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and Good Citizenship



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The New Instrumentalism

It is now nine months since the New Labour government was elected. Within days the Prime Minister set forward the new administration's priorities as "Education, Education, Education..." Good news one might have thought for those who are in the Education business. I use the term business advisedly because the recent pronouncements about the introduction of Education Action Zones indicate opportunities for the private and business sectors to be directly involved in running schools. This extends both the rhetoric and practice of the previous Tory government and is strongly linked to the flagship of raising standards through increased privatisation.

Any hopes, that might have been cherished, of a respite from governmental activity/interference have been dashed and once again teachers, heads, LEAs are reeling from the onslaught of change. Whilst there are few who would argue with the need to focus on the acquisition of basic skills at the primary stage of schooling, the level of prescription, in terms of what should be taught and how it should be taught, must raise concerns. Much has been made of the introduction of a literacy hour, an hour when all the class will focus on a range of timed activities related to comprehension and composition; grammar and punctuation; and phonics, spelling and vocabulary. The intention is to introduce more direct teaching and pace into each of these areas. Time will be released for this through the recently announced changes designed to 'relax' the primary curriculum in history, geography, design and technology, music, art and physical education.

Clearly there are some who will be concerned about the erosion of a 'balanced curriculum', but it has been obvious from the outset that the National Curriculum was an unwieldy vehicle for the development of learning at the primary stage. However, the new instrumentalism does raise concerns about the nature of teaching and learning and what constitutes good practice.

We are told that the accumulated evidence base, resulting from OFSTED inspections of primary and secondary schools, reveals much about overall levels of quality and standards. Perhaps it is not therefore surprising that the rhetoric of raising standards is so prominent at this time. There are two aspects of this move which concern me: the first is the danger of working to the lowest common denominator of achievement and the second raises questions about who defines and determines the standard.

The assumption that all schools need to be jump-started into improvement, does not serve to recognise the sterling efforts made by a significant number of schools to continue to do better over the years. Nor does it appreciate the high quality of hard-working, creative and imaginative teachers. I am aware that words like imaginative and creative may be an anathema to those who are disciples of the new instrumentalism. It would be a sad day if such teachers were forced into the strait-jacket of an instrumental approach

which requires prescriptive teaching methods and uniformity of standards.

Some time ago, I wrote about the dangers of teachers being regarded as technicians instead of professionals. I asked "Do we want teachers who are compliant operatives - technicians who carry out required tasks? or Do we want teachers who are able to renew and recreate their professionalism... who demonstrate a capacity to transform, generate and be creative within the learning process?" My remarks were related to changes in the initial training of teachers, but I suggest they have a particular resonance today for teachers at all stages of their professional development.

It may sound very obvious to say that if overall standards rise - so does the average. And it is self-evident that any system of measurement will reveal those who succeed, those who are average and those who fail. The publication of results encourages competition which in turn means that some schools will grow in their success and others will be reduced by their failure. We only have to look at the so-called choice available to parents and children at the age of eleven to see the effects of such competition in action. The levels of stress and anxiety experienced by middle class parents who live in inner urban areas when their children reach the age of secondary transfer are extraordinary. We have all heard of families moving house in order to be in the 'right' catchment area for their desired school and of rapid conversions to Christianity and regular church attendance.

Meanwhile the notion of comprehensive education in those areas becomes a fallacy. We know that the large conurbations of London, Birmingham and Manchester have never been truly comprehensive as there have always been ways of creaming off many of the most able students into the former direct grant, private and grammar school systems. And yet, as Sir Peter Newsam highlights in his extremely thought provoking article in this issue, "Where schools that are comprehensive, in the full sense of admitting the full range of ability, have been developed, the pressure of places on them tends to be severe and the notion of middle class or any other form of flight from them is false. *Such schools perform consistently well and, if properly supported, will do better still*" (my italics).

Sir Peter's article represents a change for this journal. It is much longer than the average *FORUM* article, but both editors felt that it should be included uncut, so that the complexity and detail of his argument could be read in full. Whether or not we agree with his solution, his plea for the need to consider structural changes in education deserves to be considered seriously; particularly when we see the effects on quality and overall standards of the lack of clear and coherent structures in different parts of the country.

Liz Thomson

How Can We Know the Dancer from the Dance?

Peter Newsam

In this provocative and challenging article, Peter Newsam puts forward his own solution for realistically ending the separate status of independent and grammar schools in this country. He argues for a comprehensive system embracing the 5-14 age range, with Key Stage Four becoming the stage where different forms of education are encouraged to develop. Independent and grammar schools would be encouraged, or required, to become part of the diverse forms of post-14 provision.

In many aspects of constitutional, social and economic policy, New Labour has recognised that improvement requires structural change. Devolution, the changed role of the Bank of England, the social security system: the list of possibilities that have opened up is impressive. But, so far as the school system is concerned, structure and rising standards are held to be unrelated. Indeed, there is some presumption that a concern for structure, by diverting attention from direct efforts to raise standards, is positively harmful as well as being out-dated.

One consequence of this has been a flurry of initiatives designed to propel the publicly-maintained school system into improvement. Targets, task forces, monitoring and zero tolerance of this or that are the means by which standards are to be levered upwards. Some of the more positive elements of these initiatives, such as the creation of Education Action Zones, may indeed prove useful but the prospects of raising this country's educational achievements thereby to those of others, with whom we regularly compare ourselves, seem slight. Countries that are, at least on some measures, already ahead of us are quite as determined to improve their own national systems as we are.

The absence of structural thinking, even awareness of the need for it, is particularly evident in relation to secondary education. New Labour has decided to focus its efforts on only part of the publicly-maintained sector. The 160 or so grammar schools and the secondary modern schools that, in some areas, are necessarily their complement are taken to be too few, on the one hand, or perhaps too unimportant, on the other, to bother about. Their future is to be left to local parents to determine. As for the independent sector, this also does not seem to feature much in New Labour's thinking. This is possibly because, as with the grammar schools, these schools are seen to be of minor importance numerically, attended by only 7% of the school population; but also because it would be absurd to attempt either to abolish fee-paying schools or to bully them into some form of compliance; and it would be expensively reminiscent of the Assisted Places scheme to pay for school places within them. Accordingly, apart from phasing out assisted places and, from the sidelines, encouraging co-operation between publicly-maintained schools and independent ones, in the form of some shared facilities here and one or two joint ventures there, little of substance is proposed.

For reasons which George Walden has regularly pointed out, most recently in *We Should Know Better*, so far as the independent schools are concerned, this is an inadequate

approach to developing the world class education system New Labour hopes to create.

The paragraphs that follow summarise Walden's analysis, which deserves to be read in full, go on to suggest why recommendations of the kind he proposes would be unlikely to achieve what is hoped for them and, finally, set out suggestions for other ways forward.

In relation to independent schools, the argument Walden and others have put forward runs broadly as follows: first, that no country with a high general standard of secondary education, consequently lacking the long tail of low performance that is a persistent feature of our own school system, has achieved this when most of its successful and influential citizens do not use the publicly provided and, in too many instances, inferior school system for their own children.

Second, that engaging the personal interest of as many as possible of the 7% who do not now use the system used by the majority in the success of the schools used by that majority would be one of the most effective ways of raising expectations and, thereafter, standards throughout that system. It is therefore an essential condition of improving the performance of the nation's schools.

Third, that any strategy for involving independent schools and those who use them in a nation-wide effort to improve educational standards needs to be accompanied by a parallel strategy within the publicly-maintained sector. Increased investment in that sector without the reforms that need to accompany it would be likely to be a waste of money.

Finally, as to the principles underlying the reforms now needed, change should exclusively be driven by educational motives rather than social or other considerations. Furthermore, change must be voluntary, must preserve the standards and autonomy of the independent sector and must be allowed to take place over time.

The essential validity of this analysis of the problem will be evident to those who have experience of secondary school systems outside Britain or, within this country, are confronted day by day with the dysfunctional elements of our own.

Before Walden's proposals for dealing with the problems he has identified are considered, that 7% figure of the percentage of the school population attending independent schools needs further analysis. In January 1996, there were 360,000 pupils aged 16 or over in English secondary schools or VIth Form Colleges. For the purposes of this illustration, the numbers in Further Education Colleges are omitted.

By no means all independent secondary schools select by ability or have VIth Forms where high achievement is the norm but, of those 360,000 VIth Formers, 80,100 (over 22% rather than 7%) were in independent schools, most of which were, as their entrance examinations indicate, academically as well as socially and economically selective. Between them, as Walden points out, the 80,100 VIth Formers in independent schools obtained 41% of all the "A" grades achieved at GCSE A-level. The percentage of "A"s obtained for traditionally difficult subjects, such as Physics, was considerably higher. If, to these figures, are added the results achieved by VIth Formers in the 160 or so remaining grammar schools, the percentage of all "A" grades achieved within the selective schools, independent or publicly-maintained, rises still further. To take another example, in some urban areas, such as the City of Bristol, of those taking two or more A-levels, between 60 and 70 per cent are in independent or grammar schools. Academically, the continued existence of two nations, particularly in those same urban areas, is starkly obvious. The nature of this divide has consequences for access not just to Higher Education in general but, as the A-level grades required at leading universities indicate, to the places which are known to offer the best prospect of future advancement to those attending them.

The extent of the gap between selective secondary schools of one kind or another and the rest is not, as some still seem to suppose, a marginal issue that will become insignificant when the "rest" catch up. The rest have not the slightest chance of catching up; indeed, the gap may well widen as teacher shortages place the schools in the worst bargaining position, particularly a number of publicly-maintained urban secondary schools, at an increasing disadvantage when it comes to recruiting or retaining able teachers. In these circumstances, the prospects of this country achieving anything like the equivalent of the nation-wide *baccalauréat* targets which, to take one example, the French have set themselves are negligible.

To return to Walden's analysis, he proposes a new "open" sector of education "specifically designed" with the needs and traditions of the independent sector in mind. Broadly, academically suitable independent schools would open themselves "regardless of income or social status" to any pupils of suitable aptitude and ability. Initially, it would be some of the 120 ex Direct Grant schools, now independent and mostly in urban areas and accounting for nearly 100,000 of the 250,000 places in independent secondary schools, who might be the most likely to join. They would thereby re-assume and extend a role they had played before the direct grant system was ended in 1976. These schools would continue to be fee-paying and would retain their control of admissions. The fees of those qualifying for entry would be supported, when necessary, by public and private funds.

Leaving aside for the moment all questions of cost, there are two difficulties with suggestions of this kind.

The first is that it is not clear that a proportion of comparatively poor but high-achieving newcomers entering ex Direct Grant but now independent schools, to which influential parents pay to send their children, would cause those parents to feel any particular responsibility for the welfare of the schools which these newcomers would otherwise have attended. The Assisted Places scheme has had no such discernible effect. Of course, parents whose children were displaced from a fee-paying school by higher-performing newcomers would be disposed to do

something about it; but that something would be likely to be to find another independent school to pay fees to. Concern for other people's children tends to manifest itself when it coincides with concern for one's own; when, for example, the children of the influential attend, even in fairly small numbers, the local primary school. The positive effect of this can be marked. Conversely, so is the adverse effect when, as is often the case in inner urban areas where the comparatively poor exist side by side with the comparatively affluent, the children of the latter drift away, in ones and twos, into fee-paying schools or out of the area altogether.

Suggestions of this kind are anyway likely to fall down on their arithmetic. For example, given that the ex Direct Grant schools contain some 100,000 pupils between them, over seven years (11-18) that suggests an age group of about 14,500. How many of that age group would be displaced if entry to the schools were simply by examination and interview, regardless of ability to pay, is uncertain. Walden is optimistic about this, but experience suggests otherwise. For example, when four Voluntary Aided grammar schools in inner London became independent and fee-paying in 1977, the heads reported that the nature of their intake hardly changed. Those who had previously gained entrance by examination still gained entrance by examination but now had to pay fees; and most proved able to do so. And anyone who has observed the coaching, available only to those who pay for it, which now takes place, at least in the London region, to secure places either in the remaining grammar schools or in selective independent schools knows that, if anything, the pressure to gain entry to selective schools has increased over the years. But even if three or four thousand new entrants each year found their way on merit into ex Direct Grant schools, numbers of that order would be unlikely to have any greater impact than the 5,000 places a year provided by the Assisted Places scheme that is now being phased out.

In short, the structural significance of the independent schools is too great and their potential for helping a national effort to improve educational standards, particularly in urban areas, is too important to be dealt with by a one-way movement of fairly small numbers of rather different children from the publicly-maintained sector into independent schools as both are now structured. Hard though this may be to accept and unfashionable though it be to assert, structural problems require structural solutions.

Before turning to what those solutions might be, Walden's point, that change and improvement involving independent schools requires parallel change within the publicly-maintained sector, needs to be considered. His basic assumption is that the comprehensive schools within that sector are, in the main, grossly under-performing and, if they are to play their part in improving national standards, the values, organisation and processes of these schools need to be radically altered. He also believes, in that connection, that comprehensive schools were created and are now sustained, in the face of the evidence against them, by a mixture of inertia and ideological commitment.

This view of the origin and performance of publicly-maintained secondary schools, mostly now designated "comprehensive", rests on two misunderstandings. The first is that the ideological thread of thinking behind comprehensive schools has been the only or sometimes even the most significant one. That is not so. From the earliest development of comprehensive schools in the immediate post-war years, practical

considerations were often far more important than ideological ones. To take one example of many, this was certainly so in the North Riding of Yorkshire in 1965. The terms of the Labour Government's Circular 10/65 coincided with the views of an Education Committee to which the ideology of the then Labour Party was entirely alien. It appeared to that Committee to be common sense, rather than a matter of ideological principle, to combine small rural grammar schools with the secondary modern schools close to them, often on the same site and sometimes actually within the same premises. The results, over the ensuing thirty years, have fully justified that decision. At a time when the percentage of the national age group in 1996 gaining five or more GCSE grades at A-C is 45.1, those schools in North Yorkshire have consistently done far better than this and, as their five A-G results, mostly in the high 90's, indicate, are poised to do better still. And the same is true of many other areas of the country where fully comprehensive schools have been allowed to develop.

The faint praise which New Labour has directed towards these schools has been depressing. Such schools, with high standards of their own, are well able to play their part in a national drive to improve educational standards. It is a serious misunderstanding to suppose otherwise.

A further and related misunderstanding is the view that the school system consists of independent schools and just two kinds of publicly-maintained secondary school: the remaining grammar schools and the rest, nearly all of them comprehensive.

In practice, secondary schools in England are more accurately described under four headings, though there is considerable blurring at the edges. As grant maintained schools are to be found under each of the four headings, they are not separately considered.

First, there are selective, academically as well as socially and financially, independent schools. To these should be added the remaining grammar schools.

Under the second heading come the genuinely comprehensive schools. These are a combination of the grammar and secondary modern schools comprehensive schools were designed to replace and recruit something close to the full range of ability, often but not necessarily from the area immediately surrounding them. There are large numbers of such schools in rural areas, such as those already referred to in North Yorkshire. They are to be found from Cornwall to Cumbria, but more rarely in urban areas. Where schools that are comprehensive, in the sense of admitting the full range of ability, have been developed, the pressure of places on them tends to be severe and the notion of middle class or any other form of flight from them is false. Such schools consistently perform well and, if properly supported, will do better still.

It is impossible to have a sensible discussion about the role fully comprehensive schools could increasingly play in the future unless the part most of them now play in achieving high standards for all their pupils is acknowledged.

The third type of school is secondary modern. Sometimes these schools are so designated but more often they are formally entitled "comprehensive". These schools are comprehensive only in the sense that they are legally entitled and, in most cases, anxious to accept pupils of all abilities. But, whatever they might wish to do, these schools lack any but an occasional pupil entering with attainments suitable for a grammar school or selective independent

school; that is, in or near the top 30% of the ability range, so far as this can be measured at the age of eleven.

Finally, there is a group of schools which used to be described as "other", in the terminology of the then Ministry of Education. Such schools have perhaps 6% to 12% of pupils within the top 30% ability range and therefore lie somewhere between comprehensive and secondary modern schools. The position of such schools, and there are many in urban areas, almost all described as "comprehensive", is volatile. A charismatic head, good public relations, even a well-publicised collapse of a school nearby, by changing the nature of their intake, can push these schools up towards being comprehensive. Conversely, bad publicity or a little additional selection by another school, serving to remove the comparatively few high achievers who would otherwise have been admitted to the school, can cause such a school to become secondary modern in all but name.

An inability or unwillingness to look beyond the formal descriptions of schools to their essentially different structural characteristics leads to disparaging talk of a "failed" comprehensive system, where there is no such system, and to a "failed" or "below average" individual "comprehensive" school, when what may be being described is a secondary modern or "other" school, achieving broadly what it might be expected to achieve with the pupils it has. In any serious discussion relating to secondary schools, their true nature and scope needs to be defined in terms of their admissions – the pupils they actually receive – rather than their aspirations – those they would be glad to receive but in practice do not.

With these four types of secondary school in mind (selective, comprehensive, secondary modern and "other"), it is possible to refine the degree to which structural change within the publicly-maintained sector is needed to enable schools within that sector to play a full part in raising educational standards nationally.

Three types of area, again with considerable blurring at the edges, can be defined. First, there are areas of the country where little or no action on school structure is either needed or, in some instances, possible. Areas, such as North Yorkshire, have already been mentioned, but there are many others. Areas of this kind maintain a high proportion of fully comprehensive schools. In North Somerset, for example, all the secondary schools are comprehensive. Schools in these areas perform well at GCSE and have either no, or only a very short, tail of schools with low outcomes. They represent one of the success stories of the post-war years.

A second kind of area has structural problems affecting education, but the most important of these are not mainly to do with the structure of the schools themselves. These areas have a range of socio-economic and sometimes linguistic issues to deal with, often including transient or in other ways unsettled populations. Achievement levels at 11 tend to be low and many, perhaps most, of the schools within them belong under the "other" or secondary modern headings described above. At any one time, a combination of circumstances – some the responsibility of the school and others not – may cause one or more schools of this kind to come close to collapse. The approved response to that these days is to subject such schools to the full rigours of publicly pronounced official disapproval. Whether this is a sensible way to proceed is a matter on which opinions differ; but at least it is clear that schools in areas of this kind can improve what they are doing and, to take Tower

Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham as examples of this, that a number have recently done so. In recent years, both these authorities have been notably well-administered and the rise from 8% five GCSE A-Cs in Tower Hamlets in 1989 to 25.7% in 1997 and related improvements in Barking and Dagenham show what can be done by schools and a local education authority working together within existing school structures.

The third kind of area is one where school structure is a major problem. These are areas where rich and poor live side by side, where the secondary schools children attend are sharply different in status, in what they achieve and in what future they offer to those attending them. Such areas include most of inner and outer London, other large cities such as Birmingham, Bristol, and Manchester, as well as a number of densely populated county areas, of which Kent is a notable but not the only example. It is extraordinary, to take the example of Kent, that the reasons are not better understood why 53 of the 124 publicly-maintained secondary schools in Kent have lower 5+ A-C GCSE outcomes than the lowest performing school in North Somerset; 11, of which three are grant-maintained, with lower results than the lowest achieved by any school in

is not untypical. The structure of the secondary schools in Bristol is set out in Table I.

The figures for 1997 differ somewhat from these but it remains the case that just under a quarter of the age group, in the independent schools, obtain nearly half the 5+ A-C GCSE passes. All the LEA-funded non-selective schools are described as “comprehensive”, reflecting their aspirations rather than the nature of the pupils they admit.

The position at “A” level is even more clearly defined. About half the 2+ A-level candidates are in independent schools and, if the denominational schools are considered separately, the selective independent/publicly-maintained school 2+ A-level ratio is about 70:30. As the independent school points scores indicate, their share of “good” A-levels is even more heavily in their favour.

It requires imperception of a high order not to grasp from these figures, which are similar to those in several other cities, that there is structural problem here to be dealt with. All schools can improve; but the idea that schools at the bottom end of structures of this kind can, by a mixture of pressure and support, lift themselves by their performance and in the eyes of the discerning public to the level of those anywhere near the top of that structure is fantasy.

Table I. 15+ Age Group. In 1996 there were 4,093 pupils aged 15 in the secondary schools of Bristol, distributed as follows:

	Number of schools	15+ age group	% of total age group	5+ A-C GCSE as % of age
Independent selective	12	927	22.5	(100-74)
Grammar	2	242	5.8	(71-27)
CE Comprehensive	1	183	4.4	53
RC Comprehensive	3	383	9.3	(44-37)
Comprehensive	16	2358	58	(36-4)
	34	4093	100	

Tower Hamlets. It must surely be evident that this has nothing much to do with the quality of Kent’s teachers, the ability of its secondary age pupils or the competence of its officials.

The performance of Kent’s political leadership over the past twenty years is another matter but the long tail of low outcomes must be principally the consequence of the structure within which so many of the schools are required to operate. In terms of the definitions suggested earlier, that structure consists of 61 (many of them highly effective) selective schools, of which 22 are independent; 20 comprehensive schools; 23 “other” schools and some 42 secondary modern schools, a number of which are described as “comprehensive”. Some of these secondary modern schools, it should be noted, have had pupils selected out in three directions: into independent schools, into selective maintained schools or into nearly comprehensive or “other” schools to which those who are able to travel there have access.

The nature and complexity of the structural problems faced by Kent’s secondary schools appear in their most obvious form in urban areas; of which the City of Bristol

How, then, are the structural problems, such as those arising in Bristol, Kent, London, Birmingham, and elsewhere to be related to the wider issue of involving, without compulsion, some of the best independent and, it must be right to add, other selective schools in a concerted effort to raise educational standards nationally?

Two main issues are involved. The first is a matter of perception and is necessarily speculative; the second is a matter of educational judgement, on which it may be easier to reach agreement.

The matter of perception concerns the way parents who now use independent schools look at the relationship between what schools can do and their children’s future. Whereas those professionally concerned with childhood and its development put their emphasis on education in the early years, designed to provide a solid basis for future learning, those who are themselves well-educated tend, as a generalisation, to have different priorities. Such people – and it is a defining characteristic of their approach – tend to work backwards from the future. They start from the kind of university or higher education, often similar to their

own, they intend their children to have every opportunity to acquire. They perceive that the best way to secure this is to ensure their children enter, at some stage, a VIth Form with an established reputation for achieving entries of the kind they seek. They tend to be less enthusiastic about Tertiary Colleges or Further Education, of which they have little experience. They are aware that the only sure way to reach the VIth form education they want is for their children to enter one of the high-performing, which not all are, independent or grammar schools or, in the case of parents who have access to such schools, fully comprehensive schools. Entry into selective schools of any kind, parents who choose them are aware, requires their children to be able to pass examinations at either 11 or 13. As doubts about this occur, those using maintained primary schools but aiming at selective schools tend to drift into preparatory schools or separate forms of coaching. About the earliest years of education, parents of this kind tend to be more relaxed, not because these years are thought unimportant but because such parents are, rightly in most cases, confident that the background of the home is providing much of what schools are themselves attempting to achieve at this stage.

This broad perception of the way parents who choose selective schools for their children look at education suggests that, whatever else happens, those parents will not voluntarily accept any arrangement which does not secure access for their children to high quality post-16 education with good prospects of later access to their chosen form of higher education. Conversely, if they are confident they can secure that, they are likely to be comparatively relaxed about the structure by means of which this is achieved. This is the assumption on which the proposals that follow rest.

The point of educational judgement on which these proposals also rest is that it has become increasingly obvious, not only in this country but elsewhere, that the age of eleven is certainly too early, and the age of sixteen perhaps too late, to attempt to channel children into specialised forms of secondary education. Even in Germany, as Walden points out, "selective education as we understand it often comes into practice only at the age of fourteen". In France, with the reformed *Collèges*, the schools are comprehensive at that same age. Selection at eleven simply cannot be accomplished with sufficient accuracy and causes the forms of secondary education that follow to rest on an insufficiently high level of general education. The preparatory school leaving age of thirteen is an improvement in this respect but there is a strong argument for regarding the 11-14 age range, now expressed as Key Stage 3, as the phase of education on which to build diverse forms of secondary education. This is not an argument either for or against selection as such. It is an argument against selection at too early an age. If this principle is accepted – that Key Stage 3 should be the years of consolidation, for achieving the highest possible general level of education for all pupils – Key Stage 4, both within schools and between schools, becomes a stage where different forms of education can be encouraged to develop. In many areas of the country this would not require structural change. In others, particularly in urban areas, it would require a structural change from vertically organised 11-16 or 11-18 schools, of the very different status referred to earlier, to a system of comprehensive 11-14 schools followed by diverse forms of 14-18 education thereafter.

One way to provide for those 14-18 year olds is to do

so in a free-standing 14-18 schools. An arithmetical point, with both financial and practical consequences, is that any 11-18 school moving to an entry at the age of 14 can almost double its intake without increasing its total size; that is, it can continue to take the pupils it now takes, at a later stage, but can also take almost as many again from elsewhere. The practical point is that such a change can take place slowly, at a pace controlled by the school. A reduction of, say, 30 pupils in an 11+ intake frees 30 places for an additional intake at 14. Change can stop there, can be reversed, or can develop into the creation of a 14-18 school with no intake at 11.

Although no one could expect change on this scale to occur, if at all, other than over several years, if, say, thirty independent schools, mostly in urban areas, moved from a 13+ to a 14+ intake, though the difficulty this would create for preparatory schools would have to be recognised, 3,600 places could be provided (i.e. 30 schools losing an intake at 13 of 120 pupils and increasing the number of 14+ places accordingly).

If, again for the purposes of illustration, 30 of the 160 remaining grammar schools also changed their age range from 11-18 to 14-18, a further 7,100 (thirty times three intakes of 90) places could be provided. And, finally, in areas where leading comprehensive schools assumed a 14-18 role, the number of 14-18 places provided in high quality institutions would be further increased, for the purposes of this illustration, by nearly 22,000 (three times an 11+ intake of 7,200, spread over 30 schools with an average intake of 240 pupils). In all, the number of extra post-14 places that might be created would be some 32,000, of which just under 3,600 would be in fee-paying schools.

Any calculations of this kind would have to recognise that in areas where 11-16 and post-16 arrangements are well established, the 14-18 stage would continue to run across different institutions. Structural change in such areas might take the form of independent, selective and some comprehensive schools with large and effective VIth Forms becoming VIth Form Colleges.

Changes involving a number of independent or grammar schools would, of course, provide only part of the diverse post-14 forms of education that would be necessary. In urban areas particularly, there is scope for the Further Education Colleges to develop properly funded, systematically planned, complementary specialisms which would help to provide varied forms of education and practical training not otherwise available in schools. At 14, other possibilities, in the form of schools with special characteristics, would have to be open to those leaving 11-14 schools, but these are not the subject of the present suggestions.

The wide scope of these diverse forms of post-14 education suggest that the National Curriculum, in its statutory form, should stop at Key Stage 3. Stages thereafter should take the form of non-statutory guidance, as in Scotland. There is no evidence that, at this level at least, standards in the independent schools or in Scotland suffer unduly from the absence of a statutorily enforced curriculum. If the qualifications structure is clear, an increasingly diverse Key Stage 4 curriculum could be allowed to look after itself.

Changes of the kind suggested rarely have tidy institutional results. But an illustration of what is potentially involved may be useful. Birmingham, for example, has an age group disposed amongst some 84 secondary schools.

Thirty-eight of these schools are 11-16 schools and 46, including all the major independent or selective schools, are 11-18 schools. The effect of a city-wide 11-14 system would be to reduce the number of schools taking 11-14 year olds by about a third and reduce even more sharply the number taking 14-16 year olds. The number of schools with VIth Forms would also be reduced. Alternatively, of course, a number of independent selective or comprehensives with large VIth Forms could become post-16 institutions. Whether changes of that order would be an improvement on the present structure would be for discussion. There are important educational arguments for and some against concentrating upper secondary school work in fewer institutions than now. But at least it should be evident that the idea that the nature and quality of what can be offered in schools is unrelated to structural considerations of this kind must be mistaken.

Creating a 14-18 system in appropriate parts of the country, notably in or surrounding the larger conurbations, would not be easy. Conspiracy theorists would be likely to interpret change as a means of lowering standards, but, in London and elsewhere, in a diverse post-14 system it is not difficult to envisage a place for the equivalent of Henri IV or Louis Le Grand in Paris. Our major cities all have their own *Lycées* in waiting. But everything would depend on the creation of 11-14 institutions in which all parents could have confidence and to which they would be prepared to send their children.

Herein lies the problem. The required 11-14 schools, other than those formed by extending some fee-paying preparatory schools, would have to be created out of existing 11-16 or 11-18 schools. In losing their older age groups, such schools would be able to take larger age groups at the age of eleven. But would these schools be good enough, or be able to be made good enough, to form the base for diverse forms of post-14 education? It would be a principal task over a five year period to ensure that they were. This in turn would require an investment in time, training and effort to ensure that Key Stage 3 delivered what is expected of it. That stage would have to become the platform from which some of those now using independent schools could reasonably expect to enter the 14-18 schools in which extra places had been created. So far as previously fee-paying parents were confident in these schools, some of which might become junior departments or in other ways closely aligned to 14-18 schools, their presence in them would serve to support, as Walden has suggested, the aspirations of and the standards achieved by those schools.

How could change on this scale be financed? The capital cost of converting a number of all-through secondary schools to 11-14 or 14-18 ones, with the need to enhance specialist accommodation, would not be unreasonably high. Private finance and other local initiatives could be encouraged to support any new building required.

On the revenue side, expenditure would entirely depend on the number of independent schools taking part in a restructured 14-18 system. If the average cost of an Assisted Place, at just under £4,000 a place, be taken as a guide, to bring thirty schools into the scheme, as suggested in the example given earlier, would cost rather less than the Assisted Places scheme in its last years.

There would be savings to set against additional expenditure. If all pupils displaced from fee-paying schools (e.g. the 11-14 pupils no longer able to attend fee-paying schools that move to a 14-18 age range) found their way

into other fee-paying schools, the supply of fee-paying places tending to be elastic, those places would be able to be removed from the publicly-financed sector. The savings thereby achievable would mostly affect urban schools, some of which would close. At others, the removal of pupils after the age of fourteen would bring savings in staff, examination fees, equipment and so on.

To sum up: on the scale suggested earlier, the changes proposed would affect, so far as their structure is concerned, some three to four hundred of the secondary schools in England and Wales. For others, the 11-14, 14-18 break within a single school, consolidation followed by diversity, would be an extension of what is already happening. But, mainly in urban areas but also in some of the densely populated districts elsewhere, there could be a substantial opening up at the age of 14 of some of the most effective independent, grammar and comprehensive schools. At the same time and in the same areas, a new range of 11-14 schools – or 11-14 elements within schools – would be created. Confidence in these schools would be enhanced by the assurance to parents that their children would later have access to a variety of high quality 14-18 schools.

Apart from the usual inertial ones, at least five main objections to the approach outlined above are to be expected. It can be argued:

1. that 14-18 is not an appropriate age range for secondary education. It is largely unfamiliar in this country, though there are a number of examples, in Leicestershire and elsewhere, of the system working well here, as indeed it does in France. Such a system would have the particular advantage of reducing the number of schools now dealing with the 14-18 age group, too often by means of tiny VIth forms offering little to the pupils retained within them, and improving the distribution of increasingly scarce specialist teachers with high academic qualifications.
2. that creating 11-14 schools, in areas where separate institutions are required to support newly-formed 14-18 schools, to which any significant numbers of those who now use 11-18 or 13-18 fee-paying schools would entrust their children's education, would be impossibly difficult. It would certainly not be easy, but the rewards for making the effort – educational so far as the national effort to improve standards and financial so far as those deciding to use the publicly-maintained sector are concerned – make the attempt worthwhile.
3. that, as it would be in no one's direct interest to proceed, it is idle to assume that they would do so voluntarily. The independent and ex Direct Grant schools are doing well enough as things are and the remaining grammar schools have little wish to change what they now do. Similarly, a number of 11-16 or 11-18 schools would not wish to lose their senior pupils and to see themselves become 11-14 schools serving, as it were, the newly formed group of 14-18 schools. Indeed. Change is seldom in the interests of those undergoing it. But it may be a mistake to underestimate the degree of commitment in schools of all kinds to find ways of playing their part in improving educational standards in their own locality, always provided their essential concerns and expertise are respected.
4. that change would be impossibly expensive at a time of strict control of public finance. Certainly there is a calculation to be made here and a balance struck. Just how much it would cost and how much it would be worth, in terms of the value of what could be achieved, to move

decisively towards ending, or at least modifying, some of the worst effects of the educational divide that has held back this country's educational performance for over one hundred years must ultimately be a matter of political judgement. Expenditure designed to achieve this would do more than help a number of individuals, as the Assisted Places scheme sought to do; area by area, city by city, it could help shift a dysfunctional system. It would be money spent as part of a systematic effort to enlist some of this country's best schools in a well-supported effort to raise educational standards nationally; something which their present structure makes it impossible for those schools to do.

5. that change would lead to a lowering of educational standards in a number of our highest performing schools. That would be for the schools themselves to control but, behind worry of this kind, there often lies confused thinking. For example, a highly selective school may accept 150 pupils a year and 100% of its age group, a not uncommon figure, achieve five or more GCSE's at A-C five years later. Were that school to accept another 100 pupils a year from a school or schools which regularly achieve 45% of their age group 5+ A-C, the net result could be expected to be a 78% pass rate at that level (195 as a percentage of 250). But what if the school in practice achieved an 86% pass rate (i.e. the same 150 from the original intake plus 65 from the new, with 215 as a percentage of 250)? Plainly the school would have raised standards, would have levelled up not down, whatever a league table, recording a 5+ A-C pass rate falling from 100% to 86%, might misleadingly suggest to the contrary. No structural change likely to lead to lower standards, properly defined, should even be considered.

So much for the objections. The argument set out above is that, if they cannot be overcome, for logistical as much as for any other reasons, it is hard to see how, with many of the best schools detached from the effort, the drive to create a world-class secondary education system in this country can succeed. The metaphor of a bridge between independent and publicly-maintained schools is profoundly unhelpful. A comparatively small number of pupils moving from one set of fixed institutions to another, neither of which is changing, can achieve little. A lock-gate better describes what has to be created. Moving from one level

to another has to be carefully controlled, cannot be done in a hurry and involves change which affects both.

A point New Labour may wish to consider, when it has time to draw breath, is that all the great Education Acts, for which the administrations concerned are rightly remembered, have dealt with structure. The 1988 Reform Act, with its neo-liberal creation of do-as-you-please institutions confusedly allied to rigidly conformist centralism in relation to the curriculum, testing and so on, does not belong to that category; but the Acts of 1870, 1902 and 1944, in their different ways, do. There is room for another such initiative, initially perhaps by means of one or two pilot schemes, designed to encourage the voluntary alignment of independent and publicly-maintained schools, in all their various forms, in a national effort to improve this country's educational performance. That would be an achievement for which the present administration would be remembered long after less substantial initiatives have been forgotten. It is on an achievement of this kind that this country's hopes of developing a world class education service, accessible to all, even in the most difficult of our urban areas, largely depend.

One of the few great educators of the post-war years, the late Sir Alec Clegg of the West Riding, used regularly to ask the question: "what is it that we are doing now, in the honest belief that it makes sense to do it, that in ten to twenty years time will rightly be seen to have been a bad mistake?"

Asked today, a number of answers to that question suggest themselves. One such is the assumption made by New Labour, no doubt in the honest belief that it is ridding itself of unnecessary baggage from the past, that the quality of what can be achieved in a school system is unrelated to the form which that system takes: that raising standards in schools, particularly in urban secondary schools, can be pursued successfully without paying close attention to the structure, in all its diversity and inter-dependent relationships, within which those schools have to operate.

Raising standards to the extent necessary cannot be achieved in that way. Standards and structure, quality and form, are inextricably related in education as elsewhere. It is a bad mistake to believe otherwise. As Yeats once put it: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

Trends in Exclusions from School – New Labour, New Approaches?

Carl Parsons & Frances Castle

Carl Parsons is Reader in Education and Frances Castle is a research fellow at Canterbury Christ Church College. They have both been involved in national research studies and surveys into the public cost of exclusions and LEA policies and practice since 1994. This article draws on that research and raises questions about current trends, and the high cost of exclusions from primary and secondary schools at the present time.

Introduction

This paper draws on research on exclusions from school carried out at Christ Church College, Canterbury, over the last four years. This work has included national surveys of permanent exclusions, studies of behavioural support and analyses of the impact of current and planned policy and practice. It has also included research into the costs of exclusion, both human and financial (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996). We take the opportunity to look ahead with a new government which has published an education White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, a Green Paper, *Excellence for All Children*, and established a Social Exclusion Unit operating out of the Prime Minister's office.

Behaviourally challenging pupils are not going to reduce in number; they are a permanent part of the education culture in the United Kingdom as in other 'developed' cultures. The forces which helped create them and the conditions which seemingly feed their disruptive and challenging inclinations are not diminishing. The realisation that 'bad behaviour' is not a temporary phenomenon is an important 'redefinition'. 'Projects' and short-term interventions are not what is needed. The problem needs to be seen not as exceptional but as part of normal provision.

The Trend in Exclusions

Permanent exclusions from school are continuing to rise (Figure 1). A survey of local education authorities undertaken at Christ Church College indicates that the number of pupils permanently excluded from September 1995 to July 1996 reached 13,581 (Christ Church College, 1996). 80% of exclusions are from secondary schools, most are boys (4:1 at secondary level, 14:1 at primary level) and this peaks in year 10. We know that Black Caribbean boys are disproportionately subject to exclusion (Ofsted, 1996; DfEE, 1997d).

The most recent figures from the DfEE (1997d) are derived from an attachment to the school's Form 7 completed in the January of each year. Their figures are shown within the graph in italic print. These figures from the schools' census are lower than those from our surveys of LEAs. There are good arguments to suggest that schools are not good at giving historic data, especially in the context of a form requiring accurate current numbers on which their finance is to be based.

There is now evidence that exclusions from primary

schools have been increasing at a faster rate than those from secondary schools (Table I). The DfEE's (1997d) figures indicate a rise of 18% in permanent exclusions from primary schools in England over one year, 1994/5, compared with 1995/6.

The Cost of Exclusion

Replacement education for excluded pupils costs approximately twice as much as standard mainstream education at an average of £4,336 (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996). The same survey found that, on average, a permanently excluded pupil received less than 10 per cent of full-time education during the year of exclusion. It costs more for a good deal less. Costs were also calculated for six pupils maintained in their schools. In most instances these pupils were in receipt of additional resources. The additional costs vary from £0 to £6,300, with a mean of £2,815. These children were receiving full-time education. This was not without difficulty and costs to their teachers but the provision of education was approaching 100% (at least in intended provision): the young person was not left without schooling, was not left unsupervised, the family stress was minimised and the difficulties of reintegration were avoided. The small number of cases that have been costed indicate that maintaining pupils in school by means of additional support is cost-effective expenditure.

The percentage of pupils returned to mainstream school is low. In one survey of permanently excluded pupils 46% were continuing cases in the following year, at an increased average cost of £5,134 (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996).

In addition there are administrative costs of exclusion and costs to other educational services such as EWOs and educational psychologists. The greatest cost is for replacement education, but, frequently this is for vastly reduced provision.

In one sample of permanently excluded pupils, 20% were social services cases, costing on average £1,100, 10% were health service cases at a low average cost of £100. Just over a quarter of pupils had police involvement at an average cost of over £2,000 (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996). The Audit Commission (1996) found that 42% of offenders of school age sentenced in the youth court had been excluded from school.

Police and criminal justice costs form over 70% of the

costs to the other agencies incurred by the excluded pupils (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996). While the costs to the other agencies are not directly attributable to the young person being excluded from school, it is reasonable to assume that this group, being further alienated and with time in unstructured and unsupervised environments, may become involved in crime.

Based on calculations extrapolated from one research project (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996), the total cost, to education and other services, of excluding pupils from school reaches £81 million for the year 1996-97 (Figure 2). A speculative estimate of the cost of inclusion using the average figure of £2,815 and applying it to all 12,458 pupils excluded during 1994-95 and to a 46% continuing group from the previous year gives a total remarkably similar to the costs of exclusion to education for that year at £49,546,815. However, for this figure pupils would have been in receipt of ten times as much education, on average. It is likely also that the additional costs to the other services would not have applied.

Labour Solutions

Many possible measures for dealing with the problems of disruptive behaviour and exclusion are dependent on resources which are not readily available. 'Redefinition' of the problems so that they become part of 'normal' rather

1998, are unnecessary, unhelpful or counter-productive. Thus, the new government is a willing heir to a set of policy intentions and its White Paper makes clear the commitment to 'improving discipline' in the same punitive way. It is an approach which ignores the changing nature of contemporary youth and the changing context in which they grow up as reported by numerous researchers (for example, Parsons, 1998).

The eleven sections of the Bill are set out below and the guidance documentation is being produced by the DfEE.

- **Extending the permissible period for fixed term exclusions to 45 days in a term** is unlikely to be effective. It gives schools longer periods of respite but for the pupil it means disruption to education, further opportunities to become alienated from the culture of attending school and more chance that fixed term exclusion will become still less effective. It is unlikely, without targeted resources, that LEAs will be able to work with excluders on the problems.
- **Contracts** are unlikely to be viewed as partnership with parents. Individually tailored contracts negotiated with all parties, including the pupil, have been used to good effect both in maintaining pupils in their school and in setting clear standards for their inclusion in a new school following exclusion (Commission for Racial Equality, 1996). They are

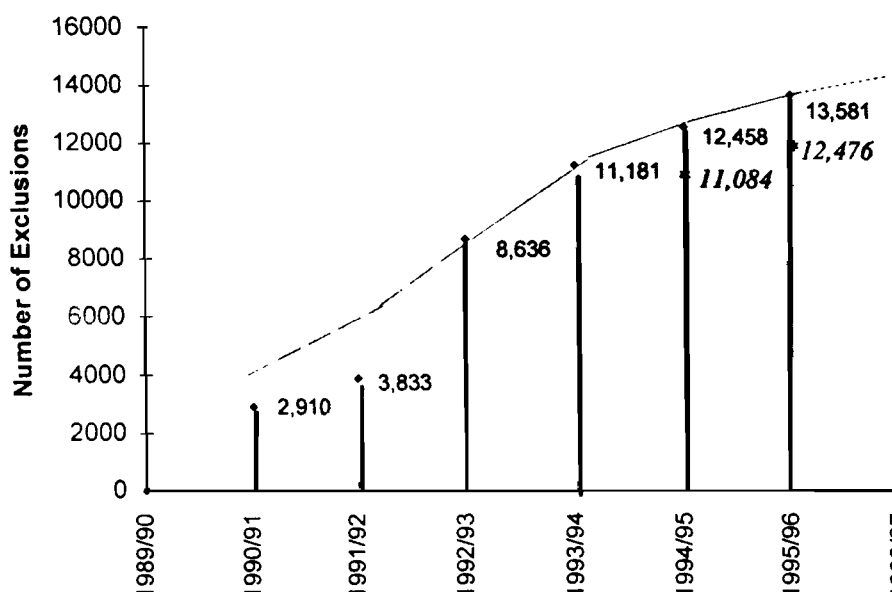


Figure 1. The trend in permanent exclusion from schools in England, 1990-6. The sources for these figures are given in Parsons & Howlett (1996). The discontinuous line raised above the figures for 1990/1 and 1991/2 represent the acknowledged under-recording of the government's National Exclusions Reporting System.

than exceptional provision is needed. This requires the recognition of the issues by a wide range of decision-makers.

National government's role in this redefinition and recognition of the issues is of the utmost importance because the legislative framework sets the parameters within which LEAs and schools carry out their work. One of the three main themes of the 1997 Education Act was discipline and behaviour. The stated objective was to give schools more power to deal with disruptive pupils. This Act, one of the final acts of the last government but which went through with all party support. Nine of the eleven measures in the 1997 Act, to come into force from April or September

devised in a context of collaboration. The proposed contracts make no concessions to the needs of individuals and are coercive and alienating.

- **Detention without parental approval may or may not be effective.** It is likely that any sanctions will only be effective if used consistently as part of a clearly stated and understood behaviour policy, set within a positive ethos of school improvement rather than in a punitive one. A wide range of rewards and sanctions, known and understood, is needed so that exclusion is not reached quickly (OFSTED, 1996).
- **Requiring all schools to publish a discipline policy**

can only be viewed positively, but most schools already have one. What is required is advice, support and resources in order to implement them effectively.

- **Requiring LEAs to publish behaviour plans** for supporting schools with disruptive pupils and for out-of-school provision is again a positive move, but they also require a boost to overstretched resources in order to provide this support.
- **Withdrawing parents' right to choose a new school if their child has already been excluded from two or more schools** is inappropriate as many

otherwise than at school". The words "full-time or part-time" have been removed after "suitable". This makes no practical difference unless the guidance documentation yet to be produced defines "suitable" and possibly equates that with "full-time".

- **Management committees or governing bodies for Pupil Referral Units** are an essential step in moving beyond the makeshift institutional arrangements which currently exist. The role of these units within the full range of educational provision needs to be defined.

	Primary		Secondary		Special		All	
	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate	Number	% Rate
1993/94	1,291	0.0289	9,433	0.3363	457	0.4835	11,181	0.1517
1995/96	1,872	0.0439	11,159	0.4173	550	0.5518	13,581	0.1932
% Increase over 2 year period		45%		18%		20%		21%

Table I. Permanent exclusions from schools in England in 1993/4 and 1995/6.

parents struggle to find even a second school for their child.

- **Giving schools greater representation at pupil exclusion hearings** is unnecessary. There is already evidence that parents regard this process as unfair and feel that they "...do not stand a chance".
- **Appeals committees should take account of the interests of other pupils and staff at the school.** However, it is important that this development should not mean an increasingly punitive stance towards difficult pupils which can only result in more exclusions.

Conclusion

Exclusions from school, permanent and temporary, continue to rise. The balance of evidence, does not favour exclusions as a means of dealing with disruption and disaffection. The experience is deeply damaging to the pupils and very distressing for the parents and carers. In some cases these are families with a range of problems already and the exclusion from school is a further difficulty. There are dangers in increasing the burden on families not coping well, and the result may be longer term calls on the public services.

The problem of school exclusions affects one part of

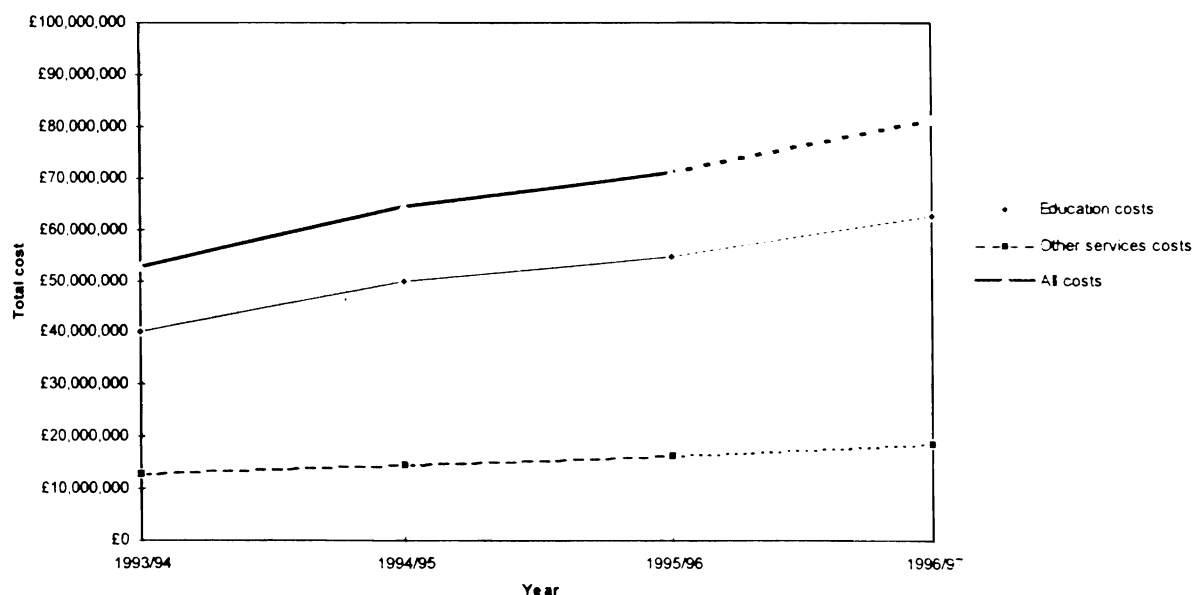


Figure 2. Cost to education and other services of permanent exclusions from schools in England, 1993-7.

- **The power to restrain pupils** is properly regularised in this Act and one hopes this will be for the good of the pupil as much as offering protection for school staff.
- **LEAs' responsibility as regards excluded pupils and others out of school** is "to make arrangements for provision of suitable education,

the community disproportionately and raises, as a result, particular issues and tensions. The over-representation of African Caribbean pupils within it requires specific and general measures to address the problems of exclusion, the loss of education and the diminished life chances which may accompany it.

Appropriate full-time educational provision needs to be

assured for all young people if they are to be enabled to develop personally and be equipped to join the citizenry. A denial of rights to this service, education, through the act of exclusion and inadequate replacement education will be individually damaging to those affected and will reinforce disaffection in those sections of society most affected. Many of these young people can be maintained in school at a cost which can be calculated.

The White Paper unfortunately still reiterates the necessity of exclusion:

Schools need the ultimate sanction of excluding pupils; but the present number of exclusions is too high. (DfEE, 1997a, p. 57)

One might ask what would be an acceptable number. The recent press release on behaviour support plans (DfEE, 1997c) repeats the conviction about the need for exclusion in almost the same terms.

As presently practised in England and Wales, school exclusion is a judicial procedure removing rights to education resulting in many consequences we would wish to avoid. It would be better to redraft the law, redefine the problem and to fund schemes which are preventative, which intervene before it is too late, which support teachers and enable them to do their job, and which do not deny pupils their right to full-time and appropriate education.

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The Education of Good Citizens: the role of moral education

Don Rowe

This article by Don Rowe, director of curriculum resources at the Citizenship Foundation examines the role of moral education in schools. Don Rowe's teaching experience was in secondary and middle schools, he became the first director of the Citizenship Foundation in 1989 and has since directed the Primary Citizenship Project and most recently the Moral Education in Secondary Schools Project.

In the Spring 1997 edition of *FORUM* (Vol. 39, No. 1), Clyde Chitty's editorial 'Morality in the Classroom' challenged the notion that 'morality was teachable'. Chitty's article raises the important issue of the role of the school in the moral development of young people. This concern is high on the agenda at the moment. In addition to the prolonged 'moral panic' which has gripped the nation for some time now, with the accompanying calls for schools to give lessons in morality, the education service is itself increasingly examining what exactly is meant by the legal duty to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of the child and of society. With the recent establishment of ministerial advisory groups on citizenship and Personal and Social Education (PSE), as well as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) consultation process on SMSC there is clearly concern at the highest level that changes may be necessary after the moratorium to strengthen this whole area of the school's work. Certainly many teachers are feeling that the huge pressures now on schools to focus on a narrower range of 'standards' have squeezed out important concerns to do with the broader aims of education. But what will schools be asked to do after the moratorium? Chitty fears that we could see a return to a new kind of moral authoritarianism which he rightly argues would be ineffective and would discredit teachers in the eyes of teenagers. However, in this article I want to argue that morality can and should be taught but not necessarily in the form usually advocated.

One difficulty we immediately face in discussing moral education is that the word moral itself has been used ambiguously in the guidance literature to schools. In the first sense, moral means morally good (as in 'he acted morally and not immorally'), and several recent documents have used it in this positive sense. For example, the 1993 document *Spiritual and Moral Development* (National Curriculum Council, 1993) at one point defined the purpose of moral education as to promote actions which "promote goodness and minimise evil". And the most recent QCA consultation document, (being piloted in 150 schools at the present time) defines moral development as developing "the will to do what is right and to resist temptation".

In its second meaning, the term is descriptive rather than evaluative. In this sense, moral defines an area of human life and experience, comparable to other areas such as aesthetic and scientific. Thus we can talk about the moral

life or moral argumentation without necessarily being judgmental. I think it is this latter sense that the Ofsted (1995) document defines moral education, describing it as "teaching the principles which distinguish right from wrong".

When politicians and the tabloid newspapers call for more moral education, they generally use the word in the first sense – they want schools to 'make children good' – in its minimal form this would include the avoidance of crime and anti-social behaviour and respecting the law but in its maximal form, it would include serving others and being prepared to make personal sacrifices for the common good. I call this maximalist version a 'high virtue' model of moral education and it has been very strongly represented in the educational tradition of this country, with its strongly Christian overtones of ethical improvement, self-denial and service to others. But this particular view of the moral life is not shared by all – it is a particular ethic and this makes it difficult for teachers in common (i.e. non-religious) schools to deal with. For one thing, it is not clear whose virtues teachers are supposed to promote as the most acceptable or most approved? Furthermore, they are reluctant to engage in what they feel to be forms of moralising and not only because they believe these to be ineffective. Most teachers do not claim to lead morally perfect lives nor do they presume to tell others to do so. Schools are not churches and teachers are not ministers of religion. They are wary of being exposed to the charge of not practising what they preach and, as professionals, see a clear line between their public and private lives. This line they also recognise holds true for students as well, though it may be less clearly defined in religious schools. And teachers are suspicious of moral education on other grounds. I have commonly encountered the view that moral education in schools is a thinly veiled form of social control, attempting to inculcate a passive respect for the laws of an unjust social order. This is quite often described as preaching 'middle-class morality' – in other words, the imposition of the morality of the propertied classes on the dispossessed. Whether or not one agrees with such views, they certainly demonstrate the controversial nature of moral education.

Some of the above difficulties arise, I think, from a confusion between public values and those values which essentially belong to the private domain which schools in liberal democracies are not mandated to invade. By 'public'

values, I refer to those values which are essential to the maintenance of the shared life of the community. It is these values which schools can be confident in promoting and given the right pedagogies, can teach.

It is widely agreed that we can, in fact, teach certain forms of morality by example. Schools teach morality through the establishment and discussion of rules and codes of conduct, through the quality of relationships and through the experiences provided by the whole of school life. But what about the teaching of morality in the classroom? Chitty suggests that the most we can do is “discuss a whole range of moral, social and health issues to enable children to make their own informed choices”. This, I think, represents standard practice at present and it is this I particularly want to challenge.

There are two curriculum slots where substantive moral issues are on the curriculum in their own right rather than arising as part of other curricular concerns – RE and PSE. In RE the approach is to look at a number of religiously controversial issues such as abortion and examine each of them from the point of view of the major religions. The PSE approach takes issues like social violence or genetic engineering and tries a) to inform students about the issues and b) stimulate debate in the hope that this will clarify and extend their thinking on these issues, leaving the final conclusions to students themselves in the light of their personal values and religious or cultural traditions. The hope is that during such discussions students will develop the skills of analysis and debate. Indeed, many teachers would, I think, claim that the development of these generalisable skills (of critical thinking and argumentation) is really what such lessons are about. The problem with this approach, however, is that it is rather like trying to teach a group of students to play football by putting them on a field with a ball and letting them discover the most effective procedures and skills for themselves. This would not only be inefficient, it would deny them access to much experience from which they could benefit. In the same way, we can help our young people think more effectively in the moral domain through direct teaching and still avoid the charge of moralising or indoctrination. On this view the main task of moral education will be to induct young people as emerging citizens into the moral life of the nation. I call this a public discourse model.

Characteristics of a Public Discourse Model of Moral Education

The primary aim of this approach is to introduce students to the moral discourse embedded in the public life of the community. As citizens, they need to be able to recognise and address those moral concerns thrown up in the everyday encounters of life. And these are not only concerned with doing good or the ‘big issues’. The occasions when moral thought and argumentation arise can be very wide ranging and include the legitimate pursuit of one’s own ends or the defence of one’s own values in the democratic forum. Where individuals, for whatever purpose, wish to engage with others over matters of shared moral concern, they need to learn the language and procedures of the discourse and to master the rules of engagement – otherwise they are at a disadvantage. In doing so, they must be free to draw on, defend or modify their own values. Such a model is likely to be less threatening and more acceptable to students and parents of all cultural groups because it avoids the charge of undermining particular cultural values through

the promotion of one view of the good and it seeks to strengthen the common democratic values which aim to preserve cultural difference.

If we describe the home community as one’s ‘primary’ moral community, then the democratic community can be seen as ‘secondary’, with a distinctive ethical basis and its own shared moral understandings which need to be taught and learned. Students need to be exposed to the moral values and procedures implicit in this civic discourse and, I would argue, schools should be as systematic in this as in other forms of developmental learning. It should certainly begin in the primary school (Rowe & Newton, 1994) and not be left until the later years. Bruner (1989) points to the importance of publicly modelling forms of moral thinking for students in schools. He argues that children do not develop these forms of thinking by instinct but, having first encountered them in society, they draw them into their own social and moral schemas through language and exchange. The child, he says, “seems not only to negotiate sense in his exchanges with others but to carry the problems raised by such ambiguities back into the privacy of his own monologues”.

What would such a public discourse model look like in practice? Firstly students need to learn how to distinguish moral issues from non-moral ones. They need to be enabled to see beneath the surface events of life to identify the underlying moral concerns. For this purpose, they need to be introduced systematically to the concepts and vocabulary which characterise this form of discourse. There are a number of key concepts such as rights, responsibilities and justice but there are many others which recur and which indeed even the youngest children in schools actually handle in simple concretised forms – concepts such as right, wrong, good, bad, rules, laws, power, authority, equality, diversity, community – all of them contested, all of them susceptible to different interpretations from within different religious and cultural traditions. At the same time, the process of shared enquiry encourages students to recognise important commonalities and to develop respectful ways of engaging with each other. The sharing of personal perspectives and experiences can be very effective in promoting a sense of community and interdependence.

A further characteristic of this model would be that it introduces students to the long tradition of public moral discourse with its ideas which have been debated and developed for centuries. I am not advocating introducing pure forms of moral philosophy into school but there is no doubt that secondary school students will have encountered and even used many forms of thinking familiar to philosophers (e.g. the utilitarian argument). Pupils will use these forms more effectively if they can recognise them and know their function and limitations. Students should also become familiar with common forms of moral argumentation such as the ‘slippery slope’ and ‘lesser of evils’ arguments, as well as learning how language is often in practice used to obscure the truth rather than clarify it or denigrate the opposition rather than their arguments. In this way, moral education begins to offer some intellectual challenge and develop a distinctive framework of its own.

The approach I have described has been developed by the Moral Education in Secondary Schools Project, directed by myself and my colleague Ted Huddleston. It is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust. Materials for key stages three and four have been in schools since January 1997 and teachers have responded well, both to the material

and the approach described above. We developed units of material not around a big issue but around a particular moral idea or concept, such as "what might prevent someone from doing wrong if they could do anything they wanted and get away with it?" To do this we used the classical story of the Ring of Gyges which made Gyges invisible, enabling him to commit all manner of crimes. The point of the story is to look at the idea of intrinsic and extrinsic good. In another story from the section on rights, we examine the difficulties inherent in situations where legitimate rights conflict. In this case, we used the recent incident in a Nottinghamshire school where the rights of a behaviourally difficult boy were threatened by a strike of teachers in the school who claimed that he was diverting too many resources away from the better behaved children. This kind of incident is familiar enough from news headlines but rarely are students shown how to analyse them from the point of view of key moral ideas. The Key Stage 3 material includes sections on how to argue well, on moral virtues, justice, duties, rights, moral decision-making, empathic thinking and some psychological aspects of moral reasoning, such as rationalisation.

The materials developed for Key Stage 4 re-visit many of the same concepts but at more complex levels. Some of the materials further examine the importance of moral virtues and others look at wrong doing and the law. In other sections, we looked at the nature of moral argumentation and particular aspects of moral reasoning itself, such as the way in which people draw on different kinds of moral principles to address a problem. Finally, we looked at the question of morality in public life including the question of how we resolve issues where different cultural values clash. We also introduce students to the ethical basis of government and such problems as how a society decides who is responsible for the well-being of its members.

Does the adoption of a model of moral education such as this imply that we have given up all ideas of moral

education as a vehicle for character development? Not entirely would be the answer. There is evidence that democratic and philosophical discussions can reduce attitudes of intolerance and aggression amongst class members (Lake, 1988; Vari-Szilagyi, 1995). There is undoubtedly a link between the way we perceive the world and the way we act upon it. So, if one learns to become a moral being both experientially and cognitively, let us aspire to provide the most nurturing environment possible in our schools in both of these domains.

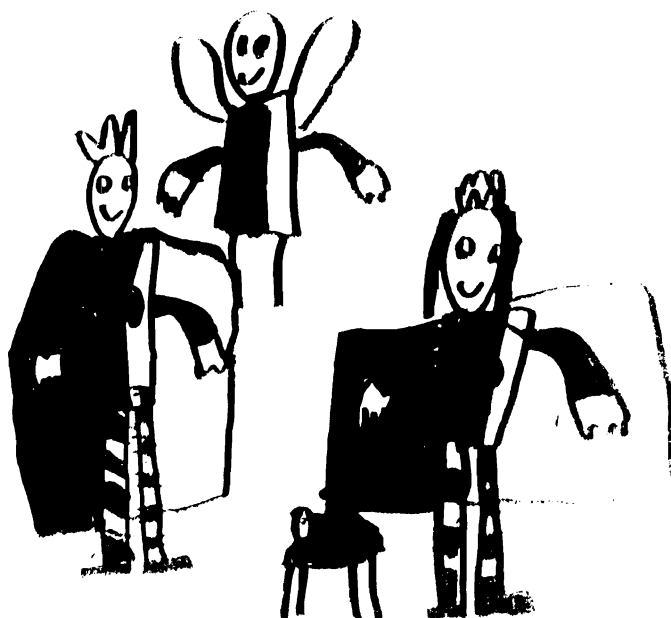
The project team would be delighted to send colleagues information about this work in progress or to hear from those working in similar ways: Don Rowe, The Citizenship Foundation, 15 St Swithin's Lane, London EC4N 8AL, United Kingdom (citfou@gn.apc.org).

Note

The Citizenship Foundation is an independent educational charity working nationally and internationally to promote education for citizenship, for democracy and human rights.

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A Powerful Double Act!

Is this the way in which relationships between primary school headteachers and their chair of governors are developing?

Liz Rance

Liz Rance is a Senior Lecturer in primary education at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln. This article builds upon her recent research into school governance and explores the critical relationship between the head teacher and the chair of governors.

My initial research on school governance explored the complexities involved between the concept of role, the inter-related nature of its component parts, and their effect/influence on 'lay' people undertaking the responsibilities of school governor. Building on that work, this article explores what I have come to believe is the most crucial of role relationships within a primary school – one which sits at the heart of effective and efficient high quality educational provision and school improvement issues.

With reference to a school's headteacher and chair of governors, Deem et. al. (1995, p. 142) observe that it is these two persons who appear to show "most awareness of multi-dimensional power" within a school; and that the individuals who hold these positions "shape much of what happens on governing bodies, both in connection with allocative and authoritative resources, and in relation to decision making and agenda setting". This description suggests an authoritative relationship which has a significant influence on school development.

In accepting this premise, it is possible to acknowledge that these two roles are complementary. Morris & McIntyre's statement (1972), concerning the interdependency which exists where 'roles' are complementary (in the sense that each role derives its meaning from the other related role), raises the following questions:

- What type of interdependency needs to exist to achieve the most successful outcomes from such a relationship?
- What could be its consequences, given that those involved are described by Deem et al. (1995) as the 'key movers' in the governance of schools?
- What are the implications for those who hold each role?

In attempting to address the first question, several researchers have already explored the nature of this relationship. They give prominence to the importance of a shared perception of each other's role (Beckett et al, 1991); both roles needing to function as 'gatekeepers' for the governing body (Holt & Hynds, 1994); a reciprocity of understanding in the execution of each other's responsibilities needing to exist (Audit Commission/Ofsted, 1995); and the relationship being 'frank' and 'honest' so that each can provide a "sounding board for the other" (Esp & Saran, 1995).

However, are all these observations based on noble sentiments alone? In reality, what form could this interdependent relationship take?

To investigate this issue further, I turned to the headteacher and chair of governors of the governing body on which I sit. Both of them are in the early stages of their working relationship (8 months and 22 months in post, respectively), and I believed it would be of value to explore these issues with them. Although relative newcomers to their respective roles, it is exciting to observe that they already have several of the features previously identified.

First, and I believe foremost, both the headteacher and chair of governors perceive the relationship as a 'partnership'. This is seen by the head as 'compatible', and by the chair of governors as 'dynamic yet informal'. Both role occupants recognise the need for, and importance of, the negotiation and identification of a shared vision and common ground on which to stand and move forward together. The chair believes that to achieve this she asked herself questions which have helped her analyse her own educational standpoint, her personal values and beliefs, and her perception of the school. Likewise, the headteacher recognises the need to make allowances for different ways of working between herself and the chair, and to retain a willingness to take on new ideas about the relationship. She also sees the need to maintain a working framework which, whilst acknowledging the external influences on their situation, ensures enough flexibility and 'space' for the two roles to develop together.

This is not to suggest that both perceive this partnership fitting together complacently – hand in glove. The chair of governors remarks that "it is not a seamless garment" but rather one in which tensions help to provide potential areas of growth; and she is convinced that an effective partnership will develop as a consequence of the successful management of these elements

At present, one such differing perception concerns the term 'friend' – a popular descriptor currently being employed to describe one aspect of a governor's role. In this case study, the chair of governors recognises the sensitivity required when considering how far she can 'push' within the partnership. She perceives this 'push' as the need to challenge, question, disagree, and offer a different perspective on issues; but shies away from the notion of 'critical friend' (Esp and Saran (1995); DFE (1995)), suggesting that the inclusion of 'friend' in this context has

too many inappropriate connotations. On the other hand, the headteacher views the chair of governors as a professional 'friend', someone who is providing social and emotional support. This 'friendship' is described by the headteacher as paralleling the 'only child' syndrome, i.e. she assumes that the chair of governors holds a 'special' relationship with the school in the way a parent would with an only child: "when you talk to the chair of governors you believe her total focus is on your school alone".

Despite such 'differences' occurring, there are already relationship features which both recognise in the same way. One such example is the existence and significance of the 'off-the-record' feature of their partnership. The headteacher acknowledges that, for her, this is based on the "deep rooted respect" she has for the chair's depth of commitment to the school and its children. She trusts the chair's judgements and relies on this to help her resolve certain issues which require an informal discussion before formal decision-making occurs. She sees herself as standing "right in the middle" of situations but thinks the chair is able to "stand one step back" and thus provide her with a "protected perspective". Meanwhile, the chair of governors believes that they have a "quasi-professional" relationship – one where they are close working colleagues rather than personal friends; although she acknowledges that sometimes this type of working situation can turn into friendship. Even so, she suggests that certain dilemmas might arise when attempting to differentiate between both types of relationship, and also in respect to their application to 'off-the-record' moments. Thus she holds back from granting their working situation a 'friendship' status for the present.

Throughout their accounts, both participants repeatedly identified the same personal qualities about each other which they consider important to the development of their relationship. These centre around:

- respect for the other, in terms of values, principles and integrity;
- a sense of trust in the other;
- a recognition of inner commitment from the other to the responsibilities of the role;
- an acceptance of differing viewpoints held by the other.

I believe it is of significant importance to bear in mind these attributes as I turn to consider my second question – what can be the consequences of such a relationship?

An Ofsted inspection of a school undoubtedly brings this issue to the fore as the nature of the process requires both headteacher and chair of governors to play prominent roles in the experience, presenting their school in as realistic and positive manner as possible.

Reflecting on their respective parts in our school's recent Ofsted inspection, both the headteacher and chair of governors are unequivocal in feeling completely confident about the involvement of the other. From the first meeting with the Registered Inspector which both attended, the headteacher observed that she had "no qualms about their basic philosophy for the school being 'as one'" and consequently felt no pressure regarding "getting stories straight!". Likewise, the chair of governors felt "in tune" with the headteacher "without having rehearsed or discussed the situation!". She felt equally assured about the similarity of their viewpoints regarding specific school-related issues, and believes that this created an element of mutual trust

which manifested itself in 'safety-netting' each other. This meant that the headteacher did not feel there was a need to 'manage' the Ofsted process for the chair of governors because of the knowledge and insights she already held. The headteacher recognises that the quality of her relationship with the chair of governors created increased personal confidence as well as helping her to manage effectively her own stress.

Surely such closely-matched responses from both participants can only have been achieved as a direct outcome of a working relationship based on those personal qualities identified above being employed in a honest and open manner? In simple terms, what both incumbents state as their relationship is based on the factual experience of their partnership rather than on unrealistic aspirations towards each role. Indeed, as Lee and Whitfield (1997, p. 25) describe it, both appear to be employing "a clear moral responsibility for school governors and heads to 'live what they are teaching' in demonstrating how working relationships should be managed".

The essential element of partnership that has been identified, raises the question about the selection of headteachers and, more particularly, the chair of governors. Handy (1990, p. 125) suggests that a team is a "collection of differences". If one applies this notion to a school's governing body, then his advice that this 'team' should include those "who will fill other important parts" (p. 126) becomes a central issue when considering these two appointments. This is further consolidated by Esp & Saran (1995, p. 71) who claim that attention needs to be paid to 'the 'match' of headteacher and chair of governor in the partnership'. Consequently, I believe it is now necessary to go further than Leonard's (1989) comment that no single decision about the life of the school is more important than the appointment of its headteacher, to also include the appointment of the chair of governors.

Nowadays, both the appointment procedures for headship and the opportunities for newly-appointed headteachers to establish a professional development programme are very clearly defined and accessible. However, at present there is little evidence to suggest that there is the same level of commitment to the appointment of a chair of governors. This appointment relies on the vagaries of governing body membership. It requires the willingness of a volunteer to have their name proposed, and annual re-election. And the possibility of training for the role and its responsibilities depends on programmes offered by Local Education Authorities and/or national organisations. If one re-considers Esp and Saran (1995, p. 71), how can it be convincingly argued that this present disparity in appointment and training helps develop their 'match'? Very simply, it cannot.

Reflecting on the case study, I think it begins to offer credence and insight into what can become possible regarding the potential within such a working partnership. The particular relationship I have focused upon has been given a good 'birth' by both role incumbents but is still in its infancy, and has many avenues to explore and expand upon as it grows. Nevertheless, in more global terms, I think the time is overdue to review and evaluate the expectations placed on the working relationship of headteachers and chairs of governors.

There is no doubt that although decisions are made in the name of the governing body, the reality is that this 'everyday' responsibility is falling increasingly on the

shoulders of the chair of governors. In attempting to identify relevant-for-chair-of-governor skills to help handle this reality, the case study chair cited the need to have an understanding of, and ability to use effective management, interpersonal and communicative skills plus a willingness to learn. She defined the core role skills as being the ability to employ self-generated enquiry, in order to undertake personal investigation and research; effective time management; and the ability to make ('weave') connections between a range of aspects of whole life issues. Her perception appears to elaborate on Esp & Saran's (1995, p. 29) conviction that role distribution between chair of governors and headteacher is affected by "individual pre-dispositions and skills which enable people to assume specific roles successfully"; and it clearly indicates the need for role-specific expertise.

One might be tempted to speculate that the level of understanding being demonstrated would suggest that everything in the garden is rosy, but this is not so. In this case study it is important to recognise that the perception and insight demonstrated by the chair arises as a consequence of her working life as a Management Consultant/Trainer and her previous teaching background in Further Education, *not* as a direct outcome of being a chair of governors. She demonstrates that she is able to apply skills learned and developed in a professional context to a different role. This must raise concerns about the consequences of appointing a chair of governors without such skills/ability.

At present, the chair of governor's role is undertaken by a 'lay' person from the school's local community who is prepared to give their time and other resources voluntarily. Their only reward being recognition from within their community of their service. Role-specific skills and/or expertise are not a pre-requisite to the appointment of a chair of governors; and at present, there is no nationally co-ordinated training programme, nor remuneration for the task. This leads me to ask "is this an appropriate state-of-affairs?"

In seeking an answer, it is pleasing to note that our newly-elected government acknowledges in their recent white paper, the "special role as partners in the school service" (1997, p. 68) school governors play. However, it is of equal concern to observe how the government has avoided the key issue of legislation relating to this critical relationship between headteachers and governors.

Our school governance system is currently too slow to make clear the distinction between the role and the work of a chair of governors, and the rest of a governing body. Rhetoric is not keeping pace with reality ... chairs of governors *are* doing a different job! It is therefore vital that appropriate resources are directed towards developing

a chair of governor's ability to support their headteacher who is, as the government describes, "a crucial factor in the success of the school" (1997, p. 29).

In the light of experience and changes since ERA and LMS, I believe it is impractical to continue to rely on an ad-hoc approach to the appointment and training of chairs of governors. It is my view that compulsory training of chairs of governors should be high on the DfEE's school governance agenda, now! This important issue has already been highlighted as a key recommendation, arising from discussions held recently between the state-funded and independent school sectors, administrative and other support services, business and voluntary sector – all of whom recognised that being a chair of governors is a role which is "the most demanding and difficult to fill satisfactorily" (Lee & Whitfield, 1997, p. 25).

If this government is truly committed to raising standards in all our schools, then it needs to ensure the improved quality of future school governance. It has no choice but to create appropriate training/qualification/remuneration/official recognition of contributions – specifically targeting chairs of governors. Only when movement in this direction happens will there be a realistic hope that the 'powerful double act', suggested at the beginning of this article, will manifest itself with greater clarity and conviction, and in a more-evenly balanced manner. Then both the posts of headteacher and chair of governors will attract those people who are enthusiastic about, and committed to, the real partnership of both roles and their responsibilities.

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Reading Quest: a search for the key to successful learning

Penny Tyack

Reading Quest is an intensive individual literacy intervention, modelled on Marie Clay's *Reading Recovery*. This article by Penny Tyack, the *Reading Quest* Project Manager at an Oxfordshire Middle School, evaluates the success of the teaching, and reviews the training of RQ tutors, the introduction of the project to new schools, and the involvement of parents in their children's learning.

At six, Sally knew lots about reading. She loved stories and rhymes, and could easily work out what was going on by looking at pictures, letters and words. She had nice clear handwriting and formed her letters correctly. But she hadn't much confidence. She could hardly recognise any printed words.

During her six-week *Reading Quest* programme Sally learned to read and spell phonetically regular words: 'Fan-tas-tic!'. She felt like a had achieved such a lot. She smiled more than ever. She even spoke in class. And she still loved stories and rhymes. Her reading age had risen by six months, and her spelling by a year and a half.

Reading Quest is a *Reading Recovery*-type programme. The longitudinal evaluation of *Reading Recovery* in England that was published in 1995 [1] recommended that *Reading Recovery*, and programmes of phonological training, should be developed for reading and spelling after their first year of school, and also adapted for older children. It found that children "who were socially disadvantaged benefitted particularly from being offered *Reading Recovery*".

Reading Quest would seem to endorse these recommendations. It was started at Bayswater Middle School, Oxford, in November 1995, in an attempt to raise the startlingly low literacy levels in this school, levels that appeared to be affected by the socially disadvantaged nature of the school's catchment area. Selected pupils were to be taught individually for half an hour three times a week for six weeks. The success of the pilot group of six pupils led to the project snowballing over the next 18 months, so that it is now operating in 11 schools, and 120 children have completed individual programmes. 37 of these children were in Year 2.

In many practical respects *Reading Quest* differs from Marie Clay's *Reading Recovery* model.[2] *Reading Recovery* is specifically an early literacy intervention, aimed at children in Year 2. At Bayswater it has been adapted for older children, in Years 5 to 8. The programme is much shorter, six weeks with between 18 and 24 sessions, as opposed to between twelve and twenty weeks with between 60 and 100 sessions. It operates with a close-knit team of specially trained Learning Support Assistants. The cost of providing *Reading Quest* is £10 per learning hour.

Reading Quest aims, like *Reading Recovery*, to identify strengths in struggling readers' literary strategies, and to accelerate their learning by enabling them to widen their range of skills and deepen their confidence in their ability to learn.

In evaluating *Reading Quest*, both observational and

standardised assessments are carried out. Observational assessment takes the form of detailed analysis of pupils' skills and strategies, and of their learning behaviour. During the lessons full records are made of the child's response to every activity. Diagnosis of these observations forms the basis for all planning. Notes are made of the child's ability to monitor his/her own learning. Class-teachers and parents remark on the increase in confidence shown by the children, and on their willingness to 'have a go' at reading and writing at home and in their mainstream classes.

Each child's reading and spelling are tested formally at the beginning and end of the programme.[3] The six children in the original 1995 pilot scheme at Bayswater Middle School made average Reading age gains of 5 months over the six weeks, and Spelling gains of nearly 6 months. Since the *Reading Quest* project has expanded into ten more schools in Oxford, the overall average Reading gain is still 5 months, while the Spelling gain is 7.5 months. The average for the Year 2 Children is 3 months reading gain and 7 months spelling, while for the children in Years 5 to 8 the reading gain is 5 months and the spelling 7 months.

Success rates are highly dependent on the needs of the children selected for the scheme. Class teachers almost always choose children whose literacy progress does not seem to be matching their expected potential, and who have a poor image of themselves as learners. Generally they are children who do not qualify for intensive support for Special Educational Needs. A good attendance record is essential as missed lessons halt the momentum of the regular individual programme. An enthusiastic attitude on the part of the child, and the supportive involvement of parents may also be factors in the scheme's effectiveness, but not enough evidence has yet been accumulated to demonstrate this.

The quality of teaching has to be a crucial component in the success of *Reading Quest*. It is demonstrable that children taught by specially trained, well motivated teachers make more progress.[4] The training of tutors working on the scheme consists of a detailed investigation of the experiences of the struggling reader, and the strategies, knowledge and skills that can be marshalled by the successful learner. Children are taught to use problem-solving techniques to approach reading and writing. They are also given the opportunity to build up a body of literary experience by the regular exposure to reading and writing activities. Multi-sensory approaches to word building and writing skills along lines advocated by Gotswami for phonological training [5] form the central part of each lesson, with

supported and independent reading providing the context at the beginning and end of the half hour. In order to maintain the sharp focus of the *Reading Quest* approach, tutors meet weekly to discuss specific aspects of their work. This sharing of experiences provides a social framework for tutors working in isolation from each other during the week, as well as an opportunity to continue their professional development.

The optimum length of the programme is a matter of continual debate. Analysis of the gains in reading and spelling scores in relation to how many *Reading Quest* lessons pupils receive indicates, rather surprisingly, that there is no significant increase in reading progress when a child receives more than 25 lessons, rather than the average 18-24 sessions. There is, however, a significant gain in spelling when lessons are given over a longer period of time. While the spelling gain maintains its level of about 5 times the expected rate when more than 25 lessons are given, the reading level does not. It drops from over three times the normal rate of progress with 18-24 lessons, to twice that rate. Children on the longer *Reading Recovery* programme made twice the expected progress.[6]

The comparative success of the shorter programme of lessons may indicate a need for pupils to consolidate their reading experiences before making a further accelerated burst. It discourages the pupils from becoming over-dependent on the tutor for help, and gives them the opportunity to perceive themselves as independent learners within the context of their mainstream classes.

The question of providing on-going support for pupils after the discontinuation of the *Reading Quest* programme is addressed by involving the whole school staff and the children's parents as closely as possible with the project. When schools invite the *Reading Quest* tutors to work with them, they are encouraged to send their LSAs and their class teachers to be trained in the teaching methods used. Correspondingly, the *Reading Quest* tutors make every effort to match the teaching strategies normally used in the school. The more constructive the communication between the teachers and the *Reading Quest* tutors, the more closely they are able to build together on the strategies, knowledge and skills that their pupils are beginning to acquire. Raising the school's awareness of what is going on in the *Reading Quest* lessons results in a high profile for the project, which in turn gives the children and their parents a message about the value of their literary efforts.

Parents are invited, for the same reason, to become involved as active supporters of their children's learning.[7] They are invited to meet their children's *Reading Quest* tutor at the start of the programme to find out what the project is like, and they are warmly encouraged to watch their children's lessons at least once during the course. The children take home a book to share each evening. After-school clubs, and workshops for parents are two more ways of making *Reading Quest* a family affair, with a view to the gradual adoption of a more literacy-friendly culture within the community. A typical comment from a parent was: "I feel *Reading Quest* has helped my son in a lot of ways because he feels he can read more and is a lot happier in himself which makes me feel better because I know that he is willing to try. He feels he can do it."

The accelerated rate of progress in reading and spelling made during *Reading Quest* is unlikely to be sustained over the long-term. The personal gains may be. With an increase in literacy skills, children demonstrably increase their confidence as effective learners. Those supporting them in the long term are becoming increasingly aware of good practice as formulated in project. Above all, literacy is seen by the children, their parents and all their community as being important for their successful learning, as well as adding to their enjoyment of school. As Clive Lambert, head of Bayswater Middle School, says, "basic literacy skills can give children access to the full range of the curriculum. Without this, they are educationally disabled."

Notes

- [1] K. Sylva & J. Hurry (1995) *The Effectiveness of Reading Recovery and Phonological Training for Children with Reading Problems*. London: SCAA.
- [2] M.M. Clay (1985) *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*. London: Heinemann; M.M. Clay (1993) *Reading Recovery: a guidebook for teachers in training*. London: Heinemann.
- [3] The tests used are Salford Individual Sentence Reading Test, and Schonell Graded Spelling Test.
- [4] See Sylva & Hurry, op. cit.
- [5] U. Goswami (July 1994) *Phonological Skills, Analogies, and Reading Development*. See also P. Bryant & L. Bradley (1985) *Children's Reading Problems*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- [6] See Sylva & Hurry, op. cit.
- [7] C. Nutbrown & P. Hannon (1996) *Sheffield REAL Project*. Sheffield: REAL Project.

OFSTED Inspections of Schools: perspectives of participants

Mike Golby

This article by Mike Golby, of the University of Exeter School of Education, describes the experiences and reactions of a research group of educationists to OFSTED inspections of schools.

I tell you – whoever that Inspector was, it was anything but a joke – I remember what he said, how he looked and what he made me feel. Fire, blood and anguish. You began to learn something. And now you've stopped. You're ready to go on in the same old way. (J.B. Priestley, An Inspector Calls)

In the Spring of 1997 a group of educationists associated with the Exeter Society for Curriculum Studies came together to consider their collective experience of OFSTED inspections of schools. The group consisted of primary and secondary teachers and head teachers, university staff, some of whom acted as OFSTED inspectors, school governors and others. Many of the group were also, of course, parents. This range of interests allowed some lively discussion and helped to create a sharper focus for identifying the issues at stake.

A literature review located this evidence in its wider context. The results of this first phase of work were that OFSTED is

- too expensive (Lockhart et al, 1996);
- too dependent on excessive documentation (Wragg & Brighouse, 1995);
- too frequent (Douse, 1996);
- unnecessarily stressful (Brimblecombe et al, 1995);
- unethical (Morrison, 1996);
- too bland (Dean, 1995);
- not developmental (Morrison, 1996); and
- too likely to demotivate teachers (Russell 1996)

Of course, there are some perceived benefits of OFSTED inspections which are generally acknowledged even by sceptics. Crucially, no one seriously argues that external inspection has no role in the public education system or in the process of school improvement. The public accountability of schools requires quality control that includes an element of external inspection which is open and transparent. This was a starting point for the highly critical Ofstin Conference held in Oxford in June 1996 (Ofstin, 1996). Among the perceived benefits are that inspections:

- force schools into close evaluation;
- identify 'failing' schools and teachers;
- provide clear public information, particularly for parents;
- serve as a beneficial catalyst for change and development; and
- provide a comprehensive and useful reference tool

through their published criteria for inspections (irrespective of their use within the formal inspection process.)

The research group met on two occasions for discussion. Members of the group produced widespread anecdotal evidence concerning the problems associated with inspection. As a result of these discussions they drew up a list of what they considered to be key issues, many of which were reflected in the literature review. A remarkable degree of common ground was found on the issues – but not on how they were to be resolved. Members of the group then undertook further enquiries focusing on these key issues in their own institutions and this work is continuing. What follows is an interim set of findings.

1. Conflict between the inspectors and the inspected

The overall metaphor to emerge in the discussions was that of 'war' between the two parties. Richard, a Chair of a secondary school governing body, referred to 'casualties' when talking about a teacher whose resignation was precipitated by inspection and Cohn, an inspector, referred to pupils being caught in 'cross fire' as they sided or otherwise with teachers. Rachel, a secondary teacher, referred to the pupils as often colluding with teachers against the 'common enemy'. One inspector member of the group remarked that on a recent inspection pupils went out of their way to tell inspectors that some pupils had been excluded just for inspection week and that the dining room had been equipped with new trays. The picture of pupils caught in adult hostilities is not a pretty one.

2. Stress

Inspection inevitably carries with it very deep rooted fears. Stress is both understandable and well documented. Moreover, it is a collective as well as a personal phenomenon. Whole schools succumb to institutional anxiety sometimes for long periods leading up to and through inspections. One of the teachers from a special school wore a pulse meter for two days in the term prior to inspection and for another two days during the inspection of the school. The results showed that there was an increase in pulse of twenty beats per minute where the teacher was being watched by an inspector.

Perhaps surprisingly, inspectors reported that they too were placed under stress, not so much by fear and uncertainty as by the very demanding schedule and tight deadlines they were required to meet. Stress was exacerbated through

frustration at being unable to give feedback on lessons as they would have liked. Claire, an inspector, reported an episode when she was invited to the staff room for an after-lesson discussion. She was soon required to leave by the deputy head. Both sides find limited opportunities for feed-back or explanation. The minimal contact which is allowed between the classroom teacher and the inspector fuels mistrust and anxiety on one side and frustration on the other.

3. Pupils

The effect on pupils must not be overlooked. A survey of sixteen pupils in Year Ten in a special school, seeking their views about the previous week's inspection, highlighted the following:

- there was a higher than usual absence rate (although always supported by communication from home);
- pupils resented their break and lunch times being intruded upon by inspectors.
- pupils felt they had made an effort to behave better;
- pupils felt that staff spoke to them in a better manner;
- the researcher's tutor group were very pleased that she had taken an interest in their feelings about the inspectors.

4. Validity of Inspectors' evidence

Teachers are very conscious of putting on a show for inspectors from prestigious wall displays to over-elaborate lesson plans. Window dressing is often the order of the day, and the importation of pot plants a standard ploy to impress. Rachel reported that her school had paid £85 for a plant display for the entrance hall which arrived the day before the inspection was due to start. Lessons are often presented as set pieces in order to please inspectors. Aspects of practice, which teachers feel may not find favour with inspectors, are temporarily dropped. Likewise inspectors are well aware of what is happening. They claim to make allowances for these contingencies and argue that they can see through the 'performance' and make valid judgements based on the experience of a school over a period of no more than three or four days. Indeed many judgements are virtually in place within thirty-six hours of inspectors first setting foot within the school.

Inspectors point out however, that they need to collaborate during the inspection week and to arrive at a collective decision on all substantial matters. This is obviously a demanding task given the wholesale scope of the inspection, tight schedule and the seriousness of the decisions for the school concerned. It is perhaps remarkable that few, if any, inspections have ended in open discord. For the present it must be observed that few teachers assent to the naive empiricism inherent in the OFSTED procedures. The belief that well intentioned, properly trained inspectors can quite simply and clearly 'see what is there' is not one widely shared by teachers. Linda, a Primary teacher, observed that charisma cannot be subject to straightforward observation.

5. Ambiguous status of governors

Earlier research has indicated that governors occupy an educational territory which is not well defined (Golby, 1994). If governors are understood as integral to a school and involve themselves in fighting for the school's best interests, particularly within an increasingly competitive

system, how can they at the same time fulfil an accountability function in the public interest? Roy, a school governor and unionist, reported that he "had kept a careful eye on the inspectors to ensure they complied with all due processes". He saw himself as defending the school against misunderstanding, and as a guardian of teachers' rights. Richard, on the other hand, a chair of a secondary school governing body, saw himself as rather more of an arbitrator. Certainly he wished to support the school but took great care to manage the reporting process and publicity. Richard referred to the school as having come out of the inspection well but spoke tellingly of one teacher who resigned at the end of the inspection week, the 'casualty' referred to above. What is the governors' duty in the OFSTED context? Lying beyond this is the fact that governors themselves are under inspection, and may be replaced summarily if found to be in dereliction of their duties.

6. The whole apparatus is not self-critical and works to an official agenda.

The OFSTED handbook, training and required processes have the effect of working to a received and official concept of what constitutes good education. OFSTED thus superimposes its own template upon the great diversity of educational practices found in primary and secondary schools. The National Curriculum itself is not the only possible curriculum nor is the fragmentation of the school day into lesson-sized slices the only way of organising school time. Lessons need not be teacher-led. Yet OFSTED, in all its ramifications, assumes an educational *status quo* and measures teachers against it. As we have remarked above, the lack of opportunity for dialogue means that there is precious little opportunity for critique at any level other than the technical or procedural. Perennial debates about the means and ends of education are in this fundamental way stilled by the OFSTED regime (Maw, 1995).

There were many examples of this phenomenon in our group's experience. Sheila, for example, had to teach lessons in such a way that she could be observed teaching specific subjects at specific times and this violated her natural way of working with her class. Primary teachers felt that the requirement that they should be Jacks and Jills of all trades bore especially upon them and allowed them no time for critical reflection on the overall pattern of their work. Cohn's observation as an inspector that few schools measured up to the IT criteria was taken by some primary teachers to be more a comment on the criteria themselves (as unrealistic) than upon the competence of teachers in school.

Discussion

The deliberations of the research group suggest a number of topics which ought to be the focus of further professional discussion among teachers, governors and inspectors.

These are:

- What are the internal dynamics of OFSTED teams?
- How are the agreed judgements reached?
- Studies of these week-long processes would be desirable in order to understand better the value – and limitations – of such intensive work.
- Is the metaphor of conflict *necessarily* embedded in any inspection process?
- Do alternatives exist where co-operation and collaboration could be the watchwords? (We found

such an example in the Channel Islands, but one accompanied by several severe reservations.

On the question of validity the issue seems to be this:

- Is the knowledge of schools required by teams of inspectors, working to their own prescribed purposes comparable to that required by social science researchers working to theirs? (Fitz-Gibbon, 1996).
- Is it perhaps the case that inspection requires only a measure of standard outputs and basic efficiency analogous to the MOT test for motor vehicles?
- What is 'fitness for purpose' in school inspection?

Conclusion

These many points of conflict and discussion suggest that the system as a whole, and the teachers within it, are undergoing radical cultural changes. Colin, an inspector, commenting on teachers' violent reactions to his perceptions of primary schools, observes,

... the issue behind this is that we are too new to the process and perhaps too full of preconceptions to gain full value from it. Perhaps the students leaving now to become Newly Qualified Teachers will be able to make more of it – but will their views be blinkered by teachers already in post? I think perhaps many existing teachers are deeply immersed in the mythologies and prejudices at the past.

These views clearly reflect the inspectors' position, but they do not concur with those of the experienced teachers in the group. Are the educational values of progressive teachers at risk as cultural change makes the teaching force more compliant?

The varied experience and sometimes heated discussion within our research group reflects general stresses and fault lines consequent on the educational reform of which

inspection is a part. Many current difficulties appear to centre on a mutual lack of trust and understanding. But this is exacerbated, if not caused, by inadequate opportunities for open and egalitarian dialogue at all stages of a divisive inspection process. Consequently the pervading metaphor in the inspection process is that of war.

In the longer term we need a reformed inspection system which is more respectful of teachers in offering both proper challenge and productive dialogue.

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Choosing Grammars?

Parental Perspectives on Secondary Schools

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Although the idea of increasing the numbers of grammar schools has been consigned to the political wilderness with the demise of the previous Conservative Government, the issue of grammar schools remains with us. There are over 160 grammar schools in existence whose future would appear not to be radically threatened by the new Government. According to the recent White Paper any changes to these will be decided by 'local parents' (Excellence in Schools, DfEE, July 1997, p. 72).

Part of the argument for grammar schools was – and is – that parents want them. Moreover, in a school system that is meant to provide parents with the sorts of schooling they desire, as signalled through their school choices, grammar schools ought to be part of the diverse options available where parents (or a significant minority) want them. It would seem a straightforward proposition in local areas where there is a demand to have grammar schooling, let them be maintained (the present Government's view) and created where needs be (the former Government's view). However, our study of how exactly the system of parental choice and school diversity has worked in the early 1990s displays a more complex picture in which the structure and nature of school provision interacts and helps shape the expression of parental preferences and educational priorities.

Our research was carried out in three areas, one of which included a state (co-educational, grant-maintained) grammar school. We could therefore study both what happened within that area and compare it with the two areas that had no grammar. In each area, over a number of years, annual surveys of parents were undertaken and the responses of secondary schools to choice and competitive pressures were monitored. On the basis of our findings, we address two issues in this article: firstly, what parents are looking for when they are considering which secondary school should be their first preference; secondly, some of the apparent implications of the presence of a state grammar school in a system characterised by a policy emphasis on parental choice, school autonomy and diversity.

What are Parents Looking For?

Parents' preferences in choosing a school might be summarised as follows. They want a social and caring environment in the school which supports and nurtures their child and his or her growth. We refer to this as representing an *intrinsic-personal/social* value perspective. This is a broad heading for a mix of priorities focused on the child. It encompasses but is rather broader than Bernstein's notion of the school's expressive order (concerned with conduct, manner and character – *Class, Codes and Control*, Volume 3, 1977, pp. 38-39), representing a general concern with process; the child's feelings and (anticipated) day-to-day

experience at the school; the quality of his or her relationships there; and the support, concern and general care to be provided by the school.

Parents also want opportunities to maximise the child's academic potential. We refer to this as the *instrumental-academic* value perspective, which is allied to Bernstein's concept of a school's instrumental order concerned with the acquisition of specific skills. Its emphasis is on outcomes (the school as a means to an end). Instrumentality, however, may be directed towards different ends or have different emphases. In the *instrumental-academic* value perspective the dominant tendency is towards the achievement of academic qualifications, and hence to a concern with measurability of performance through tests and examinations.

It is evident from our research that the broad majority of parents encompass *both* perspectives. Rather than the academic generally being valued as the sole or supreme measure of schooling, the importance of the academic is much more likely to be placed by parents in the context of factors represented by the *intrinsic-personal/social* value perspective. Parents also weigh into the balance factors such as accessibility, whether a school can be travelled to and from in safety, and school facilities.

Drawing conclusions concerning the degree to which parents want diversity of schooling is not straightforward, not least because it is often difficult for parents to envisage options that may not yet exist and therefore to decide how much they would want to have these available. We do not intend to discuss this here. We note only that our research suggests that some desire for diversity can be discerned amongst parents, and hence diversity is appropriate to a degree, but the evidence does not indicate that we should be rushing to create a considerably more kaleidoscopic school system without thinking through the implications for children's opportunities, social cohesion and other matters.

It is, nevertheless, clear from our research that parents tend not to favour widening hierarchies between schools. We do not find evidence of a widespread demand for selection and the reintroduction of grammar schools. Only a very small minority of parents indicated that they wanted grammar schools (in line with the Audit Commission's finding in its 1996 report, *Trading Places: the supply and allocation of school places*, that only one in seven parents consider it important to have access to a grammar school). There is, to be sure, a tension within parents as a group. In as much as education is a positional good, some differentiation in hierarchical terms is supported by parents. But this should not obscure the fact that there are differences in degree between the sorts of status division that can exist

within a local school system: the sharply tiered selective system which leaves most pupils left out as failures is not widely supported. Only small minorities would appear to attach importance to the academic over and above other factors and to an academically selective system: the proportion of parents who were strongly *instrumental-academic* according to our data is 7% or less.

Of particular interest is the fact that we have not found a consistent social class relationship amongst parents concerning the *instrumental-academic* value perspective. In other words, it is not valid to conclude that in all or most areas middle class parents generally are more likely to value the *instrumental-academic* than are working class parents.

The Effect of Selection on Choice

Amongst our three areas, the group that tended to include the larger minority strongly emphasising the *instrumental-academic* perspective was middle class parents in Marshampton – the area with the grammar school. This minority amounted to 9% in 1995, compared with 4% to 6% amongst working class parents in Marshampton and amongst both middle class and working class parents in our other two case study areas. Underlying the experience of choice and competition in Marshampton is the existence of a substantial social class divide, apparent in these and other data from our study.

Educational provision in Marshampton has characteristics not present in our other areas: namely, a high-prestige grammar school (together with a significant private sector which provides a distinct alternative to state schools). The possibility of seeking a grammar school place – deciding whether to seek a place, knowing that only a minority of children will succeed, going through the process of taking the selective examination where the family opts for this – has implications throughout the local educational system. Parents know that the demand for grammar school places far outstrips availability. Thus tension is built into the system – families competing with each other for a place at the grammar. As a result of its creaming off of the more able pupils, the grammar school's GCSE examination results are far ahead of the comprehensives, placing them in a difficult position if they are to compete in terms of 'league table' results. There are difficulties for schools lower down the local school hierarchy – for example, in offering the fullest curriculum range, maintaining esteem, and attracting resources (not all the comprehensives near grammars do badly or are universally seen as unattractive to parents, but a selective system makes their position more problematic). In addition, co-operation between schools is more difficult – especially with the grammar school because it is so markedly different and wishes to hold itself apart from the rest.

All of this affects the culture of school transfer and the responsiveness of schools. Awareness of an elite school tends to focus a significant part of educational thinking (parental and professional) on academic selection and success. Moreover, Marshampton's grammar school was largely a middle class school. Working class families by and large counted themselves out of the running for the grammar school: whilst around one in twenty working class parents considered the grammar to be their first preference, amongst middle class parents the proportion was nearer one in five.

The existence of the grammar school formed a division

between an exclusive institution with the weight of tradition behind it on the one hand, and the remaining comprehensives which take all-comers on the other. The local grammar with its emphasis on an academic focus was valued (principally by a minority amongst the more influential middle classes, as we have seen) because it is an available option and because it provides a publicly-funded route to elite schooling more like the nearby private schools. This re-inforces strong pressures both to retain the selective grammar and the local status hierarchy of schools. The latter is re-enforced because a significant proportion of families want a grammar school education or, if not that, something very like it (either a private school or a strongly academically-orientated comprehensive school). The possibility of changing this situation is minimised if the 'supply side' (the opportunity and capacity for new 'producers' to enter and increase diversity) is limited and the existing provision is therefore undisturbed by new entrants. In this way, there is a circular character to the local system: existing educational provision helps shape parental preferences (and school managers' priorities, influenced by the 'pull' of some parents to grammar school type schooling) and, in turn, influential sections of the parental community support and press to retain the existing form of educational provision characterised by academic selection and an elite grammar.

Having said this, it is important to recognise that by no means all parents preferred the grammar school for their child. We should re-inforce the point that most parents valued not only academic success but also other aspects of schooling and curricular opportunities and that large proportions of Marshampton families perceived other schools as offering the latter as well good standards of teaching. This is recognised in all the comprehensives, with certain ones developing or emphasising aspects of schooling (such as vocational qualifications and pastoral care) that meet these preferences. This always has to be done, however, with an eye to the implications for a school's standing of emphasising a broad conception of schooling within a status hierarchy dominated by academic criteria.

Conclusions

Our findings tend to support the contention that academic selection in a locality is associated with greater levels of inequality between schools and of social class divisions. In particular, the presence of an academically selective school appears to co-incide with:

- a sharper hierarchy of schools – measured by social class composition of student body and prestige;
- heightened family stress about getting 'better' schools and not being left with the 'worst';
- difficulties for schools lower down the hierarchy – for example, in offering the fullest curriculum range, maintaining esteem, and attracting resources;
- problems in co-operation between schools – especially including the highest status schools that may wish to hold themselves apart from the rest.

In addition, our evidence does not suggest that parents feel they have greater choice where there is academic selection. To the extent that schooling is moving in the direction of emphasising *instrumental-academic* values and paying less attention to broader educational aims, it is not matching the preferences of the generality of parents. More than this, our findings suggest that where there is a more sharply hierarchical local system of schooling characterised by

academic selection, middle class parents (albeit a minority of them still) are more likely to be strongly *instrumental-academic* in their outlook on schools. Moreover, given our comparisons with the other two areas, it seems to us that this is at least in part a *result* of the more sharply tiered local school system, rather than the latter being a reflection of 'given' parental preferences. Thus we tend to the conclusion that a sharply tiered system with academic selection is more likely to be helping to (a) generate a larger minority amongst middle class parents strongly emphasising an *instrumental-academic* outlook on schools, and (b) thereby create a social divide in the balance of emphasis given to the *instrumental-academic* and *intrinsic-personal/social* value perspectives.

This has important implications for how the preservation (and the creation) of grammar schools is viewed. It cannot be seen as a neutral policy, in the sense of its being simply responsive to local parental wishes. Some account has to be taken of the likelihood that those very wishes are formed in reaction to a local educational structure that nurtures social class differences and disparities. This suggests that discussion of the effects of grammar schools and a more radical approach towards them should be on the policy

agenda. Certainly, there is no room for complacency with regard to the social and educational impact of selective schooling.

Note

The PASCI (Parental and School Choice Interaction) study has been investigating the impact of the more market-like environment created by educational reforms in recent years. The study's main phase (January 1993 until March 1996) focused on three case study areas. A range of (quantitative and qualitative) research methods was used, including: successive annual postal surveys of parents (6,000 parents participated in all, representing response rates of 75% or more); personal interviews with a sub-sample of parents; monitoring of 11 secondary schools through annual programmes of interviews with staff and governors, and analysis of documentary and other data on the schools. Data were collected over three years in two case study areas, and five years in the third (where pilot fieldwork had been undertaken), facilitating a longitudinal analysis of change.

The internal conflict fought out within the consciousness of many inner-city black girls about their dual identity is set down in the following poem by a 14-year-old Yemeni pupil at Earl Marshal School in Sheffield. Ironically, she takes the title of a then-current pop-song – and then transmutes it to her own experience expressed through the words of a second language.

Shall I Stay?

Shall I stay or shall I go?
 Shall I stay in this country
 Or shall I go to another?
 I want to stay
 I also want to go
 It's difficult for me
 And maybe it's difficult for you.
 It's difficult for me, because
 I don't want to leave
 And it's difficult because I want to leave.
 Maybe my feelings and your feelings are the same
 They are the same only for one reason,
 Because I love this country, and I love the other country.
 England and Yemen are two countries.
 If I stay here I'll miss Yemen
 And if I go to Yemen I'll miss England,
 That's why it's difficult.
 Tomorrow I'll be leaving this country
 I'll be leaving this school
 And all my friends and my teachers.
 Where am I travelling to?
 I'm leaving this country to go to my first country, Yemen
 You can't believe that my heart has divided into two.
 One half for England, and the other for Yemen.

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

Book Reviews

Affirming the Comprehensive Ideal

RICHARD PRING & GEOFFREY WALFORD

(Eds), 1997

London: Falmer Press. 209pp. £14.95.

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Affirming the Comprehensive Ideal is a collection of lectures, some rewritten as articles, delivered at the University of Oxford Department of Educational Studies in 1996. The lecture series and subsequent book were conceived as a counterblast to the sustained attacks of the Tory Party on the ideals and achievements of the comprehensive system. The Tories may no longer be in power but it is becoming clear that the comprehensive ideal will still need to be defended.

According to David Blunkett, Minister of State for Education, the White Paper *Excellence in Education* (1997) “.... underpins the fundamental principle that education policy should benefit the many and not merely the few” (*The Guardian*, 8 July 1997).

No arguments there. But he also states that “everyone can now join together in concentrating on standards not structure.” Taken in conjunction with Tony Blair’s rallying call in *The Times* the previous day for every school “to make a determined break from the monolithic comprehensives that symbolised Labour’s past” it is clear that it is too soon for this excellent and impassioned book to be relegated to the top shelf. *Affirming the Comprehensive Ideal* is certainly a work of much more than historical interest.

In fact, an interest in history informs many of the contributions. The editors’ introduction sets the issues in their historical and political context. Brian Simon gives a succinct analysis of the ideals and history of the comprehensive movement and many other contributions, such as that from Caroline Benn, are firmly grounded in the history of the struggle for comprehensive education. Personal histories are also included. Peter Cornall, Bernard Harrison and John Abbott all draw deeply on the experiences which led them to champion the comprehensive ideal.

Chapters by David Halpin, Geoffrey Walford and Stephen J. Ball look in a variety of ways at the introduction into education of the imperatives of the market place and the attendant practices of privatisation and selection. The continuing existence of grammar schools, the assisted places scheme and the introduction of grant maintained status are all seen as examples.

The importance of what is taught is examined by Richard Pring who spells out what he sees as the comprehensive ideal: “Comprehensive education must be about more than a common school which embraces pupils from a range of social classes and ability. It must, too, have built into it an idea of the educated person which accommodates, on the one hand, the best in the liberal tradition (which is often seen as the preserve of a privileged few), and, on the other, the quite different starting points and aspirations of young people.” He goes on to cite the impressive curriculum innovations of Jerome Bruner’s *Man: a course of study* and the School’s Council *Humanities Curriculum Project*.

Dennis Lawton & Sally Tomlinson also address the

curriculum and look beyond the constrictions of the National Curriculum to a genuine entitlement curriculum for all young people. Stewart Ranson, also looking towards the future, develops the case for a pedagogy of active learning, giving examples from schools around the country where this is being put into practice. In Glasgow, for example, a whole school project in a secondary school focussed on recovering and remaking the waste land around the school.

There are also contributions from Tim Brighouse, based on his experience in Birmingham, on ideas for a local democratic framework in which all schools participate and from Ted Wragg on what makes effective teachers.

The book ends with an afterword by John Prescott, an 11+ failure who, in spite of reaching his eminent position, still feels that he is seen as inadequate by some. Whether he would have risen to be deputy leader of the Labour Party if he had been to comprehensive school cannot be known, but he would probably have looked back on his education with less bitterness. He states with reference to the grammar and secondary modern system: “If we exclude 80 per cent of the three-quarters of a million 11-year-olds – then every year we will be telling 600,000 children ‘you are failures’.”

Reading this book makes me wish I had been able to attend the lectures. The personal voice of all the contributors comes through refreshingly loud and clear. It is a book which has something to offer to academics, trainees and practising teachers alike. Its mixture of well researched argument, passionate advocacy and personal anecdote should inspire young teachers and remind older ones of why they are teaching. I wish David Blunkett had read it before drawing up his White Paper.

I do however, have one question, which is not addressed in the book: can you have a truly comprehensive system whilst public schools still exist? Answers, on a postcard please, to Tony Blair.

Jenny Thewlis

The Primary Core National Curriculum

DAVID COULBY & STEPHEN WARD (Eds), 1996

London: Cassell. 182pp. £16.99. ISBN 0-304-33804-4

Being personally immersed, or having been immersed in anything and everything that has had to do with the emerging National Curriculum over the last ten years is probably the equivalent of a long drawn out sheep dip. The tiresome bugs of loose planning, unstructured assessment and lack of accountability have been given a dose of something nasty they’ll probably never forget, but those who are involved in the work often report side-effects that suggest a certain toxicity.

One of these symptoms is a steadily increasing reluctance to look at the questionable, heaving liquid unless it becomes absolutely necessary. Minimum dosage is limited to one’s own Key Stage or subject and the idea of reading any additional instruction on the back of the packet, let alone

an account of its development would be considered unnecessarily wearisome.

Unless that is until one comes across a compelling book that, it has to be admitted, has a fairly unprepossessing cover and the bleak, if truthful title of *The Primary Core National Curriculum*. The first part of the book traces the evolution of the core subjects of the National Curriculum from the earliest days up until 1995. The second part deals with the problems and opportunities of a thematic approach and examples of present day implementation of the core subjects and information technology.

The inescapable conclusion from reading the first part of the book is that if sheep dip trials had been set up and conducted in the manner of the National Curriculum, its subsequent release and marketing would have been regarded as a scandal.

The book is worth purchasing by any educationalist from first year practitioners to seasoned lecturers for the first part alone; it gives a clear, succinct picture of the manner in which the core subjects within the National Curriculum evolved over ten years. Each author is careful to give detail and example and this alone will make it an extremely useful reference book. They allow the results of unseemly haste, officious bureaucracy and undue political interference speak for themselves, and having been personally involved in the exercise that was called the 'Revised' National Curriculum I can vouchsafe for such influences and their pernicious effects.

The evolution of the assessment provisions of the National Curriculum are less well addressed, perhaps because less is known about them and they were not open to the same kind of consultation. This I believe is no accident and is borne out by David Coulby's warning that they are essentially designed to encourage competition between schools, between teachers within schools and implicitly between pupils as well. As he notes, the danger is that what the National Curriculum will end up teaching will be, above all else, competitiveness for its own sake, thereby actually undermining the positive consequences that could accrue from its implementation. Interestingly, in support of his contention, a straw, if not actually a rather large branch in the wind, was the recent appeal by Chris Woodhead for teachers to "rediscover the importance of competition" (*The Times Educational Supplement*, August 29, 1997). Careful analysis of various official, sometimes quite low-key statements, reveals competition to have been the driving force behind the political education engine for some time now and teachers who have been overwhelmed by the wasteland involved in the administration of the many and complex changes to the National Curriculum have not necessarily been aware of it.

Howard Gibbon in his chapter on English in the National Curriculum is particularly interesting on the confused historical links between the words Standards, the Standard and Standard English and shows how one word came to share the meanings of the others in a way that explains much of the posturing of John Patten, for example, who even went so far as to suggest that schools raised the Union flag each morning.

Mike Spooner and Ron Ritchie writing on maths and science in the National Curriculum have also much to say that is both timely and worth remembering. Spooner reminds his readers that a DES report on the teaching of maths in 1987 revealed there to be considerably less 'progressive' maths than was thought to be the case and if anything the

primary curriculum for maths was, at the time, "generally defined by published materials".

Practising teachers will also turn to the chapter on thematic approaches and their implementation for practical advice as well as a thoughtful discussion about the advantages and limitations of cross-curricular work. The authors take a pragmatic approach and use examples from individual schools and classes who are struggling with planning, teaching progression, continuity assessment recording and testing and also trying to be reasonably pleasant human beings to the children and fellow staff members at the same time.

The chapter on information technology (IT) by David Climson dwells to a large extent on the various skills and sub-skills that children will need in order to gain mastery. It has the recognisable fervour of an enthusiast for IT as a subject in its own right but I would find it disappointing if I was a teacher looking for ways to help me in the implementation of hard-won IT skills to enhance learning across the other areas of the curriculum. Even so, his revealing assertion given without irony, that OFSTED considers there to be such a thing as a *future-proof* curriculum should help teachers get into its mind set with greater facility if not increasing disquiet.

The emphasis and very probably the experience, of the authors, is on KS2 which is to be regretted, as it means, for instance that there is very little discussion about the educational role of play at KS1, the means by which its quality can be raised and recognising its remarkable potential for the core subjects when properly used, monitored and resourced.

A remark by Mike Spooner neatly sums up the inescapable evidence that the book presents to its readers. Referring to the National Curriculum and its evolution he writes "... it is possible that (its) most enduring legacy ... will prove to be the wealth of opportunity that has been provided to learn from mistakes".

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Rethinking Education and Democracy: a socialist alternative for the twenty-first century

CAROLINE BENN & CLYDE CHITTY,

on behalf of the Hillcole Group, 1997

London: Tufnell Press. 102pp. ISBN: 1 872 767 45 1
£7.95

As the British system of state education is forced more and more into a market orientation: as the abolition of free university education is accompanied by New Labour spin that this is really good for working class families, if teachers are dragooned into becoming more like classroom operatives there to 'deliver' prescribed arid narrow curricula, rather than creating professionals who develop an internationalist dynamic of knowledge side by side with their students and communities: as 'National Curriculum' itself fast degenerates to curriculum nationalism: as schools become more and more functionalist, managerialist and behaviourist venues rather than ripe with imagination, the spark of student action, collective teacher insight and community power;

as the number of excluded and disaffected students grow in direct relationship to the tedium of their schools' institutional life and the irrelevance of constricted and often racist curricula, and as the cover-all pretext of 'standards' replaces the need to re-examine and transform inequitable educational structures and divisions based on class, economic circumstance and social placement; as the fundamental linkage between poverty and educational attainment is set aside – the need for a provocative and stimulating text for study, active debate and the sustaining of hope and struggle in the many facets of public education becomes more and more essential.

Thanks then to the Hillcole Group for providing just that. *Rethinking Education and Democracy* is a lucid and powerful stimulus of just the right length to be used by teachers' and parents' groups trade union branches, governing bodies and whole-school staffs during curriculum days (as a lively and participatory alternative to the rigidly boring, tendentious and alienating topics prescribed before and after OFSTED inspections or visitations from 'school improvement' advisers) to bring reality, honesty and the prospect of genuinely equitable change into all parts of our education system.

So what are the challenges that emerge from this epochal little book? Primarily it argues that true education is emancipatory, that it is not simply about 'managing' the study of culture and reality, but about changing it to help people take control of their lives', governing and acting for themselves. It sees education indivisibly non-neutral, allied to struggles for social and economic justice all over the world. So that our children know about the peasants of Chiapas as well as the Liverpool dockers, the dispossessed of Amazonia, Bosnia and Montserrat alongside the homeless of London and those struggling against racist violence in the northern cities of England. It challenges too the new curriculum policing and surveillance of OFSTED, the unelected powers of quangoes like TTA or SEAC, and the 'command classroom' and 'dictatorship of study' which they are making central to the British school experience. It argues that 'an inward-looking nationalism' is dominating the ideology of the prescribed National Curriculum and squeezing out the real and urgently relevant priorities of social justice critical thinking and planetary survival.

"We have it in our power to begin the world all over again": Tom Paine's dictum rings out like the authors' watchwords, and nowhere more than in education is it more important for human betterment that they be spurred into

action. The authors argue that funding must be by need, not market – that education is a human right that must not be bought and sold, and that the resources to pay for it are to be garnered through progressive taxation and a transfer of funding from military hardware to schools, universities and the means for lifelong learning.

Its pages on the impact of the new conservative quangoes are particularly vibrant, and the government emphasis on sheer 'technicism' rather than the content and structure of education is examined sharply. The transmission approach to learning, the restoration of didacticism and what Freire saw as the 'banking of knowledge' as the prevalent pedagogy is fostering a spirit of regression in many British schools, back towards historical memories of Dickens' *Hard Times* and students becoming again "vessels ... ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them."

There is nothing else at the moment in print which offers such a range of arguments about now-times education, and carries too the scope to project thoughts towards action for progress. And for the whole of education too, and all our people and their aspirations to know, act and make change in themselves and the local and far-flung world around them, beginning from the pricking of their capacity for critical enquiry through critical literacy. For the authors write clearly about a 'comprehensive commitment' to all-age education, whereby not only every person's job carries an entitlement to education and training, but also the opportunity is there for taking up higher education at any stage of life.

New Labour's largely phantom promises surrounding education and their determination to continue the conservative restoration by refusing to undo its marketisations and 'reforms', merely seeking ways and means to 'manage' and 'deliver' them more effectively – make *Reinventing Education and Democracy* a vital and entirely useful document. It needs to be bought not only in single copies but also in sets, for it is an incitement to collective consideration and open discussion, and nothing is so important as these as the precursors of future action in our schools, universities, homes and workplaces – or anywhere else where we meet, educate each other, talk and organise.

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