiful as I felt the hot air hit my face. In the beginning I felt uncomfortable because I felt that people were staring at me, but my parents told me not to worry because I was surrounded by family and friends.
> When I got home to my part of the city, I felt at home. I heard the ethane (the man in the mosque) calling for the people to pray. When I first heard this my heart skipped a beat. m e man's voice really touched me and the things he was saying really made me feel at home. I felt like a proper Muslim, even though I am one.
> I felt free and happy all the time. The view from my bedroom window was enough to last me a lifetime. I could see the buildings. They were very different, high with lots of windows and I could see the blue sky and the green sea and the palm trees surrounding the mosque.
>
> The first day we went out to the market and my father bought us some fruit. I was so surprised at the beauty of the fruit that it was enough to fill my eyes. m e people surrounding me were very friendly and I felt equal because I was at home.
> Yemen is not a very rich country but I was surprised at how it had built itself up over the previous years. Women in Aden were so free that they could do whatever they wished, but I had to wear a headscarf and an abaya, which is like a long cloak.
> One day me and my sister went to a friend's house. Her name was Safa. She took us to the beach and we walked

up and down the sand – it was beautiful. m ere were so many things to do in so little time.

Five weeks later my three sisters got married to my mum's brother's sons. It was a triple wedding and Arabic weddings last five days. On the first day you wear casual clothes and on the second you wear green. On the third day you wear any colour that you wish and on the fourth you may wear any colour again. Yet these four days were the worst that I had ever known, knowing that I had to go back to Britain without my sisters.

On the last day of the wedding, my sisters went home. It was the worst day of my life, it was as if someone had taken a piece of my heart.

Two weeks later we had to come back to Britain. We all said our goodbyes – and since that day I arrived, I have never felt the same about that country again.

The achievement behind this story is not only to have travelled and been there, but it is also to have opened yourself to the other, to know another life and to allow it to change you and become a part of you. It is living as learning: learning as living. That is education, and that is the experience of many inner city young people that is largely unacknowledged in the formal state system. So much so, that such journeys and sojourns, when they take place in school time, which is usually inevitable, are deemed to be nothing more then 'interruptions' to the conventional school curriculum and judged negatively. They are, however, often the most vibrant and revealing learning experiences in a young person's life and need to be recognised, accredited and built upon not only within family and community, but with a strong sense of value in school too. For the 'community school' must never be a narrow or parochial concept, but a school of the world. It is a base for affirming and extending the internationalism of its very nature and commitment. Its curriculum, quite simply, is not of one 'nation' but of all nations; not of a single British people but of all life and peoples – the unifying of cultures and nature as a power for development, justice and beauty.

Or there is the fourteen-year-old Pakistani girl who journeys to the centre of her family's faith and yearns to share the depth of her experience with all whom she knows – and the whole world, if possible. As she prepares to leave for Mecca with her uncle, her aunt and grandmother start to cry: "Me and my uncle laughed at them and said, 'we're not going to World War Three, we're going to a fabulous place!'" Coming in to land over the city, she sees below "the wonderful lights of Mecca" and is astonished by their beauty. Then when she visits the great Mosque she "couldn't stop looking at it. I mean it was so beautifully clean and neat. It was shining from all over, and half of it was made of real gold." m e huge oneness of a whole community at prayer moves her deeply, but she suddenly comes back to a real world:

When we prayed, all the world in Saudi Arabia is at the Mosque. We prayed, and before you pray you clean yourself, you wash your arms, face and feet. Suddenly in the place where the women were cleaning themselves the lights went off, and when they came back on again after about five minutes I looked in the sink. There were grasshoppers and lizards. I screamed. It was a very big sink – the taps just went on and on to Cod knows where. At least a hundred people can wash themselves there.

She endures the burning heat: "After we came back from the Mosque, we had a bath and got ready for the five very hard days in the tents. Believe me, it is so, so hot. It seems the sun's on the floor." As she makes her last visit to the Mosque, the mundane and the mystical seem to jell:

We came back to make our last visit to the Mosque, to say hello to the black stone. We were very, very thirsty. We all started to cry: 'Our Prophet's in heaven and he devil's in hell!' It was all like a dream. It was absolutely amazing.

I'd love to go again, and I hope that every human being goes there.

Deficit and Deprivation

How can this knowledge and experience be set down as 'deprivation' or 'disadvantage'? Yet the deficit approach to inner city education, the portrayal of students and parents in terms of problems after problems, only increases the burden on their breaking out from the caricatures heaped upon them. For their achievement is measured by the ever-narrowing official curriculum, becoming more and more impositional under the control of Conservative educators and ideologues such as Dr Tate and his preoccupations with national identity and the vindication through history of truly 'British' heroes [5] – and overseen by the formulaic inspection criteria and processes of the OFSTED network. Authentic working class and internationalist inner city experience is squeezed and excluded, with the imagination and energy fusing learning with life and human freedom being pressed tighter and tighter by every new proclaimed 'order' from SEAC and the new masters of officialised curriculum development. Thereby, living achievement becomes 'underachievement', bilingualism or a fluency in Arabic, Panjabi, Somali or Bengali becomes either irrelevant or an expression of linguistic poverty – and the immersion in cultures other than a white British norm or a European language becomes a degeneration into cultural 'disadvantage'. If we accept or work within the terminal dimensions of these definitions, the achievement of the majority of inner city children will never be equitably recognised or accredited Rather, we should be raising the value-laden criteria of their own communities' aspirations in education, campaigning for the achievement of bilingualism in the inner city to be understood and accredited as the equivalent of one 'A' level for university entry, or for the consistent participation in the teaching and organisation of community supplementary or language schools and classes to be recognised formally as deserving another 'A' level in Community Development. Universities too, and those who frame their admission policies, need to be at the centre of this process, working closely alongside inner city schools and communities. E us we would be promoting and campaigning around criteria that genuinely affirm and develop the cultural strength and achievements in the lives of many thousands of inner city young people, and struggling to open university doors to their commitment and talent.

The Damage of the Act

The force and alienation of government persuasion following the enactment of the 1988 Education Act has already wrought much damage and confusion to education and schools in the inner cities. While the well-resourced, prestigious suburban schools appear to offer their students a straight road to 'A' levels and university entry, the government uses them, through its 'open enrolment' policy, to entice inner city parents to abandon schools close to home. This was a move also symbolically undertaken by

the leader of the 'Opposition' Labour Party, Tony Blair, who enrolled his own son in a grant-maintained school, well-traditioned and well streamed, at some distance from his Islington home.

The 1993 case of the inner city, mainly Bangladeshi, parents who went to court against Bradford City Council, accusing it of racism by allocating their children to local schools rather than allowing them free entry into, as the *Yorkshire Post* [6] put it, the "best upper schools located in the Aire Valley", shows how convincing has been the government attack on inner city schools. *The Times Educational Supplement* [7] put the argument and the myth pithily: "White middle class schools offer the best route out of the underclass for poor Asian kids and parents actually have a choice." In fact, the reality of government strategy is to increasingly present *no* choice, as local schools are gradually bled dry and closed down – with suburban *schools* presented with the right to choose rather than working class *parents*. Furthermore, the number of inner city children who are sentenced to long-distance education far from their friends and communities, who are disenchanted by and opting out of suburban schools and transfer back to schools in their local neighbourhoods – is also an observable phenomenon. As the Bradford town councillor, Malcolm Waters, concluded after the case of racism against the local council was turned down by the High Court in September 1993: "We have sympathy with every parent who may have believed that government policy guaranteed their right to the school of their choice, but it does not." This choice is a phantom one and a part of the duplicity of the 1988 Act. Yet while the Bradford parents' case of the blatant discrimination suffered by those communities living in geographically and economically-defined struggling areas of the inner city was undoubtedly true, nowhere in the establishment press could be found a defence or advocacy of inner city schools, or their potential in offering local communities a democratic and achievement-founded alternative to the estranged and far-away education of suburban schools.

Unlimited Ambition

Far from the convenient myths hatched about inner city children being bereft of aspiration and desire to succeed in education, ask our students what their ambitions are – there is no limit to them. These have often come with their parents, travelling oceans and continents to strive to make them real. The school's major daily task is to help to achieve and realise them, and passing examinations in conventional school terms and National Curriculum terms is of vital importance for inner city young people. Yet their teachers have so much more to do too, putting this official knowledge into a critical framework and offering alternative perspectives, broadening and internationalising curriculum and developing work against racism and sexism, creating new forums and activities within the community and democratic structures and practices within the school, stimulating learning and pride in black and working class history and culture, transforming individualised and capsulised notions of knowledge, value and experience so that our students can see in their future an ambition not only for themselves, but for their communities too.

A Pakistani boy says: "My ambition is to be a doctor, a casualty doctor because I want to save lives and help sick people. I'm not going to be a lazy one like some doctors that only do it for money. I'm going to do my best to help

people." A girl classmate adds: "My ambition is to be a nursery teacher because I'd like to teach children all I can. I care about children's education ... I would like to go to Pakistan and other countries and teach the children there about all kinds of subjects." Another girl writes: " I want to be a doctor because I want to save people to live and be proud of myself. I would like to help the Bosnian people because they are dying and I want them to live longer and enjoy their lives. I want to be part of a big group to help them because I don't want them to be fighting all their lives." Another knows the real situation in Pakistan, for he writes, "you have to pay to go to the Doctor's there and it is a lot of money. I want to be a doctor to help those who can't afford to go." Rizwana tells of her lifetime's hope: "Ever since I was small my ambition was to be a teacher. I would like very much to be a nursery teacher because I like small children and I think that nursery education is important before you start school."

Then there is Fatima, twelve years old and writing defiantly:

My ambition is to be a lawyer who takes cases and fights for justice in the court. I would like to be a lawyer because I want to fight for justice and the rights of people. Also I don't want guilty people freed and innocent people jailed. I would like to help people get their rights, not jailed for what they haven't done. I would like to give people the – courage to speak in the court, and not be frightened.

These are not lives and futures seen from a deficit vision, rather from a clarity and determination to see success and fulfilment personally, and for others and whole communities too. Neither is there ambiguity about achievement and what it means It is bonded with service, internationalism and love for ordinary people on two continents and across the world. It is upon this strength of *community* and aspiration that we, as teachers, need to build our work in the schools of the inner cities, within a culture which now goes beyond points 'national' and expresses the world. This culture needs also to be in the hearts of our schools and those who practice a critical pedagogy within a dialogue of the classroom, standing up against the passive notion that teachers are simply 'deliverers' of a formulaic and prefabricated curriculum handed down to them. Such an education can only be moribund and demotivating. Instead, teachers must live up to their true mission as active makers of curriculum in collaboration with their students, keeping knowledge and achievement alive and in perpetual process and creating schools which are true meeting places of curriculum and community.

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[1] See 'Education is a Must!', in Chris Searle (1984) *In Nobody's Backyard: Maurice Bishop's speeches, 1979-1983*. London: Zed Books.
[2] From 'Caribbean Coronation Verse' (1993) *The Flowering Rock: collected poems of E.M. Roach*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press.
[3] This quotation, and those following, are from *School of the World*, Earl Marshal School, Sheffield, 1994.
[4] 'A Visit to Carriacou', from George Lamming (1992) *Conversations, Essays, Addresses and Interviews, 1953-1990*. London: Karia Press.
[5] See article 'Britain's heroes find a champion in the English Classroom' by Donald MacLeod, *The Guardian*, 19 September 1995.
[6] *The Yorkshire Post*, 11 September 1993.
[7] *The Times Educational Supplement*, 17 September 1993.

Funding Technology Schools

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It would be very surprising if there wasn't a school near you beavering away at a technology college bid. There may be a revenue budget crisis, redundancy procedures may be at their height, urgent curriculum planning tasks in connection with the introduction of further GNVQs may be needed, but it all has to be set aside as the pursuit of local business interests presses on. The last time I saw one of our heads he was over the moon. Had a handicapped child achieved a real triumph? Had one of his excellent colleagues gained significant promotion? No. He had got a quarter of the way to his £100,000 target by securing discounts on plastic moulding machinery!

Only a few years ago such a scenario would not only have been laughable; it would have been thought disgraceful for a public service whose prime task was to improve educational standards for all by as fair a distribution of public resources as possible.

When the history of education in the 1990s comes to be written from a detached position safely into the new millennium, there is little doubt that the arrangements for the introduction of enhanced technology provision in schools will rank as a major scandal.

The bad beginning was, of course, the CTC programme. Twenty beacons of excellence were to be created with substantial investment from private industry. Local education authorities were not to be involved. Inner cities were to be the beneficiaries. In practice their location has owed more to the interests of private sponsors than the needs of inner cities. Their admission arrangements cut across those of local authorities and often produce parental frustration. Moreover, the actual support for such a divisive initiative from private industry fell far short of what was needed, limiting their number to 15 and requiring a huge injection of public money.

Just when it seemed that fairness and common sense would never prevail there appeared the Technology Schools Initiative (TSI). Considering its predecessor and its successors this brief interlude almost got it right. All schools could apply, there was no need to have an industrial sponsor on your doorstep, applications through LEAs meant that some element of sensible local planning was possible. On the other hand, many schools wasted fruitless hours making bids which failed and the Department for Education could not resist letting through a few individual school bids which bypassed the LEA, on criteria that were never revealed.

Then this brief window of opportunity vanished to be replaced by the Technology College Programme (Mark One). This was the programme for which only grant maintained and voluntary aided schools were eligible. Ministers were often asked why these were the only categories allowed to benefit from improved technology facilities. Mr Patten told the North of England Conference that it was because voluntary aided school governors were more experienced at working with industry, to the predictable fury of his audience. He later adjusted his explanation to the fact that the legislation limited the programme to these categories of school. Once 70 or so schools had benefited under this discriminatory programme the present Secretary of State graciously conceded that all schools could be eligible.

Thus was born, of very dubious parentage, the current Technology College Programme (Mark Two), now sometimes described as the Specialist School Programme as its remit is widened to include languages. Whilst patently fairer than its predecessor this still has many flaws.

Firstly, it remains an individual school bidding system. If my own authority is anything to go by, then, with 200 projects available in 1995-6, at least three quarters of the bids now being feverishly concocted, will fail. The cost of such effort is very easily lost sight of, not to mention the frustration and disappointment inflicted on large numbers of hard pressed staff. Moreover, this is not to be a planned dispersal of scarce public resource. The bid documents marginalise LEAs and only grudgingly concede the need to consult over technical aspects of implementation.

Rural areas are likely to be doubly disadvantaged. There will be much less local industrial support and even where a school is successful it does nothing to improve parental choice.

Finally, the bid documentation makes it clear that this is a case of building on success. Larger schools with some evidence of existing achievements in the relevant areas will be favoured.

In a recent article in *The Times Educational Supplement*, Sir Cyril Taylor, Chairman of the Technology Colleges Trust, argued in favour of the present arrangements because the macro-economic arguments" were said to be "in favour of diversity". But the "macro-economic arguments" are surely in favour of giving a decent level of provision in technology – and languages – to all our schools and not to a random selection. And if there is not enough money to do that all at once, then provision should be properly planned for the benefit of as many as possible.

Sir Cyril himself proved my point when he said that there was "even one in Northumberland". Why "even" for goodness sake?

Actually, one technology college and one languages college have been identified in Northumberland. Both are on the fringes of Tyneside. Both could, therefore, tap some industrial support and have relatively affluent parent support. But what about school "x"? Its staff are just as devoted. Its children deserve those same extra opportunities. But since the local pit closed, the chief source of income of most of its parents is the DSS. Not an organisation noted for its industrial sponsorship.

If, as we are often told, our destiny as a nation rests on improved standards of education, especially technological education, amongst the whole future work force, then the sooner the present unplanned, discriminatory and unfair arrangements are scrapped the better.

Missing the Targets: the new state of post-16 education and training

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Education and Training in a Right State

The new type of capitalist state that has been introduced since 1979 is nowhere more clearly defined than in education and training where the new state form was pioneered.[1]

'The Contracting State' operates through funding quangos that subcontract responsibility for services to schools, colleges and training agencies, while power contracts to the Centre. This new state has a corresponding new mixed economy. Instead of separate private and public sectors, a semi-privatised state sector is becoming indistinguishable from a state-subsidised private sector.

This is particularly obvious in schools where Local Management and other innovations have semi-privatised state schools, while private schools are state-subsidised to the tune of approximately £1.3 billion annually through Assisted Places and tax relief.[2]

In higher education an Ivy League of fee-paying, research universities are opting out of their nominal unity with the former-polytechnics so that in this worst of both worlds, elite universities for the few are combined with mass universities for the many.[3]

In further education (FE), where there is desperate competition for students, the FE colleges do not get paid in full by their funding quango until students complete their courses, so persistent allegations of abuse are unsurprising. Meanwhile, to cut costs, college managers, having raised their own salaries by an average of c.£7,000 (*The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 19 May 1995), are imposing local wage contracts on their staffs thus provoking the present dispute, the outcome of which will decide whether the same happens in schools and higher education.

Despite the fact that in the few years since the incorporation (semi-privatisation) of colleges, the contracting state of post16 provision has produced unprecedented chaos through unregulated competition between and within HE, FE, tertiary and sixth-form colleges, schools and training schemes, the National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (NACETT) has proposed raising its targets to match those of rival 'competitor countries'. Research undertaken by the authors in representative colleges and schools in all regions of England and Wales suggests that reaching the new target of 60% of young people at level three (= 2 'A'-level equivalent) by the age of 21 in the year 2000 demands substantial improvements that are unlikely to be met.[4]

The New Tripartism

New divisions within and between schools and FE were foreshadowed by the Dearing Review. The distinctions between 'A'-levels, general NVQs (so-called "vocational 'A'-levels") and NVQs, is mirrored in training by divisions between professional education and the latest invention of the Employment Department – 'Modern Apprenticeships' to NVQ level three, alongside Youth Training to NVQ level two.

The small sixth forms being set up by many schools are often below the viable size of c.200 and further squeeze expenditure on pupils lower down the school. Yet their efforts would be wasted if the playing field were levelled for costs of maintaining students in sixth forms as opposed to FE – as proposed in the Government's 'Competitiveness' White Paper of May 1995. Basically, at present it costs more for a student in sixth-form than in Further Education and more in Further Education than in Youth Training.

Despite the 'attractiveness' that the 'Competitiveness' White Paper saw "in providing all 16-19 year-olds with Learning Credits with real cash value", the Employment Department and Department for Education and DfE have traditionally been at loggerheads and their recent merger may do little to improve the situation. Meanwhile in the wings the market 'loonies' wave their universal vouchers for everything from nursery to post-graduate schools.

The ideal solution for the government of students/trainees taking out loans for their learning credit is therefore far off, though a compromise might be a credit for a basic 'learning entitlement' – such as the Labour Party has proposed for adults – with loans (if not private resources) to 'top-up' on particular courses. One could even imagine a 'learning society' – in the latest Confederation of British Industry (CBI) rhetoric – in which no one was ever unemployed but only 'learning' – rather as Youth Training supposedly ended unemployment for 16-18 year-olds!

For already education and training are heavily implicated in not only maintaining old social divisions but in creating new ones, particularly through the certification – or rather the lack of it – of a so-called 'underclass'. This new 'rough' is divided from the 'respectable' working-middle of society by, among other things, the lack of worthwhile qualifications.

In 1993/4 80.1 per cent of 16-17 year-olds participated in education in a ratio of 6:4 FE: sixth form.[5] Many of these full-time students stay for less than a year however, total participation for 17 and 18 year-olds being 67.5 and

46.8 per cent respectively, more dropping out from sixth form than FE, or rather, many moving at this stage from sixth form to FE. Nevertheless, six out of ten 18 year-olds can now expect to progress to full- or part-time HE at some stage in their lives.[6]

There are now four million full- and part-time FE students with 1.5 million more in HE. Most are adults, with a female majority in FE working through to HE. This indicates a shift from what was a low participation system post-16 to what Ken Spours (1995 [7]) calls a "medium participation" system.

Although the rate of increase may now have peaked, managers in the colleges and schools we visited said they were confident of reaching their enrolment targets. Yet in the sector as a whole, a report by the Further Education Funding Council on the strategic plans of 448 colleges revealed that competition from schools and lack of discretionary and travel grants have led to failure to meet the Government's new target of 25 per cent expansion, making inevitable large scale redundancies if not college closures/mergers.

Even though the traditional day/block release to FE by young people is disappearing, recruitment in the colleges and schools we surveyed was up on all major subject courses, except GCSE resits. In particular, despite displacement to new GNVQ courses and, despite the uneven competition between FE, tertiary, sixth form colleges and school sixth forms, 'A'-level recruitment rose to 36% of 16-year-olds in 1992/3 of whom nearly one third have predictably failed or dropped out.

Going Nowhere Very Quickly?

GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced courses have recruited well in both colleges and schools to approach 25% of all 16+ year-olds of whom a quarter will predictably fail or drop out. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications reported in 1994 that "Very large numbers of GNVQ students aspire to higher education" so that instead of bridging the academic:vocational divide, GNVQs are functioning mainly as substitutes for 'A'-levels for jobless young people with lower school attainments.

However, even though the CBI is calling for 40% to be in HE by 2000, the latest policy of 'consolidation' pegs entry at 30% with only 'modest expansion' promised after 1997-8. So, even if all HE Institutions accept GNVQs for entry, as they say they will, there will not be enough places in HE for all those who may qualify for them. As a result, large numbers of disappointed 18-, 19- and even 20-year-olds (if, as many do, they start at GNVQ level two before moving on to level three) may soon emerge from prolonged education with nowhere to go.

Despite an overall pattern of rising enrolment in sample institutions, many interviewees were sceptical about recent increases being sustained. This was particularly true in colleges, several of which had managed to meet their targets by only disproportionately large increases in adult recruitment due to the collapse into the sector of 'vocational' adult education of which FE is now often the sole provider in many LEAs.

As Bill Stubbs, Chairperson of the Further Education Funding Council, speaking to the 1994 Association for Colleges (AFC) Conference, put it, "scope overall for significant growth.. in attracting young school leavers ... is becoming limited", leaving "part-time education, for those in and out of work ... undoubtedly the biggest potential for change". But, as he warned, "adult students are more demanding and require higher standards of provision ... and, of course, one part-time student will bring in less money than one full-time student."

One part of this recent increase in adult recruitment – onto access and franchised courses to and from HE – may be particularly vulnerable as the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC) has protected its own interests by reconsidering the funding of such courses. Here again – as with school sixth forms compared to FE – there is a contradiction in economic terms as most of these access and franchise courses are cheaper to run in FE than HE.

Meanwhile, everybody knows the impossible is being demanded more for less. You don't get a learning society by sacking teachers, increasing class sizes and closing colleges. Yet two tiers at every level is what the market works remorselessly towards. Worse, at the bottom of this certified society, many of those without worthwhile qualification drift into a black economy of criminality and drug dependence.

Towards a New Alternative

In opposition to the market madness of the Contracting State, we cannot return to the traditional model it has replaced. Academic examinations, for example, are as unpredictive of actual abilities as competence-based assessments, which at least attempt to clarify what candidates are required to do. Learning at all levels must therefore go beyond competence without reverting to the traditional system that previously failed the majority.

For, while the new Americanised system may 'cool out' its rejects later than the early school leaving it replaced, it also offers students opportunities to 'drift up' the system. Moreover, it gives FE and HE a chance to contribute to cultural change and social regeneration. The new mass of full- and part-time students, recruited locally through franchising from FE colleges and including adults in and out of employment, can be encouraged to think for themselves. As part of a larger democratic modernisation, such an alternative education and training would contribute to a real 'learning society'.[8]

Notes

[1] See Patrick Ainley & Mark Corney (1990) *Training for the Future: the rise and fall of the Manpower Services Commission*. London: Cassell.
[2] See Caroline Benn (1990) The public price of private education and privatisation, *Forum*, 32, pp. 68-73.
[3] See Patrick Ainley (1994) *Degrees of Difference: higher education in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
[4] The report to the National Advisory Council for Education and Training is published independently by the London University Institute of Education Post-16 Education Centre as *Progression and the Targets in Post-16 Education and Training*, price £5.50.
[5] DfE Statistical Bulletin 10/94.
[6] *Post-18 Education, growth, change, prospect* (1995) London: Council for Industry and Higher Education.
[7] *Trends in 16-19 Participation, Attainment and Progression*. London University Institute of Education.
[8] A preliminary practical alternative has been outlined in leaflet form, *14-19 education: towards a saner system* by a joint NATFHE/NUT working party, available from NATFHE General Education Section, 221 Firth Park Rd., Sheffield S5 6WW, United Kingdom.

Heads and Headship Today: waving or drowning?

Peter Ribbins

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Reinventing the Controversial

In recent times, the Government has rediscovered the importance of headship. After sixteen years in office, it has also learnt that heads, new and old, lack training opportunities. To tackle this problem, HMI have been sent to France to discover how they do it there. In anticipation of these findings the DFE has set up HEADLAMP for new heads and the Secretary of State has asked the Teacher Training Agency to establish a National Professional Qualification for prospective heads. These seem sensible initiatives, but why has it taken so long to discover they are needed? The provocation is almost enough to make me dip my biro in vitriol. Now, I am not a natural controversialist but I know a man who is. For many years now, I have turned to the back page of *The Times Educational Supplement* expecting to be entertained, enlightened or enraged by Ted Wragg's famous 'Last Word' column. On October 20th, I did so again, hoping to learn from an expert.

To my delight his piece "You don't have to be mad to try this..." was on a topic of mutual interest, headship. His thesis was "you don't *have* to be a "nutter" to want to join the "Barmy Army" but...". He agrees the "feeling that you have to be daft nowadays even to contemplate becoming a head is not exactly new" but claims that "demands on heads have escalated in the last few years" and the Government "by drowning them under brain corroding bureaucracy ... has side-tracked them". Accordingly, "many lament not being able to teach children as often as they used to, or have less time to discuss with staff what is happening in the classroom. As business-type demands have grown, so the time and energy for other matters has eroded".

These, as Elizabeth Bennet once remarked to Lady Catherine de Burgh, are "heavy misfortunes". But her disdainful adviser is also roundly told that anyone securing the role Lizzy was being instructed to forego "must have such extraordinary sources of happiness necessarily attached to her situation, that she could, upon the whole, have no cause to repine". I hesitate to apply such sentiments directly to the delights of headship, but Wragg may be exaggerating the pleasures of headship past and overestimating the problems of headship present. In any case, in what follows, I will propose the controversial view that however great the pressures they face today, many contemporary heads still see themselves as educative leaders.

Do Headteachers Still See Themselves as Educative Leader?

Much writing on headship asserts that, in attempting to cope with recent reforms, many heads have tended to become 'administrators'. Williams predicted that "the daily life of

English heads in the 1990s will be very different from their predecessors a generation earlier ... Heads will become managers of an imposed curriculum ... at the same time schools and their heads are to be given greater financial autonomy ... Financial skills ... will loom large in (their) day-to-day life" (1988, pp. ix, xi). Some believe this has taken place. From a study of twenty Midland heads, Evetts (1994) bluntly concludes "heads are no longer educational leaders". Similar views are voiced in *Heeding Heads* (Hustler et al, 1995). Interestingly, the sceptics are located among the educational commentators rather than the heads.

My research (BEMAS, 1995; Ribbins & Marland, 1994) and that of the Mortimers (1991) is more optimistic. Both tell of heads who feel their ability to take an active role in ensuring the quality of learning and teaching had been put at risk. But others heads, and their numbers may be increasing, strongly deny that recent developments have forced them permanently to give priority to administration. Commonly, they make one or more of three points.

First, adjusting to their post-1988 administrative and budgetary responsibilities was tough for many heads. As Rosemary Whinn-Sladden, from a primary school in Humberside [1], puts it "the amount of work I have to do that takes me away from managing the curriculum is to the detriment of education ... that's happened to a lot of heads". Others have come to terms with this. Sue Benton found it "difficult at first. I did not come into headship expecting to carry the detailed financial, staffing, marketing and other administrative responsibilities I am now expected to exercise. I had to spend a lot of time on this in the early days but ... once I understood what needed to be done and had some experience in doing it I have not felt so swamped by it. When I talk to other colleagues I get the impression most feel the same way".

Second, some believe those emphasising the administrative dimension of their role may have chosen to do so. Brian Sherratt suggests that "Achieving a worthwhile curriculum today is possible and very demanding. It is not surprising some heads are more comfortable retreating into their administrative duties ... They do so because they want to ... if you see yourself as an administrator you can hardly hope to be a leading professional as well".

Third, whilst many heads accept for analytic purposes the value of regarding their role as having a curriculum and an administrative aspect, most reject the idea that these are at polar ends of a continuum. Instead, they see these dimensions as largely independent of each other (see Ribbins, 1993) making it is possible to give a high (or low) priority to each or both as many of those interviewed for recent publications appreciate:

I feel a bit narked about the suggestion that I was not as concerned with teaching and learning as I once was ... all my conversations with my colleagues are about the quality of teaching and learning (Anita Higham)
I could not carry out my chief executive role without being the educational leader. I feel very strongly you cannot carry out the chief executive role properly unless you have got the fundamental principles to do with the education of children, the importance of staff development and so forth. The two go hand in hand (Penny Cooper).
Are you the school administrator or are you the leading professional? I hope the description of my task at Trinity makes my answer to that abundantly clear. It is this passion for education and respect for its professionals that help me to recognise our shortcomings (Michael Evans).

To summarise, many heads do wish to play a major role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning in their school and do emphasise the educative aspect of their role. Even Wragg, in describing the Principal of a big high school in New York as "one of the best heads I have ever met" says "he could have spent all his time on paper-work ... Yet almost every day he watched and discussed a lesson with one of his teachers. That, he said, was his top priority". We are not told the priority he gave to teaching.

Can Heads Still Teach?

Wragg's observation that "many lament not being able to teach children as often as they used to" raises issues concerning how much heads teach, how this can be justified and if it is possible to be an educative leader without teaching? On this last, Anita Higham notes "I'm not sure that I could handle a teaching programme now ... I guess I have come to see my prime task as not to do with teaching particular classes, but with the teaching and learning of all children. Most do teach. Chris Searle sees himself "as a teacher with extra responsibilities ... I still teach now on a regular basis and I have a great deal of contact time with students, not only in lessons". Roy Blatchford spends more time teaching than most secondary heads. It was put to him that "People might argue what are we doing employing a highly paid Principal for a third of his time to teach kids, when we get any half-competent teacher in. Your job as Principal is to motivate staff rather than to motivate children". He admits "I have been told by the senior staff I mustn't teach more than that" but says "Maybe I am not using resources most effectively ... I think you have to ask yourself what would be doing with that time. Some heads might spend the time doing paperwork in their office which I might do at another time". Peter Downes, head of an even larger school, asked to justify the amount of time he spends teaching, admits "I can't on any rational grounds. I can justify it on the grounds of the morale and the sanity of the head ... to deprive him or her of the chance to exercise their basic craft is an impoverishment".

This may be so, but Mary Gray, head of a primary school in Bristol, criticises the idea that "to be a good head ... all you had to be was an excellent teacher ... 1 think that many of the heads who have subsequently had problems are those who obviously were very gifted teachers, but who within their careers hadn't developed the management side of their role ... Basically, I am a managing director now". But she also stresses that her role has changed over time and become more demanding. This is a view expressed by others.

Is Headship Harder?

On this, Bernard Clarke says "I talk to heads from other parts of the world, and they can't believe what is required of heads in this country ... The British education system has a tradition of the head as both academic and pastoral leader and that makes it big ... If you lay on that the business manager aspect of the role, the marketer, and all the other things, it becomes a huge job". Rosemary Whinn-Sladden asked if headship is harder than it used to be, says "Yes, very much so. The work load is phenomenal". Roy Blatchford, one of the few who thinks the work is not more difficult but "just different", puts in up to 80 hours a week. He "gets in at a quarter past seven (and is) there most evenings until 7pm and many evenings through until 9.30pm ... I usually come in on Saturday mornings unless I am at a conference". Helen Hyde "attends every single school function" and, fortunately, "likes working in the evenings". Peter Downes confesses "I probably work too hard. I think I probably work about 75-80 hours a week".

Why Do It?

If this is what it takes to be an educational leader we should ask why heads do it and if the price is too high? Is Roy Blatchford answer "that's a choice I make" or such views as "being a headteacher is a great job" (Mervyn Flecknoe) and "I still think it the best job to have" (Sid Slater) justification enough? Helen Hyde is unequivocal "I really love the job – I love coming to school – I love dealing with the personnel side – I love dealing with my staff – I like to feel I am helpful and I like to feel my school is achieving for the girls. I love the job ". But there are other motivations. Vasanthi Rao says "I must confess I enjoy the power and the status..." and Rosemary Whinn-Sladden frankly admits "I like being in charge. I'm sure it is one of the seven deadly sins ... I love being the head. I love being able to do things and see something happen. I have always been a lousy Indian and I have always known I was going to be a headteacher. I knew I was going to be a headteacher and I enjoy it. I love walking around the school when its full and when its empty. I look around and I think "I did that ... where else can you have a job where, whatever you do, a little wave just gets bigger". What would make a better last word?

Note

[1] Unless otherwise specified, the heads named are drawn from the secondary sector.

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Partnership in Secondary Initial Teacher Education

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Background to the Research

As a result of Department for Education (DFE) Circular 9/92 which requires secondary student teachers to spend two-thirds of their course in school, secondary schools are now in a very significant position. The Circular requires Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to work in partnership with schools in the planning, implementation and assessment processes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE); schools are not, however, similarly enjoined. Inevitably then, the key issue for all HEIs is that of placements – ensuring each year a sufficient number to match targets. Upon the degree to which schools are able and prepared to offer placements, hinges not only the viability of HEI–School partnerships but also the future supply of teachers. This study is concerned with the factors influencing schools, particularly in terms of entering into single or multiple partnerships. It focuses on the Postgraduate Certificate of Education.

Schools then, have the choice. The schools (140) consulted here indicated the following decisions in this respect:
(1) to have no involvement with ITE at all (18.9%);
(2) to set up or participate in a school-centred consortium for the provision of ITE, which may, but is not obliged to, involve HEI input (School Centred Initial Teacher Training schemes) (0.1%);
(3) to work in partnership with one single HEI only (36%);
(4) to work in partnership with a number of different HEIs (45%).
The focus of this study is particularly on choices (1), (3) and (4) as set out above. The chief interest lies in the issues surrounding decisions about partnerships, the rationale given by the schools for their decisions and the implications for quality assurance both in schools and in HEIs. The schools' most likely future policies are also of particular interest. The research would then inform our own practice and planning and would also shed light on how HEIs might relate to one another.

Context

From the literature growing up in the world of post-Circular 9/92 secondary initial teacher education (ITE), it is clear that the notion of 'partnership' between schools and HEIs is becoming well-established (e.g. Reid, 1994; Spence, 1993; McIntyre et al, 1993). Increasingly clear too, is the extent to which the success of 9/92 courses have depended so far, on the trust, co-operation and goodwill existing between schools and HEIs. A consensus is also beginning to grow about the necessary ingredients for success (Reid 1994, especially Chapters 4 & 11): good communication, close relationships, clearly articulated aims, shared philosophy,

good documentation and so on. Furthermore, a study undertaken by the University of the West of England (1995) particularly highlights the professional benefits accruing to schools involved in partnerships.

In spite of much positive action and indeed enthusiasm however, there are anxieties. The problem of school placements – their number and their quality – has been widely documented.

Wright & Moore (1994) write:
Higher education institutions have not been inundated with requests from schools to participate in training; in fact, there are concerns that offers of places will decline. Usually just enough places have been offered and HEIs have found themselves in the role of 'beggars can't be choosers'.

A Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) paper in 1994 also referred to:
The difficulties of securing sufficient school placements. These difficulties are now considerable in mathematics, science, modern languages, music and in several minority subjects. Although strenuous efforts are made to overcome them, they have led some HEIs into planned under-recruitment in these curriculum areas or not to seek to re-fill placements when applicants withdraw.

The UWE study, which obtained responses from 53 HEIs indeed showed the same:
The number of respondents who said that their institution was having such difficulties, had risen from 51.1% to 71.4% between 93/94 and 94/95. (p. 5)

This has been played down by government sources, yet the Chief HMI (OFSTED 1995) does see the difficulty:
.. in some areas of the country and in some shortage subjects, HEIs experienced difficulty in finding sufficient good quality departments in which to place students.

The roots of this problem are becoming clear. First, Circular 9/92 requires HEIs to work with partner schools but schools are not similarly enjoined. There is nothing in the present DFE legislation which requires schools to be involved in ITE at all. The 9/92 requirement that PGCE students be based on the premises of partner schools for two thirds (120 days) of the course (as compared with an average of half the course time prior to 9/92 and that teachers share in planning, course delivery and assessment of students, represents, for some schools, a far greater commitment and responsibility than they are prepared to take on; others feel that the resources are inadequate. As Reid (1994) says:
The imposition of the market place on professional training and the transfer of limited funding from HEIs has resulted in fairly widespread economic reconsideration. Many schools and HEIs are questioning

whether their involvement in teacher training is a cost they can afford to bear. Some have withdrawn and more are likely to, and in any case the situation has seriously disturbed the nature and relationships within the enterprise in a manner unlikely to improve the quality of courses. (p. 5)

Some schools then are not participating at all (18.9% in the survey in this study). The placement shortage is further exacerbated however, by the fact that many schools, quite properly, are operating a quota system for the number of placements they are prepared to offer overall (e.g. one student per 200 pupils). They are clearly subscribing to one of Aspinall's (quoted in Reid 1994) "ideals" for the mentoring process, that:

The school is not overburdened with students in a way that is detrimental to pupils.

In this context of 'shortage' therefore, the question of quality becomes pressing. Kenneth Clarke in 1992 said in his speech to the North of England Conference of Head Teachers:

The schools to be used as partners should be those schools in this country which command the greatest confidence in academic and in other aspects of measured performance.

It seems likely from 9/92 and the accompanying notes that, at the time, the DFE saw quality control measures operated by HEIs as yet another means of raising standards as schools competed for the status of working in partnership with HEIs.

The reality is now somewhat different. Since schools have not come forward in the number anticipated by Kenneth Clarke and 9/92, a market forces system has been created in which HEIs compete for a scarce resource, placements; schools are, as it were, the buyers. Thus the control of the HEIs over quality assurance (their explicit responsibility) is weakened.

A colleague in one HEI, desperate for placements, related that one of his proposed partner schools had 'failed' its OFSTED inspection quite badly but that he had no choice but to continue with the partnership for the present.

Much depends then on the numbers of schools coming forward into partnership; a further consideration is also the number of HEIs any given school is prepared to work with. Some schools are developing one-HEI-only policies; others are entering into multiple partnerships. For their part, HEIs are moving further and further afield to find placements and collectively, are placing those schools prepared to participate under ever increasing pressure.

Research Design

The first stage of the enquiry, described here, was a survey by questionnaire to identify the extent and nature of the partnerships in a given area and to identify some of the main points at issue. The next stage will involve a specific number of semi-structured interviews with the professional tutors who indicated on the questionnaires a willingness to be interviewed, in schools with either no partnership, single or multiple partnership policies.

The decision was taken to send the questionnaires to schools to which requests for placements from the two HEIs are normally sent; it was felt that this would ensure a better return rate. In the event, 282 questionnaires were sent out to secondary schools in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Avon, Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Glamorgan, West Midlands, Walsall and Staffordshire. The list of schools included a small number of independent schools and special schools.

Research Findings

Of the 282 questionnaires sent out, 140 (50%) were returned. This good response rate is attributable not only to the fact that one or other of the researchers was known by name to those circulated but also to the topicality and relevance of the issue itself. Furthermore, a significant feature of this survey was how fully teachers completed the form. In those questions where spaces were given – respondents often wrote at considerable length.

Schools in Partnership with HEIs

In the first question, schools were asked to indicate if they were in partnership with any HEIs in ITE. Schools were asked to note that the Open University counted as an HEI, and that partnership might involve any secondary course, i.e. BEd or PGCE.

Not in partnership 18.9% (*N*=27)
In partnership 81% (*N*=113)

One school (0.1%) was involved in a non-HEI-related SCITT.

Few reasons were given by respondents in this study for non-involvement, although OFSTED inspections and the "onerous demands' of partnership" were mentioned. It is interesting to note a similar finding in the UWE report which indicated that 18.6% of schools "had chosen not to become involved in the new arrangements" (p. 5).

Who Makes Decisions about Partnership?

In 96% of the schools in partnership, the decision is made by the senior management team, very often in conjunction with the Head of Department or with the governing body or both. This contrasts with the pre-9/92 practice whereby a less formal agreement was often set up between the subject specialists in school and in college, which was then communicated to the school senior management team.

Now that arrangements are more formal, involving contracts between the school and the HEI, many school senior management teams impose a limit on the overall number of placements offered, in the form of the quota system already mentioned. This practice has obvious benefits for the school in enabling it to protect, most importantly pupils, but also staff from over-exposure to students. But, not only does this have a knock-on effect upon placement offers (thus affecting all subject areas and even those where the numbers of placements required are not high) but also, as we shall see, is effectively cutting some teachers out of the process particularly in single partnerships.

Schools in Partnership with One or More HEIs

One hundred and thirteen (81%) of the respondents were involved in partnerships with HEIs in ITE, to which the following analysis applies:

One HEI	44%
Two HEIs	32%
Three HEIs	19%
Four HEIs	4%
Five or more	1%

It should be noted that some schools drew a distinction between their main partnership institution and other HEIs from which they are taking students; this being particularly the case for schools working with 3 or more institutions. In such cases, for the purposes of analysing the findings,

the data has been collated according to the overall number of HEIs with which the school is working

Many of the advantages and disadvantages expressed on the questionnaire about involvement in ITE were of a general nature – stimulus to reflection on own practice, fresh ideas being brought in and so on. Looking specifically for the advantages and disadvantages of being involved with either only one, or more than one HEI – the following points emerged.

Single Partnerships. Advocates of these commented strongly:
● administratively easier;
● real partnership and quality relationships with the HEI can be established – courses can be better known and understood in more detail; philosophy, aims and objectives can become clearer;
● student-teachers become truly part of the school; and
● less risk of adverse effects on children.

The single disadvantage mentioned (but by a number of respondents) was that working with only one HEI often meant that some departments could no longer have students. There was distress that some subject teachers not only felt 'left out' and thus deprived of a significant means of staff development but also had to sever previously established relationships with other HEIs. This might be because of the school's quota policy or more than likely, because the chosen HEI does not offer the full range of subjects.

Multiple Partnerships. The strengths of these – expressed with great frequency – included:
● the role of the professional tutor is enhanced;
● more subjects can be involved;
● a greater number of staff have the opportunity to work with students/HEIs;
● experience of the best and the worst of the practices/courses of more than one HEI enables the school to learn and develop their own ideas; and
● flexibility – if one 'contract' should fail to materialise.

Respondents working in multiple partnerships also identified more disadvantages:
● differences in course structures, requirements, nomenclature, proformas, assessment procedures etc. could cause confusion;
● a potential organisational 'nightmare';
● time-consuming (if the same sessions need to be repeated for different groups);
● information 'overload';
● time/distance considerations for staff having to attend training sessions/meetings at various HEIs;
● pressure on staffrooms/car-parking;
● the care needed to ensure no adverse effects on children; and
● ITE exposure fatigue'.

Th fact that the great majority of these respondents wished to continue however, suggests that schools themselves are working to resolve these problems.

How Many other Invitations to Partnerships were Received by Schools?

Number of Additional Requests
No reply 3%
| 0 | 8% |
| 1 | 20% |

2	27%
3	24%
4	15%
5	2%
6	0%
7	1%

These were the responses from the 113 schools already in partnerships. This question was included as a means of gauging the pressure schools are under to provide placements, other than to HEIs to which they are already committed. It is clear from the above that many schools are indeed under intense pressure to provide more placements than they feel they can offer.

Most Likely Future Policy for School in Respect of HEI Partnerships

Involvement with HEIs
No Reply	2%
Decreasing	11%
Ceasing	1%
Increasing	10%
Maintaining	76%

These were the responses of the 113 schools already in partnership. While these figures give a gratifying impression of stability – those likely to decrease involvement compensated for by those likely to increase involvement and a high proportion expecting to maintain the status quo – it must be remembered that this is within an overall context of shortage.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in requiring this model of ITE through Circular 9/92, the government forced HEIs into a competitive market whereby they are the buyers of a scarce resource. The Teacher Training Agency is also working within the same constraint – hence their second Aim "to secure the effective involvement of schools in all forms of ITT". To have tilted the market in favour of the HEIs, the government would either have had to increase the resources to such an extent that no school could have afforded not be involved or required all schools to take a proportion of ITE students particularly in shortage subject areas. It is unlikely that HEIs would support the degree of coercion implied by the latter; more likely, it is a greater degree of resourcing and flexibility within 9/92 which would be welcomed.

This paper has viewed the issues so far largely from the HEI perspective. From the school perspective, there are also other questions on the agenda: for example, the extent to which cuts in educational spending, staff reductions, increases in class size and pressure from the teacher unions are influencing rates of participation in ITE; the degree to which both HEIs and schools are, in effect, subsidising the whole venture. These are clearly matters in need of further investigation.

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A Constructivist View of Education

Liz Thomson & Alan Thomson
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IMAGINATIVE PROFESSIONALS
(Liz Thomson)

To say that the past decade has been turbulent, would, for many, be an understatement in the world of Education. The effects of over-legislation are evident in the confusion, high levels of stress, and the anxiety that beset professionals in all levels of the Education Service. Education has become a convenient scapegoat for the nation's ills and there is a real danger that opportunities for innovation and creativity in teaching and learning are being sacrificed at the alter of instrumentalism. The prevailing emphasis is on responding to 'needs' identified by economists, politicians and the moguls of industry. Many would agree that the only constant is change, despite the assertions in the final report of the Dearing Review, that there would be a 5-year moratorium on introducing further changes to the National Curriculum in schools.

It is worth examining the aspirations of those who conceived and introduced the changes, because there is no doubt that the rhetoric was concerned with improvement and entitlement; even though the reality for many has proved to be extremely different.

It is now nearly nine years since the red booklet *The National Curriculum 5-16* was published. The booklet, described as a 'consultation document', came out in July 1987, was circulated in August and responses were invited by the 30 September. Whatever might be thought about the timing (during August when most people were on holiday) or the short consultation period, it is interesting to see that the thrust of the curriculum reform was towards "ensuring that all pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects throughout their compulsory schooling" and that there should be "clear objectives for what children over the full range of ability should be able to achieve".

The consultation document made it clear that the advantages and changes proposed could be guaranteed only within a national framework and that, to be effective, the framework must be backed by law "which provides a framework not a straitjacket". It conceded that legislation alone would not result in raised standards, but "the imaginative application of professional skills at all levels of the education service, within a statutory framework which sets clear objectives, will raise standards".

Following the legislation for a National Curriculum in the 1988 Education Reform Act, the Government published another red booklet, this time entitled *From Policy to Practice* (1989). This booklet was intended to act as a guide for heads and teachers on the legal requirements and expectations of the National Curriculum. It affirmed the key principle enshrined within the legislation which was that: "each pupil should have a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to his or her personal needs" and promoted the concept of entitlement for all pupils.

The concept of entitlement is one which every teacher must aspire towards. To suggest otherwise is like saying that teachers are not concerned about ensuring that the children they teach progress in their learning. The critical question was, and still is: Who defines the parameters of entitlement and how can it be achieved?

It is patently obvious that the National Curriculum was introduced in a way that made most teachers feel inadequate, uncertain and insecure about their professionalism. The fact that they did not have any real representative voice in the forum where decisions were being made about the composition and content of the National Curriculum, added to their feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty. The inference that the government chose to legislate because the teaching profession was not up to par, further fuelled what I have described in a recent *FORUM* article as the FUD (fear uncertainty and doubt) factor. This, coupled with an awareness that in order to be truly accountable, measures and yardsticks would be established to check not only pupil performance, against the agreed attainment targets and levels of the National Curriculum, but also teachers' competence, all contributed to an erosion of teacher morale and belief in their professionalism.

To add insult to injury, it soon became apparent that the operational conception of the National Curriculum was flawed. For, as each working group made its recommendations, the content of the National Curriculum grew bigger and bigger and the demands, in terms of what teachers were expected to know, also grew. The effect on primary school teachers was traumatic to say the least. First they had to become experts in science handling 17 Attainment Targets. Then they had to ensure that the other core curriculum subjects, maths and English were covered in accordance with the requirements of the Attainment Targets for each Key Stage. No sooner had they completed these requirements, they went on to grapple with the demands of technology, whilst at the same time coming to terms with the introduction of Standard Assessment Tasks in the core subjects at KS1. The National Curriculum juggernaut

was well on its way, despite the casualties of demoralised and over-stressed teachers incurred in its wake.

It is not my intention to unfold the whole sorry saga of change, reversals and U-turns that have occurred since those early days. The account merely serves to illustrate the huge gap between the government's rhetoric of curriculum reform and change and what turned out to be the reality for many teachers. In responding to the requirements at that time teachers:

(1) participated in a national experiment of curriculum change without the advantage of being able to draw on evidence from any pilot projects;
(2) were required to learn a new language, often communicated through acronyms – ATs, KS, PoS, levels of attainment, SATs; as well as having to re-name the year groups;
(3) did not have any real opportunities to voice their professional concerns about the manageability of a curriculum which was conceived as the sum of many parts instead of as a whole.

Small wonder, you might think, that the statement in the 1987 consultation document about "the imaginative application of professional skills at all levels of the education service, within a statutory framework which sets clear objectives *will* raise standards", now raises a wry smile when we examine the apparently derisory stance towards the teaching profession adopted by some Secretaries of State (most notably Kenneth Clarke and John Patten) and the current Senior Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead.

And yet "the imaginative application of professional skills" is surely at the heart of good teaching. If the criticisms levelled at the teaching profession are to be challenged, it is important that the evidence for counter argument is based on the work of committed, imaginative and creative teachers. Where, might you ask, can such teachers be found? I would suggest that they can be found amongst those who are doers rather than whingers; who are concerned to be in the action for change rather than being subjected to it.

The cardinal mistake of those who were responsible for the original conception of the National Curriculum was that they did not invite others, particularly the teaching profession, to share that responsibility. The fact that the 1987 consultation was a hollow exercise and that teachers were excluded from having any real say was starkly highlighted in the response to a later consultation exercise conducted by a man (Sir Ron Dearing) who was prepared to listen.

Personal maturity is often defined as being capable of taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. If teachers are to be regarded as mature professionals then it is important that they can take that kind of responsibility; a responsibility which copes with the brickbats as well as the bouquets. Too often we are pushed into a position where we construe ourselves as victims. The scenario I have described in the first part of this article is one which might be interpreted as supporting such a stance. A stance which allows us to blame others, to be reactive, to see ourselves as victims of circumstance, instead of active agents in our own development.

Fortunately there are signs that the bleak years of professional wilderness are ending as more and more schools and teachers are adopting a 'can do' philosophy. The opportunities offered through organisations like the National Primary Centre have enabled teachers and schools in

Buckinghamshire, Birmingham and Oxfordshire, to take control of the curriculum and learning through becoming engaged in small-scale action research projects which are designed to inform and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The value of such an approach is not just in the doing, but it is also in the fact that the research studies are recorded and published in a variety of formats, folders, booklets, information sheets and videos. The publications are short, to the point and informative, and designed deliberately to be picked up by busy teachers from the staff room table and read during a mid morning/afternoon break or at lunch-time.

Maggie Debrou, in a recent article in *Primary Life*, conveys the spirit of consciously moving from being a recipient of imposed change to the more proactive role required to initiate and take control of change when she describes why she, and the teachers she works with at Priory Common First School in Milton Keynes, embarked on a self-initiated curriculum planning exercise in 1993:

The pace of change has been so unremitting in the last few years that no time has been allowed for consideration or consolidation. But now we were going to make that time available and get the measure of the beast we were dealing with! This time, we were initiating the change and for that reason alone, as research confirms, there would be a much greater chance of it being successfully implemented and developed.

In the concluding paragraph to her article she describes what the staff had gained from the process of developing "a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum":

Our review has afforded staff an exciting opportunity to examine, critically and realistically, each of these fundamental concepts. We were able to make genuine shared decisions about their implications for the quality of practice in our school and how they relate to the needs of the individual child. In the midst of the maelstrom, we have created our own small space to stop and think and create – a luxury long denied the classroom teacher.

The processes of reflexivity and creativity are indeed fundamental to the "imaginative application of professional skills" whether it is in the classroom or in other aspects of the education service. Whatever else, the past decade has demonstrated the need to recognise, foster and nurture such qualities by listening to teachers and encouraging them to look for constructive alternatives. It is only through developing the capability to become mature professionals, in the terms I have described earlier, that all teachers and learners will receive their true entitlement.

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND EMPOWERMENT
(Alan Thomson)

When Liz Thomson in *Imaginative Professionals* charts some of the political interventions that have preoccupied teachers in the last 15 years I am not so much interested in the details of the legislation but with the effect that the legislation has had upon teachers and others in education. As a psychotherapist my concern is not the events that constitute our lives but what we make of them.

In her first paragraph the words *turbulent, stress, anxiety, scapegoat, ills* and *sacrifice* stand out, and reflect my concern about the effect of what some might see as the systematic demoralisation of the teaching profession. I believe that a

constructivist approach to the stream of political events could provide an alternative way of going with the flow.

Personal Construct Psychology has a very simple starting point: We interpret what our senses tell us about the outside world. So the labels we apply to things and events like 'animal' or 'vegetable', 'good' or 'bad', 'friend' or 'enemy' are not inherent in the event but in our interpretation . Our senses are not neutral receptors of external events; they are guided and directed by our expectations. Thus it is not just events in the outside world which govern our lives, but also our expectations and interpretations of these events. It is the interpretations that we make, which we use as evidence to make our decisions and to act

To give an example of this: I may see that one child in a class is looking unhappy and that all those around the child are looking very pleased with themselves.

Recalling similar observations I have made in the past I place an interpretation upon this observation. I now guess what events might have preceded my observation and have some expectation of what might follow if I don't intervene. So I have constructed a theory (or more correctly a hypothesis) and armed with this I can devise a plan of action and put that plan into effect. Now, if my plan works then the next time I observe something fairly similar happening, I apply the same interpretation and plan of action. But if my plan does not succeed in achieving my goals, then I need either to devise an alternative plan of action or find a new way of interpreting the events.

The next aspect of Personal Construct Psychology which I wish to write about is to do with change.

It is common for us to think of ourselves as static, permanent and unchanging and that all 'change' must therefore be resisted. Personal Construct Psychology is based upon a different view. Change is what makes us human and alive, we are all changing all the time.. Apart from the obvious physical changes due to ageing we are all embracing change when for instance we plan a holiday or are asked if next term when the head is away would we like to take over. So what is different about the changes in what and how we teach? When we plan a holiday we are exercising choice, the changes (in our attitude to another culture for instance) will be self imposed . When we are asked to be acting head, we are consulted, we are given a choice to decide what is in our best interest as well as in the best interest of the school. It is unnecessary for me to point out why so many were dismayed by the attitude of Clark and Patten in introducing changes in Education. Seen at its best, consultation can be regarded as the development of co-ownership of the process of change. We need to believe that we have a stake in our own destiny.

Personal Construct Psychology is a very positive psychology. We are not condemned by past events, even events in our early childhood, nor do we race blindly into an unforseeable future. Our principal activity is construing a framework of hypotheses about our personal world which enable us with some degree of success to anticipate events and so make the future less fearful, less threatening.

... it emphasises the creative capacity of the living thing to represent the environment, not merely respond to it. Because he or she can represent their environment, they

can place alternative constructions upon it and indeed do something about it if it doesn't suit them.[1]
As I pointed out earlier in the example, if the construction we place is not useful to us then we reconstrue.

We take the stand that there are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world. No one needs to paint themselves into a corner; no one need to be completely hemmed in by circumstances: no one needs to be a victim of their biography. We call this philosophical position constructive alternativism.[1]
Seen as something less than its best, consultation can be regarded as providing an early opportunity for one party to reconstrue, but even without consultation the passage of time has enabled us to reconstrue the situation , to make it less threatening for us. We have found alternative ways, productive ways of interpreting events.

There is no end to the creativity in every one of us. Liz Thomson praises "those who are doers rather than the whingers" and she is right but there are other alternatives, some unthinkable like depression or giving up, but there are more constructive ways of withdrawing, like re-training in another profession. Less dramatically there are many who were able to see that in spite of the appalling way that events unfolded, there were advantages to be gained from a positive attitude toward them. There is a tendency in all of us when we construe imposed changes to see them to be for the worse, to idealise the position that we came from. Some of us can look back to the good old days of the 1970s with nostalgia, but were they all that good? Was there room for improvement? Is there anything that has improved? How many of us turn to the back page of *The Times Educational Supplement* on alternate weeks read Ted Wragg's alternative constructions. Ridicule and laughter is a double-edged sword but can be one of my alternatives. We can maintain the knowledge of our own professional integrity, and more easily help colleagues , who deserve it, to maintain theirs. This is not a recipe, it is not even a suggestion; it's a list of alternative ways of construing an unwelcome event, that come to mind. There are more, and as a result we can vote, march, strike, discuss, write, deny, ignore, protest, share ; the alternatives are endless.

... The assumption is that whatever nature may be, or howsoever the quest for truth will turn out in the end, the events we face today are subject to as great a variety of constructions as our wits will enable us to contrive. This is not to say that one construction is as good as another, nor is it to deny that at some infinite point in time human vision will behold reality out to the utmost reaches of existence. But it does remind us that all our present perceptions are open to question and reconsideration and it does broadly suggest that even the most obvious occurrences of everyday life might appear utterly transformed if we were inventive enough to construe them differently.[2]

Notes

[1] G.A. Kelly (1955) *The Psychology of Personal Constructs.* New York: Norton.
[2] G.A. Kelly (1970) A brief introduction to Personal Contruct Theory, in D. Bannister (Ed.) *Perspectives in Personal Construct Theory.* London:: Academic Press.
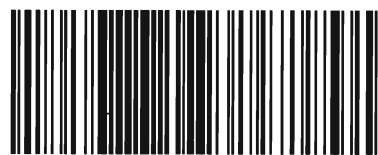
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