

FORUM

for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education

Autumn 1997

Volume 39 Number 3

ISSN 0963-8253

**The 'Neighbourhood' Debate
New Government – New Values?
Humanity in the Curriculum**



Contents

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 3 1997

Editorial. The White Paper: <i>Excellence in Schools</i>	71
CLYDE CHITTY. Comprehensive Schooling and the 'Neighbourhood' Debate	73
ANN MULLINS. Comprehensive Education: a tale of two cities	77
JOHN DUNFORD. Bridging the Divide: a vision of the future	79
NOEL FOWLER. Principles for the Key Stage 4 Curriculum	81
GWEN NEWTON. Will There Be Any Humanity in the Curriculum of the Millennium?	84
DEREK GILLARD. New Government – New Values?	86
TOBY CLOSE. What is Personal and Social Education Teaching?	89
ANNABELLE DIXON. Play it Again, Sam	93
LIZ THOMSON. Constructivism in the Developing World	95
Book Review	99

Editorial correspondence, including typescript articles (1500-2000 words), contributions to discussion (800 words maximum), and **books for review**, should be 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.

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

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

(Volume 40, Nos 1-3, 1998), post free

Individuals, £17.00 (US\$28.00)

Schools, £20.00 (US\$30.00)

Libraries, £32.00 (US\$55.00)

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

EDITORS

CLYDE CHITTY, School of Education, University of Birmingham (also *Book Reviews Editor*)

LIZ THOMSON, Development Consultant, Lincoln

EDITORIAL BOARD

MICHAEL ARMSTRONG, Harwell County Primary School, Oxfordshire (*Chairperson*)

MYRA BARRS, Centre for Language in Primary Education, London

BERNARD CLARKE, Peers School, Oxford

ANNABELLE DIXON, Holdbrook JMI School, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire

MARY JANE DRUMMOND, School of Education, University of Cambridge

LEE ENRIGHT, Westhaven Junior School, Weymouth, Dorset

DEREK GILLARD, Marston Middle School, Oxford

ANDY GREEN, Post-16 Education Centre, Institute of Education, University of London

JASON HUNT, The Sir John Lawes School, Harpenden

ROGER OSBORN-KING, Triangle Journals Ltd

JENNY THEWLIS, Educational Consultant, London

HONORARY EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

Roger Seckington, Brian Simon, Nanette Whitbread

The White Paper: missed opportunities

It is surely significant that the Conservative Opposition has found little to criticise in the new Government White Paper *Excellence in Schools*, published by the DfEE in July. Its appearance, 67 days into the new administration, is certainly indicative of the punishing schedule that David Blunkett and his team have drawn up for themselves; but, apart from the phasing out of the Assisted Places Scheme, the cutting of class sizes to 30 or under for five- six- and seven-year-olds and the renaming of the grant-maintained schools, New Labour education ministers have so far shown a marked reluctance to depart radically from the right-wing education agenda of the last Government.

It is, of course, a relief to know that Conservative plans to increase the opportunity for all comprehensive schools to become at least partially selective, allied with the idea of establishing 'a grammar school in every major town', have been jettisoned – along with the absurd idea of extending the already discredited nursery voucher scheme; but it is simply not enough to abandon some of the more lunatic proposals in the Conservative Party's 1997 election manifesto. What would be nice – and indeed a refreshing change – would be a ringing endorsement of some of the major education reforms that the Left has pioneered since the 1960s.

New Labour's Policy Principles

As we acknowledged in the Editorial for *FORUM's* Summer number, education is clearly the priority of Tony Blair's Government, and *raising standards* is the main vehicle by which it intends to initiate change. The first Queen's Speech of the new administration announced *two* education bills: one to provide the resources to implement the Government's class size pledge; the other to raise educational standards. It is this standards agenda which is set out for us in the July White Paper.

The Paper begins by listing the six principles underpinning New Labour's reform agenda:

- Education will be at the heart of government.
- Policies will be designed to benefit the many, not just the few.
- The focus will be on standards, not structures.
- Intervention will be in inverse proportion to success.
- There will be zero tolerance of under-performance.
- Government will work in partnership with all those committed to raising standards.

It is confidently predicted that by the year 2002:

- There will be a greater awareness across society of the importance of education and increased expectations of what can be achieved.
- Standards of performance will be higher.

The authors of this White Paper are clearly proud of the oft-repeated 'standards not structures' mantra – a banal

catchphrase which first saw the light of day in *The Blair Revolution*, co-authored by Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle and published in 1996. We are told that the preoccupation with structure has absorbed a great deal of energy to little effect – though it is not clear exactly what the word 'structure' means in this context. If it refers to the structure of the education system as a whole, one is tempted to ask what sort of national framework we would now have if large numbers of parents, teachers, local education authorities and politicians had not cared about 'structure' in the 1950s and 1960s and campaigned for a comprehensive system of secondary schooling. If it refers to the 'structure' of individual schools (which in any case cannot be viewed in isolation from the system as a whole), then we are being asked to consider a false dichotomy. Standards and structures are inter-related and can be understood only in relation to each other. A comprehensive school which is in reality a secondary modern in a still selective local system with inadequate resources to perform a wide variety of tasks is less likely to achieve excellent results of the kind measured by OFSTED than will another school in the same area which occupies a safe and privileged position in the local hierarchy of schools. It is one of the major shortcomings of the school improvement/school effectiveness movement that it often treats schools as if they operated in some sort of social and political vacuum. As we shall see later, this White Paper actually ducks many of the key issues concerning structure, selection and admissions criteria.

Modernising the Comprehensive Principle

On page 66, we read that "there is value in encouraging diversity by allowing schools to develop a particular identity, character and expertise". It would be nice to know where one could find the evidence for such a statement. Indeed, all recent research strongly suggests that so-called 'magnets for excellence' serve to diminish the performance and the status of neighbouring schools, thereby benefiting the few at the expense of the many.

The White Paper is indeed extra-ordinarily defensive about the effect that comprehensive reorganisation has had on the schooling system in this country. There seems to be some curious understanding that the reforms of the 1950s and 1960s served to undermine the pursuit of excellence. According to paragraph 1.12, for example:

The demands for equality and increased opportunity in the 1950s and 1960s led to the introduction of comprehensive schools. All-in secondary schooling rightly became the normal pattern, but the search for equality of opportunity in some cases became a tendency to uniformity. The idea that all children had the same rights to develop their abilities led too easily to the doctrine that all had the same ability. The pursuit of excellence was too often equated with elitism (p. 11).

Modernising the comprehensive principle – the title of Chapter 4 – seems to mean encouraging choice and diversity and creating new local hierarchies of secondary schools. We are told (p. 38) that the challenge for the secondary system is “to ensure that all children, whatever their talents, develop their diverse abilities”. It is for this reason that the Government wishes to encourage the setting up of a network of specialist schools, focusing on technology, Languages, sports or the arts. These will join the 15 City Technology Colleges to ensure that no one can accuse New Labour of favouring “a single model of schooling”. The CTCs will become “part of the broader family of schools”, with “fair admissions and funding”, but will “retain their independent status” – whatever all that means! The specialist schools will be able to give priority to children who “demonstrate the relevant aptitude”, provided that “this is not misused to select on the basis of general academic ability”. With such disingenuous statements, the Government attempts to persuade its own left-wing supporters that it is not really in favour of selection. In fact, Labour opposition to *selection* has been subtly modified over the years – as if it were one of the Seven Commandments in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* – to mean opposition to *further* selection – which means that there will be no *national* policy to deal with the remaining 163 grammar schools.

Not only will there be continued selection *between* different types of secondary school; it is also made clear in the White Paper that the Government is concerned about the grouping of pupils for academic purposes *within* schools. The one aspect of the White Paper that became a headline story in all the early morning Radio Four news bulletins on the day the document was published (7 July) was the repudiation of mixed-ability teaching, particularly in secondary schools. And writing on the same day in *The Times*, Prime Minister Tony Blair urged teachers to shun mixed-ability classes in favour of groups allowing children “to develop as fast as they can”. In a wide-ranging article (‘Schools told to break with the past’), he called for a “determined break” from the “system of monolithic mixed-ability comprehensives that symbolised Labour’s past”.

The White Paper’s tough line on mixed-ability groupings was again fore-shadowed in *The Blair Revolution* where it was confidently asserted (p. 94) that: “where teachers have ideological presumptions in favour of mixed-ability teaching, these should be abandoned in favour of what achieves the best results in schools”. According to the DfEE document (paragraph 4.3), mixed-ability teaching has simply not proved capable of ensuring that “all schools play to the strengths of every child”. It goes on to claim that “in too many cases, it has failed both to stretch the brightest and to respond to the needs of those who have fallen behind ... Setting, on the other hand – particularly in science, maths and languages – *is* proving effective in many schools”. The authors of the Paper hasten to assure us that: “we do not believe that any single model of grouping pupils should be imposed on secondary schools; but this is followed by the rather sinister stipulation that: “unless

a school can demonstrate that it is getting *better than expected* results through a different approach, we do make the presumption that setting should be the norm in secondary schools”

As Peter Wilby pointed out in a recent article in *The Times Educational Supplement* (18 July), all this is simply a case of “tilting at windmills”, with all the fuss about mixed-ability teaching appearing to exist “in a sort of event bubble of its own, without any reference to past, present or future reality”. The research that Caroline Benn and I carried out in 1993-94 for our book *Thirty Years On*, first published in 1996, showed that there was very little mixed-ability work in comprehensive schools *beyond* Year 7. By Year 9, only 6.5 per cent of comprehensives used mixed-ability groupings for *all* subjects; and by Years 10 and 11, this figure had fallen to just 3 per cent – with the vast majority of schools using various forms of streaming, setting and banding. At the same time, we could find no evidence of a correlation between a school or subject department’s grouping policy and its GCSE or A level results.

New Types of School and Admissions Criteria

It is left to the last chapter – called ‘A new partnership’ – to tell us that, in accordance with the proposals put forward in the June 1995 policy statement *Diversity and Excellence*, there will in future be *three* categories of state schools: community, aided and foundation. Yet it is not clear why we have to establish a new organisational nightmare. Writing in *The Independent* on 22 June 1995, former Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Roy Hattersley argued that: “by building its policy around different classes of school, Labour is endorsing selection”. And he made the obvious but important point that: “once a hierarchy of schools is established, those perceived as ‘best’ always receive more than their proper share of national resources”.

To sum up: it seems clear that any chance of creating a successful comprehensive system subject to fair admissions rules will be fatally undermined by the continued existence of 163 grammar schools and 15 City Technology Colleges – together with the setting up of a network of specialist schools and the introduction of three new categories of state school – with only community schools subject to admissions procedures determined by the local education authority.

Of course, it isn’t all gloom. CASE has already listed (*Bulletin* no. 95, July 1997) a number of the key areas where, in its view, the White Paper appears to get things right: policies designed for the *many*, not the *few*; smaller classes; a General Teaching Council; a network of early excellence centres; value-added assessments of performance; a national strategy for information and communications technology in schools; more family learning schemes, etc. But where issues of choice, selection and admissions criteria are concerned, there really are too many missed opportunities.

Clyde Chitty

Comprehensive Schooling and the 'Neighbourhood' Debate

Clyde Chitty

Accepting that the word 'neighbourhood' has acquired sinister overtones in educational discussion, Clyde Chitty argues that it is now time for the concept to be rehabilitated.

Writing in the journal *Comprehensive Education* in 1966, Brian Simon pointed out that:

It is not yet fully understood that the transition to comprehensive education – where genuine comprehensive systems are being established – inevitably means that the school systems that develop will be neighbourhood systems, the schools themselves neighbourhood schools.[1]

Yet this was, after all, the concept on which the idea of the common secondary school had been founded. When, for example, John Brinsley, a teacher from the 1590s, summarised his experience in two books published in 1612 and 1622, it was his concern to provide advice for those teaching in the 'common country school', a term descriptive of the local grammar school which at that time served all the groups living in the locality except, of course, the poorest who did not go to any school.[2]

Centuries later, Circular 144, published in June 1947, defined a comprehensive school as "one which is intended to cater for all the children in a given area, without an organisation in three sides".[3]

Since the vast majority of the nation's children already attended neighbourhood schools, at both the primary and secondary stage, this was hardly a revolutionary concept; but it was seized upon by opponents of the comprehensive reform as a main line of attack. The argument was that since selective grammar schools drew from every social class, such schools were among the strongest solvents of class division. In a book published in 1951, Eric James, the then High Master of Manchester Grammar School, claimed that:

Nothing could accentuate class divisions more effectively than comprehensive schools drawing on limited localities, where the whole tone and prestige of the school is completely coloured by the social status of the particular neighbourhood, as American experience shows.[4]

It was the Labour Party, or, to be more precise, Fabian elements within the Party, which attempted to answer this criticism when the comprehensive reform became a major campaigning issue in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The early Fabians had actually supported the concept of differentiation in the educational system in the interests of preserving an efficient 'meritocratic' society, Sidney Webb arguing, in a paper published in 1908, for "the progressive differentiation of the publicly provided school – the 'common school' of our Radical grandfathers – into a

number of specialised schools, each more accurately fitting the needs of a particular section of children." [5] The Fabians of the 1960s rejected the idea of a divided system at the secondary stage and in so doing added a new dimension to the ideological battle against selection.

The Concept of the 'Social Mix'

Far from merely having educational objectives, the comprehensive school was now seen as a powerful agent of peaceful social change, helping to bring about a more cohesive and harmonious society. The main thesis of Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*, published in 1956, was that class had replaced capitalism as the principal dragon to be slain, and that class hatred was buttressed by Britain's elitist educational system. In this and a later book *The Conservative Enemy*, published in 1962, he spelt out the theory that the comprehensive reform could be a critical tool in the process of improving British society without recourse to violent change. Not only would comprehensive schools enable children from different backgrounds to meet and respect one another, they would actually play a leading role in the task of creating a more stable society. According to Crosland:

the object of having comprehensive schools is ... to avoid the extreme social division caused by physical segregation into schools of widely divergent status, and the extreme social resentment caused by failure to win a grammar school place, when this is thought to be the only avenue to a 'middle-class' occupation.[6]

This powerful concept of the 'social mix', while having few egalitarian implications and conveniently ignoring some of the basic realities of British capitalist society, gained a tremendous hold on the Labour Party's imagination. It possessed obvious appeal for 'radicals' more committed to social engineering than to revolutionary change. It found clear expression in Circular 10/65, which laid down the intended pattern of comprehensive reorganisation after the Labour victory in the 1964 general election. In the words of Paragraph 36:

A comprehensive school aims to establish a school community in which pupils over the whole ability range and with differing interests and backgrounds can be encouraged to mix with each other, gaining stimulus from the contacts and learning tolerance and understanding in the process.

This Paragraph went on to warn that:

... particular comprehensive schools will reflect the

characteristics of the neighbourhood in which they are situated; if their community is less varied and fewer of the pupils come from homes which encourage educational interests, schools may lack the stimulus and vitality which schools in other areas enjoy.

For this reason:

the Secretary of State ... urges authorities to ensure, when determining catchment areas, that schools are as socially and intellectually comprehensive as is practicable.[7]

One of the definitions of a comprehensive school, used as a basis for the research sponsored by the Department of Education and Science and initiated by the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1966, was that of a school which collects pupils

representing a cross-section of society in one school, so that good academic and social standards, an integrated school society and a gradual contribution to an integrated community beyond the school may be developed out of this amalgam of varying abilities and social environments.[8]

As Brian Simon has argued:

Those who approach the matter in these terms do not necessarily stress new opportunities for intellectual development, particularly for hitherto deprived working-class children ... Rather the leading idea is to promote social cohesion in a class-divided society – modern Fabianism. This might, perhaps, be described as a form of ‘egalitarianism’, though the description does not seem very precise, nor very helpful.[9]

Catchment Areas and Admissions Systems

Despite the essentially negative British view of ‘neighbourhood’ reflected in Circular 10/65, many local authorities wanted to maintain commitment to the locality in their admissions systems while, at the same time, making provision for mixed social intakes. It was a difficult balancing act and few managed it with total success – especially since many comprehensive schools had to cope with the competition from selective grammar schools operating in the same area.

For some authorities, the ‘neighbourhood’ principle was dominant, even allowing for the fact this might well lead to some comprehensive schools having one-class intakes. And this ‘neighbourhood dynamism’ was viewed as a positive source of strength by a number of pioneering headteachers in the early days of the movement. Writing in *FORUM* in 1962, the Headteacher of Willenhall Comprehensive School in Staffordshire argued that “a comprehensive school can succeed only when it is a living organism within the neighbourhood it serves, sympathetically and consciously attuned, and, at the same time, giving a dynamic and positive lead”. He went on to claim that

the comprehensive school has much to contribute to this country's social structure: not in a merely sterile egalitarianism or in a merely party political sense, but rather in strengthening in its neighbourhood the already existing sense of community or serving to nourish or even to create that sense of community where it is weak or virtually non-existent.[10]

Other authorities and headteachers saw comprehensive schools requiring ‘a diverse mixture of social types’, with catchment areas bearing little relationship to particular neighbourhoods. In a book published in 1969, the

Headteacher of Bedminster Down School in Bristol argued that in large cities zoning should be on the wedge principle: the city cut like a piece of pie with each school’s catchment area or sector including “part of the city centre, the terrace housing, the industrial belt and all the residential area reaching out to the periphery”. It mattered little that the various sectors would have no precise shape; it was the principle of the sector which was important. Only when there was a fair degree of ‘social mixing’ could a school be labelled truly ‘comprehensive’.[11]

The authority that carried the so-called balancing principle furthest was the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) with an admissions system that tried to combine ‘parental choice’ with giving each comprehensive school roughly the same percentage of high – medium – and low-attaining pupils to obviate a ‘one-class’ effect and get a fair spread of attainment. It never fully worked because certain schools were unable to fill their ‘top’ attainment band and because many voluntary schools, which went comprehensive only slowly in London, regularly reneged on their agreements, as their aided status permitted them to do in law.

The many local officials who wrestled with reorganisation plans in the 1960s were doubtless in the main sincere and well-intentioned individuals; but it can be argued that too much time was spent worrying about aspirations and objectives that were both naive and unrealistic. It really did not matter whether or not a comprehensive school had an effective ‘social mix’; nor could it be expected to solve all the contradictions inherent in capitalist society. The situation was well-summarised by Caroline Benn and Brian Simon in *Half Way There*, their preliminary report on the British comprehensive school reform, first published in 1970:

A comprehensive school is not a social experiment; it is an education reform. In a society with class and race difference, a school that reflects all sections of a local community – and reflects them in proportions in which they are represented in the local community rather than in the artificial proportions in which they were usually represented in ‘public’, grammar or secondary modern schools – will often reflect these differences in the school ... The comprehensive school does not offer pupils a chance to hide from society, but the opportunity to learn in the conditions of social reality that prevail in the wider community.[12]

Neighbourhood or Community

As the comprehensive principle came in for heavy and invariably misguided criticism in the 1970s and 1980s, many preferred the term ‘community’ to ‘neighbourhood’, this new ‘user-friendly’ label appearing to have none of the latter’s ‘ghetto’ connotations. Yet it was not always clear what ‘community’ actually meant, the term having even more meanings than the word ‘comprehensive’. Where the concept had real significance, it could mean that comprehensive education was working to reverse the culture of competitive individualism and revitalise inner-city communities being destroyed by commercial redevelopment.

Under a radical and pioneering headteacher, Earl Marshall School in Sheffield, for example, had Urdu and Koranic Schools every evening; a weekend Arabic School run by the local Yemeni community and a Cricket Centre organised by enthusiasts from the local Caribbean

community – uses consciously resulting from a policy that made the school a ‘centre of local democratic education and activity’ by both children and adults, not a facility run by us for them.[13]

Today’s anti-comprehensive campaigners, particularly in the national media, continue to use the idea of ‘neighbourhood’ as a peg on which to hang questionable images of schooling, especially relating to discipline and poor attendance. It is, of course, true that teachers in many inner-city comprehensives have to cope daily with the long-standing problems of poverty, urban decay and segregated housing. Yet little is done to make their task easier. Indeed, their problems are being steadily exacerbated by the new ‘market’ approach which encourages ‘successful’ comprehensive schools to ‘choose’ pupils from a wide area, leaving ‘unsuccessful’ schools to pick up the pieces and suffer the ignominy of finding themselves at the bottom of the invidious and misleading league-tables.

Evidence from the 1994 Independent Enquiry

The research that Caroline Benn and I carried out for *Thirty Years On*, our up-to-date study of the British comprehensive school first published in 1996, showed that the vast majority of comprehensive schools continue to be ‘neighbourhood’ schools, though, as indicated above, the concept is being steadily eroded by the introduction of ‘market’ principles in our large cities.

Admittedly, our survey found marked and significant variations in pupil performance according to the type of ‘neighbourhood’ which the comprehensive school served. Using as a benchmark the percentage of Year 11 pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at Grades A to C or the equivalent, comprehensives drawing from mainly substandard housing had a pass rate of 18.2 per cent and those drawing from mainly council or housing association 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. These hardly very surprising findings would appear to support the popular view that catchment areas have a real effect on a school’s performance.[14]

Yet I would still endorse the ‘neighbourhood’ principle where comprehensive schools are concerned and in so doing reject the creation of an artificial ‘social mix’ when this involves ‘bussing’ pupils across cities and large conurbations. For one thing, I would wish to challenge the view that when neighbourhoods become dominated by a single class or racial group, the children who live there are incapable of ‘performing well’. It may be that schools situated in ‘deprived’ areas require special help in the form of additional teachers and resources. But this approach has to be preferable to allowing ‘unpopular’ or ‘failing’ schools to wither away and die – a popular demand of the ‘parental choice’ lobby. The point is that every neighbourhood deserves its own educational centre and that removing a school from a ‘poor’ area is a special form of social discrimination.

The ‘Myth’ of Parental Choice

Back in 1966, Brian Simon argued that adopting the ‘neighbourhood’ principle was “the only way of organising a non-selective school system without endangering the basic principle involved: namely, that there should be no selection of any kind either academic or social, in the mechanics of transfer from one stage of schooling to the next”.

His sound advice has largely gone unheeded; and for

many years, the whole issue of catchment areas has been intricately tied up with the ‘chimera’ of ‘parental choice’. Few of our politicians have had the confidence or courage to admit that it is quite impossible to run an educational system that guarantees parental choice of school to everyone. An honourable exception in this respect would be former Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath who exposed the hypocrisy at the heart of the Thatcher Government’s rhetoric in his contribution to a House of Commons debate on the 1987 Education Bill at the beginning of December 1987:

Parental choice in the new Education Bill is largely a confidence trick ... When it is claimed that the Bill will give parents greater choice, it can give them greater choice only if a school opts out and then, having opted out, changes the rules for the pupils that it takes in. That is the only way in which there can be greater choice than parents have at the moment, because there cannot be greater choice at the moment because the facilities are simply not there ... That is why the voucher attempt had to be abandoned in the recent past. It was quite obvious that the local education authority could not say to parents: “Yes, of course, you can have the school of your choice because we shall enlarge it and take them all.” That was nonsense. As I say, parental choice is in grave danger of turning out to be a confidence trick. [15]

In the years that followed, it became obvious that if grant-maintained schools were encouraged to change their admissions procedures, this could have the effect of actually reducing choice for the majority of parents. In the London Borough of Bromley, for example, there was widespread concern that a decision by the then Education Secretary Gillian Shephard to allow a grant-maintained comprehensive to choose 25 per cent of its intake by competitive examination would mean a large number of local children being deprived of a place at that school – with these places going instead to ‘bright’ children from outside the Borough. This caused Sir John Hunt, the Conservative MP for the area, to dissociate himself from government education policy and to suggest to parents that they consider voting Labour at the 1997 General Election.[16] And all this came at a time when a new education bill was going through Parliament designed to allow all secondary schools to select a proportion of their pupils by ability or aptitude without needing central approval.

In *Trading Places*, published in December 1996, the Audit Commission reported on its first examination of the impact of market forces on the education system, and blamed both central and local government for wasteful admissions arrangements. It found some authorities very much better than others at forecasting needs, removing surpluses and managing parental demand. Only 14 per cent of authorities were able to run a fully unified system of admissions administration covering all their local secondary schools. Roughly one child in 10 was unable to secure the school place he or she wanted; and a further one in 10 failed even to ask for their first choice because canny parents are aware that it sometimes makes sense to opt for a less popular secondary school more likely to accept their child than to go for the one they really want and risk failure and an allocation they could find completely unacceptable.[17]

The first case-study in *Trading Places* concerned a complex admissions system in Sutton Coldfield, an affluent

area to the north of Birmingham. Here parents could make up to SEVEN separate first preference applications, each of which could result in the offer of a place:

1. one of four LEA-maintained comprehensive schools (one of them being Catholic);
2. one of two LEA-maintained single-sex grammar schools in Sutton Coldfield;
3. one of the five King Edward foundation grammar schools in Birmingham;
4. any number of GM schools in Birmingham;
5. any number of GM schools in neighbouring LEAs;
6. a county or voluntary school in each of the neighbouring LEAs;
7. the City Technology College in Solihull, an authority adjacent to Birmingham.

Birmingham LEA was responsible for the admissions process for all LEA-maintained schools (that is, 1 and 2 in the above list); but for preferences 3 to 7 listed above, admissions were administered by five (or more) separate admission authorities, each working to a different timetable. There was an incentive, therefore, for parents to hold on to offers until they had learnt the result of all their applications. And even then, they were under no obligation to inform the various admission authorities about which offers they intended to reject. According to the Audit Commission, this complex system meant schools had to over-allocate places to take account of the parents who would eventually accept offers elsewhere. And meanwhile, other parents often faced an anxious wait to see if they would get what they wanted.

Parental choice in education is clearly a fiction; and public spending cuts and a policy of school management autonomy have served to exacerbate the difficulties faced by local education authorities. The new Labour administration will soon have to tackle the related problems of selection, choice and schools' admissions procedures. The mess we are now in and a possible 'solution' to our problems were outlined by Angela Phillips in a recent article published in *The Independent on Sunday*:

Far from delivering 'choice', the current system merely ensures that those with the sharpest elbows make it to the front. They are only doing what the free market tells them to do – shopping around for the best. But what most parents really want is a good school down the road, and that is precisely what a comprehensive system ought to deliver. It can do so only if LEAs are able to

make planning decisions and allocate places rationally – and if 'bright' children are not creamed off into a separate system. The Labour Party may end 'opting out' and this will certainly help; but while it is still hooked on the Tory rhetoric of choice, it is not going to tell parents the truth: that the best way to build a good comprehensive system is to stay put, send your children to the local comprehensive school, and put their brains and your energy to work improving it.[18]

Notes

- [1] Brian Simon (1966) *The neighbourhood school, Comprehensive Education*, 4, p. 4.
- [2] Joan Simon (1966) *Education and Society in Tudor England*, p. 375. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Ministry of Education (1947) *Organisation of Secondary Education*, (Circular 144), p. 2, 16 June. London: HMSO.
- [4] Eric James (1951) *Education and Leadership*, p. 45. London: Harrap.
- [5] Sidney Webb (1908) Secondary education, in Henry Bryan Binns (Ed.) *A Century of Education, 1808-1908*, pp. 288-9. London: Dent.
- [6] C.A.R. Crosland (1956) *The Future of Socialism*, p. 272. London: Jonathan Cape.
- [7] Department of Education and Science (1965) *The Organisation of Secondary Education* (Circular 10/65), p.8, 12 July. London: HMSO.
- [8] T.G. Monks (1968) *Comprehensive Education in England and Wales: a survey of schools and their organisation*, p. xi. Slough: NFER.
- [9] Brian Simon (1970) Egalitarianism versus education, *Comprehensive Education*, 14, p. 7.
- [10] N.C.P. Tyack (1962) The 'neighbourhood' school, *FORUM*, 1, pp. 18-19.
- [11] H.W. Simmons & R. Morgan (1969) *Inside a Comprehensive School*, p. 53. Brighton: Clifton Books.
- [12] Caroline Benn & Brian Simon (1970) *Half Way There: report on the British comprehensive school reform*, pp. 64-5. London: McGraw-Hill.
- [13] Chris Searle (1994) Strengths and struggles, *Teaching London Kids*, 27.
- [14] Caroline Benn & Clyde Chitty (1996) *Thirty Years On: is comprehensive education alive and well or struggling to survive?*, p. 287. London: David Fulton.
- [15] *Hansard*, H. of C., Vol. 123, Cols. 793-794, 1 December 1987.
- [16] John Carvel (1997) Tory MP 'blew top' at schools' policies, *The Guardian*, 7 February.
- [17] Audit Commission (1996) *Trading Places: the supply and allocation of school places*, pp. 22, 25, 28.
- [18] Angela Phillips (1997) The choice isn't yours, parents, *The Independent on Sunday*, 2 March.

Comprehensive Education: a tale of two cities

Ann Mullins

Ann Mullins is Headteacher of Highbury Fields School in North London. This article is based on a talk she gave at the House of Lords in February 1997.

This is a tale of two cities – well to be accurate, a tale of a town and a city. In the town it was the best of times, in the city it was the worst of times. It was simultaneously the age of wisdom and foolishness, when we had everything before us and nothing before us. But there is nothing fictional in this tale.

The town is situated in a pleasant, relatively affluent and diverse shire county. It is self-contained and a little insular, but there are good road links and even a train line direct to the metropolis. The inhabitants are settled and are bringing up their families in a calm and familiar environment. There is a range of light industry and professional opportunities in the area, so unemployment is low and the population spans the working and middle classes. Most inhabitants are white, and very few speak anything other than English. It is a safe haven in middle England.

The town has a number of primary schools and two mixed secondary schools. There are no private schools in the immediate locality, though some are accessible reasonably easily, and no grammar schools to cream off the brightest. Nearly all the children go to their local primary school and then transfer at 11 plus. Both secondary schools have received good Ofsted reports and score comfortably above average in the national league tables. Effective primary – secondary liaison is possible and the transfer process is as straight forward as it is ever likely to be. Parents and children know their schools and have confidence in them; they know their neighbours and know their children. Comprehensive education is alive and flourishing.

But what would happen if this level playing field were to be tilted? Perhaps a grammar school in the town? Then parental anxiety would increase and pressure be put on the children and the primary schools to 'get them through the 11+'. Remember that 75% will fail if 25% pass. Where will these rejects go? Parents with enough money will find places at private schools somewhere, as they won't want their offspring going to the local secondary modern. What will develop will be a grammar school (incidentally attracting pupils from an ever increasing distance) rising rapidly up the GCSE league table and a secondary modern falling even more rapidly downwards. Secondary liaison will become increasingly difficult and the whole secondary transfer process will cause ever more worry and concern to everyone involved.

Paradise Lost?

The city is vast, and certainly diverse. Cheek by jowl exist the very rich and the very poor, and every micro-level between. Communications links abound, but the cost of travelling both in terms of time and money is high. The

population is fluid and infinitely varied, the environment stimulating, pulsating, demanding, dirty, dangerous. Jobs there are, but many are low paid and living in the city is not a cheap option. Professional and highly paid posts abound, but stress levels as well as salaries are high. The population covers the destitute, sleeping in the streets, as well as the multi-millionaires whose residence is but one of many. Inhabitants embrace every colour and creed. Most of the world's languages are spoken and most of the world's cuisines eaten.

As there are millions of people there are thousands of schools – diversity and choice exists. There are private schools and public schools, grant maintained schools, specialist schools, technology colleges, grammar schools and comprehensives – yet strangely no secondary moderns. (Why was it that John Major wanted a grammar school in every town, yet omitted to mention the return of the 'sec mods' needed for the children who weren't selected?). There are religious schools, single-sex schools, voluntary aided schools, voluntary controlled schools, LEA controlled schools, and all with their own admissions criteria. How are parents to know these schools and choose a suitable one for their child? Often they begin the campaign well in advance of the transfer date, lining up visits on Open Days and arranging meetings with heads or heads of year. Will the chosen one choose their child? If there are entrance exams to be taken, tutors are engaged, past papers obtained and a whole series of Saturdays are booked for tests at different schools. The process is expensive and fraught, especially if the offspring is not naturally outstanding academically. And what happens if all one's best efforts fail? This is the nightmare of the chattering classes.

Paradise Regained?

Which leads us to the truth of the matter: where there is competition and selection, schools will be tempted to choose the pupils who are most likely to obtain the best examination results at GCSE. Being human organisations, some are tempted and fall. At pre-admission interviews, parents are put under the microscope – will they be able and willing to support their child's education in every way, from providing books and computers to rigorously checking homework? Do they speak English fluently? (This might be a plus for executives of international firms who can offer desirable links.) Are they in receipt of state benefits? (The correlation between free school meals and examination success is well known.) There are hidden selection criteria that make the old 11+ exam look positively above board, even if sometimes girls had to obtain a higher mark to pass than boys. Parents should not imagine that they are able

to choose a school: if it is over-subscribed and has any control over its admissions procedure, it will choose them.

The other side of the competition coin is that by definition where there are winners there are losers. The schools which do not get enough academically able children will not obtain examination success as measured by the percentage of A-C grades at GCSE. They will become less desirable and their rolls will start to fall. So will their budgets. Cuts will have to be made and the downward spiral will gather speed. Before long Ofsted will notice the fall in results and come to inspect. If the school is deemed to be in need of special measures the roll will plummet, a large budget deficit will quickly accrue, the head will probably be replaced and many staff will look for another post. The task of turning around such a situation is gargantuan – ask William Atkinson.

But does it matter? Britain did very well in the 19th century when girls received very little education, and in the first half of the 20th century when only a minority went to grammar school and only the elite to university. However, Britain began to slip in the industrial league tables and our wealth diminished. We are not a large island, and natural resources are limited. Our greatest natural resource is our people, and in the modern world we need them to be educated and creative.

Or Do We?

Herein lies the problem, the conundrum that we cannot resolve. The nation is caught up in a battle between the head and the heart, between the past and the future, and between the classes that still exist in our society.

It is interesting to compare the city described above with Singapore and Tokyo. As cities they share many characteristics, though Tokyo is hardly multi-cultural and it is difficult to find the destitute in Singapore. Both outperform London in the league tables and envious eyes look eastwards at their success. What is interesting is a comparison of their educational values – and I don't mean their systems. In Japan education is a priority, a real priority espoused by the people themselves. The system delivers large classes, so conformity is needed. It is very competitive for individuals, and stress levels are high. Pupils attend cramming as well as school as a matter of course. But what underlies it all is respect for education and teachers, and the widespread understanding of the importance of education.

Similarly in Singapore. After the World War II, the government realised the importance of education, as the tiny island was militarily vulnerable and therefore had to survive on its wits and its trade. School buildings were used to capacity, with two separate sets of children being taught daily – the early shift and the late shift. You might not agree with all aspects of their education policy, and you might object to the ideology and paternalism, but you can not but recognise that all decisions flowed from a single, central commitment to educate all children to a high level in order for the country to achieve economic success.

The most noticeable thing about education in Britain is that there has not been a single, central vision from which to proceed. We may have taken the decision to educate our children, but we have not in our communal heart taken the decision to educate *all our children*, and to give them true equality of access into the system. This has led to contradictory policies, including damaging admissions criteria, and the whole comprehensive wrangle. In a less

paranoid society, who would not have recognised and welcomed the achievements of our schools over the last 30 years?

Let us be clear as to what ground has been gained. In Scotland, all state schools are comprehensive and in England about 90% take pupils of all abilities. In 1979/80, statistics show that only 21% of pupils obtained 5 or more GCSEs at grade C or above. By 1996, this figure had risen to 44%. What is not included in these headline figures is the rapidly growing numbers of pupils passing an ever larger number of exams, and any headteacher will point to the increasing size of the school's cheques to the exam boards. Where else in the world would the improved exam results each summer be met with the cry 'Standards are falling!'

Following on from the success of comprehensive education in the last 30 years, many more people have the qualifications and desire to avail themselves of further or higher education, and there has been a corresponding expansion in those sectors. What long term, strategic planning did the government undertake to provide for this expansion? It is difficult to see anything other than a piecemeal response and this has led to the current financial crisis. As with other educational problems, Sir Ron Dearing has been urgently asked to find a solution and we are now looking at charges for tuition as well as loans for maintenance. Clearly the country cannot fully fund one in three (and rising) of the population, but if we had had a coherent education policy for the last 30 years the expansion and funding of provision would have been properly thought out. If the new administration is genuine in its prioritisation of education, will it be reflected in the proportion of GDP spent? (Incidentally, in 1993 Korea spent 18% of public expenditure on education, compared to 11.5% in Britain.)

But to return to our schools and our history. The Conservative Governments in the last two decades have significantly increased central control of education, and the new Labour administration shows every sign of continuing the process. Much education policy seems to stem from the schooling of those in power – the national curriculum looks like a grammar school timetable from the 1960s, apart from the addition of Mr Baker's personal enthusiasm for technology and information technology. There is a rumour that Mr Major's decision to cut the coursework component in GCSE came about because his son said it cut into his time to practise in the cricket nets (surely untrue!). But there is a glimmer on the horizon. The new parliament has a larger number of MPs from comprehensive schools and this figure will continue to grow as the comprehensive generation grows up and gets its hands on the levers of power. The Leader of the Opposition went to Wath-upon-Dearne Comprehensive School and even the new Education Select Committee is starting to have members with the advantage of a comprehensive education.

Hopefully these people, and others, will recognise that education is our life-blood, and that high quality education has to be available to all our children – it is their passport to their future. I don't choose who comes to my school; a list of names arrives from the education authority. They are somebody's children and we take them whether their parents are cabinet ministers or refugees. Whoever they are, they deserve the best education we can provide. But a genuine spread of ability makes an enormous difference to the effectiveness of the process.

Bridging the Divide: a vision of the future

John Dunford

As part of a series of lectures at the University of Birmingham on 14-19 education, John Dunford, Headteacher of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School and ex-President of the SHA, spoke in February 1997 on the academic/vocational divide. The following article is a condensed version of the lecture.

The academic/vocational divide in English education has a long history. In 1778 Adam Smith said that:

the greater part of what is taught in schools and universities does not seem to be the most proper preparation for that which is to employ [people] for the rest of their days.

In 1919 Alfred Marshall said that:

England is very much behind hand as regards the provision for the commercial as well as technical education of the proprietors and principal managers of industrial works.

The Government's *Competitiveness White Paper 1996* drew attention to the poor performance of the United Kingdom, by comparison with Germany and other countries, in the proportion of the population attaining middle range qualifications (see graph on p. 80).

The terms of reference of the 1995 Dearing review of 16-19 qualifications militated against a holistic analysis of the qualifications structure in which academic, vocational and general vocational pathways were to remain separate. Thus constrained, Dearing was unable to tackle the fundamental divide between the academic and the vocational. By inclination, however, Dearing operated by consensus and, where possible, he tried to build bridges. In some ways, he was even able to bridge the academic/vocational divide.

At key stage 4, for example, Dearing's first report had put technology and modern languages alongside English, mathematics and science as core subjects. Now that the technology syllabus has settled down (after several years of doubt and sorrow), this measure will have done more than any other to promote technology education in England and Wales. The emphasis on the importance of work experience, further promoted in *Learning to compete: Education and training for 14 to 19 year olds*, which the Government produced in 1997, is also of great importance in promoting vocational education. The reason why technology and work experience are so important in bridging the academic/vocational divide is that they are done by all young people in the age group, whereas the GNVQ part one or vocational GCSEs are done by only a small proportion of the cohort. What is particularly damaging is that vocational courses are often studied by those at the lower end of the ability spectrum, thus propagating the fiction that academic courses are for those who can do them, vocational courses for those who cannot. One has only to recall that chemistry and biology Advanced levels are studied as part of the preparation for the vocation of medicine to

realise how mistaken is the English tradition of equating the vocational with the less intelligent.

On assessment, Dearing has failed to build any bridges. Assessment methods for academic and vocational courses remain stubbornly separate, with an apparent view in the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) that coursework and continuous assessment are not appropriate for real academic courses. Perhaps the new Qualifications and Assessment Authority (QCA), with a brief for both academic and vocational qualifications, will reduce the tension between the different types of assessment and produce a single Code of Practice for all courses, while continuing to respect obvious differences between assessing theoretical and practical elements. Mergers and arrangements between examination boards and vocational awarding bodies, led by the merger of the Business and Technology Education Council and the University of London Examinations Council to form Edexcel, have pointed the way forward and these bodies would be well placed to take advantage of a more unified system of assessment.

Dearing saw his proposed National Certificate and National Diploma recommendations as an over-arching structure within which academic and vocational qualifications, albeit on separate tracks, could be brought into a single framework. He made it more possible for students to study two Advanced level subjects and one GNVQ area. For example, A levels in Geography and French, with GNVQ Advanced in Leisure and Tourism would be a sensible combination for someone wishing to enter the travel industry and, with accreditation in key skills at the appropriate level, this would earn a National Certificate.

The modular structure of A and AS courses, as well as of GNVQ, represent a further step forward, although the different types of module and the different modes of assessment present continuing difficulties. Indeed, the greatest disappointment of the Dearing Report was his failure to recommend ways in which credit units could be accumulated and transferred between academic and vocational routes. Until this happens, we cannot be said to have a unified system.

Key skills are the nearest that Dearing came to the development of a unified system. His recommendation for an AS examination in key skills was turned down by the headteachers and college principals and accreditation will be through each of the key skills separately. Thus communication, numeracy and information technology will each be tested at various levels, with schools and colleges

yet to decide how to arrange the teaching of these skill areas to the 16-19 age group. Provided that SCAA can agree the schemes, it is intended that students will be assessed on these key skills through a single mode of assessment, whether they are studying A and AS levels or whether they are taking GNVQs - a small, but significant bridge.

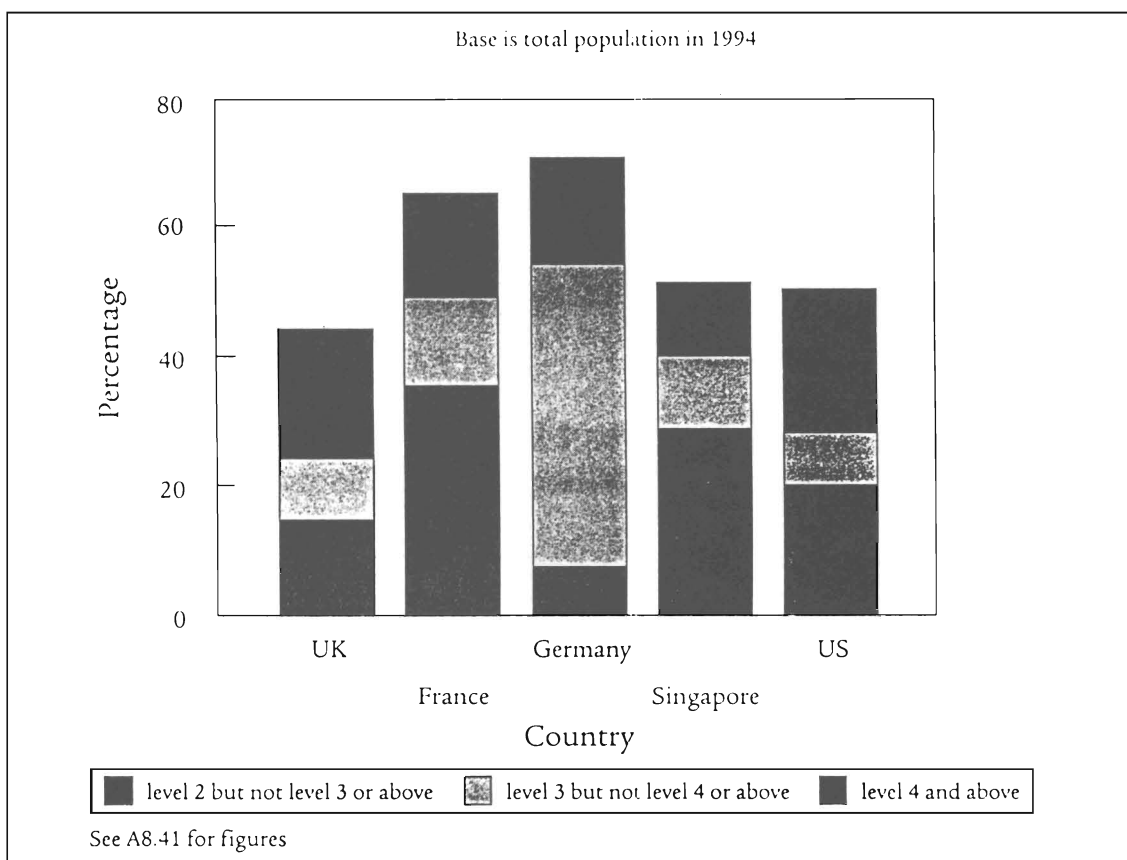
If the failure to develop a system of credit transfer was the greatest disappointment in Dearing's Report, his greatest achievement was to launch the reformulated, or horizontal, AS level. The six-module structure of these courses form a good match with the GNVQ Advanced, which will be taken as a full course with 12 modules or as a half-course with six. The new AS levels will also change student course-planning from the present two-year decision to a one-year decision which can be changed at the beginning of year two. AS will also increase breadth, particularly in year one, for many students. Because of its six-module structure, it can be viewed as an important step towards a more unified academic and vocational 16-19 curriculum.

AS is, nevertheless, little more than a short step along the road towards the vision of a single, unified qualifications framework sought by so many educationists and employers. In such a framework, there will be no academic/vocational divide and courses will have much greater parity of esteem.

The basis of all courses will be modules, drawn from a network of units, each defined according to level and pathway. With opportunities for credit accumulation and transfer, students will take modular assessments when they are ready for them, thus removing the damaging age-relatedness of our existing qualifications, which is further cemented into the public consciousness through the dreaded league tables of examination passes at ages 16 and 18. A unified framework will, incidentally, give an important boost to adult education and to those returning to education after a break, who will be able to add to the portfolio of credits which they had gained in previous years.

Such a system, developed for the 14-19 cohort, will be the basis of a framework for lifelong learning. It will build on success, whereas the present system builds in failure at every stage. It will enable students of all ages to have choice and flexibility. It will build in breadth, depth and balance. And, above all, it will bury the English (the Scots do not have this problem to the same extent) obsession with the supremacy of the academic over the vocational, which has been at the root of the failure of our system of qualifications for generations.

Proportion of population qualified to a given level (1994)



Principles for the Key Stage 4 Curriculum

Noel Fowler

Noel Fowler took over as Principal of Hind Leys Community College in Leicestershire at the beginning of 1997.

The last decade has seen a revolution in the curriculum. This revolution was long overdue but unfortunately it was not led by the right people. Instead of taking the initiative and arguing the case for the sort of curriculum that young people really need, teachers have found themselves fighting a continuous rearguard action. We have had 15 years of assessment-led curriculum development but now the time is right to take stock. I say this partly because of the recent change in government but also because the various Dearing Reports have given a very strong steer that teachers should be trusted with the curriculum. This is particularly so at Key Stage 3 but I feel it is also the case for Key Stage 4 and beyond. If we are going to grasp this opportunity, then we must make sure that any changes that we make have a strong theoretical basis. In this article I shall describe a framework that I believe can be used and then suggest some of the outcomes of using this model. Finally I shall describe the curriculum presently being used at Hind Leys Community College where I took over as Principal in January 1997.

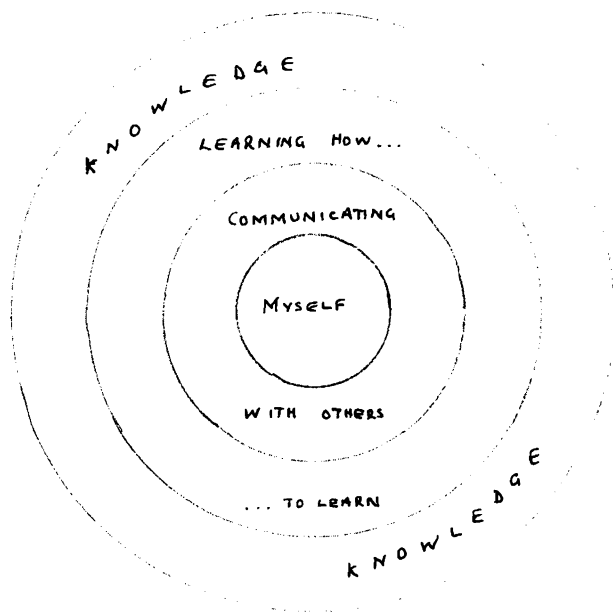


Figure 1. How the school curriculum affects an individual pupil.

The framework I am going to describe is not new and I do not wish to claim any ownership. I was first introduced to it by a colleague at a meeting of Head-teachers in Leicestershire and have since found it challenging and

rewarding to work with it and contemplate the implications for the way in which we teach as well as construct our curriculum. The model is best shown in Figure 1.

The concentric circles represent the curriculum as it affects an individual. The inner circle is the most important and is about learning about myself, feeling good about what I can do and developing an understanding about my strengths and weaknesses. This learning is crucial to the success of anything else that I might do. If I do not understand and feel comfortable with myself, then it is very difficult to successfully understand all the things that are going on around me.

The next level could be taken as me learning how to communicate on the simple level of speaking and listening, reading and writing. But it could also encompass learning about relationships, beliefs, values and why people behave in the way that they do. This stage of learning how to interact with the world around me is most clearly seen in young babies when they start to notice other people after initially concentrating totally on their own needs.

The third level is crucial and badly neglected. Even where there has been a little work done on helping students recognise different learning styles, the challenge of allowing them to define which is best for them and hence how they would like to be taught is rarely addressed. Differentiated teaching is hard enough, but the idea of differentiated learning styles goes beyond even the most progressive views of most comprehensive schools today. And yet I believe it is perfectly possible for students in Key Stage 4 to know exactly how they learn best e.g. by being told, taking part in discussion or carrying out an assignment. As an example, at Hind Leys we offer GNVQ Advanced Business Studies as well as A level Economics and we are finding that students are genuinely choosing the course which they feel will match their own particular learning style and their preference for methods of assessment.

Finally, and crucially for me, the least important and last aspect to be tackled in my learning is the gaining of knowledge. This is where most of the content, skills and understandings which form the present National Curriculum would be found. Using this framework we can see why the National Curriculum is doomed to failure especially in the Primary school because the pressure of trying to teach all of the content specified by the different subject programmes of study has forced teachers and schools to ignore the first three levels. One could argue that the consequences of this are young people who have little understanding of themselves, low self-esteem, poor skills in relating to others and no concept of how they learn. The focus at present is on the *what* not the *how* of learning.

I feel that it is important to recognise that this framework for learning is not a linear one. What I mean is that an individual may be working at each of the 4 different levels at different times during a school day or even in an individual lesson. When I am introduced to a new concept in, say, mathematics, I will at one and the same time be finding out a little more about myself as well as gaining a greater understanding of the subject. Part of the lesson may involve me solving a problem with some of the other students in my class which will increase my ability to relate to them and finally it may also improve my ability to learn from taking part in a discussion.

Trying to work with this framework leads to some clear guidelines for the construction of a curriculum. Firstly it must be student centred. This means that the schemes of work must not only take into account the different abilities and aspirations of the students, but also make sure that they allow young people to develop their own ideas and be creative. I believe that all subjects can allow students to be creative but of course the arts address this most directly. For this reason we should see performing or creative arts as part of the core curriculum for all students. This part of the framework also suggests the need for a reward structure which values achievement and ensures, as far as is possible, that assessments are against personal targets and not comparisons with other students. The vehicle for this type of work is an active record of achievement which needs the time resource of a tutor period or some other strategy. The Careers and Guidance work carried out during Years 9, 10 and 11 also contributes directly to helping young people find out about themselves.

Secondly there has to be a place for personal and social education, where students can learn more about themselves and also develop and practise the skills needed to communicate with others. However the demand for good communication skills has an influence across the whole curriculum where every subject should be looking for ways in which students are encouraged to present their ideas orally and on paper. The ability to relate to others extends further than communicating to encompass an understanding of why they act as they do. The humanities subjects address these issues by considering the historical, geographical and religious reasons behind the way in which groups and individuals believe what they do and therefore will behave in a particular way. For this reason, humanities must be a part of the core for all students.

Thirdly we must do something about making the learning processes explicit to students. The strongest reasons why all students should take a balanced core curriculum is because each of the subjects, mathematics, English, humanities and design offers a different view of problem-solving and research. These different strategies are what goes to making a good learner but we rarely share this concept with the learners themselves. (As an aside it is interesting to ask why we teach a particular subject when interviewing staff for a post. The number of potential heads of department I have listened to who really have not thought out why we should expect all students to study science, for example, is worryingly large.) The recent move towards target setting and making clear the learning outcomes for a unit of work or even an individual lesson are steps in the right direction. But I feel that we have a long way to go.

Finally, and probably most important for me, is the release from the content driven curriculum that the outer level of the framework offers. The message must be that we should

be constructing valid and coherent courses in, say, Design Technology, and then finding the most effective way to accredit them. This is a complete about turn from the assessment driven curriculum design of recent times where choosing the GCSE syllabus has been the first step, followed by writing a course to help students do well on that syllabus. We are in danger of teaching NEAB Design Technology or MEG Mathematics with all the dangers of narrowness that this brings.

So how does the present Key Stage 4 curriculum model at Hind Leys reflect these views. Before I describe our present situation a few words about the College. Hind Leys is a relatively small Leicestershire Community College. We have about 650 students between the ages of 14-19 taking full time courses together with a very large adult education programme and successful community groups. We serve the small towns of Shepshed and Castle Donington together with a variety of villages in the north west of the county. Our examination results over the last few years have been satisfyingly good, above the average for other local schools at GCSE, but we feel that there is still a lot of room for improvement. We teach 25 1 hour periods each week, 5 each day, and the diagram below shows the curriculum model presently offered to our Year 10 and 11 students. It has a number of features which can be related to the theoretical framework described above.

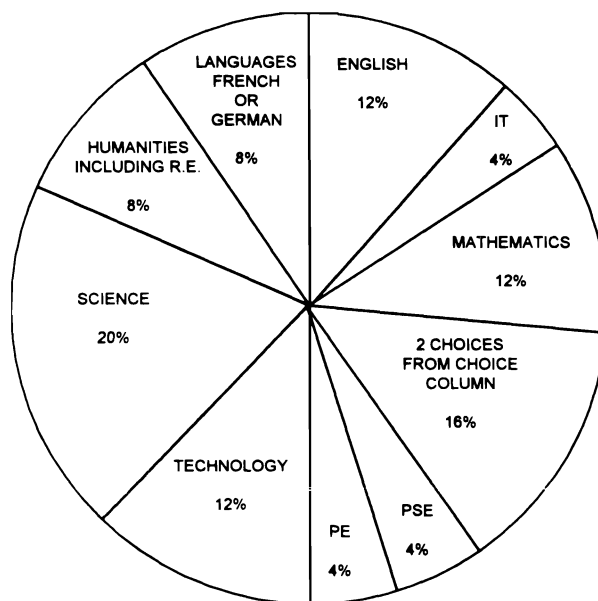


Figure 2. Core and options at Key Stage Four.

There is a large core, 84%, which consists of English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities, Design and Technology and a Modern Foreign Language together with Physical Education and Personal and Social Education. The single period of Information Technology is taught in Y10 to half a tutor group whilst the other half are working with their tutor on review and guidance activities. In this way every student has at least 19 hours when the IT national curriculum is formally taught as well as meeting it during other subjects. It is replaced by an additional period of Humanities in Y11 although some students choose to carry on with their studies in order to gain a CLAIT qualification in their own time.

Within this core there are some choices for example, in Design Technology students can elect to study one aspect

from six ranging from Meta and Plastics through Graphics to Food or Textiles. In the foreign language block students can choose to study either French or German.

At present we offer 11 GCSE subjects in the options blocks: Art, Business Studies, Dance, Drama, French, Geography, German, History, Music, Media Studies and Physical Education. These French and German options are intended for the most able linguists who will take one in addition to that studied in the core.

Although the model already displays some of the features implied by the theoretical framework defined at the start of this article, when I joined the College I began to explore with the staff some further ways of realising the dream which may lead to changes in the structure. This was an opportune time because the College had been working on how it should respond to the outcomes of the various Dearing reports and so I was able to give further impetus to this work as well as use it to introduce the ideas described above and so give some direction for colleagues.

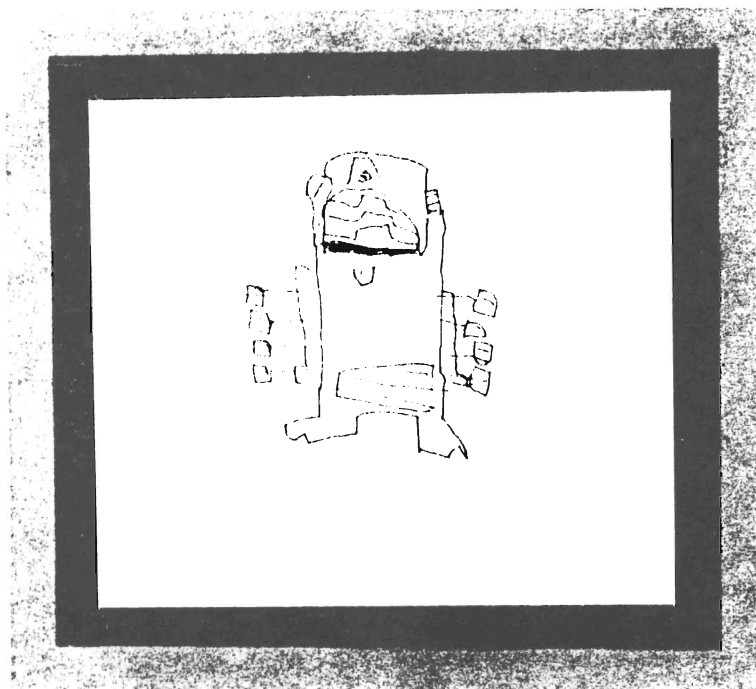
Firstly, the demand for coherent courses came at a time when the influence of the vocational curriculum was beginning to invade the compulsory stages of education. I put forward very strongly the concept of planning coherent and valid courses and then finding ways of accrediting them. For this reason we have decided not to introduce a vocational block into Key Stage 4. However a number of subjects are already offering alternatives to GCSE for some of our students and I could imagine a situation where a department decides that a vocational qualification is a more appropriate way of valuing their course. Another one of the implications of the framework has, however, led us to decide to develop the teaching of Key Skills pre 16.

Secondly, we have been looking at the ways in which we can develop a better understanding amongst students about how they learn and how they can help each other in this process. We believe that if we can tap into their collective learning power then their achievements will be

increased significantly. This is an attempt to address the second and third aspects of the framework and is both exciting and frightening because it is very new to us. But we are convinced that it is worth working on because the potential benefits are huge, so we have set up a project called Students Supporting Each Other and we hope to be able to develop teaching and learning strategies which encourage students to build each other up rather than put each other down. In this way the self-esteem of each student will be worked upon by a much larger group than if the teacher is the only person who is giving praise.

Finally, there are one or two implications of the framework which we have only just touched on and then left alone because they seem too difficult to address at present. For example it seems to me that a performing or creative art should be part of the core in order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their own creativity and also take part in the powerful experience of "performing" or "showing other people" their work. In addition we are seriously questioning whether 10 GCSEs, which is what our core offers, is appropriate for all students. After all, the more able, who can cope with this number, will hopefully go on to be successful in further study post-16 and so the number of GCSEs they have will become relatively unimportant. On the other hand, those for whom qualifications at 16 are likely to be a stepping stone to training or work would possibly cope better aiming at slightly fewer.

We intend to continue working on these issues. If you are also interested in the sort of developments outlined in this article and would like to join in with our debate please get in touch. Noel Fowler can be contacted at Hind Leys Upper School and Community College, Forest Street, Shepshed, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 9DA, United Kingdom



A 'transformer' toy, by Matthew Bell, age 6

Will There be any Humanity in the Curriculum of the Millennium?

Gwen Newton

For the past four years, Gwen Newton has been Principal of Longslade Upper School and Community College on the outskirts of Leicester.

In recent years the detail of the school curriculum for children of all ages has become a matter of political interest and pressure. Initially the National Curriculum requirements at all key stages left no room for any flexibility. Subsequent revisions allowed some space for response to local needs including, in theory, space for choice at Key Stage 4. At the same time schools were "encouraged" to address the issues associated with Vocational Education at Key Stage 4.

As the Principal of an 11 to 16 School and, more recently, of a Leicestershire Upper School and Community College, I have been only too aware of these pressures. I am now concerned that the pressure on schools to develop a curriculum which strives to meet the needs of an increasingly technological society has potentially damaging implications.

On taking up my present appointment four years ago, I initiated a detailed review of the curriculum. This was intended to enable the College to respond to the first Dearing Review, to changing examination courses and requirements as well as to the full implementation of the National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 4. This was undertaken by the staff with energy and goodwill. After much debate, we agreed on a curriculum pattern which we believed fulfilled all the legal requirements. Importantly, it also offered the breadth and balance of opportunities to which our students are entitled. We also believed that it ensured that students had access to a full range of opportunities in the future, whatever their ability or aspirations.

To us this meant that all students in years ten and eleven:

- should study for a full course in Technology;
- should study a Humanities course (a choice of Geography, History or Integrated Humanities is offered);
- should have access to an enrichment programme (known as extension studies), which includes Personal and Social Education and Careers Education, as well as a free choice of a variety of modules some of which may be non-academic.

With some reluctance, but some realism based on the experience of a previous curriculum which included "Languages for all", it was decided to offer the option of a short course in French. However, all students are strongly encouraged to study for the full course in either French or German (or both). The small number of students who choose

the short course will undertake Vocational Education in year 11.

This, as well as the usual core of Mathematics, English and Balanced Science (Double Subject), PE and RE, left space for one option block in which to offer the opportunity for students to study for a second Humanities subject or Modern Language, or other subjects such as Music, Business Studies etc.

This curriculum model meets the needs of almost all our students. The only exceptions are a number of students who wish to study Music as an "extra" subject, often as well as two languages. We are able to cater for these students by providing a "twilight" class in year ten, and using some of the extension studies time in year eleven.

Our sixth form curriculum has also changed and developed as a result of our Review and our wish to respond to student demand. We have offered an ever expanding variety of A level courses, as well as an increasing number of GNVQ courses at both intermediate and advanced level. We believe we are the first school in Leicestershire to offer NVQ's to a small number of students.

We were already concerned, before the Dearing 16+ Review, about the narrow nature of some A level programmes. We have therefore introduced the Youth Award Scheme as a compulsory element of the A level programme for students in year 12. This provision is timetabled and staffed. Year 13 students are offered the opportunity to study for General Studies at A level. Again this is a taught course which is time-tabled.

GNVQ has been an area of growth and success in the sixth form. As well as breadth and balance, it offers students real challenges, opportunities for personal development and progression. Indeed, a small group of our GNVQ students were motivated to go onto the local radio in June to defend GNVQ against a critic of national renown. They did this with some success.

We think that our curriculum works well. We believe that it prepares our students at both key stages for any future course or career. It does not allow them to "close doors" on future choices at the age of fourteen. We also hope that we are successfully avoiding the danger of an Upper School becoming an "Examinations Factory".

The number of students at the College has increased by twenty five per cent in less than four years, and our staying-on rate into the Sixth Form has gone up. Our examination results are good and we have just had a positive OFSTED inspection. So we must be doing something right!

Why then do I feel that our curriculum is under siege and that we are having to defend its structure?

We recognise that in order to fully implement the spirit of the Dearing recommendations we should be offering a wider vocational experience to our students at Key Stage 4.

Our recent inspection recommended that we increase the time allocation to Mathematics, Physical Education and Religious Education in years ten and eleven. I was pleased that the inspections also noted that we were not currently offering any drama experience to our students. (I am even more pleased that a recent appointment will enable us to begin to address this in this new academic year.)

How, then will we find the time to address all these recommendations for extra provision within our already full curriculum?

The only realistic possibilities are to:

- reduce the technology provision to a short course;
- remove, or reduce to a short course, the compulsory humanities provision;
- remove the remaining option block;
- reduce the enrichment programme - by removing the "free choice" modules.

A combination of these possibilities might be required.

It appears that many schools, (if not a majority) have responded to similar pressures by removing any requirement for students to study a Humanities subject beyond Key Stage 3.

This may appear to be an easy option, but I do have concerns about the impact of this for the future. I argue from a position of ignorance! As an Educationalist who used to be a Mathematician I did not study any humanities subject myself. However as a teacher, my experience has included observation, with admiration, of students studying MACOS (Man, a Course of Study) in the seventies, World Studies in the eighties and a variety of history, geography and other Integrated Humanities courses throughout the seventies, eighties and nineties.

My perception is that these areas have been particularly effective in encouraging and challenging students to acquire

a variety of research, study and evaluation skills. These skills are important.

It can be argued that similar skills can be developed within other subjects. However, it is now widely accepted that young people learn in differing ways. A variety of teaching approaches is more likely to result in effective learning for all students. This variety can, and should be achieved within individual subjects, but is often better achieved across a variety of subject contexts.

However, a key feature of the Humanities courses, including history and Geography, is the challenge to young people to study, evaluate and learn from the effect of humankind upon ourselves and upon our environment. My experience is that it is within the Humanities subjects that young people are most successfully encouraged to express considered opinions and their own ideas. It is also here that they are most likely to learn from the mistakes of others.

Some time in the early nineties, I attended a multi-agency conference which was convened by the Home Office. The conference was attended by the then Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, as well as by other notable politicians and a number of civil servants. Of particular interest to me are my recollections of a verbal reference to research which had been carried out on the relationship between criminality and certain personality traits. It had been found that two personality traits which correlate particularly highly with criminality were the need for short term gratification and the inability to place ones self in the position of others. Both of these are of relevance to educationalists, but the latter is, I suggest, another strong reason for continuing to teach the Humanities.

I accept the need for a technological society to equip its young people with a battery of appropriate skills and experience, including core skills. However I cannot accept this as being at the expense of Humanities. The Humanities are rightly named. Can we justify depriving our young people of this area of experience after the age of fourteen? If we do so, what sort of people will be developing and controlling our technological society in the next millennium?



Two birds of prey, by Ben Boulwood, age 6

New Government - New Values?

Derek Gillard

Derek Gillard was a teacher for thirty-one years, twelve of them as a Head, until he retired at Easter 1997.

The idea that education should be the vehicle for creating moral citizens is not a recent one. The White Paper which preceded the 1944 Education Act, for example, "called on schools and religious education in particular to revive the personal and spiritual values of the nation" (Cox & Cairns 1989). Many of the Agreed Syllabuses of the post-war years had such aims. Surrey's (1945) wanted children to "seek for themselves in Christianity principles which give a purpose to life and a guide to all its problems", while that of Middlesex (1948) said that "the chief task of the school is to train for Christian citizenship".

By the 1960s such attitudes were being questioned. Edwin Cox (1966) asked what the aims of Religious Education should be: would teaching the Bible produce faith and moral character? Or should Religious Education help pupils make up their own minds on religious questions? Ninian Smart wrote (1966) that "propaganda is not the aim of teaching, but the production of a ripe capacity to judge the truth of what is propagated".

The philosophy of the 1960s is now out of fashion. Baroness Blatch, (speaking on Independent Radio News 4 August 1992), said "we want them to have high moral values". John Patten's White Paper "Choice and Diversity" underlined the point and, once again, linked it to religious - especially Christian - education. In the past year SCAA (the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority) has conducted a consultation on a list of values to which, it is hoped, we will all subscribe and which teachers can then teach. (Most of the debate has centred on the wording of the section on the nature and importance of marriage). There is no doubt, then, that governments want our children to have values.

The problem for the Tories is that their philosophy of education (such as it is) militates against effective values education and also that their behaviour in government appeared to be based on a set of values few would want their children to adopt.

Tory Educational Philosophy

For the Tories, education is utilitarian: its aim is to produce efficient workers who will contribute to the economic success of the nation and so enable the Tories' friends in business to get rich - or even richer. The only place for values in this model of education is as a means of producing compliant citizens. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, commented at a conference on Values and the Curriculum at the London Institute of Education earlier this year "it is precisely because there are many pressures to make education more utilitarian - a better bargain for UK plc - that all of us, including teachers, need to insist on a balanced and rounded concept of education".

The Tories believe in selection as the best way of achieving this utilitarian goal. The educational elite - those in private schools with or without assisted places or in grammar schools - get a "good education" while the rest get an education that teaches them to know their place and not cause trouble.

They see education as the passing on of straightforward "facts" from informed teachers to passive, ignorant pupils. One of my (many) complaints about the National Curriculum is that it is almost entirely content-based. It relies on "outcomes" which must be behaviourally observable and publicly testable. Mike Bottery (1990) challenges the popular myth "that there are 'facts' which are solid, permanent and unchangeable ... it is important to nail this myth if the important part that values education can and must play within education as a whole is to be understood" and he suggests that the curriculum should include an element "which concentrates on the degrees of subjectivity, the tentativeness and temporality of human knowledge ... it is the teacher's duty to educate the child *away from* his or her authority" (my italics). Paul Hirst (1974) said "we can escape merely passing on our values and beliefs by passing on as far as possible the most fundamental capacities to challenge those values and beliefs and by not presenting them as having a status that is not defensible".

The Tories regard moral issues as contentious and therefore to be avoided. It is quite disgraceful, for example, that AIDS education has been removed from the compulsory curriculum. Surely children have a right to discuss such issues: how can they possibly make sensible choices otherwise? Education is not just about being fed facts, it is about developing value systems and making appropriate choices.

Finally - and perhaps most significantly - they don't believe in society. For most people nowadays, the values they practise "are derived either from a revolutionist approach, usually within a particular religious tradition, or from the adoption of principles which it is believed enable people to live together within a certain kind of society" (Bottery, 1990). But for the Tories, as Mrs Thatcher herself said, "There is no such thing as society".

What Values?

Is there a common set of values to which we could all subscribe?

Oxford Professor of Education, Richard Pring (1984), suggested "committing oneself to certain people or causes; refusing to treat others as mere pawns; pausing before embarking on a dodgy enterprise; accepting challenges to received assumptions and values; taking criticism seriously". And he quoted an American High School

Principal: "Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human".

In his speech to the RE Council of England and Wales (7 May 1992) David Paskall, then Chair of the National Curriculum Council, said "I expect (my children's) school to have a clear vision of the moral values which it and society hold to be important. These include trust, fairness, politeness, honesty and consideration for others".

More recently, the SCAA list includes "accepting diversity and respecting people's rights to religious and cultural differences; providing opportunities for all; contributing to, as well as benefiting from, economic and cultural resources; making truth and integrity priorities in public life".

There is now increasing concern about the lack of democratic values taught in school. Many of our young people seem to be blissfully ignorant of how our democracy works and the dangers facing it.

The Tory National Curriculum

You would think, then, that the Tories' National Curriculum would promote such values. However, apart from a consideration of how citizens can participate in action or decision-making on environmental issues in the Geography curriculum, the rest of the National Curriculum contains virtually nothing which would contribute to education in democratic values. As Judy Dyson (Humanities Inspector for Oxfordshire) pointed out at the conference on Values and the Curriculum, "perhaps the consensus about the need to raise environmental awareness makes this particular issue a safe bet".

Although values education should permeate the whole curriculum, an important vehicle for such teaching is Personal and Social Education. Yet this has never been a National Curriculum subject. Most schools do it, but it is an optional add-on, without the status of the other subjects. I would argue that it is the most important subject and should be a central part of any decent National Curriculum.

Tory Teacher Training

Equally worrying is the lack of any mention of values education in the training of teachers.

In February the Teacher Training Agency sent out for consultation proposals for "Standards and Requirements" for teacher training in England and Wales. This is a frightening document - it says nothing about a teacher's role in moral education and even lacks any indication of the educational values underpinning its own proposals - perhaps because there aren't any.

Aspiring teachers, it seems, are not to be allowed to consider the purpose of education. They are to concentrate almost exclusively on what has to be taught (the National Curriculum) and how this should be done. The creativity, spontaneity and originality which made English primary education the envy of the world are out. No wonder teachers are getting bored.

Tory Values in Evidence

Finally - and perhaps most tellingly - there is the Tories' own record in office. Although it's now history (thank God) it's worth reminding ourselves just how awful it was. Everything they did tells us something about their own values.

Competition is clearly an important Tory value. Competition between schools - promoted by the

paraphernalia of testing, exam results and league tables - has led to increasing division between the "good" schools and the rest.

Honesty and truthfulness were casualties of the Tory years. From the lies about taxes at the 1992 election ("no VAT on fuel" etc) to the countless examples of deceit (cash for questions et al) there seemed to be no end to it. Cuts in income tax were paraded as a triumph. But they were a deceit, too. The price was increases in other taxes and even poorer public services.

The method of calculating the unemployment figure was changed thirty-two times in the Tories' eighteen years. Some analysts estimate that there may be double the official number of unemployed. And many of the "new" jobs are part-time, low-paid, casual work. Yet, right up to the election, Heseltine was still trumpeting the Government's 'success' in this field. If not lying, he was at least being disingenuous.

Social justice was a major casualty. The gap between rich and poor widened enormously in the Tory years. Those in the poorest tenth of the population now pay £3 a week *more* tax than in 1979, while the richest tenth pay £30 a week *less*. What sort of social justice is that? To make matters worse, many of the services on which the poor depend have been cut or abolished altogether. Job Centres have been closed (presumably Tebbit's cyclists now have to pedal further for that elusive job) and old people have been thrown out of their council-run homes. Meals-on-Wheels and Home Helps cost more. Profit replaced nutrition as the criterion for the school meals service - where it still exists at all. The mentally ill were left to fend for themselves - sometimes with fatal consequences for themselves or others - and the homeless were left to rot in their cardboard boxes. There have never been so many beggars on the streets.

Peter Lilley was cheered for his mocking imitation of foreigners at a Tory party conference. He blamed the ills of society on single mothers. Gay households were sneeringly described as "pretend families". What sort of values underpin such attitudes?

The quality of public life was cheapened. Libraries, museums and art galleries were starved of funds, ITV licences were sold to the highest bidders. Music teaching in schools is disappearing. The only 'success' story is the National Lottery - a tax on fools and a fitting memorial for a government bankrupt of decent values.

Democracy itself is in danger. Britons living permanently abroad - mostly Tories - were given the vote. (Not a particularly successful move, apparently - of the two million potential expatriate voters, fewer than 24000 registered to vote this year.) Constituency boundaries were moved, largely benefiting the Tories. A huge proportion of public expenditure is still controlled by unelected quangos stuffed with Tory party supporters. Public assets were sold off and the newly privatised companies then gave money to the Tories (one water company had given them £25000 in the run up to the 1992 Election). A tobacco company gave the Tories free poster sites - in exchange for what?

A Fresh Start?

The Labour victory in May this year had a remarkable effect. The nation felt as though it had had an enormous weight lifted from it. But will it last? Will the new Government espouse and promote a decent set of values?

It made a busy - and promising - start. The Queen's

Speech began with a commitment to govern "for the benefit of the whole nation" and ended with a determination to see integrity restored to public and political life. Support for the Social Chapter and the National Minimum Wage demonstrated the new Government's commitment to social justice. The proposals to ban tobacco advertising and set up an independent food safety agency signalled not only a commitment to improve the health of the nation but also demonstrated the new Government's determination not to kow-tow to sectional interests. The banning of all privately owned handguns was an indication of its commitment to a civilised society. The Foreign Office was given a Mission Statement with clearly stated values.

But all is not well - especially in education.

I was appalled that, within a month of coming to office, David Blunkett published a list of eighteen failing schools. What was this supposed to achieve? What did it do for the self-esteem of the staff - and children - in these schools? The only tangible effect has been the inability of these schools to recruit new teachers.

Elitism is no longer to be promoted - hence the phasing out of the Assisted Places Scheme - but neither will it be rooted out. I would like to see a much greater commitment to deal with the inequalities and social injustice resulting from selection. What is to be done about the Grammar Schools, Grant Maintained Schools, City Technology Colleges and the independent sector? Precious little, apparently.

We are told that cooperation will replace competition as a core value. In his interview with John Carvel in *The Guardian* on 6 May David Blunkett promised teachers a "summit of educational practitioners" and said of the Local Education Authorities "We want to liberate them". A General Teaching Council is promised, demonstrating the Government's understanding of the need for a consensual approach and its desire to show that it values the teachers. This will make a welcome change from the rubbishing of the profession which has taken place on an almost daily basis for the past eighteen years. Yet it is accompanied by more pseudo-Tory rhetoric: "If they are not doing what we want we are not going to sit around waiting".

Excellence in Schools

The White Paper *Excellence in Schools*, published in July, is an interesting - if depressing - indication of the new Government's thinking on education (if thinking isn't too strong a word).

The new Government's policies, we are told, will be designed "to benefit the many, not just the few". According to *The Guardian* (8 July), "This will inevitably mean smaller classes, more equitable funding and fairer admissions". Comprehensives will not be allowed to select pupils on the basis of ability. So far, so good. Indeed, the White Paper was initially greeted with enthusiasm, the teacher unions describing it as "ambitious and refreshing".

But the rhetoric hasn't changed. "Raising standards will be at the heart of the White Paper" (*The Times* 7 July 1997). In a superb piece in *The Guardian* (27 June), Decca Aitkenhead said "A successful school will be measured above all by reference to a set of GCSE results". What sort of teachers will the successful school employ? They will "apply the strictest traditional teaching methods ... grind good exam results out year after year ... surf the Internet

... give out detention and correct spelling all at the same time".

There are to be more parents on governing bodies and parents on education committees. God help us! As John Rae pointed out (*The Times*, 4 July) a fundamental reason why fewer and fewer people are prepared to take on the role of Head Teacher is the "increased tension between the head and the governing body". Heads must be "given the freedom and authority to do the job without amateur intervention ... a national professional qualification for headship may improve the head's management skills, but it is the men and women with that extra quality - vision, charisma, force of personality - who are most likely to be deterred if the head is expected to be the governing body's poodle".

Tony Blair's article in *The Times* (7 July) sheds more light on the thinking of the new Government. "Education throughout life is central to our economic and social policy". Is this the same utilisation view of education which underpinned so much Tory policy? "There is proven best practice for the teaching of literacy ... based on the use of phonics to teach children words". Is there? Isn't this just another example of what happens when politicians see themselves as experts in education? "Our children will learn more and *earn* more". Ah, so *that's* what education is for.

Nigel de Gruchy, leader of the NAS/UWT, suggested that many older teachers would "smile wryly with the official acknowledgement that some of the methods imposed on them in the 1960s and 1970s were either wrong in themselves or impossible to operate" (*The Times*, 27 June).

Alan Millard, in a letter to *The Times* published on 4 July, sums up my feelings about the present situation perfectly and I can do no better than conclude by quoting from it:

"Some, like me, will be weeping over his (de Gruchy's) readiness to abandon those ideals which many believed were right and could have been operated had they been properly understood and adequately resourced.

It was only after a sustained and arguably ill-informed campaign that the Black Paper movement succeeded in turning the clock back, beating the few remaining reformers into reluctant submission. All that now remains to be seen is what will happen when the unsolved problems of the old ways re-emerge. The reforms of the sixties arose from a desire to replace what we now embrace: rote-learning, testing, selection and streaming.

The swing of the pendulum will always produce a few wry smiles. Mine must wait until someone blows the dust from the Plowden Report and rediscovers those more promising directions which were never determinedly tried nor consistently pursued".

References

- Bottery, M. (1990) *The Morality of the School*. London: Cassell.
- Cox, E. (1966) *Changing Aims in RE*. London: Routledge.
- Cox, E. & Cairns, J. (1989) *Reforming Religious Education*. London: Kogan Page/Institute of Education.
- Hirst, P. (1974) *Moral Education in a Secular Society*. London: University of London Press.
- Pring, R. (1984) *Personal and Social Education in the Curriculum*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Smart, N. (1966) *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*. London: Faber & Faber.

What is Personal and Social Education Teaching?

Toby Close

Toby Close was a member of the University of Birmingham PGCE history method group run by Clyde Chitty and Ruth Watts in the academic year 1996-97. He now teaches history at Shenley Court Comprehensive School in Selly Oak, Birmingham. The following article is based on an assignment he wrote for his PSE professional option course.

Introduction

Despite the large number of LEAs that have issued policy statements in support of Personal and Social Education (PSE), there remains an uncertainty as to the exact nature of the subject and this is reflected in the breadth of what individual secondary schools cover under the PSE umbrella. To some extent the ambiguous nature of the subject explains the animosity many teachers feel towards it, particularly those form teachers who are told to teach the subject, but simply do not know what is expected of them.

The challenge therefore for teachers and departments is to establish for themselves what PSE means and how it can meet the needs of their pupils. And we have to acknowledge that any PSE programme will always omit a wide range of valuable experiences. The DES was correct to conclude in 1989 that: "... no one set of objectives can take full account of the individuality of each boy or girl. Any attempt to use objectives to provide a comprehensive and predetermined framework for personal and social development would narrow, rather than open up, possibilities. It would also fail to recognise that worth-while personal and social learning may take place but be related only marginally, if at all, to declared objectives".[1] After much personal deliberation, I concluded that teachers should choose their own content and skills to be studied – always making clear the reasons behind such a choice. It therefore seems logical for me to propose my own general curriculum and the objectives behind it, using as a guide the objectives outlined in the DES publication *Personal and Social Education from 5 to 16* (Figure 1).

My Proposed PSE Curriculum

Figure 1 indicates some of the key areas I consider to have relevance to the vast majority of pupils under the care of teachers in secondary schools. Whilst recognising that skills and content are inextricably linked, I wish to outline some general skills after first having discussed the content to ensure clarity of discussion. At no point will I make reference to 'mortality', even though many schools study PSME (Personal, Social and Moral Education), as I can in no way define morality in any practical way for myself or for my pupils and nor would I wish to do so. Some of the issues that are often considered to come under the heading 'Moral' will be covered under 'my curriculum'.

The first area covered in Figure 1 is Education for Equality. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and this is usually enshrined in an Equal Opportunities Policy. It therefore

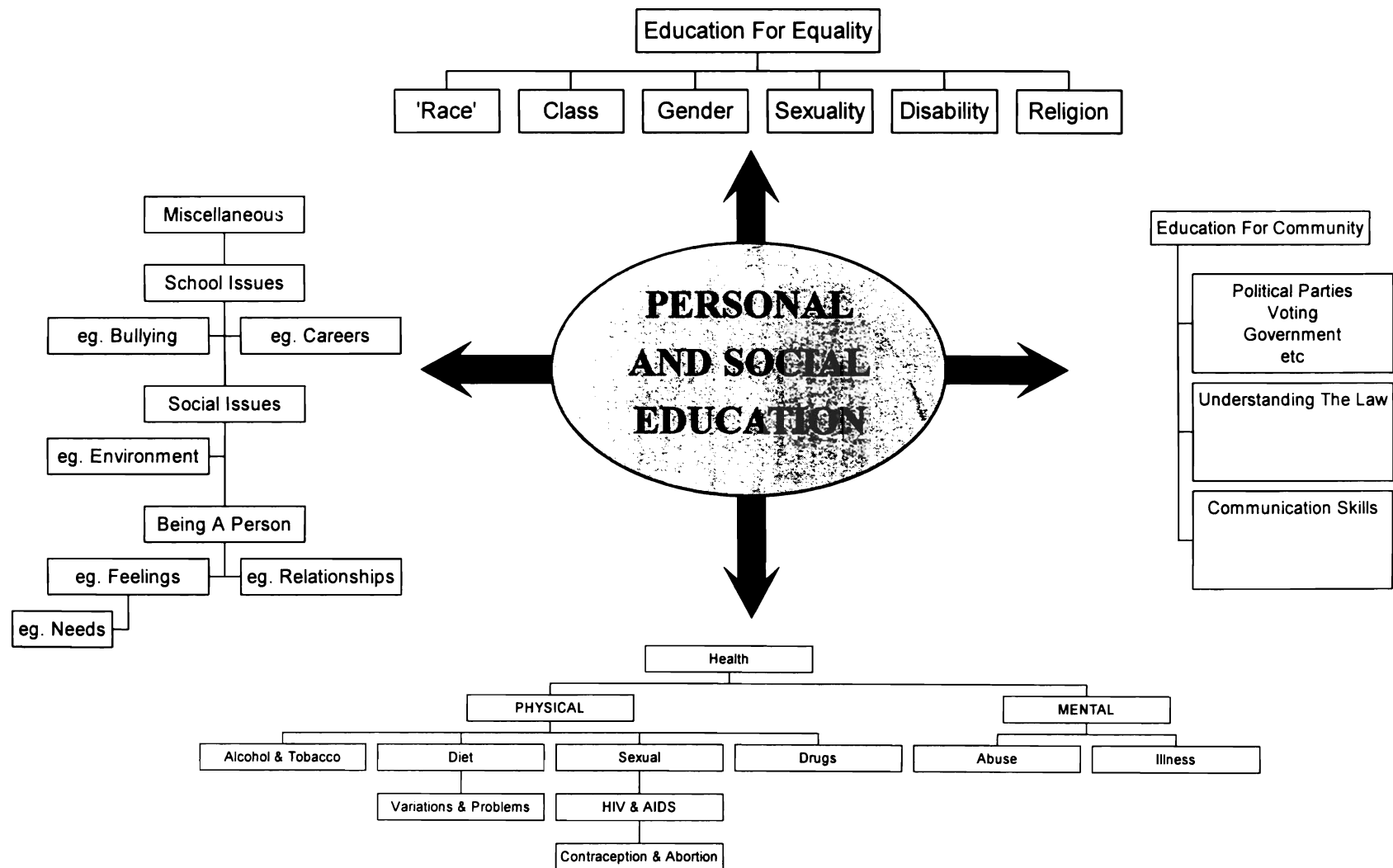
makes sense to ensure that pupils are taught about factors in society that hamper equal opportunities and these lessons can be used to challenge many ideas. As such, a lesson on 'race' could, in fact, be a lesson on anti-racist/multi-cultural education that looks at the roots of racism and challenges myths and stereotypes. The danger is that such ideas are studied in such a way as to make some pupils feel uncomfortable or to actually reinforce inferiority. In general though it is intended that such a unit would look at the diversity inherent in society and celebrate differences as a positive aspect of the world we live in.

Education For Community is not intended to force pupils to conform to expected norms as the title might suggest, but rather to highlight how 'the system' works. At the heart of such a unit would be investigation based on evidence to determine where power lies in society and the rules and regulations that govern us all. If pupils are to fulfil their potential they also need a number of skills that conventional lessons often do not teach. Communication skills, such as dealing with people in appropriate ways, will help pupils adapt to the ever-changing demands that are made upon us. This can include a wide variety of skills such as how to obtain unemployment benefit and how to write letters of application. Under this heading a wide variety of other skills could also be tackled dependent on the needs of the pupils and local parents such as seeking sources of advice and information. The general danger here is that pupils are often trained for specific roles in society, a policy that stems from low expectations of our pupils.

Health Education should give pupils an awareness of the factors affecting their physical and mental health. Within the guidelines laid down by the school, pupils needs to be able to make informed choices concerning their health. At the heart of this is providing accurate information that covers the implications of such decisions. Dictating rules to pupils is neither effective nor justifiable in most cases.

Finally PSE should cover many other 'miscellaneous' topics that come under none of the above headings. Much of this will be related to life at school such as the need for certain rules and careers advice. This is not a prescriptive list but hopefully a set of guidelines that will empower pupils to make informed decisions based upon their own values that are, in turn, based on a respect for evidence and take into account the responsibilities that underlie such decisions. If students can do this independently then they will be competent in the skills required for everyday living. What is important is that the content and teaching style are conducive to providing adaptable frames of reference so

A Proposal For The Content Of A P.S.E Course



that even if some things are omitted from a school course, pupils still know how to deal with the situation.

The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher in the PSE classroom is fundamental if the pupils are going to achieve an understanding of the field of human endeavour and realise the above aims. Of prime importance is the need to create and sustain an environment where information and issues that are often controversial can be discussed without pupils feeling isolated or oppressed. One criticism often levelled at teachers is that of delivering lessons that amount to indoctrination and this point needs further clarification.

Teachers, in a position of responsibility, should obviously not abuse such a position and use it as a platform for advancing their views over the views of the pupils. Jean Rudduck goes so far as to argue that teachers should remain 'independent' or 'neutral' at all times as asserting their views is often interpreted by pupils as the 'correct' answer.[2] Obviously it is wise to let the pupils form their own opinions before adding to the debate with new ideas, but we need to recognise that teaching is about challenging ideas and assumptions. Teachers do not exist in a vacuum: they are also acted upon by society and bring their own values into the classroom. Few teachers would accept racist, sexist, homophobic sentiments and actions or indeed any behaviour contrary to the spirit of equal opportunities and most commentators would suggest that it is actually the teacher's job to close down such thought. An alternative version of neutrality is clearly required and Charlotte Epstein echoes my own belief when she states that pupils should be aware of their teacher's views so that they "may know the roots of our teaching" – whilst admitting it is "a very difficult part of the teacher's job to make her values explicit without coercing her students to adopt these values".[3] In order to achieve this balance certain procedures need to be adopted.

From observation, it is evident that PSE teaching is least effective when a didactic approach is undertaken and that too many teachers wrongly assume that by offering their own interpretation of the issues involved the pupils are then equipped to form their opinions. PSE is concerned with the process, the acquisition of understanding through dialogue and debate, as opposed to simply the outcome. It is readily apparent that active learning is the bread and butter of PSE teaching. If pupils do not see how and why ideas and opinions are formulated then they are not ready to question, challenge and apply their own ideas. The teacher's role is to facilitate this active process.

An atmosphere of equality and enquiry needs to be created and sustained as these qualities are not always inherent in the structure of classrooms. As the first point of contact in the learning process the burden of responsibility lies with the teacher and the behaviour of the teacher is paramount in achieving this. There are as many different approaches to this as there are teachers and it would be arrogant to suggest a 'guideline'. However I can explain my own approach.

In conjunction with the pupils at my teaching practice school we devised a set of PSE discussion rules intended to facilitate the smooth-running of discussions and to ensure that they were orderly, scrupulously fair and hopefully still lively. The following were decided:

One person talks at a time (and they can expect the attention

of the class without comment until they have finished) In practice it was the teacher's job to write down on the board, so that all could see, whose turn it was to speak next to ensure continuity and fairness. This rule also applied to the teacher.

Differences of opinion are respected (but challengeable so long as this was done in the spirit of enquiry).

Nobody should feel forced to say anything if they don't want to (This meant that nobody should be forced to comment or be named by the rest of the class in a discussion. I was particularly concerned to try and ensure that no pupil was coerced into reaching a conclusion, as indecision is a part of life).

As a result of these rules the pupils had effectively allocated the role of arbitrator to the teacher. The above rules placed the responsibility for the discussions in their own hands and the teacher was there to ensure that the rules were observed. On occasion it was necessary to provide some teacher input, for example to bring the discussion under the remit of the issues at hand, to reinforce the agreed rules, to suggest possible alternative avenues of discussion and to close down 'oppressive' ideas. However my main role was that of facilitator. It is unfortunate that many teachers do not place more responsibility upon their pupils as they rarely make outrageous demands and are in fact more 'conservative' than many would expect.

Another important point concerning the acquisition of understanding, as Rudduck correctly recognises, is the role of evidence. Without evidence, such as drawings, photos, films and poems, pupils often merely reproduce their own assumptions and have nothing on which to base their arguments or challenge ideas. Evidence can act as a springboard for a discussion and can draw together pupils from all backgrounds as a common point of reference. Without evidence, pupils' preconceived ideas go unchallenged and are internalised as 'truth'; in short, discussion becomes a random guessing/memory game of the ideas they have been exposed to in the past. With these ideas in mind I wish to turn to a lesson I gave on my recent Teaching Practice that exemplifies some of the points under discussion.

At the beginning of my Teaching Practice in an inner-city 'comprehensive' school in Birmingham it was clear that many pupils in my form had not had many of their ideas challenged and they often expressed 'mild' racist, sexist and homophobic sentiments based upon stereotypes. I therefore planned a lesson with the intention of indicating the need for us all to challenge our own ideas and to be aware of existing stereotypes abounding in society.

Stereotypes Lesson

Without explaining the purpose of the lesson, as it was expected this would alter the results the pupils gave, each child was given a sheet that contained the pictures of ten different people. The 'jobs' each person undertook ranged from revolutionary to government minister and the pupils' task was to match up the picture to a brief description of their job, or why they were in the news – a task the pupils clearly enjoyed. A straw poll was taken and a general consensus was reached concerning the matching exercise. I then read out to them the 'correct' match which was used as basis for a general discussion concerning stereotypes which was followed up with a few short questions to ensure

the pupils had formed their own opinions and to clarify any points of difficulty.

As expected, the pupils reproduced many of the stereotypes that abound in everyday life which was reflected in their answers. For example the class decided with unanimity that the ballet dancer must be a woman and that the revolutionary was a man. Through discussion and an analysis of their answers it was decided by the class that there could be no absolute criteria for classifying people. Via a teacher led discussion I told them that their ideas, ballet dancer=man and student=young person, were stereotypes and they successfully developed their own interpretations of what the word means which they exemplified by giving further examples such as all black people take drugs. It was hoped that such a lesson would not reinforce difference but foster an investigative outlook that they could apply to any information with which they were later confronted.

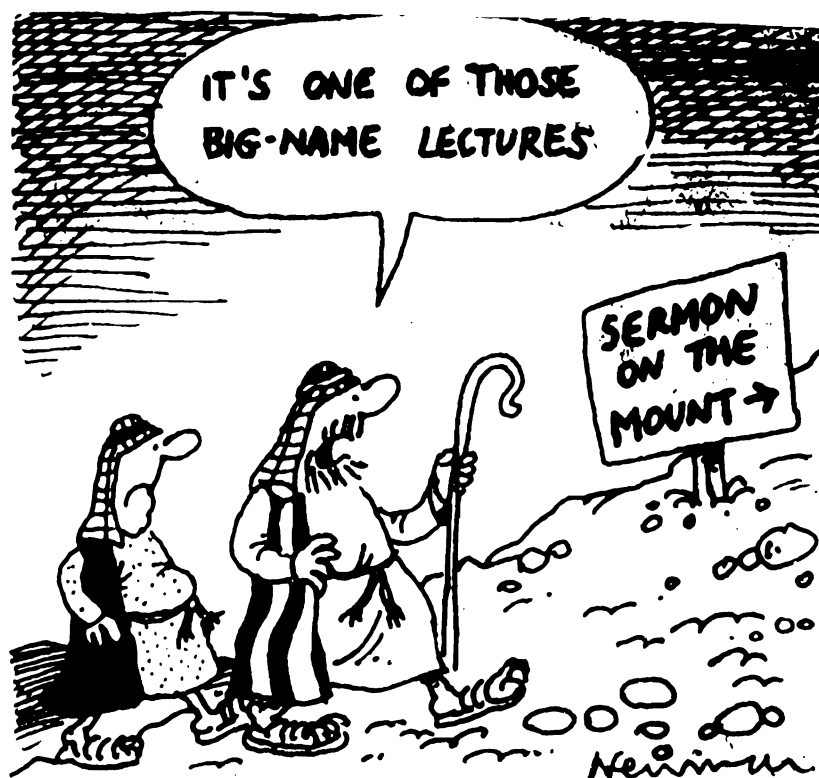
The evidence, the pictures, helped make the work concrete and they formulated their own opinions not based on the teacher's opinion but on the results of their own enquiry. The pupils also used the pictures as a focus for the discussion that followed and other work could have followed this lesson such as an attempt to unravel what information is needed to determine someone's character. It would have been quite possible to have selected appropriate content that merely reinforces stereotypes, such as having male ministers and female housewives and this

serves to emphasise that the teacher's views are a fundamental part of PSE teaching.

As I hope to have shown, PSE is an active and challenging subject that can equip pupils with some of the skills they will need if they are to survive in a changing and demanding world. As part of this process the teacher's own opinions are an asset and not a liability. The aims and objectives of a course need to be thoroughly considered as this will determine what and how the course is delivered. This should be left to the individual schools and teachers, in consultation with the local community, as it is far too important to be left in the hands of politicians. Such aspirations are not easily achieved, particularly as the emergence of League Tables, tepid support and lack of status for the subject and curriculum changes continue to squeeze PSE out of the curriculum. Furthermore, PSE needs to be supported by a whole school policy and ethos that recognises its importance in the curriculum.

Notes

- [1] Department of Education and Science (1989) Personal and Social Education from 5 to 16, *Curriculum Matters*, 14, p. 12
- [2] Jean Rudduck (1986) A strategy for handling controversial issues in the secondary school, in J.J. Wellington (Ed.) *Controversial Issues in the Curriculum*, pp. 6-18. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- [3] Quoted in Rudduck, op. cit., p. 11



Play it Again, Sam

Annabelle Dixon

A long-standing member of the *FORUM* Editorial Board, Annabelle has recently retired as Deputy Headteacher of an urban primary school. She shortly takes up a research fellowship at Lucy Cavendish College in Cambridge.

Next term, Kevin, who is five and a half, will be formally assessed as to whether he can distinguish his phonemes from his graphemes. Depending on the result he will be streamed. If research is anything to go by, there is an 88% chance he'll remain in that stream for the remainder of his school career.

The debate about streaming, banding, setting and mixed ability teaching in senior schools and to a certain extent, junior schools has been a constant one, as past issues of *Forum* going back to the early 1960s can demonstrate. The debate has now acquired a sharper edge to its tone since the advent of OFSTED inspections and more particularly, the publication of league tables. Consequently, although each approach still has its advocates, the proportions have probably changed significantly over the last few years. Where mixed-ability teaching is still accepted, it is generally for non-exam subjects such as PE and PSE, certain aspects of art and music and/or for the lower first or second years in senior schools. Those supporting an increase in streaming often stress two needs. Firstly, that brighter children can be given an opportunity to be in more competitive and challenging groups, thus raising their own and their school's 'performance'. Secondly, for such children to have the chance to get away from any anti-work attitudes amongst their contemporaries, an attitude which social pressures might otherwise influence them to adopt. Less able pupils, it is claimed, also have the advantage of being able to work at their own pace and consequently raise their level of achievement as well.

The result, as international comparisons have shown, admittedly in a rather rough and ready way, is that Britain's bright children are as good as any in the world but we have a mystifyingly long 'tail' of low achievers, which was not what streaming and banding, which is now a very widespread practice, was supposed to produce. So what variables might be at work to have this effect? Numerous have been the suggestions and predictable the denunciations: if it is not poor teachers then it's poor teaching methods and if it is neither of these, then it's the parlous way in which the teachers were trained in the first place. Easy targets, lazy thinking. There are other aspects worth consideration besides these rather too familiar ones.

The social context in which schools are operating has been noted in the international comparisons but doesn't seem to be considered as the really powerful variable it undoubtedly is. The support and status that teachers and education receive in other countries cannot be likened to just a pleasing layer of butter on the educational bread but should be considered as the very gluten that holds the flour together. Its vital effect, to put the domestic metaphors aside, is on the basic attitude towards learning of the pupils themselves and to themselves as learners. It may sound glib, even self-evident, but it has a profound effect on achievement. It could be what acts as the counter-balance

to the phenomenon otherwise noted in streamed UK classes since the sixties and seventies, of reduced confidence and lack of motivation amongst those in the lower streams and, not unexpectedly, as the results are showing, lower achievement. A second characteristic to be found in a number of the schools from "more successful" countries, is the obligation on the more able children to help the less advanced, albeit there may also be a form of streaming within the school. Thus the system of streaming, although outwardly similar, to other countries, does not hold within it the familiar Siamese twins of competition and failure to be found in Britain. Rather, it is a system of social values permeating the culture which also relies on a reciprocal balance of rights and responsibilities amongst the pupils.

Streaming in primary schools has always existed, even though a lack of official sanction in the past led it perilously close towards the theatre of the absurd, as for instance, in the attested examples of various colleagues. Amongst my favourites being two blackboard notices at two different schools, one proclaiming that: "The Green Robins measured round their hands today" and "The daffodils will not be swimming this week". These days, though, streaming is becoming noticeably more open and the impression one gains is that of an increasing social acceptability for the practice. Larger schools have streamed classes while smaller primaries stream within each class. The commonest reason given for doing this is the existence of league tables. The equation is simple: low results mean low numbers which means lower cash, which means fewer teachers and resources, which exacerbate the low results. Streaming might offer a way of pressurising the brightest to produce better results. Nowhere in the equation comes the word "children" nor do they exist in it. It would seem that they are there simply to ensure the perpetuation of an organisation, and be the classic means of production.

Up till now though, streaming in primary schools was a matter largely decided upon by the individual heads but there are now significant indicators that this freedom of choice is being gradually eroded to the point where even the youngest children will be exposed to the likely taunts of 'dimbo' and 'thicky' as they too suffer what, at the very least, can only be described as the educational indignity of being classified by deficit.

To return to five-year-old Kevin and his coming placement in what will undoubtedly be the lowest stream. He'll be streamed not because his new teacher will necessarily be of the belief that children of this age *should* be streamed, although that may well be the case, but because she will now have been formally instructed to do so, in the final analysis, by HMG.

Schools like Kevin's which are taking part in the pilot National Literacy scheme, have been told quite baldly, that children are to be streamed for the daily 'exercises' that follow class lessons on various aspects of literacy. Today

the pilot, tomorrow the mandatory requirement: there is no attempt to hide the word - the children are not to be in 'sets', or 'bands' - they are, quite unequivocally, to be 'streamed'. No alternatives are suggested and thus, presumably, not possible. There is an assumption that all will understand what it means in practice and that it forms an integral part to the coating of the magic bullet. It's the pattern of senior schools and increasingly in junior schools so in the interest of simplification why not start it as soon as children begin the first years of the National Curriculum?

Considerations such as the differences in intelligence, memory skills, social and perceptual development, pace and appropriate style of learning etc. between a five and a fifteen-year-old are presumably held to be of little importance. This despite the ever increasing body of knowledge which exists that could lead one into thinking they might be very relevant indeed.

In seeking to understand what would thus appear to be a puzzling and seemingly illogical approach to the educational grouping of very young children, it seems worth examining not just the pressures felt by schools, which have already been touched on, but the possible mind-set at national level that could lie behind it. It's one that a considerable number of teachers themselves possess, and is often demonstrated in abilities that involve complex categorisations, systems construction and analysis, organisational structuring and various kinds of complex problem solving strategies. Its detractors call it the 'bureaucratic mind-set' but in the appropriate settings it can be and is, outstandingly successful. Education though, at the level of the individual learner, who after all, underpins the entire system, may turn out to be one of its markedly less successful settings. It likes to think of itself as logical, but fear, as ever, can destabilise and this mind-set often has a fear of change and an inability to tolerate ambiguity, which can result in it appearing to be illogical and seemingly unintelligent. These seemingly paradoxical characteristics were demonstrated very powerfully many years ago by the American psychologist (largely unmentioned nowadays) called Frenkel-Brunswik. She could give no reason as to why some people could handle ambiguity and others found it practically intolerable, but it appears to be a stable personality characteristic that can influence a whole range of attitudes. The 'bureaucratic mind' seems to be the dominant one at the present time and those who cannot tolerate (seeming) ambiguity are in the ascendant. Consequently, education is thus becoming systems, rather than client-driven, to immerse my toes briefly into the brackish waters of modern jargon: this way the 'clients' (i.e. young children) who possess notable qualities of unpredictability and ambiguity and are thus particularly hard to tolerate, can be safely corralled.

There is then, really no problem in adopting a system that will stream young Kevin if you see education as an enterprise that can be tidily parcelled from the earliest age into lesser and greater skills and sub-skills and to think of information as divided into a precise hierarchy. It is tested at various stages to ensure uniformity and achievement, and an inspection system to make sure that the machinery of delivery is working according to the instructions. Neat, really. Except I keep on thinking about Kevin.

The trouble is that Kevin, and a considerable number of Kevin's friends and contemporaries that I've recently taught, don't seem to be acquiring the skills and understanding new information in the way that the manual

says they should. I've tried the system of putting them all together in a group to be given simpler, more repetitive work. The problem is that the end result is a rather curious and untidy mix of uneven achievement (in the context of the systems scale of values) but there seem to be numerous and valid reasons for this state of affairs. To return to Kevin: his learning problems may well stem from brain damage at birth which prevent him identifying pattern or line; and there are times when he is less articulate than normal; another child in the same class comes from a family who have all had special educational needs. Without wishing to pre-judge him, the evidence seems to suggest he may have similar problems. Another child has serious emotional problems and finds it extremely difficult to concentrate and another, though intelligent, has significant hearing problems. Could they, should they, all be in an identical 'stream'?

Up until now, the system allowed, even recommended, differentiation, which meant that, expected that, the professionalism of the individual teacher would see to it that each child would be given the work appropriate to its stage and style of learning. It offered teachers a welcome flexibility and meant that the National Curriculum could be delivered in a more efficient manner. As a trainee psychologist I was taught that the 'intelligent' system was a cybernetic one, i.e. one that relied on feedback to inform future decisions and behaviour. "Differentiated" doesn't rule out working in groups when that is appropriate, but being placed in streams was not what was originally intended by the term differentiation. Interestingly, the National Literacy Project refers to "streaming" children while the National Numeracy Project, not yet as advanced in planning as the former, still refers to "differentiation".

The problem for organisers is that differentiation has a latent ambiguity; there is an admission that young children will learn differently, not just because they are young children and young children learn differently, but that as individuals they have different pace and styles of learning let alone different abilities and different kinds and amounts of previous experience. There is an admission about it that it will take the knowledge and experience of the child's individual teacher to recognise and capitalise on these differences, rather than refer to a set of laid-down expectations. It has the nascent signs of emotional and intellectual "untidiness" which is perhaps at the core of the fear of ambiguity - and young children are emotionally and intellectually "untidy" and challenging if nothing else. Streaming has no such ambiguity for children, parents and teachers alike. What's so wrong about knowing you're a failure at five, anyway?

Streaming then, has powerful advocates. At local level, schools see it as a way of promoting themselves in the national league table, at Government level as promoting the country at international level. I have suggested above why I consider there may be convincing reasons for eventual disappointment at both levels. Contrary to the vigorously promoted myth, it was not the long haired young teachers of the sixties who first wanted to try alternatives to streaming, but experienced and committed teachers of the late forties and fifties who recognised what the practice was doing to their children, particularly the most vulnerable, the very youngest. Above all they saw what was wrong about knowing you were a failure at five, and what that did to you by the time you were fifteen.

You would think we might learn from experience.

Constructivism in the Developing World

Liz Thomson

This article is based on a paper given at the European Personal Construct Association's conference at the University of Reading in April 1996. It draws on Liz Thomson's recent work as an Education Development Consultant in Jordan.

Introduction

In 1993, I was invited to work as a short term consultant on a project supported by the former Overseas Development Administration (ODA), now the Department for International Development, in Jordan. The project was concerned with developing a more 'learner-centred' approach to In-service Education and Training (INSET) for teachers. This approach was designed to support a move from a very centralised, top-down programme of training to one which focused on the professional development of staff in schools; where teachers became 'active agents in the development of their own learning' [1] and the school was seen as the main base or unit of development.

The impetus for educational change in Jordan began in 1987 with a major Curriculum Reform initiated by Crown Prince Hassan. The thrust of the reform was towards a more learner-centred approach for students in schools which would support independent learning, problem-solving and critical thinking: concepts which were not at that time rooted in the experience of teachers or students in Jordan.

The ODA In-service Education and Support Project began in 1992 and was designed to look at how alternative approaches to professional development could be implemented and managed both from the Centre (via the Educational Training Centre in Amman) and in the schools – by students, teachers and school principals. The project focused on three main areas of development:

- training trainers
- developing training materials
- establishing experimental pilot projects to support the growth of school based staff development.

This article focuses particularly on my work in helping school principals to implement and support one of the experimental pilot projects on school based development. It describes both the context for change and the approach used which was based on developing 'a negotiated construction of shared meanings' [2] between all those involved.

Context

It might be argued that the absolutist nature of an Islamic society is one which would be in conflict with a constructivist approach to change and development. Indeed one of the major difficulties in introducing the Curriculum Reform for Jordanian teachers has been the need for them to consider alternative approaches to teaching and learning and to the management and organisation of their classrooms. Traditionally, the majority of teaching has been mainly didactic with the teacher directing the proceedings from a

centrally produced teachers' manual and the students working from centrally produced text-books.

There has, however, been a major thrust on 'group work' as a way of implementing the objectives of the Curriculum Reform, and much of the centrally produced and directed training has been designed to familiarise teachers with a common approach to the organisation of group work. Such strategies can work well when used by imaginative teachers, but in the hands of teachers who do not understand why they should use group work it is often reduced to all students working on the same materials at the same time (as before) but in groups. There is a story in Jordan about the Minister of Education who is reputed to have said "Ah, group work – that's when the children sit in groups and I receive complaints from the parents of those who have got a stiff neck from turning round to look at the teacher and the blackboard."

Culturally there are clearly many differences for a western woman working with administrators, supervisors, school principals and teachers in any country in the developing world. Apart from the obvious differences of diet and dress, it is also unusual for a woman in an Islamic country to be in a position of authority over men. As a short term consultant the need to demonstrate expertise and earn credibility becomes far more intensified in this kind of context. For, unless this is established quickly, communication and the development of 'a common language' can be extremely difficult.

Many of the Jordanians I met had a good knowledge of theoretical issues. However, they did not know what theory looked like in practice or how to translate theory into practice. I found that phrases like *action research*, *critical thinking* and *reflective practice* meant nothing in terms of the way that many of the most erudite individuals worked. As far as conceptual understanding was concerned I encountered a great deal of what Piaget would have described as *assimilation* without *accommodation*.

The first group I worked with were a group of Islamic Education supervisors (all male) who came to England on a study visit to look at different approaches to teaching and learning. Whilst working with them I learned three things which were important. The first was that whilst all Muslims derive their laws and spiritual and moral guidance from the Koran and from the Hadeeth, the statements can be subject to interpretation. The second was that the group construed me as their teacher which enabled them to overcome any prejudices they might have about a woman in a position of authority. The third was concerned with

using imagery and metaphor to illuminate and support individual and corporate understandings.

Approach

The insights I gained through working with the Islamic Educators encouraged me to develop ways of working which enabled those I worked with to explore the possibilities of new ideas in their own terms and in their own words. I am conscious that this could be described as impossible in a situation where I, the consultant, was not working in their mother tongue – Arabic. However, one very interesting and positive effect of working in English and Arabic was that the different groups I worked with spent considerable time negotiating and constructing meanings together. And, as I have already indicated, the use of appropriate metaphors to illuminate my meanings and to connect with their experience and understanding was another important factor.

Many of the people I worked with were themselves trainers and some, like the Director General of the Educational Training Centre, the Director of Educational Training and the Director of Educational Supervision, held senior positions of national responsibility. It was therefore, extremely important to introduce the idea of modelling at all levels – that is, being seen as a trainer to put into practice both the principles and approaches being developed.

The approach I used did not rely on prepared packages of imported training and development materials. Instead, a framework, designed to support the production of materials based on the language and concepts of those involved, was constructed for each series of workshops. The materials produced from the workshops were then used directly in schools by the workshop participants (e.g. School Principals), or as a basis for the development of training materials in Arabic.

Supporting School-based Development

I have already indicated how Curriculum Reform in Jordan resulted in a need to re-construe approaches to teaching and learning and focus on the school as a resource and a base for the development of staff as well as students. The need to focus on school based development was identified by the Minister of Education and senior officials within the Ministry. When I started working in Jordan the phrase 'the school as a unit for development' was being used extensively, although very few of the people I met understood what it would look like – what the reality might be.

A pilot project involving cluster groups of three schools in the north, mid and southern regions of Jordan was established in 1994. The main focus of the project was to introduce approaches to school review and development planning as a way of facilitating school based development.

It soon became clear, in the process of establishing the pilot project, that the school principal would be a key figure in leading and implementing school review and development within each of the pilot project schools. It was also apparent that this would require most school principals to re-construe their role from being purely administrative to becoming professional leaders and managers of change.

One of the first major tasks for the school principals was to work out how to move from the rather superficial level of constructing a school development plan to the reality of putting the plan into action. This required each school principal to question their own capabilities as managers

and professional leaders. They needed to see what school based development looked like in action.

In June 1995, six of the nine school principals came to the UK on a two week study visit. Whilst in this country, the group spent time visiting primary and secondary schools to see school development in action and, perhaps more importantly, they were able to talk to headteachers and senior staff about the practicalities of managing such change. They also talked to teachers, students and children in order to find out about both the direct and indirect effects of school based development on teaching and learning.

The study visit programme included four workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to encourage the school principals to reflect on their experience and to analyse what they needed to do to effect change in their schools. In the first workshop we began by looking at the key issues they had identified in the follow-up sessions to the school visits and used these as a basis for further discussion and exploration of the management of change. These are set out below:

Key issues arising from the school visits.

- Management structures and systems which *support innovation, development and change* within the school.
- Clear routes and responsibilities for *decision-making* within the school.
- Effective processes for *monitoring* the quality of teaching and learning – (Role of headteacher/senior management team).
- Heads of Department who have a middle management responsibility within the school.
- Computers used to *assist* learning in different subject areas (within the curriculum).
- *Special projects* (subject departments) linked to the overall identification of *needs* and *establishment of priorities* within the school.
- *Staff Development* - support for newly qualified teachers.
- *Organisation of teaching groups* - to ensure a good mix of ability, social and friendship groups.
- *Relationships* - pastoral support.
- *Team work*, e.g., Senior Management Team, Departments, Year Groups.
- *High Quality Learning Environment* - subject blocks/bases.
- *Parental/community support*.
- *Career support and guidance*.

The school principals then worked in pairs to identify what they saw as the key elements of managing change. These were brought together to form a composite list which reflected the key elements [3] for the whole group.

Key Elements of Managing Change

- Changing the role of the School Principal.
- Establishing open communication between the principal and staff (two-way).
- Building good relationships.
- Ensuring active participation in decision-making.
- Ensuring that there are adequate resources to support staff development.
- Utilising resources that are available in the wider education community (universities, other schools, training centres).

- Encouraging teachers to develop their own ideas for innovation and change.
- Monitoring activities throughout the school.
- Providing good conditions and atmosphere for change.
- Managing time effectively.
- Delegating responsibility to staff.
- Encouraging team work and co-operation amongst staff.
- Encouraging a wider use of the school by parents and others in the community.
- Creating an atmosphere which encourages staff to want to change.

In the second workshop the group (this time working in different pairs) were allocated two of the key elements and asked to state *why* they considered the elements to be important and *how* they could be put into effect. An example of the breakdown of one of the key elements and suggestions for its implementation in schools is set out below:

Establishing open communication between the principal and staff

Why?

- To develop a common understanding between the principal and the staff through creating clear routes and responsibilities for making decisions and taking actions.

How?

- establishing a management structure which will support the development of common understanding throughout the school;
- through management by walking about;
- through being open and friendly and communicating clearly;
- through developing the confidence of staff and students;
- through setting clear expectations and sticking to them.

Towards the end of the study visit, the group were asked to write out for themselves what they had learned (particularly from the visits to schools) and what they felt they needed to do on their return to Jordan. They were also asked to think about the following questions: *What kind of school principal am I?* and *What kind of school principal do I want to be?* The purpose of the questions was to encourage the school principals to be self evaluative and develop an awareness of the kinds of targets they needed to set individually in order to manage personal and professional change effectively.

Two months after the UK study visit I returned to Jordan to further develop the work with the school principals. On this visit, the six who had been to the UK shared the key elements with the other principals, supervisors and technical directors. This list was modified and added to by the other workshop participants. We then moved on to a further stage where more rigorous approaches to evaluation were introduced through the construction of success indicators linked to developmental objectives emerging from the key elements. The success indicators were constructed by the group, who worked from the 'Why?' and

the 'How?' questions to 'How will I know that I have been successful?' Table I shows a further stage in the construction of the developmental objective 'establishing open communication' and the success indicators identified by the group.

Objective	Indicators
• Establishing open communication	⇒ you send clear messages;
	⇒ you act on the suggestions of teachers;
	⇒ you explain the reasons for establishing priorities;
	⇒ you encourage everyone who wishes to contribute to discussions;
	⇒ you do not dominate meetings.

Table 1. Establishing open communication – objective.

Throughout this process the power of their own language was used by the group to reinforce conceptual understanding related directly to practical action. The developmental objectives and the success indicators were then incorporated into a self-evaluation questionnaire for the school principals. An example of the way the above objective and indicators were used is set out in Table II.

Mark with an 'X' the point which relates to your own self-evaluation

⇒ You send clear messages

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⇒ You act on the suggestions of teachers

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⇒ You explain the reasons for establishing priorities

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⇒ You encourage everyone who wishes to contribute to discussions

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⇒ You do not dominate meetings

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table II. Establishing open communication – evaluation.

Conclusion

The process of change is challenging, disturbing, exhilarating, frustrating and at times painful. I am sure that those involved in the examples I have described would say that they have experienced all those emotions and many more. By encouraging reflexivity in those I worked with, my concern was to provide the opportunity to try out new ways of working in a context which although risky was supportive. The pilot projects were established within parameters which allowed and indeed encouraged experimentation. In this respect they reflected Kelly's [4] view of 'person the scientist' and Vygotsky's [5] zone of proximal development.

In a culture that often uses absolutism as a way of evading responsibility, the idea of experimenting and having 'the security to be wrong' [6] can be heady stuff. However, coupled with this kind of experimentation is the need to be responsible for both the successes and the failures which occur at a personal and a professional level.

There is no doubt that the people I worked with in Jordan were affected by the changes they had the opportunity to try out. To suggest that this in itself will ensure that the planned changes are implemented would be naive. The ODA involvement in the School Based Development projects ended in April 1996, and at that time there were encouraging

signs that school principals, teachers, supervisors and administrators were able to take more control and responsibility for their own development and for the desired improvement in the quality of learning for all students in schools.

Notes

- [1] L. Thomson (1983) Teachers as learners, *FORUM*, 25(3).
- [2] Gordon Wells first used this term in the 1970s to describe different stages in the acquisition and development of young children's language. See G. Wells (1981) *Learning Through Interaction* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press). It is, however, applicable to other contexts; particularly those concerned with communicating in a second language.
- [3] Although the term 'elements' is used here, it should not be confused with the elicitation of elements for use in a repertory grid. Its function is as 'a component part' as defined in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*.
- [4] Here I refer to the very useful summary of Kelly's theory and update from man the scientist to person the scientist in P. Dalton & G. Dunnett (1992) *A Psychology for Living: personal construct theory for professionals and clients* (Chichester: John Wiley).
- [5] L.S. Vygotsky (1978) *Mind in Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- [6] D. Barnes (1976) *From Communication to Curriculum*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

This poem was written by Sarah Weatherall, a pupil at Earl Marshall School in Sheffield, who was horrified at the danger posed by infected syringes dropped by local drug users in the vicinity of her school.

The Syringe

I am the syringe
that you find in the street.
I am the syringe
that attacks you on the waste ground

I am the syringe
that pricks you and kills you.
I am the syringe
that you should stay away from!

I am like a live snake
that gives you a bite.
I am the live wire
that gives you a shock.
Stay away!
Or else you will have
a very short time to live!

What does it feel like
When you leave your child
Standing on the waste ground,
and I prick her?
What will you do
when your child is infected?
What would you do?

Taken from Chris Searle's *Living Community, Living School* (Tufnell Press).

Book Review

Radical Educational Policies and Conservative Secretaries of State

PETER RIBBINS & BRIAN SHERRATT, 1997

London: Cassell, 230pp, £50.00 hardback. ISBN 0304 339067; £18.99 paperback ISBN 0304 339075

There is no question that one of the main factors leading to the overwhelming defeat of the Tories on 1 May 1997 was popular opposition to and distaste for Conservative educational policies. The last Bill this Government introduced included measures to enhance selective processes right across the board, including in primary schools for the youngest children. These clauses were withdrawn for procedural reasons on the dissolution of Parliament due to the coming election. Had the Tories won, however, steps would have followed aimed at the total destruction of comprehensive education while Major's slogan of 'a grammar school in every town' might well have been realised. In the emphatic rejection of Tory educational policy which the election results strikingly underlined, voters throughout England, Wales and Scotland confirmed their attachment to an enlightened, advanced and progressive educational policy, by implication rejecting the whole trend of Conservative measures during the 18 nightmare years of Tory hegemony.

This book, then, appears at an unfortunate moment for its two main authors and their subjects - the seven Secretaries of State for Education holding office from 1979 to 1997: Carlisle, Joseph, Baker, MacGregor, Clarke, Patten and Shephard. All these are here - all, apart from the first two who show critical tendencies, triumphantly celebrating their own achievements and, in the case of the last (Shephard) promising more to come. *FORUM* readers and contributors can only emit a unanimous sigh of relief that the subjects of this book, and their henchmen and women, are now consigned to the past. And that it is only as an *historical* record that this book may have some value. Based on Maurice Kogan's pioneering *The Politics of Education*, which consisted of extended interviews with Anthony Crosland and Edward Boyle (both serious, knowledgeable educationists, unlike their successors in the 1980s and 90s), this book consists of extended interviews with the seven Secretaries of State carried through informally by the two authors (and including one by *FORUM*'s editor, Clyde Chitty who gallantly concocted a piece on the late Keith Joseph based on interviews by himself and Stephen Ball, for which he is warmly thanked by the two authors).

Looking through the interviews chronologically we find Mark Carlisle (1979-81) concerned to emphasise his part in successfully carrying the Assisted Places Scheme through Parliament (now thankfully abolished) and 'defending his corner' on expenditure. Relations with Thatcher were cool but on being dropped in favour of Keith Joseph he left the Cabinet 'with courtesy and good humour' (Thatcher's words). The main criticism made of him, he says, was that he was not disposed to be 'as radical as some wanted', and this he accepts. The claim 'that educational standards were falling and teachers were failing was rubbish', Carlisle states forcefully, 'they were not'.

Keith Joseph, Thatcher's mentor, who came next, held the office for five fairly disastrous years (1981-86). He was in an unusual position since he thoroughly disagreed with the state being involved in education anyway; 'We have a bloody state system; I wish we hadn't got one. I wished we'd taken a different route in 1870. We got the ruddy state involved. I don't want it'. Joseph was never prepared to 'fight his corner', like Carlisle. He simply accepted the Treasury case for 'financial stringency' and, as he himself says, 'perhaps Education lost out'. On GCSE which, to his credit, he brought in, he is highly critical; as for the National Curriculum, 'I reckon we've made a right old mess of it. We've got it all wrong. And it's mostly hurt all those who are most vulnerable'; but of course he wasn't responsible for that. The 'education establishment' should have spoken up, but (disarmingly) 'I'm a disaster too; I'm one of the club ... I do think the children have suffered very badly in this country'.

This is where self-criticism, in this case of a rather unusual kind, comes to a very abrupt halt and where my chronological approach also ends. The bulk of the book deals with the Secretaries following Joseph - Baker, MacGregor, Clarke, Patten and Shephard. With the possible exception of MacGregor (1989 only) all of these are unwearingly and insensitively triumphalist in their approach. 'I am very proud of the educational reforms of my time as Education Secretary', says Baker, the education reform of 1988 'was the biggest single measure of social reform undertaken in the Thatcher years'. For Kenneth Clarke the initiative is taken by one of the editors, Brian Sherratt, head of Great Barr School, Birmingham, one of the first schools to opt out and a strong and overt proponent of Grant Maintained Schools. His question to Clarke, 'OFSTED was one of your major achievements, but there are several others which we should talk about' gains the reply, 'That's very kind of you. Well, firstly I gave a whole new impetus to the grant-maintained school system'. Later: 'I had a very clear agenda which I rapidly put together ... things I wished to push on'; so there was 'never a dull moment', we were 'pushing ahead very strongly in the direction I wanted' - and so on. One gets the impression of a racy philistinism - but as for an understanding of education and what it's all about, that is simply not there.

The remaining two Secretaries include the egregious John Patten, probably the most inept holder of that office in history. Yet both Patten and Shephard maintain the uncritical triumphalist tone initiated by Baker. As I suggested earlier, the main value of this publication may turn out to be as a resource for historians. As the product of a particular historical moment (1979-97), recording the thoughts and 'achievements' of seven Education Secretaries (as well as their educational and family backgrounds) it may be helpful to future historians attempting to probe the educational disasters of these years. There is some interesting material on recalcitrant DES officials unhappy about Tory policies, incidentally. But since 1 May 1997 all is changed, changed utterly. This particular rogues gallery has been well and truly consigned to the past.

Brian Simon

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

Vol 30 No 1	Primary School Special
Vol 30 No 2	Comprehensive Counter Attack on the Bill
Vol 30 No 3	Education Bill and Primary Teaching
Vol 31 No 1	The Education Reform Act
Vol 31 No 2	Opting Out, CTCs, National Curriculum
Vol 31 No 3	LMS and National Curriculum
Vol 32 No 1	AIDS Education, National Curriculum
Vol 32 No 2	RE and Collective Worship Symposium
Vol 32 No 3	Conservative Education Policy: the hidden agenda
Vol 33 No 1	Assessment
Vol 33 No 2	Into the 1990s: the state system under attack
Vol 33 No 3	Reflective Teaching
Vol 34 No 1	The Past, the Present and the Future
Vol 34 No 2	Curriculum U-turns, Bullying, Europe
Vol 34 No 3	Three Wise Men, Why Assess?
Vol 34 No 4	The School Curriculum: need for vision
Vol 35 No 1	Mixed Ability Applauded
Vol 35 No 3	Training Primary Teachers
Vol 36 No 1	National Curriculum and Assessment
Vol 36 No 2	Dearing's Legacy
Vol 36 No 3	Back to Basics
Vol 37 No 1	Comprehensive Achievement
Vol 37 No 2	Evaluating Schools, School Self-improvement
Vol 37 No 3	Education Post-16
Vol 38 No 3	Comprehensive Achievements, Disruptive Pupils
Vol 39 No 1	Whose Morality? The New Education Bill
Vol 39 No 2	Narrative, Learning and Creativity



Copies can be ordered from
Triangle Journals Ltd, PO Box 65
Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0YG
United Kingdom

Email: journals@triangle.co.uk
World Wide Web: <http://www.triangle.co.uk>
Single copies: £6.00 (individuals),
£7.00 (schools), £12.00 (libraries)



0963-8253(199709)39:3;-8