FORUM

for promoting 3–19 comprehensive education

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Comprehensive Achievements
Disruptive Pupils
Unethical School Inspections

TRIANGLE

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The *next* FORUM

Among the items in the Spring 1997 number **Brian Simon** discusses the proposals in the recent DfEE White Paper *Self-government for Schools*, and in the new Government Bill arising from it; **Clyde Chitty** analyses the changing concept of the neighbourhood comprehensive school; **Rob Watts**, a comprehensive school teacher in Burton-upon-Trent, explains why the comprehensive principle is so important to him; **Glenn Rikowski** provides further reflections on the recent Dearing Review of 16-19 qualifications; **Douglas Newton** writes on 'Assigning Design and Technology'; and **Audrey Osler** looks at black teachers' professional and political identities.

Editorial correspondence, including typescript articles (1500-2000 words), contributions to discussion (800 words maximum), and **books for review**, should b addressed to Clyde Chitty, 16 Elmfield Avenue, Stoneygate, Leicester LE2 1RD, United Kingdom. Telephone: 0116-2703132. Please send two copies and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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Not Set Apart

As we enter into the run-up to the next General Election the paranoia of both major political parties becomes increasingly evident. Education continues to be a major focus, with each side seemingly bent on out-doing the other in proposing reactionary and regressive measures designed to ensure that they will succeed in gaining the majority vote.

How could they have got it so wrong? The meticulous research evidence compiled by Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty in their seminal book *Thirty Years On* shows that the majority of comprehensive schools are successful and that parents do not want to return to the dark ages of selection at eleven. John Major's stated desire for a grammar school in every town is designed to appeal to the voter who sees such a move as an opportunity for their off-spring to become part of the educational élite and as a springboard for upward social mobility. However, as Melian Mansfield points out in her article 'Is Selection What Parents Really Want?', few voices are raised in support of the return of secondary modern schools. Those of us who were educated in the times of selection know from personal experience of siblings who did not achieve the golden goal of the grammar school, who were relegated to the bottom league of the secondary modern. Within families and in the wider community, selection reinforces the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' not only in terms of acknowledged achievements, but also in terms of resources.

There is little mention in the current political rhetoric of ensuring that education is properly resourced. The comprehensive ideal which is concerned with ensuring that there is parity of esteem accorded to all sections of the school community can, when it works well, provide a model for the kind of society we desire and deserve; but it needs more accurately targeted resources to ensure that such an ideal can become a reality for the majority.

The fact that schools are under increased pressure on all fronts has been well documented in this journal in recent issues. However, there is no doubt that during the past twelve months increasing concerns have been expressed about disruptive pupils. Jenny Thewlis's article, 'What Shall We Do With the Naughty Children?', identifies the cycle of failure and deprivation which leads to the difficulties that have received so much media attention and publicity. This is an issue which has divided staff, headteachers and governors and is a further manifestation of the alienation that can occur when mutual concern and esteem go out of the window. Basil Bernstein said many years ago "Education cannot compensate for society"; yet there is a sense that the nation's ills are often attributed to what is deemed as the inadequacy of the education system.

It is, therefore, good that in this issue we have articles which focus on the positive achievements of young people in schools and the successes of comprehensive education. Bob Moon's 'Schooling Beyond the Bell-curve', challenges the metaphor of the bell-curve as a determinant in measuring achievements in schools and draws upon the work of Howard Gardner and others who believe that multiple intelligences offer a reformed vision of each child's potential which requires some re-conceptualisation of teaching and schooling. This should not take us down the narrow, retrograde path of selection and specialisation, but should, as Bob Moon suggests, provide "a release of energy and inspiration, a curriculum and assessment system unconstrained by normative standardisation". If this can occur then the possibilities are enormous and will allow teachers and pupils to truly develop their creativity and potential.

The current obsession with quantifiable measures does not allow for the more intangible aspects of a high quality school and of high quality teaching. The breast-beating which occurs in August when A-level and GCSE results are announced shows how spurious the arguments are when elderly politicians like Sir Rhodes Boyson chant their annual mantra about a decline in standards and the inadequacy of the present examination system – this despite an increase in successful results in both examinations. Whilst it would be churlish not to acknowledge Sir Rhodes's experience as an educator, it is important to recognise that he is not comparing like with like. From his recent pronouncements it would appear that his definition of examination is related solely to the capability of students to perform well in a timed test. There is no recognition of the value of other forms of examination and assessment which often are more beneficial to the students' long term understanding and maturity.

At a time when social values are being questioned and the manifestations of the self-centred legacy of Thatcherism are all too evident in some of the difficulties faced by schools, it is important that we should be reminded of the purpose of education. For me, the words of Julius Nyerere provide as fitting a conclusion to this editorial as they did for Bernard Clarke's article:

> *... children must learn from the beginning to the end of their school life that education does not set them apart but is designed to make them effective members of the community – for their own benefit as well as that of their country and their neighbours.*

Liz Thomson

Alive and Well and Destined to Survive

Caroline Benn & Clyde Chitty

FORUM exists to promote comprehensive education at all levels. In this article, Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty discuss some of the findings of their 1993-94 independent enquiry into comprehensive schools and colleges in Britain, against the background of recent government efforts to reintroduce selection under the guise of promoting choice.

Introduction

A recent editorial in *The Independent on Sunday* provided a refreshingly simple class-based analysis of the motivation behind Tory education policy since 1979:

> *For the past 17 years, Tory education policy has had one over-riding aim: to help the middle classes keep their offspring out of schools that have too many rough children from poor homes. All else – talk of parental choice, diversity of schools, differentiation among pupils – is waffle ... For the Tories, the most important thing about a school is not the teachers or the buildings or the books and equipment but the pupils. The attraction of a good school, like that of a good club or a good restaurant, is precisely its exclusivity ... The main aim of government policy is to strengthen selection and to rig the rules in favour of the middle classes.[1]*

In their belief, mistaken or otherwise, that selection is indeed an important middle-class issue, recent Thatcher and Major administrations have sought *both* to marginalise the comprehensive school *and* to denigrate its achievements. For example: *The Parents' Charter*, sent in 1993 at a cost of £3 million to every household in Britain, told citizens about grant maintained schools, City Technology Colleges, assisted places, voluntary schools, training credits, selective schools for the 'academically able' and about the 'important role' of private education. It completely failed to mention state comprehensive schools and colleges. Yet in the same year, another government publication claimed that 'over 90 per cent' of pupils owed their secondary education to state comprehensive schools.[2]

As part of the Government's campaign to destroy comprehensive education and thereby supposedly secure middle-class support, ways have had to be found of introducing more selection and diversity into the state secondary sector – while at the same time ensuring that where genuine comprehensive systems do exist, new hierarchies and elite establishments are created in order to undermine the comprehensive principle. John Major's idea of 'a grammar school in every large town in England and Wales'' which became official government policy with the publication of the June White Paper, is a fairly crude way of reintroducing selection; a more subtle and therefore potentially more sinister means to the same end is the promotion of the 'magnet school' concept among comprehensives: in other words, *selection by specialisation.* Back in July 1992, former Education Secretary John Patten argued in an article published in the *New Statesman and Society* 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, under-pinned by the National Curriculum, will be the answer for some – though not all – children, driven by aptitude and interest, as much as by ability.[3]*

In May 1996 Gillian Shephard announced that ministers were commissioning new tests in technological ability for 11-year-olds to help the Government's business-sponsored Technology Colleges to select their future pupils. At the same time, another 38 schools were named as new Language or Technology Colleges, bringing the number of specialist schools in the Government's programme to 196 (15 CTCs; 30 Language Colleges and 151 new Technology Colleges). And government policy has been endorsed by New Labour in their policy documents *Diversity and Excellence* and *Excellence for Everyone.* What both party readerships conveniently fail to mention is that in a class-divided and competitive society, specialisms are not equal: they rapidly become ranked in a hierarchy of status.

On top of all this, both Conservative and Labour politicians have recently sought to influence the teaching methods and grouping policies of individual comprehensive schools. The 1992 White Paper *Choice and Diversity* argued that special arrangements should be made for 'children with exceptional ability'; and vilified the comprehensive system for presupposing that "children are all basically the same".[4] And more recently, in a speech in Oxfordshire in June this year, Tony Blair argued that standards in comprehensive schools could be improved only by abandoning mixed-ability teaching:

> *Not to take account of the obvious common sense that different children move at different speeds and have differing abilities is to give idealism a bad name. The modernisation of the comprehensive principle requires that all pupils are encouraged to progress as far and as fast as they are able. Grouping children according to ability can be an important way of making that happen.[5]*

Which would appear to be in line with the thinking of that *éminence grise* of New Labour, Peter Mandelson, who recently argued in his co-authored book *The Blair Revolution* that "more schools should consider setting pupils according

to ability in some academic subjects: where there are ideological presumptions in favour of mixed ability teaching, these should be abandoned in favour of what achieves the best results in schools."[6]

Coping with Current Myths

This over-riding pre-occupation with selection and diversity would seem to fit in with a number of current myths about the sort of education system that parents actually want.

On both the Centre Right and the Modernising Left, 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-provided education.

The Conservative MP George Walden has long campaigned for the return of both grammar and direct-grant schools, arguing that "it is a myth to suppose that it is possible to develop a high-quality system of state education in a country where the richest, most successful and influential people have nothing to do with it."[7] In Walden's view, the return of selection will bring excellence back into the state sector and thereby create real competition for the private schools.

Similarly, in an article published in *The Guardian* in August last year, John Gray argued that "egalitarian opposition to selection in state education" would simply "guarantee, in effect, the future of a privileged private sector through which all of Britain's worst class inequalities are reproduced".[8]

And in his otherwise admirable book, *The State We're In*, first published in 1995, Will Hutton argued that "grammar schools and grammar school streams in comprehensives need to be revived in order to attract members of the middle class back to the state system".[9]

Yet what so many political commentators – many of them based in London – fail to appreciate is that throughout the country at large the comprehensive system remains extremely popular with teachers, parents and pupils.

A number of Conservative local authorities have made attempts to re-introduce selection since 1979; and all have failed. The main reason for this is one which John Major and Gillian Shephard should note carefully: they have all failed to gain the support of influential middle-class parents. It is, of course, true that Conservative voters in leafy suburban areas have every reason to fight for the preservation of their local, largely middle-class comprehensive schools. In the West Midlands borough of Solihull, for example, the residents of Dorridge and Balsall Common had no wish to see their local comprehensive school turned into a grammar school selecting pupils from all parts of the borough. But it is not simply a question of influential groups of parents pursuing the politics of enlightened self-interest. Many middle-class parents throughout the country understand that it would be unfair to all children to return to a system of rationing opportunity and resources based on prior judgements of likely future attainment.

Thirty years ago the principle of fully comprehensive education was supported by about a quarter of the population and opposed by about a quarter – with the rest undecided. By the beginning of 1996, the principle that all state secondary schools should be comprehensive was endorsed by 65 per cent of the population with only 27 per cent favouring a system where some schools cater for the 'able' and others for the remainder – and 8 per cent unable to give a view.[10] Most parents clearly understand that the creation of more grammar schools will also mean the creation of more secondary moderns. And only the most blinkered Conservative voter will have failed to see that the *Mail on Sunday* headline of 23 June, heralding the publication of the June White Paper, 'Grammar Schools For All', was, in fact, a contradiction in terms.[11]

Our own research into the working practices of 1560 comprehensive schools and colleges in Britain, which culminated in the publication of *Thirty Years On* in April this year, made it clear to us that most comprehensives enjoyed the support of their parents – with head-teachers and principals wishing that this support could extend to government, political and media circles at national level. Those working in the field feel a distinct lack of support for the values upon which a comprehensive educational approach is based: the assumption that every human being is educable and that given the right support and opportunities, and a diversity of goals that develop the full range of human intelligence, we are all capable of reaching the highest standards. At the same time, the vast majority of comprehensive schools have no wish to start operating their own selective criteria. Even those comprehensive schools which are invariably over-subscribed realise that to start selecting pupils on grounds of aptitude or ability will serve to damage neighbouring comprehensives – and act to the detriment of the system as a whole.

It is also true that comprehensives have become a lot more socially mixed than they were in the 1960s. Thirty years ago, none of the comprehensives had a mainly middle-class intake and less than half could be described as socially mixed. In our 1993-94 survey, 67 per cent of schools were socially mixed; and of the 33 per cent that were 'one class', one out of five was middle class.

Myths about Mixed-ability Teaching

As we have seen, there have recently been demands for mixed-ability teaching to be replaced by streaming or setting in order *both* to raise standards *and* to win the support of middle-class parents.

On this issue, our survey findings show that the pronouncements are based on *two* false premises. In the first place, mixed-ability teaching simply did not exist on a large scale in the majority of comprehensives. Mixed-ability grouping for all pupils in all subjects was confined mainly to the first secondary year when it was used in just over 50 per cent of schools. By the following year (Year 8), the figure was down to just under 17 per cent and a year later to 6.5 per cent. For Years 10 and 11, the figure was just 3 per cent, with the vast majority of schools using various forms of streaming, setting and banding. These statistics are backed up by the latest figures from the Office for Standards in Education which show that most schools set pupils for academic subjects in the two years leading up to GCSE. Only 6 per cent of pupils are in mixed-ability classes for maths, 19 per cent for French and a quarter for English.

That said, there is absolutely no evidence from our enquiry of any significant correlation between a school or subject department's grouping policy and its GCSE or A level results. We were able to divide our schools into those that were largely streamed or with most subjects in ability sets in the early secondary years and those that were generally mixed ability (including those with no more than two or four subjects set at any time). Analysis showed that the type of grouping policy used made no appreciable difference to a school's examination performance – indicating that

mixed-ability teaching can be advocated for its positive social effects in the knowledge that it does *not* lead to a lowering of standards.

The Co-existence of Grammar Schools

What *does* affect the examination performance of a large number of comprehensive schools is the continued existence of 160 or so grammar schools.

Until recently, the Labour leadership has tended to regard the existence of such schools in a number of key areas as an issue of minor significance. And the Party's proposal for dealing with them, outlined in their 1995 blueprint *Diversity and Excellence: a new partnership for schools*, was both disingenuous and unworkable. In the words of the document:

> *Our opposition to academic selection at eleven has always been clear. But while we have never supported grammar schools in their exclusion of children by examination, change can come only through local agreement. Such change in the character of a school could only follow a clear demonstration of support from the parents affected by such decisions.[12]*

Our own research found that where grammar schools survived in an area, the comprehensive schools whose intakes were affected had much less chance of being *genuinely* comprehensive and of achieving well in terms of the league table markers; and that pupils within such schools tended to abandon full-time education earlier. Table 4.4 in *Thirty Years On* (p. 182) shows that where grammar schools were present in an area, the percentage of pupils in the neighbouring comprehensives falling in the top 20 per cent of the attainment range was 12 – compared with 24 for those comprehensives where there was no competition from selective schools. For those going on from 11 to 16 schools to some form of post-sixteen education and training, the figure was 57 as against 69; for those staying on in 11 to 18 schools, 49 as against 60; and for those gaining five or more GCSE passes at Grades A to C, 29 as against 48. The 'A' level point score averages were 10.6 and 13.4 respectively.

If the Tories win the next General Election and implement the proposals outlined in the June White Paper *Self-Government for Schools*, it seems likely that there will be a steady increase in the number of selective schools.

Polarisation by Housing in 1994

Our survey also found marked and significant variations in pupil achievement according to the type of catchment area which the school served. Using as a benchmark the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at Grades A to C or equivalent (admittedly a narrow and unsatisfactory means of judging schools), comprehensives drawing from mainly substandard housing had a pass rate of 18.2 per cent and those drawing from mainly council or housing association housing 23.2 per cent; while those drawing from mainly private residential or owner occupied housing had a pass rate as high as 52.1 per cent. What was interesting was that those comprehensives drawing from a mix of council and private housing did not have a rate halfway between these extremes, but towards the higher level at 42.4 per cent. It is also fair to point out that all such comparisons can be highly misleading – and that many comprehensive schools situated in areas of extreme deprivation achieve remarkable success with their pupils, and in all manner of ways.

The Neighbourhood Principle

Nearly 80 per cent of the comprehensive schools in our survey were *neighbourhood* schools in the sense that their intakes came from their own area or from within their own LEA (rather than from outside either). Most schools used one or other of *three* traditional criteria, chosen in various combinations: the most popular was nearness to the school used by 63.5 per cent; followed by feeder school systems at 54.6 per cent and zoning at 54.0 per cent. There were, in fact, larger percentages of comprehensive schools using these methods in 1994 than had used them at the time of the Benn & Simon survey which produced *Half Way There* in 1970, when only 48 per cent used nearness or zoning and only 15 per cent used feeder systems.

There is at present considerable confusion and controversy surrounding admissions procedures; and our own preferred solution would be to give each child a 'school of right' for each stage of the school system. A legal right to a named school would give all parents a choice of a known school which their child had a *right* to enter (a significant increase in parental rights over the present position where there are no legal rights to enter any school, even if it is situated next door) and then, in time a 'college of right' for older students and young adults. The current right to state a preference would also remain (if the school named was not accepted) and schools would have to accept pupils in the same way (provided none whose 'school-of-right' it was, was displaced).

We endorse the neighbourhood principle where comprehensive schools are concerned; and we accept that sometimes lead to the creation of one-class schools. Where schools are situated in 'problem' areas, they may often require special help in the form of additional teachers and resources. It is clear that successful comprehensives are often those which draw their pupils from a mix of council and private housing, but we are often against the creation of an artificial social mix if this involves 'bussing' children across cities and large conurbations.

Conclusion

Writing in *The Independent on Sunday* in January 1995, Ben Pimlott argued that New Labour should be proud to promote the cause of the comprehensive school:

> *There are exciting possibilities here. Education is a key concern of Tony Blair, as of every parent in the country: the policy aim of turning Britain's comprehensives into the best in Europe, after 16 years of criminal neglect, would create excitement throughout our cities; but only if Labour offered the resources to make it credible.[13]*

History – and the experience of much of the rest of the advanced industrial world – has made the case for continuing to extend comprehensive education. Its principles have won increasing support in Britain over the last thirty years and now command the approval of the great majority of the population. The chief mistake of the period since 1965 has been the retention of a narrow education designed for a minority, within a system that *should* be designed to develop everyone. Our belief in comprehensive education is not based on the principle that everyone should be the same or that we should try by education to make people alike, but instead derives from our fundamental concern that no accidents of birth or environment and no inchoate assumptions about aptitude or ability should be permitted – as they are now – to ensure

privileged access to the education from which all individuals should benefit.

Notes

[1] *The Independent on Sunday*, 14 January 1996.
[2] Department of Education (1993) *Education Statistics for the United Kingdom*, p. 95. London: HMSO.
[3] John Patten (1992) Who's afraid of the 'S' word?, *New Statesman and Society*, 17 July, p.10.
[4] Department for Education (1992) *Choice and Diversity: a new framework for schools*, pp. 3,12. London: HMSO.
[5] John Carvel (1996) Blair rejects mixed ability teaching, *The Guardian*, 8 June.
[6] Peter Mandelson & Roger Liddle (1996) *The Blair Revolution: can New Labour deliver?*, p. 94. London: Faber & Faber.
[7] Quoted in Bethan Marshall (1996) Halfway houses, *The Guardian*, 16 January.
[8] John Gray (1995) Labour's struggle to avoid class war, *The Guardian*, 10 August.
[9] Will Hutton (1995) *The State We're In*, p. 311. London: Jonathan Cape.
[10] Results of ICM poll reported in *The Guardian*, February 1996.
[11] Interestingly, the slogan 'Grammar Schools for All' was the means by which Harold Wilson's Labour Government tried to win wide public endorsement for comprehensive schools in the mid-1960s.
[12] Labour Party (1995) *Diversity and Excellence: a new partnership for schools*, p. 11. London: Labour Party.
[13] Ben Pimlott (1995) Labour does have policies; it just won't talk about them, *The Independent on Sunday*, 8 January.

Schooling Beyond the Bell Curve

Bob Moon

In this article, Bob Moon, Professor of Education at the Open University, exposes the fallacy of the bell curve and focuses on the achievements and the potential of comprehensive schooling.

Ranking and sorting children has been one of the major functions of schooling in the twentieth century. The ubiquitous bell curve, the metaphor for class in the nineteenth century, overlaid by the psychometric camouflage of IQ in the twentieth, continues to have enormous implicit and explicit influence. This bell curve determined the structure of schooling in the post war period and continues to drive the thinking of both British major political parties as the century draws to a close.

I want to argue that democratic schooling has to jettison this hugely distorting model if young people are to be given the confidence to live and work in the communities and economies of the new millennium. Contrary to media opinion, and despite the gloomy prognostications of some politicians, I sense that schools are beginning, slowly, to move in this direction.

In the last few years one, two and sometimes three major new bookshops have opened in the major cities and towns of Britain. The dictionary and manual diet of W.H. Smith is under siege. Music shops across the country now feature the widest range of classical as well as contemporary music. Traditional songs from the Auvergne hugely outsell the choices of a Terry Wogan or a Jimmy Young. The Arts Council tells us that arts centres of all kinds are opening on an almost daily basis. Participation rates in all sports are on the increase, not only in the major team games but in the fitness related worlds of cycling, aerobics, and many other team and individual pursuits. Camping and outdoor equipment merchandise is big business. The Millets some of us remember from the 1950s and 1960s have disappeared, replaced by design and safety-conscious products unknown to the scout, guide or rambler of yesteryear. A better educated population, a population with wider personal and social horizons is visibly transforming the cultural landscape.

And there other signs for optimism. Expanding adult education classes, the new concern with the environment, the passionate (Band Aid and beyond) association of so many young people with the plight and challenge of the developing world. The list is almost endless. What is happening? How has this come about?

The answers, of course, are not straightforward. The complex interplay of technological and commercial imperatives is important as is the advent of global communication systems. But schools must claim a large measure of credit. Our late twentieth-century comprehensive, primary and secondary schools have helped unleash an energy and creativity previously undreamt of. The widening of curricular and extra-curricular traditions, the emergence of a teaching force prepared in the socially conscious world of the 1960s and 1970s and the growing maturity of schools, confident of local support, have all had an impact.

There are other signs of optimism. Public examination results improve year on year. Qualified entrants for university have increased sixfold since the mid 1960s, one fact alone to challenge the bell curve. And the vast majority of young people say they like school, very different from the pattern thirty years ago. Schools, more than any other institution, have overseen the development of many genuinely multi-racial communities and schools, again more than most, have seen a major improvement in the opportunity and achievements of girls.

Yet despite all this Britain, or more accurately England and Wales, is overwhelmed with educational uncertainty. An education system which can claim much is under siege. From left and right the criticism pours in. The media has a field day shipping so called educational pundits, from one part of the world to another to try and find the answer to that British phenomena of uncertainty and inadequacy.

Even a Labour Party, on the brink of power, finds much to carp at.

> *Grammar schools and grammar school streams in comprehensives need to be revived*

writes Will Hutton in *The State We're In* (p. 311):

> *Where there are ideological presumptions in favour of mixed ability teaching, these should be abandoned.*

write Mandleson & Liddle on page 94 of *The Blair Revolution: can New Labour deliver?* (p. 94).

Here are influential people, creating the mood and spin of Labour Party policy yet firmly wedded to turning the clock back on the achievements of decades of comprehensive education. Underlying their thinking, as with that of those on the Right, is the implicit and explicit assumption that the prime purpose of schools is the *ranking of children to recognise aptitude and thereby exploit potential.* This apparently common-sense, but deeply flawed, conviction is, I suggest, at the core of the confusion in educational policy making.

The debate goes back a long way. Brian Simon, way ahead of his time, was questioning the way misconceived conceptions of intelligence were distorting schooling in the early 1950s (Simon, 1955). More recently Howard Gardner's espousal of multiple intelligencies has attracted popular interest. Yet in the minds of school policy makers and the professional and public community at large, the idea of fixed aptitudes, potential and abilities still runs very deep. More significantly this perception of ability is highly constrained focusing on apparent capacity in relation to a limited number of traditional knowledge domains. The idea that ability is measurable, observable and finite feeds the belief that schooling should somehow respond to a deterministic vision of learning.

Gradually the opportunities of a more comprehensive school system have allowed a wider range of accomplishments to emerge. I suggested above how this is feeding through into the educational culture of the day. But the mood is still one of constraint with the paraphernalia of the National Curriculum providing a new range of identifiers to sort and categorise.

All the contemporary evidence about learning and intelligence suggests that:

- intelligence is a multi faceted concept, and
- potential is expandable

David Perkins (1995) in an interesting new book, *Outsmarting IQ: the emerging science of learnable intelligence*, has suggested that a major problem is the way theories of intelligence have provocatively been set up in competition with each other. He suggests we should use instead the language of dimensions the neural, experiential and reflective, for example, all of which together give us a better grounded explanation of intelligent behaviour, an explanation that require new forms of organisational and pedagogic response.

If we accept that ability is not a singular concept, if we consign those well worn phrases about high ability, the average and low ability to the scrapheap of educational terminology then a new vision of schooling opens up. But an important point first. If we discard the general category of ability then the equally problematic term 'mixed ability' disappears. In that sense, not I suspect his, I go along with Mandelson. Schooling will need to achieve collective and individualistic goals by forms of grouping and teaching strategies that begin from very different premises.

This was very much the sort of thinking that in the early 1980s motivated ideas about radically restructuring curriculum through Records of Achievement. Tim Brighouse, a key figure at that time, is now recreating the spirit in Birmingham. In a recent lecture to the Royal Society of Arts (Brighouse, 1996) he called for a wider conception of curriculum embracing national and school concerns but focusing as well on the home and personal learning that

> *would cater better for different intelligences and interests, developed at different rates and to a different extent at any one time.*

Over the last decade the work of Howard Gardner and his associates at Harvard has taken a similar route. They are seeking new forms of teaching and schooling that reflect a reformed vision of the child's potential. Reading some of the case studies (Gardner, 1993) I am reminded of that heady period in Britain – the 1960s and 1970s – when some schools set out to experiment and innovate to try to widen the basis of achievement and success. If we are to raise standards and expectations and allow the potential of many more children to grow, then a new rhetoric must be put in place. Schooling needs to think beyond the idea of the bell curve. The sense of optimism that characterised the end of the 11+ and the work of comprehensive schools needs regenerating. The period since 1979 has seen an unprecedented assault on the integrity of schools and teachers and policy making across the board is under that shadow.

To establish a reformed climate, schools and teachers need to be given new forms of political and professional freedom. National policy has become Frankensteinian in character. How did we create this? We now have the most virulent form of national curriculum that combines the continental tradition of content prescription with the North American obsession with standardised testing. An inspection regime that inspires fear across the country. And, alongside that, confidence draining from a system that is so crucial to individual self esteem, social cohesion and economic achievement. I salute the schools and teachers who, despite the oppression, have sustained an alternative path. The next few years, however, are crucial. Will the system bunker down? Or will we witness a release of energy and inspiration, a curriculum and assessment system unconstrained by the normative standardisation that has diminished the achievements of so many of our citizens.

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What Comprehensive Schools do Better

Bernard Clarke

This article by Bernard Clarke, Headteacher of Peers School, Oxford, is based upon a lecture which was part of a series held in early 1996 at the University of Oxford's Department of Educational Studies. The main theme of the series was 'Affirming the Comprehensive Principle'.

In preparing this article, I recalled my childhood in a small Midlands town with one grammar school and three secondary modems. You will, note the proportions. From the age of 11 we lost contact with close friends from primary school. There was no contact with them whatsoever and, in fact, I remember being advised to avoid the children from those schools, including my brother. Not only were they rough and to be feared, but they had nothing in common with us, the chosen ones.

I find it extraordinary that we need to justify the simple idea that young people should attend their local school and receive as good an education as possible. Brian Simon recently concluded that the comprehensive principle is now in place and "as firm as a rock". When you consider the alternatives, he must be right.

That is not to say that all is well in every comprehensive school. Obviously, it is not and there isn't a school in the land that does not need to improve in important ways. Nor should we stick nostalgically to formulae which may have served quite well in even the recent past. As H. G. Wells said, we need fewer professors of history and more professors of foresight. The world in which our children become adult citizens will be unrecognisable from the world we inhabit.

In this temporary phase dominated by the OFSTED number-crunching, bean-counting culture there is a considerable danger that, under pressure to justify ourselves, we might lose sight of the values which are fundamental to comprehensive education and which most of us know to be right.

I want to say something about the context in which many of us work. Then consider what in my view comprehensive education is and should be about. In doing so, I will use some currently unfashionable phrases and dirty words – children and young people; the real curriculum including the hidden curriculum; good teachers; community education; success; and, dirtiest phrase of all, social engineering.

The Context

Shortly after starting my present job eight and a half years ago, I was asked to see Nicola, a bright student in Year 11 who was rapidly losing her way with her GCSE work. When I asked her what was wrong, she explained that she was very tired. Like many young people in Oxford, she had a part-time job at one of the college kitchens. She served at table, cleared up and helped with the washing-up. Unlike many of her colleagues, though, Nicola was not working to earn pocket money. She was working because of family poverty. Her tiredness was the result of clearing tables for several hours every evening after school, with two work shifts on Saturday and three on Sunday. For some reason, she felt it important to tell me that she received a bonus whenever she had to clear up vomit.

Although she had the ability to go into higher education, Nicola left school at 16 years with one or two GCSEs. She lived within 3 miles of two universities but that kitchen is as close as she will ever get to either.

My point is the obvious one that, if young people are to succeed, the conditions must be right. Hungry, tired and unloved children cannot learn ... even in Oxford.

What Should They Learn?

With regard to the curriculum, I agree with Tom Sobol, formerly Director of Schools for the state of New York, when he says, "if you always do what you always did, you always get what you always got."

What may have served in the past will no longer do. We need to think afresh about what young people should learn in school and how they should learn it. The National Curriculum has been a huge and wasteful distraction from that central point. In planning the curriculum, you don't start with 10 subjects, you start with the nature of society and the needs of young people within it.

A group of 14-year-old students from our school were randomly recruited to spend the day at a major, local, 'cutting edge' business. During their visit, they were invited to take part in a manufacturing simulation exercise the purpose of which was, as a team, to make small items from stickle bricks and by paying attention to quality, production levels, efficiency etc. to reduce the unit cost as low as they could. They were allowed five goes and on their fifth attempt, this group of young people who represented a very broad range of ability as measured by National Curriculum assessments, had reached the theoretical minimum and out-performed every group of workers, managers and directors who had been through the exercise. The organisers concluded that their success was the result of uncluttered minds, the ability to think creatively and, above all, the ability to cooperate. Perhaps we need to think some more about the nature of the so-called skills crisis.

What can we possibly know about the world that children starting their education at the age of 5 next September will enter when they leave school at 16 in 2007? If it comes to that, what can we say about the world school leavers will enter in two year's time?

Not much. Our curriculum thinking should be dominated by one simple question. What do all young people need to know and be able to do to be effective citizens in a rapidly changing world?

Competence with Information Technology will be Fundamental

What else? I strongly agree with Anita Higham, Principal of Banbury School, who has argued that three fundamental areas of learning for all young people in their preparation for life as citizens, workers, life long learners and parents in an uncertain future are understanding about boundaries and relationships, values and personal responsibility.

Such understanding is not best acquired by young people or anybody else, for that matter via conventional, didactic teaching. What we were saying about the hidden curriculum in the 1960s and 1970s remains true. Do what I do, not what I say. It is for such reasons that the school where I work does not have a set of rules. So often, school rules seem to assume the worst of young people – "don't do this. If you do, this is what will happen to you."

Instead, we have an agreed statement of rights and responsibilities which applies equally to everybody connected with the school and embodies two fundamentally important principles. Firstly, staff will not ask students to do anything they are not prepared to do themselves. Second, all the adults at Peers School understand that they provide constant models of work and behaviour for young people growing up.

What Else Should They Learn?

The curriculum statement agreed this year by the headteachers of every LEA primary, secondary and special school in Oxfordshire includes these words in its introduction:

> *A comprehensive curriculum is the entitlement of all pupils and should provide access to all the relevant areas of experience (some readers will remember those!): expressive and aesthetic; linguistic and literary; physical and recreational; scientific and mathematical; social and environmental; spiritual, moral and cultural; technological; vocational.*

I doubt if we would have been able to produce such a powerful, unanimous statement had we not all represented LEA maintained comprehensive schools.

Good Teachers

A brief word about good teachers in comprehensive schools. Firstly, the majority know from first hand experience that learning takes place most effectively when the context of relationships and ethos is right. Second, because they work in comprehensive schools and teach some students for whom learning does not always come easily, they have to work hard to make what they teach stimulating and accessible for everybody. As a result all the students, including the 'most able' benefit.

Community Education

At our school we have a public library, sports centre, nursery, further education centre, early education project, commercial business employing 50 people, 10-year-old link with a school in Tanzania, and an annual tea dance for 200 elderly people from all over Oxford. Next year a school for young people with profound disabilities will join us on the campus.

This is not serendipity, but the result of thought and planning. How does any of us acquire (not learn about, but really acquire) understanding and tolerance unless we encounter at close quarters people from different backgrounds, cultures, generations and circumstances?

And what value would any of it have for our students if the school were not comprehensive and excluded some local young people from attending it because they were different?

Success

Recently, during our OFSTED inspection, Nicholas, the hitherto shy and anxious son of professional parents, was referred to me for being rude to a teacher. Not the least of his offences was telling her that he was going to get her sacked by the inspectors! When I asked him what had made him be so rude, he shouted through his tears, "I hate Gs". I didn't know what he was talking about, and he eventually explained that he had worked for hours on an assignment, gone to the library and even missed Oxford United's promotion match against Crewe in order to produce 10 sides. For his efforts he had been given a G. His friend had done one side and got an A.

We very nearly had a disaffected student on our hands. Why? Lazy? Violent? Delinquent? Not a bit of it. We had told him he was a failure. We do it all the time and the National Curriculum assessment arrangements are demanding that we do it more.

Is this really the way to raise national standards?

Think about anything you are good at and ask yourself why. Now think about anything you cannot do and ask yourself the same question.

Social Engineering

Those of us involved in comprehensive education should proclaim proudly that we are about social engineering. How else are we to play our part in achieving "a society at ease with itself"? And what a marvellous goal John Major set for us all.

Bertrand Russell described the natural human impulse "to view with horror and disgust all manners and customs different from those to which we are used" and saw it as "one of the gravest dangers to which our overcrowded world is exposed."

There are currently 30,000 'gated communities' in the USA providing enclaved security and privatised protection from the 'have-nots'. And Britain is moving in the same direction.

Sophie's parents were threatening to remove her from the school because Tracey was threatening her. When I sat down with them, Tracey, in her blue jeans and black leather jacket said she did not like Sophie's clothes. Sophie was wearing a Laura Ashley floral dress and a straw hat. "Anything else?", I asked. "Yes. She talks funny. She uses stupid words." Sophie: "Oh, don't be so preposterous". Tracey: "There. See what I mean?"

Julius Nyerere, the inspiration for our link with Katumba School in Tanzania, described our obligation as educators in the following words:

> *... to prepare our young people to play a dynamic and constructive part in the development of a society ... in which progress is measured in terms of human well-being. The children must learn from the beginning to the end of their school life that education does not set them apart, but is designed to make them effective members of the community – for their own benefit as well as that of their country and their neighbours.*

I haven't come across many better cases for comprehensive education.

Is Selection What Parents Really Want?

Melian Mansfield

Melian Mansfield has been actively involved with the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education (CASE) for many years as a parent, teacher, writer and school governor. Here she exposes the Tory myth of 'parental choice' and presents a parent's perspective of the current moves towards selection at the age of 11 years.

The Tory agenda for education for the past ten years has been based on the ideology of 'parental choice'. The fact that the 'scramble' for what are perceived as the most popular schools has resulted in fewer parents overall getting the place in the school of their choice, has not deterred the Government. The number of appeals has rocketed – together of course with the costs – and more parents each year end up dissatisfied. The effect on their children is obviously an appalling feeling of disappointment and rejection. When a young person of 11 starts their secondary education in a school which they know is not their parents' first choice – and maybe not theirs either although many 11-year-olds views are not taken into account – then they are already at a disadvantage. Parents are often totally distraught and emotionally devastated after going through the long and stressful experience of an appeal and not winning – as most don't . This inevitably affects their child's attitude to the new school. Whatever the strengths of the school the child attends, they still have to come to terms with the fact that this is the second or third choice and therefore not as good. Most LEAs , because of the league tables will be perceived as having only a few 'good' schools i.e. the top three or four.

This parallels precisely the effects of the 11-plus – the selected few – those that pass go to the school they want and the rest get what is perceived as 'second best'. No parents want 'second best' for their child and no young person should have an education which is not the best. The only parents who want grammar schools are those who believe their child will be one of the 'chosen few'. The Government has been clear about the purpose behind the introduction of grant maintained status – not only as a means of reducing the power of LEAs but, through offering at the beginning at least increased finance through additional grants – the incentive most heads and governing bodies would agree drew them to applying – a way of making one sector of schools 'better' or more attractive to parents and creating a two-tier system – three if City Technology Colleges are included. And in the recent White Paper proposals it is Grant Maintained (GM) schools which will be able to select most of their pupils and new grammar schools will be GM.

The consequence of league tables has not only been to divide schools – in the eyes of parents into the 'best' and 'not so good' or 'worst' but also to encourage schools to use a process which enables them to remove children who may be difficult or have learning difficulties by exclusion – permanent or part time or by explaining informally to parents that their child is not suited to the school. The National Curriculum as prescribed is not flexible enough to meet the individual needs of children and in many cases is irrelevant to the lives of young people. This results in an increase in disruptive behaviour and truancy.

Specialisation is just another way of justifying selection and denies opportunities to many children who may not have the right aptitude at the right time. Streaming has a similar effect. Baseline assessment has already been mooted and so we may begin to see selection at 5 years.

The system of education which we now have, therefore, is a far cry from the vision of comprehensives for all; though this is what the vast majority of parents want. We do not hear of any parents campaigning for 'secondary moderns' and adults who attended them experienced a total loss of self-esteem and can often be heard to say 'I only went to a secondary modern' – in other words 'you can't expect much of me.' They do not want the same for their children.

In many other countries all children are expected to do well. Why is this not the case here? All children have a right to a good education and OFSTED is supposed to be ensuring that that is so. Pronouncing schools and teachers as 'failing' is hardly the best way of doing this . It is more productive to concentrate on the strengths and build on those; sometimes providing money can help. If children and teachers were valued then money would be found to provide the best possible environment for teaching and learning. When a building is closed as a school and then used by adults, money is always found to repair, upgrade and refurbish. It is of interest to note too that many of the schools in OFSTED's list of the 'best' are grammar schools. What criteria are being used? Mainly an increase in the number of 16 year olds getting GCSE grades A-C. The effects on those unable to reach such grades in these schools is that they often do worse because less energy and fewer resources go into helping them. This is totally contrary to the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child ratified by the British Government in 1991. Article 28 requires the right to free education on the basis of equality of opportunity and Article 12 the right of children to express a view on all matters which concern them; rarely are young people asked for their views and not one would want a reduction in the quality of the education they are offered.

What do parents want? Most want a good education and a local school. They want full and accessible information about the organisation of the school and the principles on which it is based; the curriculum and extra curricular

activities; school policies on behaviour, bullying, sex education and special educational needs and ways in which parents can be involved; regular reports about the progress their child is making and how they can help, who to contact and what to do if their child has a problem. All of this can be provided by a comprehensive school.

What is so special about the age of 11? What right have adults to make decisions about children at so young an age which will effect them for the rest of their lives? At no other stage are people divided so overtly according to their ability. Children in pre-school and nursery settings and in primary schools are in a comprehensive situation. They show different interests at different ages from 5-18 years and beyond – much depends on the experiences they have had. Adults are not publicly examined and divided accordingly although they may of their own accord choose different routes. Any system of selection is flawed – no two people are alike and each have their particular learning styles so they cannot be easily compared. Interviews for jobs do not always find the right person – those who interview well are not always as competent as they may sound. Intelligence is not measurable in only one way – children have a variety of aptitudes which are equally valid and many are only evident when the appropriate opportunities are given. What is the rationale behind dividing young people when they become of secondary school age? People learn best when they are confident and their self esteem is high – both are severely effected when some children are selected and the rest know that they are 'less good'. Many spend the rest of their lives trying to prove otherwise. This cannot be right and should not be necessary.

The vast majority of children in secondary schools are in comprehensives. more young people are achieving more GCSEs and A-levels; more are going into higher education. The benefits of learning with others from a wide range of backgrounds is a learning experience in itself and enables young people to appreciate different talents and abilities. Much can be gained from students helping each other. Equality of opportunity and mutual respect should still be the basis on which we work – every student should be valued if they are to achieve their best. A school community consists of children, parents staff and governors. Each have a different role to play but all are important. Learning is something we can do together and is to be enjoyed , not seen as a struggle. Integration of children with disabilities into mainstream schools is happening more and more and is successful – so why divide at other levels if more money is needed then it has to be found – and spent appropriately. It is not good enough for the Government to say it is spending more money on education in 'real terms' when what we see is ever-increasing class sizes, deteriorating buildings, teachers being made redundant, insufficient provision for children with special educational needs and more money going on quangos and promoting ideologies which are not based on research, nor properly piloted or evaluated. No school system can work in a climate of continuing cuts and it is totally unfair to blame any shortcomings on 'being comprehensive'.

Far more important than the idea of selection which apart from being divisive does nothing on its own to improve the quality of education – except possibly by concentrating more resources on the few – is the concept of communality, of local people being proud of their school and wanting their children to go there. Success comes not from dividing people but bringing them together. As it says in the concluding chapter of the National Commission on Education's publication *Success Against the Odds.*

> *The combining of 'heart and mind' is evidently important in this process – that is to say, the vision, optimism and rhetoric supporting and informing a thoroughgoing review and development of whole-school policies and procedures... Systems of communication, of consultation, of debate, and of assessment and of reporting of pupils' work to the pupils themselves and to their parents are also needed.*

When everyone works together – parents, staff, governors and pupils – and their skills are combined then every school has an explosion of talent and anything can happen. Success breeds success. Equally telling children they have 'failed' leads them to believe that they can never succeed and that is what we are doing when we select some and not others.

In the same book we are reminded that "low educational performance remains closely linked to social and economic disadvantage'' but ''The intelligence and talents of children who experience problems of disadvantage are no different from those of any other children, and it is a matter of both justice and equity, as well of expedience that we enable them to grow and flourish." This can only happen in a system of education which is truly comprehensive , in which every young person is valued and respected, supported by a government which believes that funding education properly is of paramount importance from which all else follows.

Sometimes we need to reflect on the wise words of people such as Bertrand Russell: "The spontaneous wish to learn, which every normal child possesses ... should be the driving force in education"; and George Bernard Shaw: "What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge, not knowledge in pursuit of the child"; and Paul Ginnis: "All people ... have an enormous drive and capacity to learn; many aspects of schooling get in the way of this, partly by assuming that the reverse is true ... the most effective teachers trust learners, enhance their self esteem, have no need to control them, provide unconditional support which does not go too far and value all types of intelligence in all areas of learning." Basing the way we organise education on these principles will leave us in no doubt that for every child to succeed – which is what every parent wants – we have to include and involve.

What Shall We Do With the Naughty Children?

Jenny Thewlis

This article by Jenny Thewlis, former manager of the London Borough of Wandsworth's Individual Tuition Service and later the Secondary Centre Support Service, examines the current situation of disruptive pupils. In it she argues the need to re-think ways of working to ensure success, instead of the cycle of failure and deprivation which too often prevails.

In April of 1996 the media were much exercised by the case of the 'Nottingham One' – 13-year-old Richard Wilding, who, having had an appeal against his exclusion upheld, wanted to go back to school. His teachers didn't want him to, and threatened to strike if he returned. It was a story heaven-sent, encapsulating as it did so many of the current concerns about disruptive pupils – the pupil's right under law to an education; the teachers' right to be able to work without the disturbance and distraction such pupils create; the role of the parents – and at the centre a little boy in spruce school uniform who looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

For a few days the story dominated press and TV, with even the Guardian asking the question "is he the worst pupil in Britain? A deal was finally struck – the boy could return to school but would be taught in isolation from his peers for five half-days, the remainder of his education to be received via home tuition and at a pupil referral unit (PRU). The revelation that his mother had been convicted for violent assault on a council official and the sudden death of his father were the coda to this sad and salutary tale. In this article I want to examine the issues raised by this story and in particular the ways in which disruptive pupils are dealt with.

Richard was just one of the rising number of permanent exclusions from school and versions of his story are commonplace. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) figures for 1993-4 (the latest available) stood at 11,181, of which a worrying 1,291 were for primary aged pupils, compared with a total of 2,910 for 1990-91. The reasons for this epidemic have been well rehearsed and are social as well as educational. A two year study of permanently excluded primary pupils by Carol Hayden of the University of Portsmouth found a high incidence of family breakdown and, as would be expected, the proportion of permanent exclusions is higher in inner city schools with their attendant social problems of poverty and unemployment.

The competitive educational market place, forced onto schools by the Conservative Government, has put a premium on published examination results, attendance figures etc. which means that many schools have a vested interest in shedding any pupils who are going to interfere with their ratings. In addition increased class sizes and lack of resources, teachers' stress levels, reduction in local authority support services and the lack of training for teachers in coping with difficult children all combine to make it harder for schools to cope with disruptive pupils. Not only are many more pupils being formally excluded who would otherwise have been worked with, but the number of informal exclusions, the quiet removal of non-attenders form school rolls, has mushroomed.

In the current climate such responses are understandable. Difficult and disruptive pupils interfere with the education of their peers and make heavy demands on staff time and nerves. The pastoral system has been displaced in many schools as the imperatives of the National Curriculum have taken over. In one London secondary school the post of pastoral Deputy Head has recently been replaced by that of Pupil Services Manager! On-site units or sanctuaries, where pupils could take time out when they were having difficulties and thus frequently avoid the confrontations which inevitably led to exclusion, are a thing of the past in most schools.

At the same time, as a result of the weakening of the LEAs, much of the external support for such pupils has been curtailed. Centralised services, such as the Education Psychology Service have been cut back and are solely concerned with the statutory demands of the statementing process. Off-site support has also been severely eroded. In 1990, before the disbanding of the ILEA one Inner London borough employed over 70 full time equivalent teachers in 14 different off-site situations. From September 1996 that same borough will employ 17 FTEs, working in one primary and one secondary PRU.

There is an argument that schools receive direct funding to work with their Special Needs pupils and that they should therefore be able to deal themselves with those with emotional and behavioural difficulties who make up the bulk of disruptive pupils. But the demands of such pupils out weigh the resources that even the best intentioned school has at its disposal.

In the London borough already quoted there are over 300 pupils at any one time not on a school roll. (And these are only those that the LEA is informed about – there are many more who slip through the net entirely.) What can be done to help this growing band of displaced and disaffected young people? The Government is aware of the problem. The six circulars issued by the DfEE in 1994 under the collective title 'Pupils with Problems' examined the issues and looked at good practice in relation to them. GEST (Grants for Education Support and Training) money has been targeted towards disaffected pupils for the past three years, the latest initiative being a £18 million package over three years to set up special support teams to tackle disruptive behaviour in schools. The latest White Paper proposes extending the maximum period for a fixed-term exclusion from 15 to 45 days.

At present most young people who are excluded from school end up off-site. According to the DfEE in the Autumn term 1994 of 7,832 permanently excluded secondary pupils

in England and Wales, 3032 were in Pupil Referral Units, 2122 received Home Tuition and a further 652 were in other forms of off-site provision. Only 1156 returned to mainstream school. the term Pupil Referral Unit applies to a variety of off-site units, renamed, and with a changed status, as a result of the 1993 Education Act. The average teacher pupil ratio is 1:6, which is an acknowledgement of the difficulties inherent in working with a disparate group of challenging and disaffected pupils. At their best, PRUs provide a broad and balanced education in a supportive environment working towards reintegration into mainstream or preparation for the world of work. At worst they can be little more than youth clubs offering a limited curriculum in an unstructured way. Frequently pressure on places is such that a young person may only receive two hours per week tuition.

Pupil Referral Units – the first twelve inspections (OFSTED 1995) states bluntly:

> *Standards of attainment in the pupil referral units (PRUs) inspected thus far are variable, but generally too low, even when the educational history of pupils is taken into account. Standards of literacy are variable but often poor and the programme of work in most cases is making little impact on the low levels of reading and writing. Equally worrying is the poor level of spoken language which hampers the progress of many pupils and often exacerbates their social and emotional difficulties.*

Only one unit inspected was deemed to function satisfactorily. This was a unit for pregnant school girls and young mothers, generally well motivated academically; not a group with florid behavioural problems. The others were criticised on the grounds of poor teaching, vague policies and giving poor value for money. Their only saving grace seemed to be that the relationships between staff and pupils was seen to be good.

There are real dilemmas for such units. The emphasis, rightly I think, for many, is to give the pupils in their care a positive experience of education which they may not have received in school. The units are frequently small and the atmosphere nurturing. But small units, often with only two or three teachers, are not best prepared to deliver the National Curriculum and often make little attempt to extend pupils academically. The balance to be struck is a fine one. Frequently the students in question have low self esteem, have failed to achieve in academic terms and have become increasingly alienated from formal education. They need to be convinced of its value and led back towards it. But what is on offer for them should be of the same quality as that received by their peers in mainstream school and teachers working with such pupils should be as skilled in curriculum delivery as in pastoral support and guidance.

Pupils end up off-site for a variety of reasons – school refusal, psychiatric problems, pregnancy – but the vast majority have been permanently excluded – some because of a major incident involving drugs or a weapon for example; most for the drip, drip, drip of disruptive and unacceptable behaviour which finally wears down staff to the point that it becomes intolerable. Most have incident sheets running to several pages in their files. General disobedience, physical aggression against staff and pupils, constant refusal to comply with school rules, verbal abuse, insolence to teachers, disruption and defiance are all cited as examples of such behaviour by the DfEE.

Some of these pupils will be able to return to mainstream education, the majority won't. A lot depends on the systems for reintegration put in place in various schools. All to often, a child is reluctantly taken on to the roll of another school, which has been directed to take them, but with no plan for reintegration and no additional support. Not surprisingly, those children frequently figure as exclusions from their new school as well.

Of course, there are schools and LEAs who work hard to keep pupils in schools. Whole school approaches to behaviour management, key working, assertive discipline techniques, circle time, counselling, all help. Back up from the LEA in terms of advice, training and behaviour support are still available in some areas. As a result of the 1993 Act LEAs have had to develop new policies for pupils who are out of school and issue guidelines to schools clarifying the responsibilities of Heads and governors. These paper exercises have had no impact on the numbers of exclusions which continue to rise.

In the 1970s, concern about the perceived levels of disruption and poor behaviour, particularly in inner city schools, led to the setting up of a kaleidoscope of alternative provision and curriculum innovation to deal with it. The political and pedagogic will was there and schools and LEAs worked closely together. The years of Tory Government have seen the breakdown of that partnership. I believe that we need to look back critically to those initiatives and examine how they might be applied to work with disaffected pupils today. I believe we need to move back towards a dual system where the pastoral needs of pupils are given as much emphasis as the academic. Personal and social education should not be seen as a peripheral area of the curriculum but central to it. Time needs to be made available for counselling, key working and behaviour support. On-site units could be reintroduced with the aim of holding difficult pupils in school and helping with reintegration. Off site units (PRUs) should not be seen as 'sin bins' and dumping grounds but as part of a continuum of provision for pupils with problems working closely with mainstream schools.

Parents and carers need to receive far more support with problem children and links between school and home need to be strengthened. Home-school liaison officers can often do invaluable work here as they are often seen by parents as less threatening than teachers. Initial teacher training needs to focus more on strategies to cope with difficult behaviour in the classroom as well as training teachers to diagnose problems.

Inter-agency work needs to be developed and partnership approaches to dealing with problem children put into practice. Above all, perhaps, we need a change of attitude. Every child should feel welcome and happy in school and a valued member of the community. (Negative self images are one of the main characteristics of pupils who are out of school.)

We need to be seriously concerned about the future consequences of our neglect of pupils who reject/are rejected by the educational system. On the one hand we could settle for the fact that increasing numbers of excluded pupils are the price to be paid for schools to maintain their market positions in a competitive climate. they will then take their place as part of an economic underclass which is another of the growth sectors of British society. On the other hand we could say that the sign of a civilised and caring society is how it behaves towards its most needy citizens and by failing to provide adequately for disturbed and disaffected pupils we are failing as a society.

Why Present School Inspections are Unethical

Keith Morrison
Keith Morrison taught in primary and secondary schools for many years before moving to higher education. He currently works at the University of Durham where he lectures on curriculum, evaluation and educational policy. This article draws on his recent work with schools preparing for inspections.

It has been argued that inspection is a significant intervention in improving standards and schools. However, there are four *ethical* principles of human conduct which are being violated in the present use of inspection for school improvement. This article first outlines these principles and describes how they are being violated, and then suggests how inspections could conform to them.

Principle One: non-maleficence/'fiduciary trust'

In the study of, and intervention in, human activity, one widely accepted principle is that the interventions, e.g. experiments, investigations, innovations, inspections, should be used for subjects' benefits ('fiduciary trust'). The intervenor must ensure that the intervention promotes the best interests and welfare of those affected by it, and that the intervention is conducted in a way that protects individuals from stress and trauma (non-maleficence). Precautions must be taken to avoid injurious physical, social and psychological effects (*primum non nocere* – the priority is not to harm). A corollary of this principle is that the dignity of each individual should be respected. How demeaning and degrading it is, therefore, to have experienced teachers chasing a 'good' or a 'very good' as the summary comment on their work. This model of school improvement through public humiliation is practised *within* schools by the presence of inspectors and *outside* schools by the publication of reports. Non-maleficence is concerned with treating humans as subjects rather than as objects to be inspected as one would a machine.

This principle is broken routinely in school inspection. Accounts indicate that many teachers are traumatised by inspection, treated in a belittling and high-handed way by inspectors, and worn out and highly stressed by preparatory work overload. Yet inspections steamroller on over the feelings and practices of professionals. Inspection is often brutal, intimidatory, institutionalised bullying, even though it was brought in by a government with an expressed commitment to equal opportunities. Why should 'good teachers' have to feel a sense of relief when inspection reports are published?

Principle Two: Informed consent

Many ethical codes of practice for studying and intervening in human activity require the *informed consent* of participants. Potential participants must have the option not to join in an intervention, to withdraw if they wish during it, and/or to participate in alternative ways. Involuntary participation might be justified only if the intervention does not harm participants, which, as argued above, is violated in many inspections. Not only is the principle of informed consent to inspection violated with teachers, but it is not even discussed with other participants in school. How many times has the informed consent of children, non-teaching staff, parents and governors been sought in the inspection process? How many times has permission been sought of all parties to: (i) gather inspection data (the *process*), (ii) decide the *contents* of the inspection, and (iii) agree the *ownership* and *release* of inspection data?

Where there are differentials of power, as in inspections, the principle of informed consent argues that inspectors must ensure that everyone's voice is listened to and affects the conduct and reporting of the inspection. This is not the case currently. Inspections reinforce, indeed require, power differentials. Inspectors are powerful, teachers are not. Inspectors dictate, teachers comply. Conflicting views do not feature in the report. Teachers' participation in inspection is decided for them and control of teachers is almost absolute. Many schools plan how to meet inspection demands even before they are informed that they are to be inspected – a backwash effect. Teachers write detailed policies that provide 'ammunition' for inspectors to chart the possible shortfall between policy and practice; if they do not write full policies then this itself attracts criticism. You're caught if you do and you're caught if you don't write a detailed policy. Inspection is a mechanism for control of teachers at a distance. Informed consent is *imposed*.

Total control is real, not this writer's paranoia. It is manifested in teachers' inability to contest judgements (teachers are excluded from inspectors' reporting session to parents) and in the control of schools' purse strings. Schools pay thousands of pounds for a process whose beneficial (or even information-providing) effects are questionable, in a climate in which money is scarce and in which schools have a greater priority for the disbursement of their income than that which is spent on inspection. A school's inspection is the cost of its library provision, a member of staff, part-time support teachers, art and technology materials. Schools have greater needs than to be inspected. Their informed consent to spending money on what they see as low priorities is not canvassed or secured. Consent seems not to matter.

Principle Three: meeting agreed agendas

It is a principle of many interventions by professionals in person-centred activities that their own agendas and needs should be secondary to clients' needs. Activities should be avoided that further the intervenor's needs at the expense of the client's needs. Yet it is very clear that the present form of inspections were brought in as part of a political agenda of the conservative right since the early 1980s, for example the Centre for Policy Studies, the Adam Smith Institute and the Hillgate Group. Inspections were to act as regulators of the market, providing consumers with putative objective information so that they could exercise their power through informed choice, and so that competition would break down 'producer capture'.

Under the guise of raising *educational* standards a right wing *political* agenda is being served. Whilst setting an

educational agenda of 'weeding out' bad teachers and improving performance, through inspection a political agenda that disempowers already consumer-minded teachers is at work. Through statutory inspections teachers cannot avoid serving the political agendas of the conservative government. Many teachers, from choice, would not wish to serve a conservative ideology, yet they are denied that freedom. This is ethically indefensible.

Principle Four: methodological rigour

Whilst an open society should break down secrecy it should do so by adopting high professional standards of enquiry and inspection. This is an important ethical principle. Methodological rigour ensures that data are accurate, objective, unbiased and factual. Though OFSTED publishes its framework for inspection, the reliability of inspection data is problematical.

Threats to the reliability and representativeness of inspection data are familiar. If, say, 6 inspectors spend 18 hours each (108 hours total) in classrooms of a school with 7 classes during an inspection (i.e. above the statutory minimum number of inspector days), and the school operates 40 weeks of 30 hours per week (8,400 hours total – 7 x 40 x 30) per school year, the proportion of the whole possible time sampled is only 1.3%, hardly a basis for generalisation or reliability. Using a formula for sampling (Morrison, 1993, p. 116) 108 hours generalises to a 150-hour total and a representative sample for 8,400 hours is over 367 hours of classroom time.

To sample a few hours of high stress teaching in a snapshot of a particular few days that are likely to be atypical and disruptive of everyday teaching, at a particular time of the day, week, term and school year, compromises reliability very considerably. Couple this with no indication of: (a) the sampling strategy used to decide which children, classes, teachers to inspect, (b) the inter-rater reliability levels (the degree of consistency amongst inspectors across teachers, classes, children, schools etc.), (c) inspectors' background, experience, competencies and personal biases, (d) 'disconfirming' evidence, (e) factors that might reduce confidence in the data, (f) how 'respondent validation' has been addressed, (g) how representativeness has been addressed, (h) the reliability (or validity) of the instruments used, and then judge the school in terms that violate the parameters of generalisability of the data, simply beggars reliability. Inspection findings are not 'proven beyond reasonable doubt', yet the inspection report is couched in terms that suggest the unquestionable authority of the results. This does a great disservice to genuinely 'good' schools. A summary judgement of a 'good', 'very good' etc. stretches validity beyond credibility. This is ethically unacceptable.

Moreover, as human activity is socially situated, context is important. It is difficult to see how, in inspections that follow the given standardised format, account has been taken of human differences and diversity of values and practices. The framework for inspection takes insufficient account of contextual variables, and its separation of practice from people is over-simplistic. On many fronts, then, inspections violate the ethical principle of methodological rigour.

Conclusion

This article has suggested that the inspection process sanctions several questionable ethical practices and has argued that judgmental data can not, and should not, be used for school improvement by any stakeholders in education. If raising standards of education is the agenda then the present form of inspection is part of the problem rather than part of the solution; it misconceives the way in which improvement can occur. Paradoxically, perhaps, given the government's sympathy for using industrial models in education, the notion that quality can be 'inspected in' has been abandoned in industry and replaced with a model of 'building in' quality at every stage. Continuous improvement – the *kaizen* of successful Japanese industries (Wickens, 1987) – argues for a developmental and flexible process that supports individuals and teams.

Seen like this, inspection, rather than being a 'hit-and-run' coercive exercise where inspectors can simply hand down judgements and walk away from problems, should fit into a program of ongoing professional development. In this model interested parties (including inspectors) identify and work towards the solution of problems where they exist, identify how development and improvements can occur, identify how to build high quality into practices, share responsibility cooperatively and collegially, celebrate efforts as well as achievements, and respect people as subjects. Inspection reports become accounts of developments in quality, used formatively rather than as sticks to beat overworked teachers. I have yet to find a teacher who does not want to do well for children and students. That provides a positive foundation for supported development. The influential industrialist Senge (1990, p. 95) remarks that one should not push growth, rather one should remove the factors that inhibit growth. Inspection should support the growth of a learning organisation rather than batter it into using a singular conception of quality. Battery is ethically indefensible; perhaps teachers need to rage more whenever it occurs.

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Advancing GNVQs

Ray Anderson & Roy Haywood
Ray Anderson taught in two comprehensive schools before becoming Careers and Guidance Co-ordinator at St Mary's Sixth Form College, Middlesborough. Roy Haywood is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Education, University of Newcastle. In this article they describe a small-scale research project which focused on the practical difficulties experienced by sixth-form students when seeking admission to higher education with Advanced-level GNVQ (level 3).

In September 1993 a sixth-form college in the North East of Britain, with an upper-sixth cohort of 280 students, introduced Advanced GNVQ courses and qualifications in three areas: Science, Business Studies and in Health and Social Care. There were two reasons for this.

First, because there were not enough potential A-level students to go round the nine sixth-form colleges in the LEA, the College was in competition with the others for enrolling students and there were fears it might fall short in attracting the requisite numbers of traditional A-level students. Extra GNVQ students could be used to off-set this scramble for student recruitment, and the College could not afford to ignore the national trend of rapid growth of the new GNVQ courses (from 8,000 students in 1992/3 and 82,000 in 1993/4, to 164,000 in 1994/5).

Secondly, FEFC funding was biased towards GNVQ students. Although the numbers initially attracted to the GNVQ courses were small in comparison with A-level students, the College decided that an open admissions policy would provide not only extra recruits but also satisfy the FEFC criteria for growth. As it turned out a large proportion from this cohort ultimately dropped out (completion rates for 1994-95 were 64% for GNVQ and 83% for A-level).

GNVQ courses have been presented by the Government as alternative qualifications which are "equivalent to 2 A-levels" and on that basis were "built into a mainstream qualifications system". As such they appeared to parents and students as a proper means of gaining access to higher education. Indeed, as the GNVQ Consultation Paper states "A particular feature of all Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced GNVQs is that they are broad-based, providing a foundation of learning for later progression". In other words, they are intended to provide a separate but equal ladder of opportunity for the one in four of all 17-year-olds who are taking GNVQs. Unfortunately, somebody forgot to involve the higher education admissions tutors in all of this.

Research Stance

We decided to test out just how far the GNVQs "have now been built into a mainstream qualifications system" by looking at whether GNVQs were acceptable to Higher Education. After all perhaps also helped in 1992 by a change in the definition of what constitutes a university – university education is no longer reserved for an elite minority and all HE institutions have been set growth targets which would have been regarded as unrecognisable (or inconceivable) forty, or even ten, years ago. The number of university students has risen from 3% in 1951 to 33% in 1994, and the Government and CBI propose even higher figures of a 46% entry by 2000 to cater for the future demands of the next century.

Given these HE targets, it seemed reasonable to expect that HE admissions tutors would welcome a different, but equal, pool in which they could trawl for potential students. But could it be that this new GNVQ cohort of students might be at a disadvantage in applying for courses at certain HE institutions because they were in competition with students offering traditional A-level subjects and qualifications?

We decided, because GNVQ Business Studies and Science Courses had relatively logical routes for progression to University courses, to concentrate our enquiries on whether the twelve Health and Social Care GNVQ students who all were applying, via UCAS, to HE courses would be regarded as qualified. So, within the field of health-related occupations, we sought the views of admission tutors of courses listed in UCAS for physiotherapy and nursing as these seemed to be appropriate career areas for students coming through the GNVQ route. Additionally, because our students were aiming for a qualification that was equivalent to 2 A-levels we decided to canvass admission tutors for Primary Education Courses in HE colleges, rather than universities, since colleges had traditionally made offers to students based on 2 A-levels usually without making rigorous demands for grades.

Research Procedures

We wrote, enclosing a stamped-addressed envelope, to HE institutions which offered these three courses asking them for their views about the acceptability of our GNVQ Health and Social Care students. We also included details of the mandatory and optional units of the BTEC validated Advanced GNVQ Course in Health and Social Care that the students were taking.

The letter, signed by the Careers Guidance Co-ordinator of the college, stated that there were twelve students who were successfully following the Advanced GNVQ (BTEC) course in Health and Social Care and that four or five of them would like to apply via UCAS for entry to pursue a career in the practice of nursing, physiotherapy or primary teaching. We included, in the letter to the HE colleges, the fact that all students considering teaching had undergone two or three weeks work-experience in a local primary school. Each HE admissions tutor was asked to give advice whether the (GNVQ Health and Social Studies Course

> *would be viewed as 'serious currency' for admission, and if so, what level of success would you want students to attain. Obviously, this will not be viewed as 'tablets of stone', but I am attempting to give our students realistic, impartial and factual guidance ... In all cases the students*

have more than five GCSEs at Grade 'C' or above, which includes Mathematics and English.

Sample

The twenty-five HE institutions offering degree courses in physiotherapy were contacted and fourteen replied; the twenty eight offering nursing were contacted and seven replied; of the forty HE Colleges offering teacher training courses (BEd and BA/BSc with Qualified Teacher Status) twenty replied. Perhaps those who did not reply did not regard the GNVQ qualification as 'serious currency', but we have no way of knowing if this was so.

Results

Physiotherapy is a very competitive subject within HE. Such is the level of competitiveness that the Chartered Society for Physiotherapists has instructed UCAS to inform prospective candidates for 1996 entry that they can only apply to a maximum of four institutions thus leaving places for possible alternative courses. Indeed, a tutor from an 'old' university said that it had 2000 applicants for 93 places, whilst another from a 'new' university said it had 1000 applicants for 40 places. Consequently, for students the competition is such that it seems that the hardest part, rather like applying for medicine, is not in making the grade but in getting an offer!

The traditional entry requirement for physiotherapy is the compulsory study of 3 A-levels, one of which must be Biology. Grades must also be high, usually BBB-CCC 'points' score. Realising that a GNVQ qualification ("equivalent to 2 A-levels") on its own would not in the normal course of events be acceptable, the intention was to see if admissions tutors would view it positively in lieu of the traditional 2 A-level standard.

The majority of the respondents would not entertain GNVQ on its own as a means of entry to their physiotherapy courses. The 'old' universities, as a group, flatly rejected GNVQ and would only make their offers in terms of A-levels. A recurrent theme was that GNVQ Health and Social Care did not contain sufficient science content. A few suggested they might consider a student with a GNVQ if it was at distinction level, and if the student also had a good grade in Biology at A-level. All institutions required a good GCSE profile as a basic requirement. One stated that it needed this because "BTEC entrants sometimes meet more academic difficulties than do their A-level entry colleagues".

Nursing had a low response rate. Those who replied were consistent in their view that a GNVQ qualification alone was not sufficient for entry to Nursing degree courses. A-level points of 12 – 16 were required and, in addition, candidates were required to have a good GCSE profile with high grades in English, Mathematics and Science.

It was interesting to note that one of our college's candidates was an exemplary student (she ultimately gained a distinction grade), but she did not receive a single offer. However, she gained entry to a Project 2000 nursing course, via the ENB application system, on the strength of having a very good GCSE profile. When HE admissions tutors were contacted on this student's behalf later their comments ranged from, "The level of competition was exceedingly high this year" (an 'old' university) to, "We are unsure of the ability level of the candidate so we reverted to type and made offers to A-level candidates where we can gauge the standard" (a 'new' university).

Primary Teaching admissions tutors who replied gave positive responses towards GNVQs; but then usually qualified their remarks by saying that they also required an additional qualification in the form of an A-level in a National Curriculum subject. The only areas where GNVQ students could naturally progress without taking an A-level were in courses that specialised in Religious Studies; Sports Science/Physical Education; and possibly, in one case only, in Biology.

The 1996 UCAS prospectus shows that nearly all colleges of higher education are making offers of less than 12 A-level points. It is common knowledge that education courses are popular and receive approximately twenty applications for each available place. However, academic ability is not the only criterion in filling places for teaching courses. A great deal of emphasis is placed upon having relevant classroom experience; but we found a discrepancy here between A-level and GNVQ students. The college arranges for all students who want to teach to go in to local primary schools for one whole afternoon each week for two terms GNVQ students have an additional block of three weeks work-experience built into their course, and those aiming for primary teaching careers spend this in reception classes. The two GNVQ students in the college, with good GCSEs and an anticipated merit grade at Level 3 GNVQ, who submitted UCAS applications for primary education courses were either rejected or told that an additional A-level was required. Conversely, the eight students doing A-levels who applied for the same courses, without exception, received offers – perhaps because they had in their favour that they were studying National Curriculum subjects.

Discussion and Implications

There are several lessons to be learned from this small-scale survey about the acceptability to higher education of Level 3 GNVQs qualifications in Health and Social Care.

For post-16 students, their parents, and school sixth-forms and colleges, the first point is that GNVQ on its own is a low-status currency in the admission to HE stakes. As one tutor put it, "We have been given to understand that GNVQ Level 3 is equivalent to the BTEC Health Studies but on investigating this has not proved to be the case. There is not sufficient Science". Even though many tutors thought that the high grades of merit and distinction at GNVQ might have some value for the individual student, they did not think that they had sufficient merit for the student to gain access to their HE courses. Most tutors, if they were prepared to consider GNVQ qualifications also required the student to take an additional A-level. The implication of this is that students will have to take an A-level alongside their GNVQ course for it to be regarded as 'serious currency'. This will probably cause problems of overload for some students, adapting to different patterns of learning and time-tabling difficulties for the college or sixth-form. For some students taking GNVQ courses it will mean extending the traditional two year post- 16 course to three years in order to get the preferred A-level. As one tutor wrote, "I appreciate the difficulties this causes as studying two different courses (GNVQ and A-level) defeats the object of alternative courses for students".

A further point for students, parents and post-16 institutions is that all the HE institutions use GCSE as an initial screening device. They all require a 'good' profile and 'good' grades in English, mathematics and science. Thus a grounding in Foundation and Intermediate GNVQ

courses becomes a non-starter. These 'vocational alternatives' are irrelevant in the ladder of progression game because they have no 'currency' value for qualifying to vocational HE courses. Some people already see the Foundation courses as a dumping ground for those pupils redirected at 14 years into the Shephard and Dearing 'New Apprenticeship' pathway, even though New Apprenticeships are intended for students seen as capable of operating at NVQ level 3 or above. Nowhere did the admissions tutors mention that they were prepared even to consider Intermediate GNVQ courses as worth bothering about.

For HE institutions the messages are equally clear. First, there is little evidence that universities are rapidly moving with the times. Our experience shows that there is some evidence that the new universities and colleges of HE, rather than the old universities, have begun to regard the GNVQ as slightly more acceptable currency. It all depends on whether the course is selecting (oversubscribed) or recruiting (undersubscribed). Both physiotherapy and nursing are oversubscribed and so can afford to remain with their traditional clientele – the A-level students. However, a few of the colleges of higher education even though they are oversubscribed, say they are adopting a more open-minded attitude. "We would interview applicants. As an institution we are committed to broadening access and seek to facilitate entry of students with qualifications other than A-levels. We would like to stress that we do not consider GNVQ or BTEC qualifications to be less valuable than A-levels. Within the current course structure, however, students who do not have a clear strength in their main subject are likely to encounter difficulties in this area of the course". But they did not give our GNVQ students an offer based on this qualification alone.

Secondly, HE institutions are being invited in the Consultation Document to extend the GNVQ framework to levels 4 and 5, "limited initially to a few vocational areas where there is already significant interest". Our experience is that there is plenty of student interest at Level 3 GNVQ for continuing up the ladder of opportunity post-18, but there is little opportunity in the form of HE vocational courses which will consider them whilst a dual (or should it be duel?) qualifications system exists. Are we about to see a replay of the old battle for respectability and acceptability that we saw earlier between GCE and CSE in the pre-16 phase exacerbated by "the possibilities of merging" SCAA and NCVQ (*The Times Educational Supplement,* 13 October 1995)?

Conclusions

Our evidence supports that found by the recent project report of *Tyneside Progression 2000* (August 1995). It concluded that, "Some admissions staff in Universities are placing excessive entrance requirements on Advanced GNVQ students." In general the current systems tend to assume that there will be a small number of applicants who can be treated as 'exceptional' entrants and treated individually Tutors are not prepared to develop criteria related to 'fitness for purpose' and take into account the predicted rapid increase in the number of applicants completing GNVQ.

Making students combine GNVQ and an A-level has already led to students dropping off the 'ladder of opportunity'. The question now is: can the post- 16 institutions and the universities, and the nation, afford to be profligate and continue to waste the talents of these new, and therefore different, students?

Partnership in Primary Teacher Education

Stephen Ward
Stephen Ward, who has taught in primary and secondary schools and a Language Centre, runs the In-service Programme for Teachers, and is co-ordinator of the Primary Undergraduate Initial Teacher Training Course at Bath College of Higher Education. Here he responds to Eke & Lee (1995) in *FORUM*, 37, pp. 55-56.

One of the most important aspects of the current debate in primary teacher education is how training is shared between practising teachers in schools and Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The virtue of *partnership* between HEI and schools is often cited, although there is little analysis of what this actually implies. Government initiatives, particularly Circular 14/93 (DFE, 1993), have fired a plethora of widely varying positions and practices. At one end of the spectrum there are School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) schemes where HE plays a minimal, or no, role. Similarly, the Open University course, while retaining control and funding with the HEI, hands over substantial responsibility to the schools. These models are a threat to the existence of teacher education in HEIs and, naturally, create concern among HE staff about their own employment prospects. At the other end of the spectrum there are arguments for preservation of the status quo in which HEI continue with overall responsibility for the training with little involvement from schools. For example, Eke & Lee (1995) argue that the traditional model in which HEI staff carry out the work be preserved. They suggest that primary school teachers do not feel competent to participate further in initial teacher education.

This paper challenges Eke & Lee's assertion that the traditional partnership between schools and HEIs is the ideal one. It is argued that both schools and student teachers benefit from a more dynamic and developmental partnership in initial teacher education, but that the teacher's role needs to be carefully nurtured and that recognition needs to be paid to the historical relationship between schools and HEIs, which has been problematic.

Primary teachers' present reluctance is, of course, driven by the overwhelming burden of teaching the National Curriculum in under-staffed schools. It is also born of an ambivalence and is fed by a culture of cynicism in schools about teacher education. This has its origins in a variety of historical causes. For example, many practising teachers were trained in early BEd courses which emphasised

theoretical material drawn from the social sciences without immediate relevance to classroom practice, often taught by staff with little or no primary classroom teaching experience (Fish, 1988). While there is some acknowledgement that current initial teacher education is improved, doubts still remain (Ward, 1994). So, although Eke & Lee refer to primary school teachers as "our mutual friends" it must be pointed out that the traditional relationships between schools and HEIs have not been universally *friendly*: they have often been mutually suspicious and sometimes resentful. HE staff are sometimes perceived by teachers as out of touch with classroom practice and too concerned with inapplicable theory. There is sometimes a view among HE staff that teachers in school are too present-oriented and lack critical perspective.

The data which Eke & Lee cite does not in fact show a concerted opposition to increased involvement in teacher education. Of their respondents, only 40% expressed the view that they would take no further responsibility for training and a further 53% were prepared to take additional responsibility, albeit in a limited role. The negative aspects of their findings is stressed. However, the same data might be used to suggest that, rather than a concerted anti-government consensus as the authors argue, there is instead a variety of different views about the role of schools in initial teacher training.

Our own research (Ward, 1994), together with general interactions with schools, indicates that there is a range of views about initial teacher education in schools which can be paraphrased as follows:

1. We want no involvement in teacher education which is all a waste of time. It is too theoretical and you don't learn anything until you really start teaching in the classroom.
2. Training should be done by HEIs. We will have students for *teaching practice*, as long as the HEI takes full responsibility for them, but want minimal involvement with the student's development. We are not interested in additional work and funding.
3. We would like to have partnership with HEI in the supervision of classroom experience. We find that supervising students helps our own practice. We need some staff resources to carry it out.
4. We would like to be more involved in the student's knowledge of the curriculum. We have ideas to share and being involved with the students' work would help our own curriculum development. We would like more funding for this. We also want further involvement with the HEI for our own continuing professional development.
5. We want to be involved in partnership with HEIs, but we want to control the framework and would like to control the funding. (SCITT in partnership with HEI.)
6. We want to control and carry out all the training. HEI have made a mess of it in the past. (SCITT with no HEI involvement.)

These each imply a model of relationship with HEI. Of course, partnership between schools and HEI takes place in models 2,3,4, and 5.

Eke & Lee emphasise the reluctance of schools to take part in teacher education, but their data is drawn from schools operating in the more traditionalist form of partnership (Model 2) in which the HEI retains the main responsibility for tuition and assessment. It is argued here that, where teachers are gradually given more responsibility for, and resources, for the student's tuition and assessment, they will come to value the benefits of a more extensive partnership.

At Bath College of Higher Education a development from the traditional model of partnership was begun in 1988, before the government reforms were introduced: the Affiliated Teacher Scheme. This was born of dissatisfaction with the traditional model of supervision of students' school experience by higher education staff. It was felt that the HE supervisor's oversight of the student's planning, followed by weekly visits and formal assessment at the end, was not the ideal model for students or teachers. The student received partial and brief support which was disconnected from the classroom situation. Furthermore the class teacher's role was always ambiguous: teachers would often play a supporting role, but this was seen as secondary to the advice given by the HE tutor who would make the final assessment of the student. The Affiliated Teacher Scheme is simple in its concept: the class teacher acts as the student's supervisor and carries out the final assessment. Thus s/he is *affiliated* to the College for the duration of the school experience. The teacher is required to give a formal tutorial and formative written report each week and to make a summative report and assessment at the end; a College tutor normally makes one visit to ensure that all procedures are in place and to moderate the assessment. For this work the school is paid on the hourly basis which would have been used by the visiting HE tutor and the teacher is given a half-day training session in preparation. The model is not described as a mentorship scheme, although it is similar to others which are so described (Turner, 1993). It is considered that the term 'mentorship' implies a high level of teaching expertise and a level of tuition and guidance which is not required. The rationale is that, given appropriate guidance, most teachers are able to give support to a student in the context of the classroom – indeed, in the traditional model of partnership they have been doing so for many years – and that all such teachers benefit from the professional development which they gain from the insights given in supervising a student teaching in their own classroom. The Affiliated Teacher Scheme recognises this, formalises it and provides suitable support and resources.

This is model number 4 in the above table: there is a transfer of control and responsibility for the student from the HEI to the school, with appropriate transfer of resources. The College's direction of students is softened to allow for cooperation with the school and the teacher's model of teaching, of curriculum planning, assessment and recording; the school plays a key role in assessing the student and, while the College still holds overall responsibility for quality assurance and the award of the qualification, there is a shift of power between the institutions.

After six years of the scheme research was conducted with students and teachers who have participated (Ward, 1994). The findings demonstrate a range of different attitudes to initial teacher education and associated approaches to supervision. They also demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the role of supervisor and satisfaction with the scheme overall. The positive comments concern the clarity of the role which teachers feel: they are clear about the definition of their role in respect of the College tutors and they are approving of the documentation and the training sessions which help to make the role and the requirements clear. The research (interview data with teachers and students) also demonstrates ways in which teachers in the scheme said that they learned professionally from the

experience of working with the student. Watching a student work with the class gives teachers insights into the children and their own teaching:

> ... *you can step back and look at somebody else doing it and see the reaction certain things have on children, which you don't always pick up yourself as a teacher.*

Further, the very act of advising a student and giving formal criticism necessitates the teacher analysing her/his own professional practice:

> *You don't realise how much you do that introduction yourself....*

and it helps the teacher to reflect on the variety the personal aspects of teaching:

> *I'm aware that my methods are probably only one method and that there's no right or wrong way ... it's just instinctive.*

In many cases teachers are able to share with the student their own uncertainties about their professional practice and see teaching as a continuous learning process:

> *I think teaching is very much a craft to be learned and I'm still learning. I see myself as a learner... in the same way as we see the student as a learner.*

Where teachers find the work with students stimulating they are able to write up their experience of working with students to gain credits in the College's Modular Professional Development Programme. This brings together, in a formal way, initial teacher education and teachers' continuing professional development.

Since the Affiliated Teacher Scheme began the nature of the relationships with schools has slowly changed with the gradual development of teachers' perceptions and awareness of teacher education. When the scheme was introduced in 1988 it was with a small number of students (20 from a BEd Course of 140 per year) and teachers who were known to have a positive view of the College and its courses. It was pressure from students which in subsequent years encouraged the College to expand the scheme. Students reported a much more satisfactory experience of supervision with regular attention from the teacher who had a close knowledge of the children and guidance about the curriculum which was focused to the context of the student's teaching. Expansion of the scheme moved relatively slowly because of the response of schools. Teachers needed time to be persuaded of the benefits, but there was a steady increase in schools' voluntary participation, until in 1994-95 the target of 100% supervision of students by Affiliated Teachers was reached. There are now several hundreds of teachers in the region who have successfully supervised students, are in favour of the scheme and appreciate the benefits which the supervision brings to their own professional practice. This demonstrates the way in which teachers in school can develop and move along towards participation in teacher education. In effect the teachers have moved from position 2 to position 3 in the table above, so that this is now *normal*. Most teachers in the schools would be strongly opposed to returning to position 2. Our findings are now that there are many teachers who wish to be *more*, rather than less, involved in initial teacher education. However, the timescale is crucial. For those HEIs who have not worked in this way with schools, to move rapidly at the behest of Circular 14/93 is a problem.

The scheme continues to develop. Having made progress in developing teachers' confidence about working with students, it will soon be in possible to move teachers along to model 4 in which they play a role in supporting the student's knowledge of the curriculum and its assessment. This will be done by teachers guiding students in classroom activities which ask them to enquire into aspects of children's learning: a miscue analysis in reading, for example. In doing this teachers' own learning and professional development will be enhanced. It is a step which the College will be taking from September 1996.

Conclusion

It is not being argued that the whole of initial teacher education should ultimately be handed over to schools. I would share Eke & Lee's condemnation of the ideological excesses of the previous Secretary of State. The SCITT model currently appears clumsy and expensive and removes the element of critical analysis and innovation which is offered by HEI and there appears as yet no concerted attempt by primary schools to gain control of initial teacher education. What is emphasised is the range of different attitudes and views about teacher education and the way these are changing as teachers become increasingly involved and interested. The point is that it is up to the higher education institutions to make the going here. It is no use our sitting around protesting that teachers don't want to do it. HEI must create frameworks within which teachers can participate and move on to further detailed participation, so that initial teacher education becomes a 'normal' part of the ordinary teacher's professional role. From this students, teachers and HEI staff will all benefit. As Eke & Lee suggest, "partnership is not simply about the sharing of responsibility for students; genuine partnership is about developing and enhancing the profession". However, the sharing of professional responsibility for the initial training of teachers is one of the ways in which the profession can be enhanced. The important thing is that the sharing of responsibility is within an appropriate, properly documented and agreed framework, or contract, which everyone involved understands. We need to move teaching closer to nursing in this respect, so that the profession has more ownership of its own development. Of course, a General Teaching Council would enhance this. Gradually, the old cynicism and distrust will be broken down and participation will become more mutual and mutually respectful.

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The Future of Teacher Appraisal

Steve Bartlett
Steve Bartlett was a head of department in a large comprehensive school before becoming a TVEI coordinator and advisory teacher. He is currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton. Here he writes a response to Barry Wratten's article on teacher appraisal in *FORUM* (1995), 37, pp. 57-59.

Barry Wratten in *FORUM* (1995), 37, pp. 57-59, reflected upon the introduction of appraisal in schools. The findings of his own research, carried out amongst a cross section of teachers, indicated a generally positive experience of appraisal. In spite of reservations at its introduction Wratten feels that teachers have used appraisal to serve their professional needs.

> *What teachers have achieved is to create an appraisal system from which they feel they can gain some professional benefit different in emphasis although not wholly different in philosophy from appraisal in industry. (p. 59)*

The term 'professional' should be considered in terms of how it can be used in different ways. Parry & Parry (1974) noted that the state has a vested interest in opposing the aspirations of teachers to professional status in the traditional sense of them having powers of self-regulation and autonomy. Since then others have stressed the reflective and caring nature of the work of teachers as being the basis of their professional status. Hoyle (1980) refers to the task of developing from restricted to extended professionals, Ribbins(1988) sees teachers as "interdependent professionals", Avis (1994) rather than using traditional measures would prefer to recognise the special nature of teaching as meriting professional status. Lawn & Ozga (1988) point out that the term professional may be used as a means of resistance or of control depending upon circumstances.

Rather than attaining or maintaining professional status, there is a view that teachers have in fact been deprofessionalised, that they have been subject to de-skilling and a process of proletarianisation. Apple (1988) described how increasing workloads and greater external constraints have led to teachers becoming more like technicians with decreasing control over the actual educational process. Both Ozga (1995) and Hoyle (1995) point to what may be termed increasing 'managerialism' within education and its potential threat to professionalism.

Appraisal may, depending upon one's viewpoint, be seen as part of a process of professionalisation or of deskilling. Wratten noted this conflict between the teaching profession improving what it does and the imposition of external constraints. Appraisal attempts to raise professional standards, yet at the same time may be said to undermine professional autonomy.

Goddard & Emerson (1992) outlined two polar models of appraisal: the staff development model and the accountability model. They pointed to the danger of a hybrid scheme trying to do both which is likely to be viewed with confusion and suspicion. The legislation, by stating a legal minimum of what was to be done in the appraisal cycle, left the process open to interpretation. It could be used for accountability purposes, for professional development or both. Circular 12/91 which accompanied the statutory instruments drew on the recommendations of the National Steering Group on School Teacher Appraisal which stressed openness, trust and professional development. However there still remained the undertones of accountability and control. Fears continued to be expressed regarding links between appraisal, disciplinary procedures and pay.

Much was to depend upon the actual implementation of appraisal. Wratten feels that in spite of all the dangers appraisal "has taken its place alongside other strategies employed by schools to improve their effectiveness." Appraisal will be of use to schools as it has been in industry.

It is at this point that I would like to refer to some small scale research of my own (Bartlett, 1996). Three secondary schools were looked at and thirty-four teachers were interviewed. The first of these was an over-subscribed grant maintained school. Various feelings were expressed by the staff as to the usefulness of appraisal. Some said they had found it beneficial but for many it was just something else which they had to do. The school was behind on its second cycle of appraisal due to the pressures caused by an OFSTED inspection earlier in the year.

The second school has gone through a period of contraction and has been expanding modestly over the past two years. Here the first cycle was completed but the second cycle had been modified greatly. Once again OFSTED was accused of disrupting the appraisal process and in the rush to complete the first year of the second cycle, formal observations had been neglected in many cases. It was suggested that the staff work closely together and see each other teach regularly. Also everyone had been observed during the inspection several weeks earlier. This lack of formal observation alters the whole focus of the appraisal process as it becomes much more of a personal review.

The head expressed a desire to 'open the appraisal process up,' to look at the work of departments and the school as a whole, rather than just focus on the individual. He felt that this would feed into the school development process more effectively.

The third school has suffered from falling rolls in recent years and there has been a significant reduction in staff numbers, including some redundancies. Though the school should have been on its second appraisal round, many staff had not been appraised. They had either just not started or had given up during the first cycle. Again pressures of OFSTED along with problems caused by long term absence of the head were cited as reasons why the appraisal process had gone 'adrift'. For many staff at this school appraisal was seen as yet another task in an increasing workload during a process of contraction.

Thus the legally imposed appraisal framework operates very differently from school to school. However, certain conclusions may be drawn which are reflected in recent national evaluations (Barber 1995; Wragg 1996). All three schools are suffering from appraisal 'slippage'. The process

for many staff is shortened, amended or not being carried out. Other pressing demands of which OFSTED inspection appears to be the most threatening, result in a low profile for appraisal.

How then can these findings be explained alongside those of Wratten? An important similarity is that the teachers did not find the appraisal process onerous. In fact many were pleasantly surprised. Early fears had generally subsided, the process had gone smoothly and they had enjoyed the personal 'chat'. However there was scepticism about the outcomes of appraisal and they saw few, if any, long term benefits and felt the process to be rather false.

There was a desire to work alongside and share experiences with colleagues as part of the process of professional development. This would involve forms of observation. However it was felt that formal appraisal did not contribute to this process as it discouraged true openness and co-operation. The nature of the appraisal process meant that many real problems would probably not be raised due to the apprehensiveness of both appraiser and appraisee. The schools generally found it very difficult to link the appraisal process into their school development plans in any systematic way.

These particular schools have, with varying success, introduced a system of staff appraisal. It appears time-consuming, cumbersome and really a matter of going through the motions. Perhaps it is worth considering some of the ideas offered on staff appraisal by the quality management movement. The Deming Association (1992) quotes Deming as describing appraisal as a deadly disease of Western-style management.

Scholtes (1995) identifies various assumptions behind the introduction of performance appraisal which he considers to be ill founded and in fact harmful to the development of any work organisation. One of the major assumptions is that employees as individuals have influence over the results of their work, rather than these being due to factors outside their control or the result of combined efforts within the organisation.

A further assumption is that rewards or punishments will alter performance for the better. It is not realised that incentives, when used to reward the few may demotivate the majority. There is here an implication that most people can try harder and are thus working below their capability. Thus there is a tendency to blame the individual or at least to make them feel at fault. It is often a blow to our self esteem not to be considered one of the most valued workers or to be classed as merely competent.

Scholtes (1995) argues that appraisal discourages teamwork in the desire to improve personal ratings, isolates the individual, encourages the desire to look good and play down problems that may really matter. These problems are made worse the more an appraisal system uses ratings, compares employees and uses merit payment as incentives.

Scholtes (1995) suggests that in order to improve the quality of products/services to customers (an image much in favour when talking of education in the 1990s), we need to look at systems for faults rather than blame individuals. Most people work hard to do the best job they can. If there is a perceived problem consider the system, the process, the training, the mentoring, the solution but don't set up procedures to blame the individual. Blame is counter-productive.

Though written with industrial systems of production in mind, these ideas may explain the current situation many schools face regarding the implementation of staff appraisal. By concentrating on individuals, appraisal will tend to harbour mistrust and the avoidance of important issues. The result is that the appraisal process becomes inert and is unlikely to be of any real benefit to the development of the school or the individual teacher.

What is the future for schools? For appraisal to be worthwhile the focus needs to change from individuals to teams. It is perhaps only when there is open evaluation of the whole system and staff feel involved yet not threatened that it may be useful to focus on individuals. One school in this study is moving rapidly towards this approach, the others are likely to follow.

One is left wondering why appraisal was introduced in this way. A system which had not been developed from within the majority of schools, which appears based on a belief that it is the employees who are in need of improving rather than the systems within which they work, will need much customising if it is to be of any use.

Perhaps an indication is given when Gillian Shephard (*The Times Educational Supplement,* 8 March 1996, p. 8) is reported as wishing for an appraisal system 'with teeth' which could be used to improve standards in schools. This would involve rewards for expert teaching in the form of performance related pay. The conclusions of a recent OFSTED report (1996) state that a number of weaknesses in accountability need addressing in the national appraisal scheme. It also states that:

> *Few, if any, schools have linked appraisal with pay or promotion ... The intention to make such links effective needs to be considered a priority. (OFSTED, 1996, p. 25)*

In the light of this, Chris Woodhead is reported (*The Guardian*, 23 April 1996, p. 4-5) as looking to a system of staff appraisal which aids identification of strengths and weaknesses Teachers would become more accountable to their 'line managers'. Targets would be set and monitored. Thus we have not escaped the philosophy of 'driving by fear'. Perhaps as Scholtes (1995) says we are fixated with identifying outstanding performers and underachievers when we should be looking at the development of outstanding systems, processes and methods to allow everyone to do a good job.

It would seem that teachers are being isolated and blamed for many perceived faults in education. Perhaps it may be useful and more effective to stress a team approach, a return to collegiality. Consideration could then be given to faults of 'the system' and the real causes of our problems.

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Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: a response to *Peddling Feel-good Fictions*

This response to David Hamilton's article, published in *FORUM*, Volume 38, No. 2, 1996, is by **Pam Sammons**, Associate Director of the International School Effectiveness & Improvement Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London; **Peter Mortimore**, Director of the Institute of Education, University of London; and **Josh Hillman**, Research Officer at the Institute for Public Policy Research.

Introduction

The previous issue of *FORUM* included David Hamilton's reflections on our recent *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools* research Review published jointly in April 1995 by the Institute of Education and OFSTED. We welcome the opportunity to comment on Hamilton's article which we consider fails to provide an accurate account of the nature, purpose and conclusions of our Review. The tone of the critique, with references to "social Darwinist eugenic rationale" and accusations of "ethnocentric pseudoscience", is somewhat intemperate but we have endeavoured to respond to the issues raised in a constructive fashion.

Background

School effectiveness research commenced 30 years ago largely in response to the pessimistic interpretation of findings by researchers in the USA (Coleman et al, 1966; Jencks et al, 1972) about the possible influence of schooling on students' achievement. In the UK, seminal studies were conducted in the late seventies and mid-eighties (Rutter et al, 1979; Reynolds, 1982; Gray et al, 1983; Mortimore et al, 1988; Smith & Tomlinson, 1989). The research base was thus established well before the British Government's market-driven educational reforms were introduced.

Hamilton claims that school effectiveness research is 'ethnocentric' and unconcerned with democracy, equal opportunities or social justice, which suggests that it ignores the powerful impact of socio-economic factors, gender and race. This is untrue as even a cursory reading of much published work shows. In fact, we and other researchers in the field have highlighted the nature of such influences.[1] Furthermore school effectiveness research has led to the development of a methodology for separating and identifying the impact of school from the influences of student background factors such as age, low income, social class, gender and race, and their prior achievement levels at entry to school. These studies demonstrate the vital importance of taking account of differences between schools in their intakes so that any comparisons made are done on a 'like with like' basis thus highlighting the need for the concept of 'value added'.

Such value added approaches have provided a powerful critique of the simplistic use of raw league tables to measure school performance. We have consistently demonstrated that such tables cannot provide accurate information about the contribution of the school and are especially misleading in relation to the performance of inner city schools (e.g. Sammons et al, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Mortimore et al, 1994 and Goldstein & Thomas, 1996).

Acknowledging the powerful impact of intake factors, however, does not mean that schools can exert no influence on pupils' educational outcomes. Our work has consistently revealed the existence of both educationally and statistically significant school effects at both secondary and primary levels. In a detailed study of inner London comprehensives, for example, the difference between the most and least effective schools was over 12 GCSE points – equivalent to 6 Grade Bs instead of 6 Grade Ds – for a student of average prior attainment (Sammons et al, 1995a). At the primary level the differences can be even more striking (Mortimore et al, 1988; Sammons et al, 1995b). Indeed, although no schools overcame the social class difference in attainment between working and middle class pupils, our School Matters study revealed that, because they made greater progress over three years, working-class pupils in the most effective schools attained more highly than middle-class pupils in the least effective ones. In terms of further education and life chances such differences are highly significant, especially for disadvantaged groups.

The Key Characteristics Review

Our Review was commissioned by OFSTED to inform its revision of the *Framework for the Inspection of Schools*. It was conducted independently and at no point were we requested to make any alterations to the text. Involving an

analysis of over 160 publications, it was intended to summarise current knowledge and was based on studies conducted in a variety of contexts and countries. Unlike Hamilton we feel it is a strength rather than a weakness to adopt an international perspective, a failure to do so would indeed merit the charge 'ethnocentric'! With respect to Hamilton's billiard ball analogy although we do not advocate a linear model of causality, neither do we accept his alternative proposition that schools and teaching are too complex for analysis to reveal any patterns or consistencies. Our combined research experience leads us to conclude that the study of such patterns is important [2], and our Review provides strong evidence of the existence of "common features concerning the processes and characteristics of more effective schools".

We stressed throughout that the Review should not be seen as prescriptive and certainly cannot be viewed as a simplistic recipe for effectiveness. It is regrettable that Hamilton fails to report that the summary table to which he takes exception is introduced by the following paragraph:

> *These factors should not be regarded as independent of each other, and we draw attention to various links between them which may help to provide a better understanding of possible mechanisms of effectiveness. Whilst our list is not intended to be exhaustive, it provides a summary of relevant research evidence which we hope will provide a useful background for those concerned with promoting school effectiveness and improvement and the processes of school self-evaluation and review.*

It is true that in writing the Review we attempted to provide information in a format which would be *accessible* to non-researchers but we see this as a positive rather than a negative feature and reject the claim that we conflate clarification with simplification. Of course there are dangers of over-simplification in summarising research findings but we believe strongly that research should be made available to practitioners and policy-makers. Such accessibility does not have to be simplistic however. For example, with regard to the centrality of teaching and learning we argue that "the results of our review do not support the view that any one particular teaching style is more effective than others" and went on to conclude "Indeed in our view debates about the virtues of one particular teaching style over another are too simplistic and have become sterile. Efficient organisation, fitness for purpose, flexibility of approach and intellectual challenge are of greater relevance."

Democracy and Research

Hamilton claims that UK manifestations of school effectiveness research "are shaped not so much by inclusive educational values that link democracy, sustainable growth, equal opportunities and social justice, but rather, by a divisive political discipline redolent of performance-based league tables and performance – related funding!" We reject this view. We hope our Review demonstrates that the field has, and continues to have, a strong focus on equity and, as we have noted, that it provides forceful evidence against the simplistic use of league tables. In fact we think that school effectiveness methods will provide particularly valuable tools for evaluating the impact of recent policy changes concerning educational markets, school status and admissions policies and the (as yet untested) claims that such changes in themselves will raise standards.

We also contest Hamilton's claim that such research "underwrites ... a pathological view of public education in the late twentieth century". In reality, studies have focused much more on the identification of effective schools and effective practices for raising student achievement than on failure – a trend followed in our Review. A more telling criticism would be that we have tended to ignore the less effective spectrum of schools and practices in favour of the more effective! Only recently have studies examined so called 'failing' schools (Reynolds & Packer, 1992; Gray & Wilcox, 1995; Myers & Goldstein, 1996; Stoll et al, 1996). As Gray & Wilcox have argued "... the correlates of ineffectiveness have been assumed to be the same. It is by no means clear, however, that they are" and further work is needed in this area.

We are aware that reviewing research to inform policy-makers, practitioners and lay audiences may be regarded as controversial in a climate in which education is often treated as a political football. Nevertheless, as argued recently in the British Educational Research Association's *Research Intelligence,* we believe the virtue of research needs to be vigorously asserted. "...we can mobilise rational argument, empirical evidence, critical debate and creative insights. These are of the essence of democracy ... the social responsibility of researchers ... should be to try to disseminate findings not only to fellow researchers, practitioners and policy-makers but also to the general public ... difficulties in simplifying complex findings and fears of misrepresentation by the press are insufficient grounds for trying to hide in simulated ivory towers" (February 1996). We think that Hamilton's comments about 'mystifying' administrators and 'marginalising' practitioners are misplaced and there are greater dangers in viewing research as suitable only for an academic elite.

Our claims for *Key Characteristics* remain modest: we hope it provides a useful summary for those interested in the results of three decades of school effectiveness research. So far the reactions we have received from practitioners to the Review have been overwhelmingly positive. Of course, the findings must not be seen as a panacea and we strongly caution against prescriptive interpretations. However, we hope they will stimulate debate and encourage heads and teachers in the process of evaluating their institutions. We are committed to playing our part in improving understanding of the processes of schooling and we believe that the school effectiveness tradition can make a valuable contribution to this aim.

Notes

[1] See, for example, the three articles published in this journal (Mortimore et al, 1987a, b & c) or Gray et al, 1990.

[2] See Mortimore, 1995; Sammons et al, 1995b; National Commission, 1996.

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The Eternal Return of the Same: Dearing's latest review

Pat Ainley

The recently published *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Years Olds* is here subjected to critical scrutiny by Pat Ainley, writer and researcher on education and training.

Sir Ron Dearing's *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds*, published in March 1996, cannot be understood save in the context of factional struggles within the Tory Party over education and training policy.

As is well known the 1988 Education Act represented a compromise between market ideologues and the neo-Conservatives of the New Right. The deal between these two factions was that the market would deliver grammar schools and preserve 'quality' higher education. This marginalised the modernising faction with whom the marketeers had previously been in alliance during the period of Department of Employment dominance over education.

For, without the full employment policy that had underpinned Keynesian demand management of the Welfare State, the Employment Department (ED) had no role. Despite the way the ED's creature quango, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), pioneered the contracting administration of a new post-welfare state, in the end Education won out and subsumed the employment services of the old ED into a new Ministry for Education and Employment.[1]

Instead of pursuing vocational relevance, 'standards' were to be raised through testing a subject-based National Curriculum. Yet, as the late Lord Joseph warned from the House of Lords, a grammar school curriculum designed for the academic selection of a top 20 per cent would not suit the whole school population. Hence Dearing's earlier review of under-16 provision to prune an overloaded, academic national curriculum and its associated tests.

Back to the Future

Sir Ron's second review has partially resuscitated vocationalism. This is seen for instance in his support for 'Modern Apprenticeships'. The ED reintroduced these with its last grasp – after trying to get rid of 'inflexible' and 'time-served' apprenticeship throughout the 1980s. Dearing has even renamed the ED's discredited Youth Training as 'Youth Traineeship' to make it sound more like apprenticeship. He also proposes rebuilding a 'work-based' route for 'non-academic' 14-year-olds.

This last recommendation recognises the reality Keith Joseph had warned about that the academic National Curriculum is not suitable for all. Those who 'fail' it will from now on have an alternative linked to Further Education

(FE). But they will still continue with what remains of the statutory curriculum after Dearing's previous pruning made room for this alternative. However, by associating FE with school failure' the status and esteem of school sixth forms will predictably be enhanced. Also, colleges that students attend voluntarily are not prepared for the *in loco parentis* role of compulsory schooling.

Dearing does not mention this problem, nor the question of levelling the funding at present weighted towards schools in the competition between them and the colleges for dwindling numbers of 16-plus year-olds.

Neither has Dearing tackled funding for his new 14-plus route. It will therefore be impractical for many students to leave for FE at 14 because of the complexity of coordinating transfers between independently incorporated FE and sixth-form colleges and schools also financially independent under local management.

A National Qualifications Authority

Dearing has attempted to tidy up one legacy of the Departmental battle between Education and Employment by merging the former's School Curriculum and Assessment Authority with the latter s National Council for Vocational Qualifications. They will form a National Qualifications Authority to administer both academic and 'applied' examinations, thus turning level 3 General National Vocational Qualifications into 'applied A-levels'. Academic and applied are assured the same 'parity of esteem' by Dearing that was supposed to hold between the grammar, technical and secondary modern schools under the post-1944 tripartite system.

In the new tertiary tripartism of A-levels, 'applied A-levels' and work-based National Vocational Qualifications, all qualifications will now fall under one unified framework. Yet the numbers of different qualifications have multiplied to more than 6,000 since Keith Joseph set up the NCVQ to rationalise them into five levels from Foundation to Professional level. Dearing recommends more rationalisation but has complicated the levels further by adding an 'entry' level. Confusion is worse confounded with redundant National Certificates and National Diplomas to recognise additional breadth and depth of achievement respectively, all recorded in a revamped (again) National Record of Achievement.

Not Very Qualified?

The new SCAA-NCVQ merger leaves uncertain the status of NVQs, which NCVQ designed to be acquired at work (unlike the school or college-based General NVQs). Dearing proposes leaving NVQs with the awarding bodies. However, under the employer-led Training and Enterprise Councils which took over the MSC's training empire and who now link with the Industrial Lead Bodies awarding NVQs, training has been considerably run-down.

NCVQ's much vaunted competence-based qualifications are designed to employer specifications, testing everything candidates can do, rather than selectively examining what they know. Now they are also running into the sand. The extension of NCVQ s framework to higher and post-graduate education has already been considerably modified, while Dearing endorses the reforms of GNVQs previously suggested by the Capey Review which are designed to extend written testing of these applied A-levels .

Written tests will apply particularly to the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information technology familiarity, which with another change of names Dearing now calls key skills . The potential of GNVQs as an attempt to acquire general knowledge through vocational areas rather than through traditional academic subjects is thus considerably undermined.

In any case, it is possible that the introduction of GNVQs has actually hindered attainment of the National Targets for Education and Training since even more students drop out of GNVQs than fail the A-levels and BTECs that GNVQs have to some extent replaced in FE and sixth forms.[2] Also, many 16-19 year-olds who did not get the GCSE grades qualifying them for A-level are taking GNVQs as an alternative route to HE. Yet the capping of HE student numbers means there are not enough places in HE for all those qualified for them.

In relation to higher education a new national pattern is emerging with Ivy League research universities recruiting oven-ready students with good A-levels from private and more academic (often opted-out) state schools, while former-polytechnics gain local students with less satisfactory grades and on GNVQs through franchises with their associated FE colleges.[3]

Certified Not a Learning Society

It all sounds depressingly familiar. As Brian Simon has written [4], since the Education Act of 1870, Oxford and Cambridge still stand at the apex of the system, the 'public' schools continue to provide only for the upper class, maintained secondary schools are still divided according to the age the children leave and the professions they are likely to enter – just as was planned in the 1850s, '60s and '70s.

It has nothing to do with modernising the economy which is supposedly the point of all these repeated reforms. Yet education and training have been elevated to a position at the top of the political agenda that is out of all proportion to their real importance in relation to other areas of public policy. This is largely because government can no longer even pretend to do anything about other areas of policy, particularly the economy, over which it has deregulated away effective control.

Instead, learning at all levels follows contradictory social goals. It seeks to return to the secure certainties of academic/applied divisions between traditional 'middle' and 'working' classes. At the same time the modernising agenda, still advanced for example by the CBI, calls for a new 'flexible' workforce. Constantly updating their portfolios of so-called personal and transferable skills , these classless individuals will move from contract to contract in a work environment transformed by new technology to combine the academic with the applied.

Rather than either goal being attained, chronic qualification inflation/diploma devaluation has resulted. Ironically, it can be asserted that more students are now learning less at all levels. This is the road to a certified and not a 'learning society'.

Dearing's Review has not confronted these fundamental issues, merely patching up a tripartite framework of supposedly equivalent academic and applied qualifications alongside a work-based route. He has reinforced the hegemony of A-levels by levelling up rather than down in a futile bid for grade comparability, while at the same time introducing reformed A-level special papers "for young people of exceptional ability' and A/S-levels (equivalent to half an A-level) "for students who do not proceed to the

full A-level". He also calls for 'research' into overcoming the unpopularity of 'hard' maths and science A-levels and vaguely exhorts teachers to address the 'spiritual and moral' needs of 16-18 year-olds.

Progression between one route and the other will be limited by Dearing's restriction of modular A-levels and refusal to credit modules for transfer. It will be extended elsewhere by his advocacy of beginning modular degrees at school – leaving the door open to the 'Scottish solution' advanced by the left-wing think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research.

Any reform requires as a first step the abolition of A-levels in favour of Scottish higher-type exams unified with vocational qualifications and extending from schools through F to HE. Under political pressure Dearing has ducked this prime issue. One can only await his next review (of higher education) with foreboding.

Notes

[1] P. Ainley & M.Corney (1990) *Training for the Future: the rise and fall of the MSC*. London: Cassell.

[2] Peter Robinson (April 1996) *Rhetoric and Reality: the evolution of the new vocational qualifications*. Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economic.

[3] (1994) *Degrees of Difference: higher education in the 1990s*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

[4] Brian Simon (1974) *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Review of *Thirty Years On*

Clive Griggs

This is an extended review by Clive Griggs, the Leverhulme Emeritus Fellow at the Education Research Centre of the University of Brighton. His previous experience includes teaching in secondary technical, secondary modern and comprehensive schools.

Thirty Years On: is comprehensive education alive and well or struggling to survive?

CAROLINE BENN & CLYDE CHITTY, 1996
London: David Fulton Publishers
560pp., hardback, £25.00 ISBN 1-85346-353-1

In 1970 Caroline Benn & Brian Simon published their report entitled *Half Way There* on the British comprehensive school reform. This major study included introductory chapters which provided an historical perspective on secondary schooling in Britain and comparative studies of such schooling in a selection of other countries. However, by far the greater part of the work was a detailed study of the way in which comprehensive education, often against determined resistance from vested interests, had succeeded in providing comprehensive secondary schooling which offered hope of greater equality of opportunity than the selective system which had gone before; remnants of which were to remain in place in certain areas of the country, especially Northern Ireland. A generation on, a worthy successor has been produced which moves the story forward; a story which in many respects has been one of success for the majority of children who have attended the growing number of comprehensive schools and colleges in England, Wales and Scotland; Caroline Benn is again one of the authors, Clyde Chitty, a researcher in the original study, is her co-author, whilst Brian Simon, who has done so much in support of comprehensive education, is fittingly linked to the study by providing the Foreword.

Like its predecessor this is no easy read, not in the sense that it is written in a difficult style, on the contrary the writing is in plain concise English. Rather it is the breadth and depth of the study, supported by detailed tables of statistics from the survey they have undertaken, and buttressed by a detailed knowledge of the changing education system during the last thirty years. The study is also based upon impressive scholarship as evidenced by the wealth of reading listed in the sixteen pages of bibliography. This means that the book requires and deserves the reader's full attention to do justice to the wealth of material provided here; presented in such a way which makes it clear that developments in schooling from secondary to tertiary level have been complex and cannot be understood in the simplistic terms beloved of radical right pressure groups.

Again an historical perspective is provided to take the story on from where Benn & Simon left off thirty years earlier and frequently the book makes good use of the information in that earlier study to compare what was true then with the situation as it is today. In many ways the comparisons make for an encouraging picture; for, in spite of constant sniping, the comprehensive system is stronger today than it was a generation ago, although there are strong forces actively working to undermine it through breaking up the system of education planned and provided locally and under democratic control. The debates which have taken place over comprehensive education are covered and it is important at this stage to underline the fact that this study covers comprehensive education for the eleven to eighteen-year age group and beyond at times. Moreover this is a study of education which for a change includes material on Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Whilst so many aspects of education are covered the study does at least four important things. Firstly, it dispels myths frequently based upon ignorance of comprehensive education. Secondly, it provides information which explains the reasons for the variation in academic attainment between many schools. Thirdly, it points up the dangers of new forms of covert selection which have been introduced in recent times, and finally it provides suggestions based upon sound evidence of the kind of programme needed if comprehensive education is to be strengthened in order for further progress to be made by all our young citizens.

Turning to myths, claims that comprehensive education promotes uniformity are dispelled by the authors' 1994 survey, "...from a well-established middle school with 10 pupils in a remote area to a general further education college with over 5,000 full-time students. There are

schools with boarding and colleges that have on-the-job training as well as first years of degree courses". As the authors explain, It is very hard to wean people away from the limited image many still carry, and get them to look at comprehensive education rather than comprehensive schools ... Concentrating on a single type of secondary school misses the essential point that we are looking at a system which includes primary and nursery education; schools that serve one sex or religion, and colleges where people attend part-time as well as full-time. What it does not have is selection by attainment.

Another vision which remains strong is,

The stereotype of a comprehensive school in countless media profiles and even in popular fiction and drama, is of a school in an inner city, despite the fact that the first independent enquiry of 1968 found that less than one in five were so located; 30 years later it is almost down to 1 in 10.

For much of the twentieth century the correlation between academic attainment and various indices relating to standards of living have been catalogued through a series of government reports and independent studies. Whilst opportunities in education have been steadily widened Benn & Chitty provide evidence to show that inequality of opportunity stubbornly persists, not least because of the now documented widening gap in incomes and wealth in the nation as a direct result of government policies in taxation, cuts in public expenditure, low wages and unemployment. One interesting historical fact is a geographical reversal in disadvantage.

At the start of this century it was greatest in the countryside and lowest in the suburbs and towns. Today countryside and villages are advantaged areas, with schools and colleges becoming less disadvantaged as we move through the towns and then suburbs, to many of the least advantaged in the middle of larger cities.

This general point is reinforced by other evidence.

The city schools had the highest levels of poverty in their intakes. In 1994, 65.5% of city comprehensives had pupils taking free dinners at the level of 31% or over compared with only 2.8% of schools from the villages or countryside.

This can be linked to another relevant finding. "Schools with the highest percentage of pupils estimated to have special educational needs are those with the highest percentage of pupils qualifying for free school meals". Naturally, within these areas there are differences but they are still linked directly to social circumstances. "...there were only small variations in achievement according to type of school in Britain as a whole, there were marked and significant variations according to type of catchment area". A point underlined by a recent study of the Institute of Fiscal Studies which showed that, "Half of all men in council homes are now unemployed as estates become dumping grounds for the poor, unemployed and benefit dependent" (*The Guardian*, 24 May 1996). In such circumstances league tables tell us more about social deprivation than they do about academic success or teaching ability.

The survey shows that Scotland in 1994 with its 100% comprehensive and 100% mixed sex schools, achieved the best academic results in league table terms and had the best staying on rates although the latter were the worst a generation ago. In Britain girls' schools obtain the best academic results at sixteen years of age and boys are four times more likely than girls to be excluded, with a disproportionate number of those exclusions coming from pupils with Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. As the survey shows it is important to avoid measuring success only in terms of GCSE A-C grade results but also to take account of other grades in this examination, vocational qualifications, records of achievement and all of those elements which go to make up the qualities of pupils.

There is a section on admissions listing at least ten different methods from the traditional catchment area and feeder schools approach to interviews and priority for special ability in certain subjects such as music, sport or mathematics. The influence of market forces is discussed and found to work in accordance with favoured government policy rather than in terms of economic principles.

Never has a system claiming to be merely the free operation of 'the market' been so heavily controlled by government, so policed in law and so remote from democratic oversight". It is not as if these policies pursued by government have even been efficient in fiscal terms as the Audit Commission was to demonstrate in 1994 with evidence relating to the maintenance of surplus school places ...the taxpayer was paying at least £250 million a year for the thousands and thousands of provided-places no one was using.

Just like many of the other 'civilising services' in the country, such as the health service,

The effective schools movement was almost overpowered by the wave washing in from marketisation, accompanied by a whole new generation of gurus from the world of business and marketing, ready to mesmerise schools and colleges with their thinking. Newly 'independent' colleges and locally 'managing' schools were now encouraged to see themselves as businesses requiring managerial change rather than democratic overhaul, pushed forward by teachers who had taken 'flight into management training' in the early 1980s... The positive virtue of the new managerialism was that it was simple to understand by lay people because it involved reducing the concept of effectiveness of schools, colleges and local authorities to a few measurable indicators, including simplistic 'league table' scores based on the attainment of top pupils.

Most of those actually involved in teaching pupils and students will doubtless sympathise with the authors' view of some of these recent developments: "Learning and teaching were not commercial activities. Human beings were not commodities". Yet marketspeak about producers and customers has attempted to reduce everything good in education to the ethos of the commercial world; an ethos completely unsuited to one of the major caring services within our communities.

There are aspects of the study which are at first glance saddening, such as the recording of the numerous divisive measures introduced during the 1980s from the disproportionate funding to develop City Technology Colleges via the Manpower Services Commission to the incentives (bribes?) in extra capital funding to persuade schools to opt out of local authority control. Yet much comfort can be taken from the fact that in spite of all the financial inducements, glossy brochures and ministerial pressures, neither scheme has been a success if measured in terms of the Government's stated claims for these policies. The growing collaboration between schools which believe that co-operation is the most worthwhile approach for those

in education who are striving for a common aim, to improve the educational opportunities for all children rather than a favoured few, has made steady progress although, "There is no agency to encourage it; no government or LEA to fund it; no policy to guide it".

It is really remarkable that any government should seek to ignore in its publications distributed to parents the education offered to the majority of pupils and students yet

> *The 'Parents' Charter', sent in 1993 at a cost of £3 million to every household in Britain, told citizens about grant maintained schools, city technology colleges, assisted places, voluntary schools, training credits, 'selective schools for the academically able', and even about 'the important role' of private education. It completely failed to mention comprehensive schools or colleges.*

It is not wishful thinking to state that comprehensive education is a success story, largely due to the efforts of the teachers, those working in the service and the support of many parents. It is a case not so much of 'could do better if they tried harder' rather than 'could do even better if they received support from a government in terms of resources and political commitment'. They deserve such support from any potential Labour Government. The question is whether such a government would spend as much energy in promoting them as Conservative Governments have in supporting schemes to undermine them.

Book Reviews

Learning to Teach: a guide for school-based initial and in-service training

JULIAN STERN, 1995
London: David Fulton. 176 pp., £12.99, ISBN 1 85346 371 X

This book is described as a guide to teaching, schools and educational research for those involved in initial and in-service teacher education and training. It has grown out of the author's work as teacher and teacher trainer over the past few years.

The book falls into four broad sections. The first looks at the teacher as researcher. One chapter looks briefly at principles of research, the second at research methods, the third at what Stern calls forms of research and the fourth is a useful glossary of research terms. The chapters are brief and consequently superficial, but they do provide an introduction to the kinds of things that the teacher who wishes to adopt a research perspective might need to consider. They would serve to whet the appetite rather than to provide a comprehensive guide. Putting teacher as researcher first is unusual in these days of competences and checklists, of conformity to externally imposed requirements rather than self improvement, but is no less welcome for that.

The second and lengthiest section focuses on 'The Teacher in the Classroom'. I found the chapter on learning personally irritating in promising much and delivering little. There are some statements about equal opportunities but this important issue is not given the attention it deserves. A brief section on special educational needs is given similarly cursory treatment. The chapter on 'Organising the Classroom', includes brief discuss- ions of differentiation, planning, flexible learning, group work, DARTs, IT and homework. It is a personal selection of topics with various suggestions in the form of lists of ideas, such as in 'planning for the unplanned' and practical strategies. This chapter is followed by 'Communication in the Classroom' which guides the reader to think about a number of important issues under this heading – listening, talking, coping with difficult questions, assessing oral work, writing and teaching bi-lingual or multi-lingual learners. The chapter titled 'Behaviour in the Classroom' is really about bullying. Some useful guidance is provided although it is a pity that the chapter title does not reflect its content. The chapter on 'Cross Curricular Controversial Issues' introduces some important areas of thinking and practice for all teachers. The final chapter in this section, 'Assessment and Evaluation' provides a glossary of key terms preceded by a brief introduction to the purposes and form of assessment.

The third section focuses on 'The Teacher Outside the Classroom' and comprises two chapters, one on developing schools and the other on developing people in schools. 'Developing Schools' dips into policy, quality, management, display and design. 'Developing People in Schools' refers both to teachers and to pupils and includes transfer to new schools, self-esteem, time and stress management and advice on applying for teaching posts. It is an eclectic collection of thoughts rather than a definitive guide to practice.

The final section on 'Different Perspectives on Education' is really an annotated bibliography divided into two chapters. The first chapter arranges the works included under the headings of the previous three sections while the second is an alphabetically arranged bibliography. It provides useful information about what to expect from the texts included.

Overall the book offers an interesting and idiosyncratic collection of pieces addressing a mix of issues. Readers may feel that the topics covered range from the important to the peripheral. Amid a plethora of texts telling mentors students and others how to achieve success, this one is refreshingly different, a book to dip into and to include as an alternative reading option. It will delight some and annoy others.

ANNE WILLIAMS
School of Education, University of Birmingham

The Emerging 16-19 Curriculum: policy and provisions

JEREMY HIGHAM, PAUL SHARP & DAVID YEOMANS, 1996
London: David Fulton. 176 pp., £14.99. ISBN 1 85346 389 2

In the current climate it is almost impossible to discuss matters to do with education without talking about the post-16 arena. Questions about the future of education beyond the age of 16 years are being asked by students and their parents, by teaching professionals in further and higher education, by employers and by politicians. What, they ask, should happen to A-levels? Should they remain unchanged as the supposed 'gold standard' of our education system? What is the future of the vocational route? Are GNVQs too easy, and are they accepted as the equivalent to A-levels for employment or for higher education? Should there be elements common to all post-16 programmes of study, such as core skills or common learning elements? Could these common elements become bridges between the academic and the vocational routes? As a nation, what do we require from our young people when they enter employment? And what are the needs of the young people themselves in the competitive international job market? Should changes to the post-16 arena continue to be incremental and developmental, or has the time come for a major revolution in this area of education? And what guidance can we give, or even should we give, to our young people about to transfer to post-16 programmes of study?

In the context of their own research in the schools of West and North Yorkshire, these are the questions addressed by the authors of this book. The book sets the current debate into a context from all relevant angles, it outlines the changes which have already occurred, and it assesses the possibilities for future reform. The fact that this book was published only weeks before the publication of the Dearing Review of post-16 qualifications must be a source of some frustration to the authors who are thus unable to compare their conclusions with those of the national review. But in retrospect, with both publications to hand, it is clear that the conclusions of the book are valid and relevant.

This book can be highly recommended as a thorough survey of the current state of the debate, as well as providing an interesting insight into the attitudes of students and teachers currently involved in post-16 programmes of study.

FRANCES BURGESS
The Friary School, Lichfield

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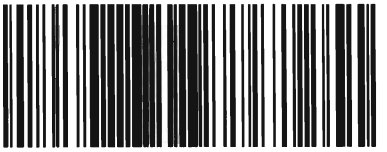

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