ISSN 0963–8253

FORUM

for promoting comprehensive education

Volume 40
Number 3
Autumn 1998

TRIANGLE

Contents

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 3 1998

Editorial correspondence, including typescript articles (1500-2000 words), contributions to discussion (800 words maximum), and **books for review**, should be addressed to Professor Clyde Chitty, 19 Beaconsfield Road, Bickley, Bromley, Kent BR1 2BL, United Kingdom. Telephone: 0181-464 4962. Please send two copies and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(Volume 40, Nos 1-3, 1998), post free
Individuals, £17.00 (US$28.00)
Schools, £20.00 (US$30.00)
Libraries, £32.00 (US$55.00)

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

Business correspondence, including orders and remittances relating to subscriptions and back orders, should be addressed to the publishers:
Triangle Journals Ltd, PO Box 65, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0YG, United Kingdom.
journals@triangle.co.uk
www.triangle.co.uk

Typeset in Times New Roman by Triangle Journals Ltd
Printed and bound in the United Kingdom by Cambridge University Press

Selection by Specialisation

After 18 months of a New Labour Government, the education system of England and Wales is as unfair and divided as it was during 18 years of Conservative rule. It might, of course, have been unrealistic to expect David Blunkett and his team at the DfEE to change everything overnight. What is really sad is that New Labour policies have served to *exacerbate* rather than *remove* existing divisions at the secondary level. And of particular significant here is the Big Lie that Labour ministers seem anxious to promote: that you can have specialisation *without* selection.

Back in the 1980s, the Tories found it impossible to destroy the comprehensive reform by reintroducing 11-plus selection. There were concerted efforts to reintroduce or extend selective education in Berkshire, Wiltshire, Solihull in the West Midlands and the London borough of Redbridge, but all met with severe local opposition and failed. Such humiliating 'defeats' served to encourage a succession of Conservative ministers to opt for rather more subtle policy initiatives aimed at establishing a wider variety of secondary schools and providing for greater parental choice.

It was during John Patten's period as Education Secretary that the idea of specialist schools acquired a new and chilling importance. Indeed, specialisation became the new in-word; and we were told that we were now to have the British versions of the American Magnet Schools which were designed originally (even if things haven't worked out that way) to resist the 'segregated intakes' of so-called neighbourhood schools by using the 'magnetic' pull of a specialised curriculum to attract students voluntarily across racial and social-class lines.

Details of this new 'schools revolution' were joyfully spelled out as the front-page story in *The Mail on Sunday* at the beginning of May 1992:

> *Education Secretary John Patten is looking at plans to turn secondary schools into centres of excellence in key subject areas ... This mean that some schools will specialise in the academic subjects like languages, maths and science; some will be technically-based; and others might offer performing arts or sport as their new specialism ... The move drives a final nail in the coffin of the campaign to bring back grammar schools and the 11-plus – but it also puts selection firmly back on the educational agenda.*

Then, in July, the Education Secretary himself contributed a telling article to the *New Statesman and Society* in which he argued that Socialists must now 'come to terms with the concept of specialisation':

> *Selection is not, and should not be, a great issue of the 1990s as it was in the 1960s. The new S-word for all Socialists to come to terms with is, rather, 'Specialisation'. The fact is that different children excel at different things; it is foolish to ignore it, and some schools may wish specifically to cater for these differences.*

Ten days later, John Patten's 1992 White Paper, *Choice and Diversity*, vilified supporters of comprehensive education for believing that 'children are all basically the same' and that 'all local communities have essentially the same educational needs'. It announced the expansion of the Technology Schools Initiative (TSI) to encompass other areas of the school curriculum. The subsequent Specialist Schools Programme encouraged schools to develop 'their own distinctive identity and expertise' in one or other of four 'specialist subject areas': technology, languages, sports and arts.

It is this Programme which has been 'relaunched' by New Labour with a vigour and enthusiasm of which John Patten would have been proud. By January this year, 290 of these 'specialist schools' had been designated in about 100 English local authorities: 210 technology colleges, 50 language colleges, 17 sports colleges and 13 arts colleges. According to David Blunkett, these colleges were at the heart of 'a drive for diversity and excellence within a modernised school system' which would now be able to cater for 'individual strengths', rather than offering 'a bland sameness for all'. Further colleges were named in June, bringing the total to 330; and the Government re-stated its ambition to create as many as 450 'specialist schools'.

The enthusiasm for 'specialist schools' is based on the false assumptions that children can actually be tested for particular talents, rather than for general ability, and that recruitment by aptitude is quite different from recruitment by general ability. As Professor Peter Mortimore argued in an article in *Education Guardian* in March, the body of recent research evidence suggests otherwise:

> *Expect in music and perhaps art, it does not seem possible to diagnose specific aptitudes for most school curriculum subjects. Instead, what emerges from such testing is a general ability to learn, which is often, but not always, associated with the various 'advantages' of coming from a middle-class home. How can headteachers know if the 'aptitude' of a 10-year-old in German shows anything more than the parents' ability to pay for language lessons?*

All of which helps to account for the alarm caused by Clause 93 of the School Standards and Framework Bill, published in December 1997, which says that a maintained school may 'make provision for the selection of pupils for admission to the school by reference to their aptitude for one or more prescribed subjects', where: the admission authority for the school are satisfied that the school has a specialism in the subject or subjects in question; and the proportion of selective admissions in any relevant age group does not exceed ten per cent.

The ten per cent limit on 'selection by aptitude' is justified by the Labour Government as sufficient to support 'diversity', but low enough not to change the 'character' of the school. Yet as CTCs have shown, a specialist school which is seen as having enhanced resources and abler, better motivated students can still have a disturbing effect on neighbouring comprehensives. It seems clear that specialisation will rarely be achieved without overt selection in the fiercely competitive market that has emerged from all the changes of the last 20 years. **Clyde Chitty**

A Journal for Comprehensive Education

Brian Simon
FORUM's co-founder looks back on forty years of continuous publication.

The first number of *FORUM* was distributed to subscribers in September 1958 – exactly 40 years ago. It was originally the brainchild of Robin Pedley, Jack Walton and myself. We saw it partly as a campaigning, but primarily as a discussion journal designed particularly for teachers sympathetic to the idea of comprehensive education. Our object was to assist this movement in an attempt to transform the existing state education system.

It is worth recalling the situated we faced. In 1958 there were only 86 so-called 'comprehensive' schools, educating less than one per cent of secondary school pupils within maintained schools in England and Wales. These were all of recent foundation. The great majority of pupils were in secondary modern (1,456,000) or grammar schools (608,000), the 'sheep' being separated from the 'goats' by the so-called 11+ examination (though normally taken at the age of 10). So sharp was the competition that, almost without exception, primary schools large enough streamed their children into A, B, C, and sometimes even D streams from the age of 7; many infant schools did the same. Research showed minimal transfer between streams. To all intents and purposes this meant that the entire future of the bulk of the children was determined by their original stream placement at 7, or even 5. Such was the 'rigid and crystallised pattern' (to quote C.P. snow) which had been brought into being following the 1944 Education Act, despite the promise of 'secondary education for all'. An aura of failure hung over the entire system. Intelligence testing, now at the peak of its influence, dominated the entire educational process, being used for the 11+, for internal stream placement, and apparently legitimating the entire structure. Only a minority with high IQ's, it was argued, was capable of profiting from a systematic secondary education. .

Criticism of the system had been expressed throughout the post-war period, but to little effect. The existing divisive structure was roundly, even aggressively, defended by succeeding Ministers (Labour and Tory), grammar school heads and associations, individuals and educationists generally who strove to make the system work, no doubt often with the best of intentions. But by the late 1950s the tide of criticism was becoming overwhelming, fuelled by parents concerned for their children's future. As a result of local battles, and sometimes for other reasons, a few comprehensive schools had, by the mid-50s, become established.

These pointed the way to the actual abolition of the 11+ – indeed provided the only means by which this could be done. Already in 1953 Anglesey had shown this to be a practical solution: four comprehensive schools now provided secondary education for all young people – the 11+ was abolished. Other local authorities, now under increasing popular pressure, looked in the same direction. In 1957 the Leicestershire 'experiment' found a new solution with its two-tier plan, sometimes using existing buildings and so finding an alternative to the very large schools now also being established in London. By 1958 it seemed that a breakthrough on a national scale was possible.

This was the context in which the journal was launched, to provide a 'Forum for discussion of new trends in education' – its first title. The journal supported all the positive moves of the period towards more flexible structures including attempts by secondary modern schools to transcend their circumstances; new types of 'bilateral' schools which offered hope for future development; new comprehensive schools; moves to break down streaming in primary schools to create an open road for all. The journal met a need. Subscriptions poured in and we immediately became financially viable – an unusual situation for a 'new' educational journal. Our 40 years of uninterrupted existence had started.

We were determined from the start that the journal would largely be written *by* teachers *for* teachers. To that end we recruited an Editorial Board mainly comprising teachers and heads from the new comprehensive-type schools, as well as a number of primary heads pioneering non-streaming (George Freeland, Eric Linfield and others). This board was to play an active role, meeting three times a year and determining the content of each number. The loyalty of our first board members was high and this has remained true of board members ever since. Attendance has normally reached 100%. The intense, often dramatic discussions proved productive – all board members assisting by suggesting topics for articles along with suitable authors. This has, I believe, been the main factor ensuring the overall success of the journal.

Over the next decade or more *FORUM* focused its efforts in four main directions. First, we sought to publicise and evaluate the swing to comprehensive education in key areas throughout the country. It must be remembered that the journal was established 7 years before the issue of Circular 10/65 (in July 1965) by which comprehensive education became national policy. But in these years the country was already preparing itself for the change. The 80+ schools in England and Wales of 1958 grew to 130 in 1960 and 262 five years later. Things were on the move; but it was important to discover and evaluate exactly what was happening.

In a series of articles, *FORUM* reporters covered developments in London, South Wales, Yorkshire, Bristol and the West country, West Midlands, Leicestershire and in the New Towns several of which inaugurated totally comprehensive systems. These surveys served a useful

purpose in evaluating the rate of advance and degree of popular support, defining obstacles, and drawing attention to new practices in relation to the key question of admissions policy and related issues. No-one else was attempting to monitor developments at this stage, and indeed at this time there was still much opposition from those determined to maintain the status quo. One key aspect of this whole development, especially in the late 60s and early 70s, was the extraordinary rapidity of the change once breakthrough was achieved. The *FORUM* surveys, however, highlighted at an early moment the deep-seated popular support for the move – from parents, teachers, the Labour movement and others. Later, this function was taken over by the Comprehensive Schools committee of which both Robin and I were members. Founded in 1965 this developed as a very effective pressure group and information centre, run largely by Caroline Benn, while *FORUM* now focused more specifically on the inner functioning and problems of comprehensive schools.

Questions of school organisation, teaching approaches, pupil grouping and above all the curriculum provided the second main focus of *FORUM* articles in the early years – and later. Pioneers of comprehensive education are sometimes criticised for lack of attention to these crucial areas, but this cannot be applied to *FORUM*. Practising teachers in the new schools wrote of their experiences; moves towards a common curriculum were central to their objectives and early efforts in this direction were publicised.

Discussion on the curriculum was widespread particularly given the circumstances in which the new schools were situated. These had to accept the divisive and over-academic approach still embodied in an examination system which literally forced divisions within the new schools whose objective was to provide an appropriate, and systematic education for *all*, and not only a few.

The third area of activity derived from the determination of the Editorial Board to throw its weight behind the move to eradicate prismatic streaming in primary schools. This was seen as an essential adjunct to comprehensive secondary education and the abolition of the 11+, as well as a reform in the interests of children in its own right. Here *FORUM* had considerable, indeed startling success. We presented a closely argued written statement of 'Evidence' on this issue to the Plowden Committee, set up in 1963. This drew on a mass of contemporary research which by now emphasised the malign influence of this early form of selection. We were invited to meet the Committee and present our case orally. Eric Linfield, George Freeland and I were deputed to do this job. The Committee were sympathetic in spite of a severe interrogation by A.J. Ayer, then Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford University. Their report (1967) finally unanimously advocated unstreaming – there were no dissenting voices. Oxford's foremost logician had been convinced!

But the startling success was not so much this as the extraordinary response from teachers and schools to our 'Non-streaming in the Junior School'. This contained a reprint of our evidence, plus supporting articles. The first print, of 2000, was sold out before publication; a second and then a third had to be put in hand. Together with a reprint of our evidence in *FORUM* itself, well over 10,000 copies were dispatched to the schools within a few months. And, in fact, the swing to non-streaming in primary schools now took off with extraordinary rapidity. This was a teachers' movement – it was not imposed from above. Of course, so-called 'mixed ability' teaching brought about a new situation in primary schools which, as we emphasised to the Plowden Committee, urgently required in-depth research. But that a profound transformation in the inner organisation of primary schools took place in the 60s is without doubt. This, then, was an important aspect of our philosophy, opening new opportunities for all. No longer were children to be labelled A, B and C at the age of 5 or 7 and given what Cyril Burt once called 'an appropriate education'. The full potential of this reform remains to be realised, but that the structural change that it embodied was crucial cannot be denied.

The fourth area of activity lay in the annual conferences *FORUM* organised in the 60s and 70s, often in conjunction with the Comprehensive Schools Committee. These were normally well-attended with hundreds of teachers and others present and contributed towards the feeling of solidarity that the comprehensive movement developed, especially among younger teachers. Topics covered in succeeding years included the role of the comprehensive as a neighbourhood, or community school; the qualities and characteristics of the new-type teachers required for the new schools; the issue of the sixth form in comprehensive schools (particularly the 'new sixth' now emerging); the needs of the 16-19 age group and the unification of education in this area; the need for a single examination for all at 16 in place of the divided system (GCE/CSE) then existing.

Perhaps the most memorable of these events was the over-subscribed conference of Summer 1966 on the whole issue of grouping and internal school organisation within the comprehensive school. At this period – shortly after the return of a Labour government with a greatly enhanced majority – hopes were high as to the implications of comprehensive reorganisation in terms of the unification of the system as a whole. Heads of schools and departments as well as class teachers strongly argued the case for extending the unstreaming of junior schools through the early years of secondary schooling. Personal experiences of the success of this move were presented in a thoroughly serious and professional way. The atmosphere generated at this conference, attended by over 400 teachers and others, was exceptionally positive – almost electric. It seemed at this particular moment in time that a basic transformation of the whole system of secondary education was a real possibility. The response engendered was apparent in many parts of the country – well-attended day conferences, using *FORUM* speakers, were held in Nottingham, Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire, Devon, Reading, York and elsewhere, organised by universities and local authorities. Here also, things were on the move, and *FORUM* was closely involved, indeed taking a leading part in the developments.

The swing to comprehensive education, as is now well known, took place with considerable rapidity in the decade 1965 to 1975, at the end of which over 3,000 comprehensive schools catered for 70% of pupils in maintained schools in England and Wales. During this whole period, *FORUM* was working with the tide of public opinion now determined to make the change. When the Tories were returned to office in 1970 there was little Thatcher could do, as Secretary of State, to halt the 'roller coaster' as she called it. However, a number of well-directed spanners were thrown into the works under this Government (1970-74) some of very questionable legality. *FORUM* responded to this attack with a closely argued and detailed critique, entitled 'Indictment

of Margaret Thatcher' (1973), described by *The Times* as 'one of the most carefully documented attacks on Mrs Thatcher'.

From 1976 the cold and bitter winds began to blow, against education in general, comprehensive and also primary schools. Unscrupulous attacks were directed specifically against teachers by industrialists, politicians and journalists of the tabloid press. These were sustained for some 20 years, but in spite of this, comprehensive education now established itself as the predominant mode of secondary education – in Scotland, Wales and England (though pockets of selectivity survived). Throughout this period *FORUM* fought a continuous defensive battle while at the same time continuing the sober discussion of the crucial educational issues now surfacing.

Looking through the 60 odd numbers of these decades (1976-96) a clear focus on the curriculum and assessment is apparent. Special numbers were produced on remedial provision in comprehensive schools, on multi-racial education, on the primary school, on the need for flexible grouping structures, on the community and neighbourhood school and its role. Comprehensive principles were defined and the threats contained in government policies highlighted. Special attention was given to the needs of the 16-19 age group and the relation between education and training. The focus on children's learning was preserved and extended; *FORUM* continued to stress the potentialities of each individual child and the need to keep all roads open as long as possible. Particular emphasis was given to enhancing the democratic control of education and the crucial role of local authorities. *FORUM* survived this period as did comprehensive schools generally. This was surely something of a triumph.

Matters reached a climax with the Education Reform Bill of 1987. Together with most educational organisations (and the Labour movement) *FORUM* saw this Bill, with its clear intention of substituting market forces as the main determinant of educational change, as a significant threat to the objectives of comprehensive education. As well as the critique launched in *FORUM* itself, the Editorial Board undertook the organisation of a mass 'demonstrative conference' held at Friends House in the Euston Road while the Bill was passing through Parliament. Winning the co-operation of 25 national organisations, including the main teacher's unions, the Trade Union Congress and Labour Unions, this also united very many specifically educational organisations (e.g. Campaign for State Education, Council for Educational Advance, etc.), most of which shared the costs. Tessa Blackstone and Tim Brighouse, then Oxfordshire's CEO, Harry Rée and others led the critique very effectively. Representatives of each of the 25 organisations involved also spoke. The Conference finished with a Statement of Intent, carried unanimously by acclamation, reiterating our determination to defend and enhance the movement to comprehensive education. Edward Blishen, an original member of the Editorial Board, contributed a full report of this 'astonishing day' to *FORUM* (Vol. 30, No. 3).

If that was the last, fairly dramatic action undertaken by *FORUM*, over the last decade the journal continued its consistent critique of government policy, especially in respect of the 1988 Act's provisions. City Technology Colleges, Grant Maintained Schools, the National Curriculum and Testing – these have all been monitored, discussed, criticised. Even with the welcome return of a Labour Government in May 1997, *FORUM*'s critique has not been wanting. There is still much to be done before the principles underlying the swing to comprehensive education can be fully realised.

It may be appropriate here to say a few thank you's, although to single out individuals in what has for 40 years been very much a team effort may be invidious. *FORUM* owes a debt of gratitude to both Robin Pedley, who died in 1988, and Jack Walton, now in Australia. Robin features in an article I was asked to contribute to a recent volume of the Dictionary of National Biography (1986-1990). Jack was the first Chair of our Board, to be succeeded by the very distinguished Raymond King, Head of Wandsworth Comprehensive School, who presided over our Board for nearly 20 years until well into his 80s. Roger Seckington then took over for more than a decade, contributing his experience as a comprehensive teacher and head. On his retirement, Michael Armstrong has fulfilled this role and does so at present – a long-standing member of the Board, Michael (an old Leicester PGCE student) has contributed enormously to the journal over very many years.

On the editorial side, we owe a special debt of gratitude to Nanette Whitbread, who acted as joint editor for nearly 30 years, taking full responsibility for alternate issues. Nanette proved expert at concocting the short, punchy, critical editorials we aimed at and played a crucial part in the journal's development. Thanks are also due to Clyde Chitty (another ex-Leicester PGCE student), who took over joint editorial responsibility in 1989 when I stepped down, and now shares it with Liz Thomson and Annabelle Dixon. Appointed recently to a Chair in Education at Goldsmiths College, Clyde has plenty on his plate. As many will know, together with Caroline Benn, Clyde recently published the massive survey, 'Thirty Years On', which concluded that comprehensive education is not only well, but alive and kicking.

Looking back over these 40 years, I find little to regret, at least as far as *FORUM* is concerned. No, we have not yet fully achieved our objectives, but outcomes are the resultant of a complex of forces, of which *FORUM* was only one. So – the struggle continues. Producing the journal over these years has involved a lot of hard work – sometimes frenetic. We owe a large debt of gratitude also to our business managers over many years, particularly Doreen Richardson, Judith Hunt, Anne Warwick and more lately Lesley Yorke. Their work has been exemplary. For over 35 years we also carried full responsibility for publishing the journal – until 1992, when Roger Osborn-King of Triangle Journals, took this over. With his care and support, *FORUM* remains on a sound financial footing and can look forward to the future with confidence. It remains, however, entirely independent as regards policy, not being otherwise connected with any institution. This, in may view, has been *FORUM*'s main strength, and this is now guaranteed for the future.

Education Action Zones: test-beds for privatisation?

Clyde Chitty

In this article, Clyde Chitty looks at the Government's dramatic plans to 'modernise' and perhaps ultimately 'privatise' the state education system.

Introduction

Of all the proposals in the 1997 White Paper *Excellence in Schools*, none has turned out to be more radical or controversial than the decision to introduce a pilot programme of 25 Education Action Zones. More than City Technology Colleges or Grant-Maintained Schools, this has the *potential* to challenge and destroy all our traditional notions about a publicly-funded state education service locally administered.

Origins

The whole idea of 'Education Action Zones' (EAZs) was dealt with in a mere four paragraphs in David Blunkett's 1997 White Paper. Significantly, these four paragraphs (6-9) appeared in that section of the document called 'Modernising the Comprehensive Principle' where it was argued that the establishment of the new Zones would have the objective of 'motivating young people in tough inner-city areas'. The new EAZs - 'taking careful account of the distinctive characteristics of the areas involved' - would form part of a 'new and imaginative' programme for helping 'failing' schools to 'achieve the Government's overall objectives'.

There would be a pilot programme of up to 25 Action Zones, 'phased in over two to three years and set up in areas with a mix of underperforming schools and the highest levels of disadvantage'. It was likely that there would be more than one zone in London, with the others concentrated in the other major urban areas in the country. A typical zone would be likely to have two or three secondary schools, with supporting primaries and associated SEN provision.

The exact relationship of the Zone to the Local Education Authority was left distinctly vague. The Action Zone would be expected to operate on the basis of an 'action forum' which would include 'parents and ... representatives from the local business and social community, as well as representation from the constituent schools and the LEA'. The Forum would draw up an action programme, including targets for each participating school and for the Zone as a whole. The Action Forum could bring forward plans for 'school rationalisation' - and for new schools 'to provide new hope for the area'.

Yet it was also made clear that the Government itself intended to play a direct role in the new venture. Once an action Zone had been established, various representatives of the Secretary of State - 'for example, someone from one of our most successful schools' - would be appointed to the action team to provide 'advice and support'. And the Standards and Effectiveness Unit of the DfEE would be required to 'monitor the operation of the Action Zone'. The Action Forum would be expected to publish regular reports on progress.

The White Paper floated the idea of additional resources: 'Zones will have first call on funds from all relevant central programmes - for example, the literacy and numeracy initiatives, the homework centres, the specialist schools initiative - provided that satisfactory proposals are put forward'. It was also suggested that an action zone might be given 'additional flexibility in matters of staffing or the organisation of schools'; but it was not clear at this stage exactly what this meant.[1]

These, then, were the first details of the Government's new Big Idea; and it seemed possible at this stage that there were proposals here worth pursuing as part of the campaign to raise educational standards in 'socially disadvantaged' areas. This indeed was the line taken by Professor Geoff Whitty in a talk given at a conference on 'Labour, Education and Social Justice', organised through the STA (Socialist Teachers' Alliance) in London in November 1997:

> *It remains to be seen how [Education Action Zones] develop and whether their existence does indeed channel more help and energy into the target areas. Nevertheless ... I believe the idea is worth pursuing - but only if each Zone's Action Forum gives a voice to all relevant constituencies and provided there is a significant redistribution of resources into these areas. We will certainly need to fight hard to avoid the pitfalls of the old Educational Priority Areas and the managerialist excesses of the Tories' Urban Development Corporations.[2]*

The School Standards and Framework Bill, published on 4 December 1997, dealt with Education Action Zones in Chapter 3 (pages 9 to 11). This had little to add to what was in the White Paper; although it did cover in some detail the proposal to allow the disapplication of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Order in relation to teachers employed in participating schools.

It was a letter sent out from the DfEE in January 1998 to 'colleagues in LEAs, TECs, Government Offices, Health Authorities, business, religious, community and other organisations that first caused alarm about the Government's true intentions. The letter was an invitation to 'apply for an education zone', accompanied by an application form with explanatory notes.

Now it was clear that business could have a major role to play in the running of at least *some* of the new Zones, thereby exerting a direct influence on the curriculum and ethos of the participating schools. Indeed, this was the

feature of the new Zones picked up and discussed in the national press.

For not only would an action forum be given powers to offer 'a new pay and conditions package for teachers'; it would also be able to 'tailor or radically alter parts of the National Curriculum'.

All this has given rise to fears that the Government's new project could undermine the role of the Local Education Authority and open the door to the privatisation of the education service.

Test-beds for Innovation

It was Professor Michael Barber, Head of the Government's Standards and Effectiveness Unit, who outlined the blueprint for the Education Action Zones at the North of England Education Conference meeting in Bradford on 6 January 1998. The first five Zones would begin operation in September 1998 – and another 20 in September 1999. Schools in a zone would be allowed to dispense with the National Curriculum and to focus on the rudiments of literacy and numeracy. They would also be able to ignore national agreements on teachers' pay and conditions to extend the working week into early mornings, evenings and/or weekends.

Professor Barber was proud to announce that the new Zones would be 'test-beds for innovation in a post-modern world'. The Initiative was to be modelled on exciting schemes in the United States, where detergent group Proctor & Gamble and management consultants Arthur Anderson ran schools. According to Professor Barber, interest had been expressed by 'household names' - multinationals involved in manufacturing, commerce, insurance and information technology. Apparently, Capita, which ran the Nursery Vouchers Scheme and administers council payrolls, Nord Anglia, the Stock-Market-listed education provider, and the Centre for British Teachers, which runs careers services and Office for Standards in Education inspections, had all shown a willingness to be involved.

As *The Times Educational Supplement* observed, it was 'somewhat ironic' that the North of England Education Conference, 'the premier showcase for local authorities', was the chosen venue to make the announcement that ended up on the front page of daily newspapers under such jubilant headlines as 'Private Firms to run State Schools'.[3] The response of Graham Lane, Labour education chairperson of the local Government Association, was understandably hostile:

> *This could be the beginning of the privatisation of the state education system. It could lead to the break-up of local education authorities. It could lead to the destruction of local democracy.[4]*

Not surprisingly, the Government's proposals received staunch support from all the usual right-wing sources, many of them echoing Barber's extraordinary claim that 'successful companies are uniquely able to manage educational change and innovation'.

According to Ruth Lea of the Institute of Directors: 'Education Action Zones are a rattling good idea'. In her view, 'Good management requires business skills and you can trust private industry to do it more competently without all the political baggage that you find in local education authorities'.[5] Writing in The Observer with her usual gift for getting everything wrong, Melanie Phillips argued that: 'the new Zones will be test-beds for innovations' (where have we heard that phrase before?) 'which can now dump the bits of old baggage' (another popular term) 'that made the 1997 Education Bill so incoherent - such as the naïve faith in LEAs and the animus against selection - and show the rest of the country just how stifling these are'.[6]

Ignoring all the evidence of collapsing educational standards, fiddled examination results and creative accounting, *The Financial Times* told its readers that 'business does have a proven record of raising academic standards in the United States'.[7] And a similar claim could be found in *The Daily Mail* where David Blunkett was congratulated for being 'radical and brave', for 'rescuing children imprisoned in dud schools' and for 'tearing up the rule book'. According to *The Daily Mail* leader: 'emergency measures have long been needed to make good the damage inflicted by bad teaching and bureaucratic domination'.[8]

Voicing his opinions in *The Daily Telegraph*, Boris Johnson was also jubilant:

> *This is nothing less than a triumph of Tory free-market ideology and, on the face of it, a brutal snub to core Labour voters ... Ex-comrade Blunkett paves the way for the new Cadbury's Comprehensive, with the choc machines in the gym, or for Texaco's hostile bid for Grange Hill.[9]*

Recent Developments

When the EAZ policy was launched back in January, there was to be an initial tranche of five Zones by September. Each was to receive £250,000 of public money to match £250,000 from the private sector.

Then in the late Spring the Government changed the rules. Instead of starting five Zones in September 1998 and inviting bids for a further 20 later in the Parliament, there were now to be 12 Zones in September, and another 13 in January 1999. All would be chosen from the first 60 bids that had been received by the end of March.

Mr Blunkett also increased the amount of money on offer. Instead of £250,000 of public money, there would be £750,000 to add to the £250,000 from the private sector. That would begin to provide the level of resources needed to fund radical developments, such as recruiting 'advanced skills teachers' on higher salaries, negotiating a longer school day or changes in holiday patterns and appointing new classes of 'managers' and support staff.

The locations of the first 25 Action Zones were announced on 23 June 1998, David Blunkett arguing that they would be 'test-beds for the school system of the next century'. Schools Minister Stephen Byers said the Zones would constitute 'a fundamental change to the education status quo and a real threat to those vested interests which have for too long held back our school system'.[10]

Mr Blunkett said companies backing the successful Zones included Blackburn Rovers, Cadbury Schweppes, Nissan, Rolls Royce, Kellogg, British Aerospace, Tate & Lyle, American Express, and Brittany Ferries.

In most cases, the private firms were expected to play a secondary role in the zone partnerships often led by the local authority; but the Zone in the London Borough of Lambeth would be led by Shell International and managed by private sector consultants.

Some of those who were most excited by the EAZ concept back in January have been somewhat disappointed by the nature of the June announcement. Conservative education spokesperson Stephen Dorrell showed great enthusiasm when the first details were unveiled in Bradford; but his

successor David Willetts has expressed concerned that many of the Zones will be 'left in the hands of the very local education authorities that even the Department for Education and Employment believes have failed'.

It may be true that the worst privatising fears have not been realised; but the new Zones could still become the Trojan Horses which will destroy local education authorities as we know them. *The Guardian*'s education correspondent John Carvel has argued that the Zones may not in *themselves* be such a Big Idea, but they are still 'the propagation units in which little ideas can flourish'. In his view, they provide 'a pragmatic mechanism through which a new ideology may emerge'.[11] It seems likely that as more and more zones are announced, the role of local education authorities within the new partnerships will steadily diminish.

Criticism of the EAZ Initiative

Of real concern to many on the Left is the harmful influence that the Zones could have on the curriculum of the participating schools - and particularly with regard to the programme of work for older pupils. For many 'low-achieving' youngsters, this could well be an impoverished, skills-based 'Gradgrind Curriculum' concentrating on preparation for low-paid employment.

The Lambeth bid described its proposals for Year 10 pupils in the following terms:

> *Pupils who are disaffected will have been identified by the end of Year 9, and schools will then develop a programme of in-class support and after-school activities ... The Borough already has close links with the Construction Industry Training Board, vehicle maintenance workshops and jewellery-making firms and these contacts will provide the basis for the initial programmes which will be reviewed and extended after the first year. Included in the new programme will be extended work experience, and classes will continue into the school holidays. Where appropriate, basic skills programmes will be introduced to raise standards.*

As the Socialist Teachers' Alliance has pointed out, this hardly seems a very exciting or creative way of modifying the discredited National Curriculum:

> *The picture that begins to emerge is that working-class students will be fed a diet of work-related programmes. School will become quite literally a preparation for work. It also raises issues to do with discrimination against girls and black students and the potential for blatant stereo-typing reinforced through a vocational/academic divide in the curriculum.[12]*

There is also concern that each EAZ will have at least one specialist school within it. The Government's expectation is that these schools will provide 'local and regional centres of achievement and excellence in their specialist subjects' and become a focal point for revitalising education in areas of 'social disadvantage'. Yet, as recent research shows, specialisation is hard to separate from selection; and the potential is clearly there for yet one more level in a local hierarchy of schools.

Blair's Third Way

It seems from recent government announcements that EAZs have a vital role to play in Tony Blair's vision of a 'third way' in social and economic reform. Indeed, the point was made forcibly by former Schools Minister Stephen Byers in a lecture entitled 'Towards the third way in education' delivered at the Social Market Foundation in London at the beginning of July:

> *The Third Way applies traditional values to a changed setting ... The 25 Education Action Zones are intended to tackle endemic levels of low achievement and low expectations ... They contain many proposals that would have been regarded as impossible to achieve just 12 months ago - performance-related pay for teachers; ditching the National Curriculum to focus on key skills and work-related learning; master-classes on devolved budgets for governing bodies run by some of the world's leading financial consultants; provision to identify and stretch our most able pupils; agreed working on Saturdays and during school holidays.[13]*

Cynics might suspect that the Third Way is a bland term to disguise a clear continuity between Thatcherism and New Labour.

Conclusion

It is possible to argue that significant improvements in educational standards require, among other things, concerted local action in which schools, and the communities they serve, work together towards commonly agreed ends. Indeed, Richard Hatcher has pointed out that 'launching a well-funded, democratically-controlled, progressive and equitable initiative to effectively meet educational needs in poor working-class areas is exactly what a Labour government should be doing'.[14]

Sadly, as Richard Hatcher goes on to argue, New Labour's 25 Education Action Zones meet none of those criteria. So, if this new idea becomes a permanent feature of the educational scene, those of us who believe in democratic accountability will have to campaign to ensure that the action forums are truly representative of local community interests.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Glen Rikowski for his help with the preparation of this article.

References

[1] DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (1997) *Excellence in Schools*, pp. 39-40 (Cmnd. 3681). London: HMSO, July.
[2] Reprinted in *Socialist Teacher*, No. 65, Spring 1998, pp. 12-15.
[3] *The Times Educational Supplement*, 9 January 1998; the front-page headline in question comes from *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1998.
[4] Quoted in *The Guardian*, 7 January 1998.
[5] Quoted in *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1998.
[6] *The Observer*, 18 January 1998.
[7] *The Financial Times*, 7 January 1998; see also: Nick Cohen 'Hold on a minute', *The Observer*, 11 January 1998.
[8] *The Daily Mail*, 7 January 1998.
[9] *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 1998.
[10] Quoted in *The Guardian*, 24 June 1998.
[11] *The Guardian*, 5 May 1998.
[12] Socialist Teachers Alliance (1998) *Trojan Horses: Education Action Zones: the Case against the Privatisation of Education*, p. 27. London: Socialist Teachers Alliance Pamphlet.
[13] Reprinted in *The Independent*, 2 July 1998.
[14] Richard Hatcher (Spring 1998) What's wrong with Education Action Zones?, *Socialist Teacher*, 65, pp. 4-5.

Failing Schools: the case of Hackney Downs

Sally Tomlinson

In this article [1], Professor Sally Tomlinson of Goldsmiths College exposes the dubious premise on which the whole concept of the 'failing schools' is based.

At the end of the 20th century a new educational phenomenon appeared in Britain. This was the failing school, a demonised educational institution whose head, teachers and governors were deemed to be personally responsible for the educational underperformance of its pupils. Individual schools and their personnel were discussed as though divorced from an historical position, from basic social, economic and educational structures, and from the pernicious effects of 'market forces' which have moved more 'desirable' pupils out of particular schools and ensured that other schools take in large numbers of those children considered 'undesirable'. Children with special needs, migrant and minority children, second language speakers, children living in poverty and deprived circumstances are now concentrated more than ever in smaller numbers of urban and estate schools.

But once the 1993 legislation had set in train the measures to be taken against schools 'failing or likely to fail to give pupils an acceptable standard of education' it was open season on schools where short-comings could be rigorously pilloried by inspectors, politicians, policy-makers and the press. OFSTED discovered in 1993 that schools were failing whole disadvantaged communities, and Michael Barber, the Head of the DfEE Standards and Effectiveness Unit blamed failing schools for weakening the whole educational structure (Barber, 1996, p. 12). Journalists competed to discover the 'worst school in Britain', an accolade handed out regularly to different schools, and politicians competed to demonstrate their 'zero tolerance' of school failure.

This article illustrates the dubious premise on which the whole concept of the 'failing school' is based, using Hackney Downs, a school closed in December 1995 on the (incorrect) assumption that it was failing. It is becoming clearer that post-1988 market policies in education have helped to create schools which are subsequently regarded as failing and that school effectiveness research is used injustifiably to support the political fiction that 'good' and 'bad' schools can be easily identified.

Effective Schools – Failing Schools

The 'failing' school is the obverse of the 'effective' school. School effectiveness researchers, in the 1970s and 1980s, were concerned to identify the characteristics of effective schools and made their findings available to practitioners to improve schools. The major school effectiveness studies in the UK were undertaken from the initial hypothesis that schools with similar intakes of pupils in terms of prior attachment, social class and ethnic origin, might differ in the extent to which they helped pupils to progress. The intention was not to pillory and deride schools that did not appear to be as successful as others in helping all pupils to progress, but to identify the factors which made for success. But, by the 1990s, the research had been 'hijacked' politically to blame secondary schools which performed badly in the league tables of GCSE A-C passes. Schools which appeared to take in children with similar socio-economic backgrounds but 'did worse' than others nearby, were castigated as 'failing' and blamed for 'parading this (socio-economic background) as an excuse for low standards' (Tomlinson, 1997). Policy-makers and the inspectorate began to demand lists of factors which made for effective schools and assume that such lists would automatically identify ineffective schools.

The reality is that reliance on school effectiveness research to discover and describe failing schools is simplistic and dangerous. As already noted, the dramatic effect of market forces, and the increase in poverty, unemployment and the effect of excess deprivation, which affects even schools in the same neighbourhood differently, make it educationally, methodologically and morally indefensible to continue to 'shame and blame' particular schools.

Hackney Downs was a school experiencing these two effects. It had been included in a major school effectiveness study in the 1980s (Smith & Tomlinson, 1989). In 1986, the pupils achieved examination passes on a par with the other London schools studied. Yet already the School was experiencing staff, maintenance and resource problems and feeling the effects of an increasingly disadvantaged intake. By the early 1990s, two-thirds of the pupils had some form of special educational need, about 70% being second language speakers. A high proportion of pupils had been taken in after exclusion from other schools. By 1995 the buildings in which the pupils were taught were, almost literally, falling down. Yet this was a school in which the teachers in post were publicly blamed for 'short-changing' the pupils (North East London Education Association, 1995). The School was closed with precipitous haste in December 1995 while an appeal against its closure was still being heard, and has entered educational mythology as the prototype of a 'failing' school. What was the actual Hackney Downs story?

Origins

Hackney Downs Boys School, a foundation of the Worshipful Company of Grocers, was opened in 1876. Initially it offered a more practical curriculum than the classical grammar school education of the day, and was distinguished by the emphasis placed on English literature and on drama-subjects appraised in a final inspection report over 120 years later. The School was handed over to the

control of the London County Council in 1906, and began to admit boys from Jewish immigrant families – providing an early example of successful multicultural education. The School continued its dramatic traditions, producing plays which in the later 1940s starred a young Michael Caine and a young Harold Pinter. Regrettably, a fire started accidentally in the theatre in 1963 caused the loss of much of the original school building. In 1969, despite its success as a grammar school, the school staff, supported by governors, parents and distinguished old boys in the 'Cloves Club', voted for comprehensive status under the Inner London Education Authority. The Authority tried to ensure schools had truly comprehensive intakes through a system of ability 'banding'. However, throughout the 1970s the increasing impoverishment of the Borough and the settlement of many ethnic minority communities – Afro-Caribbean, Turkish, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Kurdish and other groups – affected the banding system and the ability mix.

The 1980s

In the 1980s Hackney became and has remained, the poorest borough in London, with high levels of socio-economic deprivation and also the poorest record of child health in London. In 1980 six Hackney secondary schools (out of 15) were closed or merged, leaving Hackney Downs as one of the two boys schools. But the popularity of boys-only schools was waning. The Jewish population had moved elsewhere and in ability terms the School had become a secondary modern. However, a 1985 ILEA report, written by the then Chief Inspector David Hargreaves, praised the School for its 'many individual and collective strengths', which included a 'most civilised and humane working environment'. But from this time, problems accrued. The School lost its sixth form when a sixth-form college opened locally. The mid-1980s teacher industrial action affected staff relations, with some militant teachers making themselves unpopular. In 1986 the School had to be closed temporarily while asbestos was removed from the buildings. In 1989 the Headteacher, John Kemp, who had been in post for 15 years, was faced with uncomfortable gender and race problems and retired in December. The issues centred on various staff discontents. A women's staff group had met and complained about the attitudes of some pupils and male staff. This sparked an angry reaction from black male staff, who set up a black staff group and linked up with a black parents' group. Although both black and white boys were regarded by staff as 'underachieving' the black group complained, in an unsigned letter to the Head, about 'covert racism' in the School which affected black pupils' achievements. An ideological rift developed between staff which continued into the 1990s, even after a black Chief Education Officer had been appointed in the Borough.

1988-90

In 1988-89 the Inner London Education authority prepared to hand over Hackney Schools to the new Hackney Local Education Authority, which had appointed the then local councillor, Michael Barber, as its Chair of the Education Committee. A final report of ILEA inspectors in November 1989 continued to praise the generally good relationships within Hackney Downs, but noted that improvements in teaching and learning were needed. This Report also deplored a developing 'tough' sub-culture (a feature of boys' schools not confined to Hackney Downs) and was openly critical of the physical state of the School. Their Report noted that 'it is lamentable that the School has been allowed to fall into such a state of disrepair when staff and pupils were expected to have pride in their environment'.

The Early 1990s

Schools in London's poorest boroughs undoubtedly suffered from the break-up of ILEA and the budget cuts forced on boroughs by the then Conservative Government. Labour-controlled Hackney was not in a good position to respond to cuts, being one of London's most politically turbulent authorities, with factions often vociferously opposed to each other and accusations of corruption in various services surfacing at times. HMI made a final visit to eight Hackney schools and concluded that four, including Hackney Downs, were giving cause for concern. In response to HMI Hackney drew up an action plan which promised the School extensive building improvements, staff stability and a 'secure and structured learning environment'. None of these was delivered. The newly appointed Head, John Douglas, attempted to obtain the promised resources for minor works, including the science labs, which a visiting teacher had described as 'dirty ... with many walls with peeling paint and rotting plaster ... and a shortage of gas taps and sinks'. A year later, Douglas was still writing to the Director of Education, Gus John, who was a year into his post, asking for the promised maintenance. Nothing was forthcoming from the Authority and the buildings continued to deteriorate until closure. Meanwhile the School continued to take in pupils excluded from other schools, over a third of the 'casual' intake between September 1991 and July 1992 being exclusions or truants from other schools, and also began to be affected by proximity to a local estate which was one of the first sites of domestic crack cocaine transactions in London.

The Head and staff were working hard with little outside help against a rising tide of socio-economic deprivation and taking in the 'problems of other schools'. In 1991 John Douglas obtained a promise of funding from the Prince's Trust for a homework and reading room, but this offer was withdrawn with no explanation. Subsequent research by the Prince's Trust has shown that such support can help deprived pupils achieve more. A referral room for disruptive boys was set up and well used. The boys referred there had, without exception, deprived backgrounds, difficulties at previous schools and in some cases, parents who admitted to inability to control their sons. However, there was little external help forthcoming. Hackney LEA had problems with its educational psychology service and its educational social work service. In early 1991, after a promised report on a January inspection never appeared, irate correspondence between the Governors and Gus John ensued, which already appeared to be hinting at possible closure of the School. When this Inspectors' Report finally appeared it noted the 'neglect and disrepair' of the School's building with no acknowledgement of years of staff complaints about this, and subsequently no funding for buildings, resources or staff was offered to the School.

Four Head Teachers

John Douglas began to suspect that the LEA had abandoned Hackney Downs and that this really would affect staff morale. Certainly, in 1993 staff reductions had to be made under LMS and the School lost many experienced teachers. HMI arrived in the School again in October 1992 and made

a negative report on the School, noting the 'squalid' environment. The Report sparked off more disagreements between the school governors and Gus John who now suggested that there were three options for the School – closure, merger with a mixed local school, or becoming a mixed school. With nothing settled as regards the future of the School, John Douglas left unexpectedly in December 1992, his job passing without discussion with the school governors or open advertisement, to Peter Hepburn, the Deputy Head at Homerton House, the School to which the Hackney Downs boys were precipitously pushed in 1995. He was to be supported for two years by Daphne Gould, a retired Head of a successful school in a neighbouring borough, and by two deputies, Betty Hales and Ken Russell. Peter Hepburn found the School difficult – 'casual' entries of boys with disruptive behaviour being a particular problem – and he stayed only one year in post, leaving in December 1993. Daphne Gould, who battled unsuccessfully for improvements, stayed a further half year. Peter Hepburn was replaced in January 1994 by Deputy Ken Russell, the appointment again being made without governor input. He stayed only two weeks in post, before going on sick leave, to be replaced as Acting Head, by Betty Hales.

1993-94

In 1993 Hackney LEA began a review of its secondary school provision and in May the Education Committee recommended that Hackney Downs should become a co-educational school and that the Year Seven intake should be 'frozen' in 1994 while refurbishments took place. The Secretary of State for Education rejected this proposal a year later, but the Year 7 intake was frozen, and the school role dropped, while the Authority decided to keep the staff complement of 24. One of the most bizarre results of this decision was that in 1995 the Education Association accused the School of operating with an expensive high staff-pupil ratio and politicians of both major parties began to quote Hackney Downs as an example of schools which could not be improved by 'throwing money' at them!

By 1994 some 60% of the pupils had been identified as having special educational needs and the National Union of Teachers was worried by the lack of specialist staff and permanent posts in the School. Betty Hales had agreed to take over as Acting Head on certain conditions – one of which was the appointment of permanent staff, a situation never rectified. By May 1994, when an OFSTED inspection of the School took place, two-thirds of the staff, including the whole of the Senior Management Team and four Departmental Heads, were holding acting appointments. Despite all the difficulties, parental and community support for the School grew in 1994 and Betty Hales began to feel that there was a chance for the School to improve and develop. However, this feeling did not last long as the LEA did not provide the necessary support for the School or for her, as a new (acting) Head. Daphne Gould, who had been an initial help, had her contract ended prematurely, and the OFSTED Inspectors Report, published in August 1994, although sympathetic to problems beyond the control of the School, was generally critical.

Special Measures

The School was to be put under the 'special measures' laid down by the 1993 Education Act. the inspectors made ten proposals for action by the LEA, governors and staff, including action on special needs, bilingual pupil support, health and safety and building refurbishment matters. They were scathing about the conditions of the school buildings. The School's only Conservative Party Governor wrote to thank Betty Hales and her staff for the hard work they had put in over the year telling her that, 'What you and your staff have had to put up with has been amazing and I have nothing but admiration for the way in which you have all managed to come through'. Meanwhile, the Authority decided to advertise the Headship, receive 12 applications and drew up a short-list of two – Hales being one – for interview. The LEA then decided that Headship interviews could not go ahead with less than three interviews and no permanent appointment was made! Betty Hales was left in post to prepare an action plan in response to the OFSTED Report, and to argue the detrimental effects on the School of a frozen Year 7 intake. Unreality appeared to take over the LEA at this point. It produced an action plan as required by authorities with schools under special measures, that would have cost over £2 million to implement, and simultaneously announced consultation on the possible closure of the School.

1995

Relations between the Director of Education, the school governors and the Acting Head were strained over the winter of 1994-95. The Education Committee confirmed the closure proposal in October 1994 and the aim then appeared to get the statutory closure consultation procedure over and prevent this School from organising a campaign to save itself. However, a campaign was organised with petitions, a parental letter and a TV programme. One sympathetic journalist commented that 'A modern ritual of education politics appears to be in motion. From tabloid decryings to damning inspection report to shut-down, with the School sliding along rails to its end, greased by Conservative education reforms'. In March 1995, despite a stormy consultation process and a positive HMI report on the School's progress the Education Committee ratified its decision to close the School, the boys were to be transferred to Homerton House in September 1995 and primary parents were immediately directed to send their sons elsewhere. In April 1995 the Chair of Governors wrote to the DfE complaining that the LEA had not met its commitment to treat Hackney Downs as a fully-functioning school during the closure consultation period. In particular he noted lack of action on refurbishment, health and safety issues, removal of delegated powers, lack of support for the governors, and the denial of new pupil entries, the refusal to appoint a substantive Head, the lack of advising support and educational psychology support despite the high number of boys with special needs. In a response to the DfE, the Director claimed that improvements in the School had been due to a high level of LEA support, and that the School was no more disadvantaged than other Hackney schools.

In May 1995, Labour councillors began to have doubts about the school closure, and refused to endorse the closure procedures and on 8th June the Education Committee refused to ratify the closure decision or Gus John's report to the DfE. On 28th June, the full Council rejected the closure proposals and informed the DfE. On 4th July the DfE replied that the Secretary of State's consideration of closure proposals had been termination and she had no further interest in the School.

On 13th July Betty Hales and the staff were astonished to learn via a fax from the press that the Secretary of State

was 'minded' to set up an Education Association to take over the running of Hackney Downs from the LEA. What happened between 4th and 13th July to change her mind will probably never be known – although two DfEE officials who were in the School on 14th July did let slip that they believed LEA officials had visited the DfEE after the Council vote which allowed the School to remain open. Many of the School's supporters began to believe that 'secret deals' had been done between central government and unelected education officials.

The Education Association: July-December 1995

On 27th July the School was told that it would come under the control of the North East London Education Association, established by Statutory Instrument under the 1993 Act. An Education Association, as a DfE White Paper of 1992 had explained, was to take over schools at risk of failure which had not been improved by their governing bodies or the LEA. It was to be in the position of a grant-maintained governing body and 'at the end of its stewardship, the normal expectation is that the School will become grant-maintained'. Thus, Hackney Downs, with evidence that it was now an improving rather than a failing school, and with nearly half of the two-year period allowed for in legislation concerning failing schools still to run, was to be taken over by a central government-appointed body. The School was again pilloried in the press as 'the worst school in Britain'. The Editor of *Education* magazine, however, wondered why Hackney Downs School, when it was actually improving, had been selected as a sacrificial lamb out of some 80 'at-risk' schools at the time.

The membership of the Education Association (EA) appeared to be guaranteed to deliver the decisions required by the Government and the local education officials and to ignore the views of the elected local council, parents, pupils, teachers, the old boys 'Cloves club' and many supporters in the local and wider community. The Chair was a senior executive of an electronic security services conglomerate. The others were the former Chair of Hackney Education Committee; a retired headteacher of a selective independent school; an accountant; and the retired Chief Education Officer of an Outer London Borough.

The EA engaged three independent inspectors to visit the school in September 1995. Although two of these reports were favourable to the School, they do not appear to have been used. After only eight weeks of 'stewardship' the EA sent a report to the Secretary of State on 26th October recommending closure. Perhaps this decision was unsurprising as Michael Barber (the former Chair of Hackney Education Committee) had written an article the day after he was appointed to the EA 'New start for pupils sold short by Council policies' in which he had criticised the elected Council's decision to keep the School open. The Report did, however, contain some surprising statements. It blamed the School for faulty financial management when its finances had, in fact, been under the control of the Hackney LEA since March 1994, and it suggested that the site could be sold when in fact this could not happen as the land on which it was built had been given by the Worshipful Company of Grocers on the abiding condition that it was to be used for educational purposes. The Report also gave the impression that the School had long been functioning in favourable conditions without showing any signs of improvement, but omitted to mention clear evidence of improvement not only from OFSTED but from two of the three inspectors appointed by the EA itself. The Report also criticised staff 'who have forgotten what is possible in terms of standards in inner city education' – without bothering to point out that the average length of teaching experience of the staff was only three years, following the replacement of experienced, and therefore more expensive, staff in 1993 required as a result of LMS described above.

The School was closed with precipitate haste, the Secretary of State allowing only ten days for 'consultation' after the publication of the EA Report. Two pupils and their parents took the decision to the High Court for judicial review on 8th and 12th December 1995, and subsequently to the Court of Appeal on 21st December, but both Courts upheld the Secretary of State's decision. It is important to note that despite attempts by the plaintiffs' legal team to place all the facts before the Courts, they were able only to review the *mechanisms* by which the Secretary of State made her decision and not the EA Report itself or the evidence on which it was based. In his summing up of the Judicial Review, the High Court Judge noted that there were no rules of conduct for this or any other Education Association and there was, for example, no bar to members publishing articles in the press *while* carrying out their duties and before reaching any decisions.

The boys were transferred to a neighbouring school, Homerton House, stated during the court hearings to be doing better than Hackney Downs although its 1995 examination results were no better and its 1996 results showed no improvement. The total cost of closing Hackney Downs was eventually estimated to be the same as keeping it open and putting it in reasonable repair.

Conclusion

By 1996, Hackney Downs had been superseded in the mythology of the 'worst school in Britain' by the Ridings School in Yorkshire, a school where staff refused to take in more students with learning and behavioural difficulties. Both schools, and most other schools which acquire the 'failing' label illustrate the failure of simplistic, politically motivated education policies to get rid of 'bad' schools. It could have been foreseen, or at least acknowledged, that failing schools cannot, in the 1990s, be divorced from the results of market policies by which some schools now receive more than their fair share of troubled and deprived pupils. Politicians, locally and nationally, cannot continue to compete to be 'tough' on failing schools while ignoring the effects of their own policy and administrative decisions. Explanations as to why some school suffer from uniquely difficult circumstances in a fierce market environment cannot be dismissed as special pleading. Children's education and teachers' careers cannot continue to be affected, through no fault of their own, by the lack of support illustrated by the Hackney Downs episode.

Between 1989 and 1995, Hackney Downs must have been the most inspected school in the country, yet despite a plethora of action plans, checklists and improvement criteria there was very little actual help with tackling the problems. Top of the 'Effective Schools' checklist is stable headship yet Hackney Downs had four Heads in five years and no permanent Head for its final three years. Effective schools have experienced staff, yet during the final five years it had mainly young, inexperienced, or temporary staff. But most importantly, effective schools presumably have supportive LEAs whereas Hackney Downs appears

to have been treated with a special kind of ineptitude by its LEA. The case of Hackney Downs offers an example of how *not* to develop a relationship and during its last years the LEA was part of the *problem* and not part of the *solution*. However, this does not absolve central government from policy decisions, which created and continue to create, the 'falling school'.

The existence of poor schools which are a result of historical, social, and economic circumstances and political decisions is not unique to the UK. Many countries are attempting to improve school and pupil performance, particularly in deprived and poverty-stricken city areas. As a solution to these problems, none of them seems to have chosen the 'blame and shame' policy which characterises the treatment of schools in this country in the 1990s, which results in school closure accompanied by public humiliation.

Notes

[1] The full story of Hackney Downs School and its closure is told in M. O'Connor, E. Hales, J. Davies & S. Tomlinson (1998) *Hackney Downs: the school that dared to fight.* London: Falmer.

[2] The legislation on Failing Schools and Education Associations is set out in the Education Act 1993 (Part V, Chapters I and II), DfE Circular 17/93 *Schools Requiring Special Measures*, and the Education Act 1998 (Part I, Chapter IV).

References

Barber, M. (1996) *The Learning Game.* London: Gollancz.

North East London Education Association (1995) *The Future of Hackney Downs Schools: a report to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.* London: NELBA.

Smith, D.J. & Tomlinson, S. (1989) *The School Effect: a study of multi-racial comprehensives.* London: Policy Studies Institute.

Tomlinson, M. (1997) The devil is in the detail, *Education Guardian*, 7 January.

The Research and Information on State Education Trust

Specialisation without Selection?

RISE, the Research and Information on State Education Trust, has produced an excellent four-page leaflet (RISE Briefing No. 1, May 1998) reviewing all the recent research evidence with regard to specialisation and selection. The author of *Specialisation Without Selection?* is Tony Edwards, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The purpose of the Briefing Paper is not to argue *for* or *against* the Labour Government's Specialist Schools Policy, but to review evidence relevant to assessing its more likely effects. It is therefore more moderate and objective in tone than my own Editorial for this number, although it reaches many of the same conclusions.

The Review is organised around three of the main claims made in support of what has appeared to successive governments to be an evidently good thing. These are:
(1) that parents want greater curriculum choice;
(2) that specialisation is quite different from selection; and
(3) that diversity through specialisation will raise educational standards in and beyond the specialist schools themselves.

Professor Edwards argues that although it is too soon for a decisive assessment of the validity of these three claims, the weight of evidence supports the following six conclusions:

(1) there is no evident parental demand for specialised forms of curriculum;
(2) in the British, particularly the English, context, specialisation as a means of 'diversifying' and 'modernising' the school curriculum confronts a formidable obstacle – the continuing high prestige of the traditional-academic curriculum;
(3) specialisation is hard to separate from straightforward selection, certainly in conditions where schools compete for pupils;
(4) 'selection by interest' also tends to produce socially segregated intakes;
(5) the early identification of aptitude for particular subjects, defined as *promise* rather than *achievement*, remains a problem without technically well-grounded and educationally acceptable solutions; and
(6) without valid evidence that 'specialist schools' are, in fact, more effective, the extent to which they are preferentially funded is inequitable.

RISE depends on donations and the sale of publications. Those who want more information or to make a donation should contact the Trustees at: RISE, 54 Broadwalk, London E18 2DW, United Kingdom. Tel: 0181-989-4356.

Clyde Chitty

Some Thoughts on Spiritual Education

Derek Gillard
Derek Gillard recently retired from teaching after 31 years, 11 of them as a Head. He now writes for children and lectures on spiritual and moral education and on bullying in schools.

What do we mean by 'the spiritual'?
First, 'the notion of the spiritual is ultimately impenetrable' (Webster, 1990). Bernard Lovell, the astronomer, said recently on Radio 4, 'It is perfectly simple to give a scientific explanation of a sunset, but the beauty – that's spirituality'. In *The Curriculum 5-16*, HMI talked of 'moments of insight' and suggested that they were 'an indication that there is a side of human nature and experience which can be only partially explained in rational or intellectual terms' (HMI, 1985).

Second, it is concerned with identity. 'A person should become a little more himself.' In the words of Rabbi Susya, 'In the world to come I shall not be asked "Why were you not Moses?" I shall be asked "Why were you not Susya?"' (Webster, 1990). David Pascall, then Chair of the National Curriculum Council, said in a speech to the RE Council for England and Wales (May, 1992), 'It is to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our response to challenging experiences of life, such as death, suffering, beauty and the rare encountering of real goodness.'

Of course, we don't develop our identities in isolation. We are who we are in the context of the society in which we live. 'People can only become persons in a society which respects their dignity as self-determining agents, capable of making moral choices and decisions. Children will only develop as persons insofar as they learn to think of themselves as such' (Kirby, 1981).

And third, it is about values, 'basic ethical principles derived from the inner life' (Read et al, 1986). There is, of course, no such thing as values-free education. Roger Straughan (1982) says, 'All teachers in their interactions with individuals, groups and classes, are inevitably seen to support certain values by their encouragement or discouragement of certain forms of behaviour'. With regard to the formal curriculum, I suggest that most, if not all, school subjects already possess a moral dimension and that moral education should be viewed as a whole-curriculum issue, rather than as a separate timetabled subject. However, as Roger Straughan points out, there is no guarantee that all teachers will pay sufficient attention to the moral dimension of their subject and it is also arguable that moral education requires as much specialist knowledge and expertise as any other subject. Hence, Personal and Social Education has been a popular addition to the curriculum since the early 1980s. Roger Straughan suggests that '*Personal* and *social* seem to be more acceptable adjectives than *moral* at present'.

Speaking on Independent Radio News on 4th August 1992, Baroness Blatch said, 'The moral and spiritual development of our pupils should underpin all they do in school. We are concerned with the wholesomeness of young people, we want them to have high moral values' (a bit rich, coming from a member of what many of us would regard as the most immoral government of the century!).

It is worth making the point that spirituality is not about being religious. Spirituality is 'often mistakenly equated with religion' says Martin Israel (1974) and David Pascall suggests that the term applies 'to something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and not necessarily expressed through everyday language'. We're not necessarily talking about God, therefore, rather about an acceptance that life cannot satisfactorily be explained in purely materialistic terms.

In his book, 'One Man's Advent' (1985), Tony Bridge, then Dean of Guildford, explores this point. He tells the story of a German friend who witnessed an SS Guard kill a young pregnant woman in front of her two small children. What he had witnessed 'could not be adequately described in terms of the mere elimination of a chance biochemical accident of the earth's random physics and nothing more'. He goes on to ask the reader 'whether he or she could have treated the first person they ever loved and held in their arms in all their naked vulnerability, surrender and uniqueness as no more than a biochemical accident'.

Are our emotions to be regarded with the seriousness of rational thinking? Tony Bridge suggests that 'no amount of rational thinking will do much to open my eyes to the splendour of Duccio's Maesta in Sienna or my ears to the glory of Byrd's Five-part Mass, nor will rational thinking teach me as much about my lover, child or lifelong friend as I will learn from loving them'.

For the religious, of course, God is 'the ultimate spiritual reality' (Watson, 1987). Martin Israel suggests that 'spirituality is the movement of the personality of God', and for Harry Williams (1979) 'God is always present and waiting to be discovered'. However, we are not all religious, and we must not confuse spirituality with religion, but we should accept that religions have a spiritual dimension and may, therefore, have something of value to tell use.

So should there be a spiritual dimension in education? Derek Webster is concerned that 'currently education does function in forgetfulness of anything other than its positivist dimension'. David Pascall makes the point that 'education is more than a collection of skills and acquiring of facts'; it is a preparation for life. Spiritual growth is fundamental to learning, spiritual and moral development are the responsibility of the whole school. Spirituality is to do with the search for meaning in life and values by which to live. Jo Cairns (1992) suggests that pupils need to become

numerate, literate and 'numinate'. Derek Webster suggests that 'the quest for wisdom, for identity, for ecstasy' should be part of education. And Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, writing in *The Observer* in April 1992, noted that there were 'signs of reawakening of interest in spiritual things'.

However, David Pascall says, 'RE is probably the only subject on the curriculum which is required consistently to dwell in depth on questions about the nature and origin of spiritual experiences'.

How can religious education contribute to promoting the spiritual? In his book, *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education* (1983), Edwin Cox listed 'Six sensitivities'.

He talks of a sense of the mystery inherent in life. 'Religions refer to this as the numinous or the sense of the sacred.' Then there is a sense of continual change. He quotes Heracleitus, an Ephesian philosopher of around 500BC: 'You cannot step twice into the same river, for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you'. Thirdly, there is a sense of our relationship to, and dependence on, the natural order, and fourthly, a sense of order in what we experience. Without this, he says, 'the questions of purpose that religions are concerned with will not seem worth discussing, and religions will not seem worth taking seriously'. His fifth sensitivity is the realisation that there are other persons in the universe. 'This leads to an appreciation of our own personal position in society and to an awareness of the moral question of how others ought to be respected and treated.' And, finally, he talks of a sense of right and wrong, 'a hunch that there are moral choices to be made' without which 'moral search will seem meaningless and unnecessary'.

David Hay (1982) suggests that religious education can help to combat materialism. 'Pious discussions amongst the well-to-do over the plight of the world seldom result in effective action, when, in their heart of hearts, they believe that competitive striving for material wealth is the only way to ensure personal well-being.' And, according to Jo Cairns (1992), religious 'offers teachers the opportunity to help their pupils become sure-footed in the non-cognitive aspects of awareness.'

However, we should be aware that religions are not without their problems with regard to spiritual education. First, religions have a history of indoctrination, which is the antithesis of education. As John Dryden wrote,

By education most have been misled,
So they believe, because they were so bred.
The priest continues what the nurse began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.

Secondly, what about the validity and truth-claims of religions? Brenda Watson again: 'Religion is concerned with the ultimate spiritual reality (God). It is perfectly possible to disagree that there is such a reality, but no study of religion should begin with this assumption. It is like a novice scientist saying that there cannot be any elementary particles, so that the only thing we can study is the behaviour and motivation of those scientists who say there are. The almost exclusive concern in religious education with what religious people do or think reflects the same preconception, namely, that we cannot take seriously the possibility that they may be right in what they say about spiritual reality.'

Well, I for one would be more inclined to 'take seriously' the truth-claims of religions if they hadn't peddled some pretty dubious beliefs over the centuries. For example, Ursula King (1989) notes that, 'In many, though not all, religions of the world women are considered as spiritually inferior'. And in the past year or so we've had a holy tomato in Huddersfield and a holy aubergine in Bolton (both spelling out Koranic messages in their flesh), holy tortillas in California (showing Christ's head) and Hindu statues drinking milk.

Another problem is the inclination of governments to use religious education to promote morality and spirituality in the hope of producing compliant citizens. This can clearly be seen in the Education Acts of 1944 and 1988. There are dangers here, not least for religion itself. Ronald Goldman wrote (1965), 'To use Christianity as a pew-fodder, citizenship-fodder and democracy-fodder device completely contradicts the teachings of Christ himself. Christianity should be taught because it is true'.

Finally, it seems to me that the greatest threat to spiritual education lies in the Government's obsession with 'standards'. 'There is the danger that, in giving way to a popular insistence upon standards defined in simplistic terms, teachers, by paying too much attention to those aspects of education that can be tested, will tend to overlook some of the broader human vistas of education represented, for example, by the arts and sciences, by environmental explorations and other activities, the outcomes of which are difficult to measure' (Kirby, 1981).

I agree with David Pascall. Education is 'more than a collection of skills and acquiring of facts, it is a preparation for life'. 'In a changing world the most urgent task is to encourage the spirit of inquiry among pupils' (Kirby, 1981).

It is the death of the spirit we must fear.
To believe only what one is taught and brought up to believe,
to repeat what one has been told to say,
to do only what one is expected to do,
to live like a factory-made doll,
to lose confidence in one's independence and the hope of better things -
that is the death of the spirit.
Tokutomi Roka (quoted in Carr, 1972)

References

Bridge, A. (1985) *One Man's Advent.*
Cairns, J. (1992) Religious education and the humanities, in P. Gordon *Teaching the Humanities.*
Carr, J.L. (1972) *The Harpole Report.*
Cox, E. (1983) *Problems and Possibilities for Religious Education.*
Goldman, R. (1965) *Readiness for Religion.*
Hay, D. (1982) *Exploring Inner Space.*
HMI (1985) *The Curriculum 5-16.*
Israel, M. (1974) *Summons to Life.*
King, U. (1989) *Women and Spirituality.*
Kirby, N. (1981) *Personal Values in Primary Education.*
Read, Rudge & Howarth (1986) *How Do I Teach RE?*
Straughan, R. (1982) *Can We Teach Children To Be Good?*
Watson, B. (1987) *Education and Belief.*
Webster, D. (1990) A spiritual dimension for education, in Francis & Thatcher, *Christian Perspectives for Education.*
Williams, H. (1979) *The Joy of God.*

Tensions in and Prospects for School Improvement: a comment on the White Paper *Excellence in Schools*

David Hopkins
David Hopkins is Chair of the School of Education at the University of Nottingham.

Those of us who spend much of our professional lives labouring in that part of the educational vineyard known as 'school improvement' have recently been celebrating. For decades now we have been the poor relations of the field, tolerated, talked to at parties, but not really regarded as being a main player. But as Western societies have in recent years grappled with the challenges of economic growth and social dislocation, our particular contribution to educational change has increasingly been recognised as important and helpful.

The emergence of school improvement from 'the shadows' is to some of us, however, a mixed blessing. As with any new idea, much is expected of it, particularly from politicians desperately seeking for simple and rapid solutions to complex problems. School improvement's time in the sun will be short lived unless it can persuade its new found friends that it is not a 'quick fix' response to educational change. Our approach to school improvement - which we define as a strategy for educational change that focuses on student achievement by modifying classroom practice and adapting the management arrangements within the school to support teaching and learning - implies a medium term and systemic orientation. The challenge of enhancing student achievement requires a purposeful and strategic response.

At the same time as pressure on schools and school systems have increased, so too has the context of schooling changed dramatically. In most Western educational systems, there has been a move from a somewhat paternalistic approach to education to a situation where schools are not only encouraged, but are increasingly required, to take responsibility for their own development. The emphasis on self-improvement has increased in the past decade as a consequence of the trend in most Western countries towards decentralising the responsibility for the implementation of educational reform. Alongside this increase in political pressure for institutional renewal, there has been a steady realisation that traditional strategies for educational change are not working. In recent years, it has become starkly apparent that, as strategies for educational reform, neither centralisation nor decentralisation works and that a better way must be found.

The DfEE's 'Improving School' programme has been one response to this challenge. It advocates a five stage cycle of target setting located within a self-evaluation framework that is supported by the outcomes of OFSTED inspections. With the publication of the White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, policy support is now provided for this general approach to school improvement. Some of the themes in it directly related to school improvement are:

- The drive to raise standards of achievement and learning;
- A particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy;
- The importance of early years education in providing the foundation for learning;
- Strengthening school management and professional development in the support of student achievement;
- The use of target setting as a key school improvement strategy;
- Developing innovative partnerships to support learning.

These themes which are obviously more fully developed in the White Paper provide not only a policy framework, but also contain some of the key ingredients for a successful contemporary approach to school improvement. I doubt, however, if they will deliver the higher level of achievement on which the White Paper is premised. There are two reasons for this pessimism. The first is that the approach being advocated is insufficiently strategic and ignores what is known about integrative and successful school improvement efforts. Second, what it takes to impact effectively on classroom practice or the 'learning level' is underestimated, and similarly what is known about innovations in curriculum and teaching is at best only superficially addressed. I will briefly address both of these points.

Proposals for 'target setting' in the White Paper are illustrative of a tactical rather than a strategic approach to school improvement. Schools are now actively being encouraged to use local and national benchmarks to compare their own performance with those of others, and legislation for target setting is soon to be introduced. Although many schools are finding the use of comparative data helpful in setting targets to improve pupil performance there are serious dangers in adopting such a simple-minded approach to school improvement. Our own research, for example, suggests that when schools are faced with targets such as an increase in A-C results at GCSE, they adopt 'short-term' measures such as 'homework clubs' targeting students at the C-D divide, and changing examination boards. These tactics often result in short-term improvement, but such increases in attainment are rarely sustained beyond a year or two. Although the setting of targets is a useful and motivating activity, without a focus on those strategies that lead to enhanced performance, usually becomes an end in itself, rather than the first step in an improvement process.

It is salutary to compare the approach to school self-improvement advocated by the DfEE's five cycle with the evidence from research and evaluations of successful school improvement projects in a variety of Western countries. This accumulated experience and knowledge has moved school improvement to a position where some reasonably robust guidelines for action can be established. Although similar in aspiration, this evidence contrasts sharply with the advocacy of the present Government. In

general, it appears that effective school improvement initiatives tend to:

- focus on specific outcomes which can be related to student learning, rather than succumbing to external pressure to identify non-specific goals such as 'improve exam results';
- draw on theory, research into practice, and the teachers' own experiences in formulating strategies, so that the rationale for the required changes is established in the minds of those expected to bring them about;
- recognise the importance of staff development, since it is unlikely that developments in student learning will occur without developments in teachers' practice;
- provide for monitoring the impact of policy and strategy on teacher practice and student learning early and regularly, rather than rely on 'post-hoc' evaluations;
- 'pull all relevant levers' by emphasising the instructional behaviour of teachers as well as school level processes, at the same time as paying careful attention to the consistency of implementation.

All of these conditions need to be in place if significant improvements in student achievement are to be realised. As it stands, current policy is directing schools and LEAs to only the first of these activities. Although the setting of targets provides a powerful way for schools to set clear and direct goals for raising standards, and although target setting raises expectations, directs efforts, and demands the planned use of resources, once the targets are set, many schools find themselves at a loss as what to do next.

The second point relates to the crucial failure of most British attempts at school improvement to impact on the 'learning level'. In our experience most school improvement initiatives are poorly conceptualised in the precise ways in which they might affect learning in the classroom which is the educational factor with the greatest impact upon pupil outcomes. Whilst many schools are pulling the 'levers' of curriculum and organisation, the precise ways in which these changes impact upon learning are unclear and usually unaddressed.

Teaching is more than just presenting material, it is about infusing curriculum content with appropriate instructional strategies that are selected in order to achieve the learning goals the teacher has for his or her students. Successful teachers are not simply charismatic, persuasive, and expert presenters; rather, they create powerful cognitive and social tasks for their students and teach the students how to make productive use of them. One can summarise the evidence of teaching and curriculum and their impact on student learning as follows:

- There are a number of well-developed models of teaching and curriculum that generate substantially higher levels of student learning than does normative practice.
- The most effective curricular and teaching patterns induce students to construct knowledge - to inquire into subject areas intensively. The result is to increase student capacity to learn and work smarter.
- Importantly, the most effective models of curriculum and teaching increase learning capacity for all students, greatly reducing the effects of gender, socio-economic status, linguistic background, and learning styles as factors in student learning.
- These curricular and teaching patterns represent new approaches for most teachers – these represent additions to their repertoire that require substantial study and very hard work if implementation in the classroom is to take place.

It is experience and research such as this that provide the most positive critique of current Government policy. There is no doubt that this Government is committed to the aspirations of school improvement, and that is evident in the White Paper. What *Excellence in Schools* lacks is considered conceptual framework in which to drive forward and deliver the educational agenda which has already motivated a generation of educational activists. Having identified targets for achievement in key learning areas, the Government now needs to address in seriousness and modesty three further key issues. They are:

- The Government and/or LEAs should be developing and piloting curriculum and instructional programmes that directly address in implementable ways the targets that the country, LEAs and schools are setting themselves. Take the example of the National Literacy Strategy. As it stands, it is of course necessary, but only in a minority of cases is it a sufficiently specific strategy for schools to adopt.
- If we achieve this – a range of policy options related to programmes that really work - then schools and LEAs could begin to select from among a range of options those strategies that address the particular targets they have set, the learning needs of their students, and that particular stage of development the school is on. Staying with the Literacy example, those schools faced with the most challenging targets should have made available to them well-structured whole school approaches to literacy such as the 'Success for All' project we are piloting in Nottingham.
- With a series of programme options available schools and LEAs are then in a position to address more directly the crucial issues of staff development and consistency of implementation that are so necessary for ensuring student achievement. This would make it easier for Government to target funding to those schools in the greatest need in the far more secure knowledge that what they were going to do would achieve the goals the system as a whole had set itself.

What the White Paper offers us is a glimpse of this future, with certainty in the area of target setting, but rhetoric or ambivalence in the crucial areas related to the adoption and implementation of practices that have a proven track record of impacting positively on student learning and achievement. In order to ensure that the White Paper themes do reach the level of the classroom, the DfEE with others need to produce a range of carefully selected curriculum and instructional strategies that are designed to meet the particular development goals of schools. Further, there will also be the need to focus not just on how innovations impact on schools, but on how such innovations can move up the scale and make an impact on many schools and systems. Without such an approach to school improvement, the evidence of practice and research clearly suggests that society will continue to set educational goals that are, on current performance, beyond the capacity of the system to deliver.

Defining the Standard: achieving status – some reflections on initial teacher training

Kate Gilmore, Nicola Heesom & Cathy Parks, with a Foreword and Afterword by **Liz Thomson**
Kate Gilmore has just completed her fifth year of teaching and is currently Phase Co-ordinator for Y4/5/6 at a large urban primary school in Greenwich. Nicola Heesom and Cathy Parks have both just completed their third year of teaching. Nicola teaches at Eldene Junior School in Swindon and is Curriculum Co-ordinator for Technology, Drama and the Library. Cathy teaches nursery age children at Thongsley Infant School in Cambridgeshire.

Foreword

This article is concerned with the effects and the value of initial teacher training (ITT). It focuses on the early experiences of three young teachers and their reflections on the ways that their initial training course prepared them to become confident, capable and successful teachers.

All three teachers are working in primary schools and were trained after the advent of the National Curriculum. However, since they were trained, new criteria for the initial training of teachers have been established which specify in detail the English and mathematics curricula which should be taught to all students undertaking courses of primary ITT. It might be thought that this, coupled with the more prescriptive approaches to meeting the requirements of the Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks, would dampen the obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment that Cathy, Kate and Nicola show for teaching young children. However, before reaching such conclusions, it is important to read what these young teachers have to say and also to consider what are the defining characteristics of a good teacher.

Kate

I started teaching in 1993 for the London borough of Newham in nursery school. I moved to a junior school in Sydenham, South London in 1994 as a music co-ordinator teaching Y3. In 1996 I taught for Nottinghamshire with a mixed Y5/6 class with responsibility for the Y5/6 team. This year I have started working for the London Borough of Greenwich, teaching Y5 in an urban school with very demanding children, with the added responsibility of being Y4/5/6 Phase Co-ordinator.

This year has been my most difficult in teaching so far. It has been more difficult than my NQT year, because this year has been my first in Senior Management. After five years of teaching I have found an aspect of my job that I thought I hadn't been trained for in my initial teacher training. I could say that so far I have been lucky but I don't think that's true. I think that the BA(Hons) QTS I gained from Bishop Grosseteste College, Lincoln, enabled me to sail (relatively easily) through my first few years in the job. During those years, I developed skills and gained knowledge which enabled me to do the job that I currently do. I firmly believe that had I not received a thorough initial training, I would still be working at the 'basics' of teaching.

I adored my time at college. I adored higher education. I adored my course. From the start of my course at Bishop Grot, the buzzword was 'children'. That is what the whole business is about, you were told, and the quicker everyone realised that the better. College made it very difficult to forget. No sooner had you made a scale model of the Students' Union building with wood, PVA and a couple of Jinks' Triangles, than some tutor would be saying 'Now, how would you approach this with a group of 5-year-olds?' Every term they sent us back to school either on a teaching practice, or to collect evidence, or to work on specific training objectives with small groups of children. This was such a learning experience for us.

In my opinion, there is no better place than school to learn about teaching children, through experiencing as much of it as you can. Every school was different, children were different, staff were different, teaching styles were different. And, when I left college I found (lo and behold) it was the same in the real world! Experiences in school, with the safety net of college under you, meant getting it from the horse's mouth! It was a time for trying out your incredible theories, fantastic lesson plans, top quality strategies for behaviour, only to find that they didn't work! But with so many school experiences this meant you could work out others, with support back at college, so that next time (and hopefully forevermore) you'd succeed.

Everyone knew where they stood at college, whether you were a high flier, an average achiever or someone who 'needs support'. College had very clear, high expectations and very clear strategies and procedures for assessment, using their findings to aid development. This is exactly how I have continued to operate with my classes, in may classrooms, and also now with my staff team.

But by far the element of my training that has been of most value is planning. There was a huge emphasis placed on the planning process. 'Too woolly, too vague' tutors would say when confronted by my first attempts at learning objectives. 'Be specific'! I was taught that children needed to understand concepts, learn or develop skills, gain knowledge and develop attitudes. That was, I think, the most significant piece of learning I encountered. Significant because, since leaving Bishop Grot, I have always planned the children's work like that. Some schools I have worked in are already using these approaches whereas there are others I have introduced it to. I recently introduced a very experienced colleague in my team to the idea of breaking down his learning objectives in this way, and he said 'I didn't realise it was so clear like this'. When he realised that his assessment could come straight from the learning objectives, his face was a picture!

At college nothing was overlooked. We would sit in the Students' Union bar moaning about our workload and the amount of work we didn't think we needed to do! But I look back and realise that it's because of the 'work' I did that I know what I know and am where I am.

College used to say that it was no good knowing it in

your head if you couldn't prove it or demonstrate it. I have given this advice to colleagues during the run up to OFSTED; to my team during INSET time on planning and assessment; to parents at parents evening about their children. And, most importantly, I give it to the children I teach – on the carpet, during mental maths, on the computer or in preparation for SATS.

The most valuable aspects of my course took four years to sink into my brain and come out again in the form of teaching. I never realised the worth of what college taught me until I started to use it! I'm writing this and reading my first few comments and I am contradicting myself. Yet again, college have proven themselves. I still don't realise how many of my skills I learnt there until I need to use them. Maybe it's not been as difficult a year as I thought!

Nicola

When I left Bishop Grosseteste College in July 1995, I had secured a job at Ruskin Junior School in Swindon. I spent two years at Ruskin School working with Year 3 children. I really enjoyed my time there, including the OFSTED Inspection in the November of my first term. I was well prepared for this by BGC, because whilst on final teaching practice I actually had OFSTED inspectors observing and giving feedback on a couple of my lessons. The observations and feedback weren't dissimilar from those that the tutors at BGC undertook during out teaching practices right from the start of the course. We had also had various lectures and seminars at college about what an OFSTED inspection involved, so I knew what to expect.

I must be a glutton for punishment as I have just moved to a school which is being inspected this year. I feel that I am less inhibited than my colleagues about having people in to 'watch' me teach and believe that this stems from being used to people observing me right from the beginning of my teaching course. I'm also relatively comfortable teaching alongside other colleagues (team teaching) as this was another experience I had at BGC where I had to teach alongside another student for one of the teaching practices.

In my first job, I was very eager to share my curriculum expertise with my colleagues. I began by helping a colleague with the co-ordination of English, which was the subject I had specialised in at college. By the summer term of my first year of teaching at the school, I felt ready to take on the responsibility of a curriculum area of my own. I was given Design Technology, an area that was new to me, but I felt that the knowledge I had gained from my time at college had equipped me to cope with the challenge. The following September I began a 20-day Open University course in the subject, Design and Technology in the Primary Curriculum, in order to develop my subject knowledge further. For the course I had to complete three assignments which I was able to do with ease, after all the assignment writing I had undertaken at college.

During my time as Curriculum Co-ordinator at the school, I led staff meetings and advised my colleagues on aspects of my curriculum area – all things I had been given opportunities to practise at college. During our final year at college we had to develop our consultancy role, and as my subject was English all the sessions I prepared and led for fellow students and teachers alike were all English based. However, although the subject area is different, I have been able to use the skills I gained and adapt them for co-ordinating technology.

At the end of my first two years of teaching, I moved to another primary school in Swindon, where I took up the position of Technology Co-ordinator with a point for responsibility, and another OFSTED inspection this year!

When I started my first job, I began alongside another newly qualified teacher. This was good as we were able to support each other. She felt that it took her a full academic year to reach the stage that I was at when I started. I feel that this reinforces my views that I was very well prepared for the task ahead. I know that I am able to teach all areas of the curriculum and plan interesting topics and activities. I also have the ability to display children's work effectively and create a stimulating environment – all very important skills that I learnt during my initial teacher training course.

My college course equipped me as much as is possible for my chosen vacation. I haven't come across anything which has been a surprise for me and I have felt able to cope in all situations.

Cathy

I went to college wanting to teach, knowing the professional rewards it might bring, but without any firm information about what 'teaching' really involved. I attended Bishop Grosseteste College from September 1991 to July 1995. I started with the clear idea that I wanted to teach younger children having gained some limited experience and confidence with this age group. I am currently in my third year of teaching, and have already experienced team teaching, two vastly different schools with diverse philosophies of teaching, and three different age groups throughout Key Stage 1. I have also taken responsibility for two curriculum areas, geography and design technology.

Whilst at college I was introduced to a theoretical framework which related directly to the philosophies of teaching and children development and to the practice of teaching all National Curriculum subject areas. This framework also included inputs on dealing with parents, behaviour management, the classroom environment and structuring adult help within the classroom. This provided a good basis to build upon as I entered my first teaching post.

In my main subject, geography, I attended lectures on practical ideas for the application of the subject in the classroom and looked at how to co-ordinate this curriculum area throughout a primary school. Since I started teaching this has proved invaluable, particularly when advising other members of staff on the National Curriculum requirements. I have also been able to give practical help on teaching the different components, especially if this was a particular weakness of a colleague.

Curriculum co-ordination for me has also involved the organisation and management of resources, updating and evaluating policies and schemes of work, in consultation with the Headteacher and other colleagues. I learnt the importance of discussion and consultation at college and used these processes regularly throughout teaching practice and college life. During teaching practice emphasis was placed upon planning for the classroom, which I feel is of great importance to allow me to establish a firm routine. I have had experience of planning all the National Curriculum subjects in detail which has helped me to highlight and respond to the needs of all the children I have worked with.

As a practising professional I recognise and value the need for accountability and believe that this helps me to develop further as a teacher.

In my first teaching post, I had a large group of children with special needs who required constant monitoring and assessment in order to provide information for parents and subsequent teachers. The importance of this kind of information was stressed throughout the four-year course and has since enabled me to make professional judgements about children and make sure their needs are catered for, academically and socially. Ideas and advice were given about effective teaching, including the importance of time management as part of the planning process. On teaching practices, targets were set to match planning to the needs, experience and ability, of individual children, and a strong emphasis was also placed upon making the work purposeful and meaningful. I now find that this approach has become part of my own philosophy and practice, and constantly use the targets as a form of self-checking criteria whilst teaching.

Teaching practices and school experiences were varied during the four-year course and included working with different age groups, mixed classes and experiencing rural and urban placements. They all gave me a deeper understanding of the different and individual needs of children.

I have worked with support assistants in the classroom and believe that it is important to recognise and include their contribution to planning, record keeping and the classroom environment. I attended lectures on this aspect of teaching and although it is an area often left to the judgement of the teacher, the College gave me a basis to work upon and implement in schools. Lastly the importance of developing an active and interesting learning environment, including display, furniture and the organisation of resources, was addressed at college. I believe that I have made an impact in each classroom I have worked in, as I have always endeavoured to make the best of the classroom environment.

At college many practical tips were provided, with opportunities for practice and rehearsal of key aspects of teaching. For example, I believe that children need physical space in the classroom, especially working in the early years, with stimulating displays and well maintained resources to match their varied needs and abilities.

Throughout my first years of teaching I have had the opportunity to meet other newly qualified teachers from various institutions and we have made comparisons between our initial training courses. This further highlighted for me the breadth and depth that my college course provided for me. Although college cannot teach you everything it gave me an important framework to work with until I gained the experience and maturity to develop my own strategies and ways of coping. Above all, I believe that the course gave me the skills, abilities and confidence to become a good teacher.

Afterword

For the past three decades questions have been raised about whether ITT courses equip young teachers with the skills, confidence and capability to be effective teachers. There have been radical changes in approaches to training, not least the move to highlight the essentially practical nature of the activity of teaching and to increase the time spent by students in schools. Alongside these changes have been changes to the curriculum and to the expectation of what teachers should be able to achieve.

When reading about the reflections and experiences of Kate, Nicola and Cathy, it is clear that all three have the confidence and the capability to respond positively to any future changes. I would suggest that this is because they are self-critical, have high expectations, and recognise and acknowledge their own need to learn and to improve. Kate refers to the expectations she encountered when she was at college:

> *College had very clear, high expectations and very clear strategies and procedures for assessment, using their findings to aid development.*

and sees that she has the model both in her teaching and in the way that she works with her colleagues.

The White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, sets out the current Government's intention to raise standards across the education system and the title of Circular 10/97, which sets out the initial training requirements for teachers, is, Teaching: high status, high standards. The question of status is one that has preoccupied many teachers who have often felt that their efforts were unrecognised and unrewarded. We all know that like credibility, status should be earned or demonstrated, not given. This will occur only in situations where there are opportunities for students/teachers to demonstrate their capability, to be creative, reflexive, analytical, active and articulate. For without the ability to communicate all the good things they can do, including achieving high standards, how will they receive recognition and the status they deserve?

August's Quote of the Month

"The fact that so many of these unemployed people have resigned themselves to a lifetime of despair and poverty means they will be perfectly suited to careers as teachers."

Simon Hoggart speaking on Radio Four's *News Quiz* on Labour's New Deal plans to put unemployed people to work as classroom assistants. Broadcast on 28 August, repeated on 29 August.

Reflection in Action

Brenda Hanson
Brenda Hanson is Head of Science at a mixed comprehensive school in South London.

Claris School [1] is a multi-ethnic comprehensive school in South London, for boys and girls, aged 11-19. It has 868 pupils, 254 of whom are girls. There are six tutor groups in Years 7-11, each containing 30 pupils. The school has 68 teachers and within the Science Department, there are seven teachers working in six laboratories, with the support of 2.5 technicians.

At Key Stage 3 in science, pupils are taught a variety of units, each lasting for approximately six weeks. Units of work include topics such as safety, earth in space, light, sound and materials. There are 18 units altogether, each containing an investigation and an end-of-unit test.

In May of each year, all Year 9 pupils sit their Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs) in Science, English and Maths. These examinations are held in our large sports hall, with pupils in science taking two papers each lasting for one hour in length. Pupils are able to take two different tiers: Level 3 to 6 or Level 5 to 7. The decision is made by the classroom teacher taking into account each pupil's end-of-unit test marks during the course of Key Stage 3. The papers are marked externally.

At Key Stage 3 pupils who are at Levels 5-6 have reached the national standards which are expected to be within the compass of a "typical" pupil aged 14 years. Pupils who achieve Level 4 or below are supposedly performing less well than expected for their age.

In 1994, in science, 59% of our pupils achieved Level 4 or below. Nineteen per cent achieved Level 5-6, with none of our pupils achieving Level 7 or above.

In 1995, in science, 73% achieved Level 4 or below, with 27% achieving Level 5-6 and no-one achieving Level 7 or abo\ This was in comparison to approximately 33% in the Borough and approximately 56% nationally who achieved Level 5 or above.

In 1996, in science, 72% achieved Level 4 or below, with 18% achieving Level 5-6 and none achieving Level 7 or above. This was in comparison to approximately 37% in the Borough and 57% nationally achieving Level 5 or above.

In 1997, in science, 22% achieved Level 5-6, compared to 60% of pupils who achieved these levels nationally.

Although our results were quite pleasing in 1995, and showed some improvement between 1996 and 1997, our results in science in comparison to the results in maths and English have continued to be very disappointing. Maths and English have shown a steady improvement each year:

Year	Maths	English	Science
1994	21%	16%	19%
1995	24%	19%	27%
1996	28%	31%	18%
1997	30%	32%	22%

When our 1997 SATs results were circulated to the Department, the memo attached from the Headteacher asked us to ensure that strategies for improving our results were included in the Department's Action Plan.

As Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator, and at that time, Acting Head of Department, I decided that a potentially useful exercise and one which I believe follows the principle of 'reflection-in-action', would be to analyse the SATs papers sat by our pupils in May 1997 and which were returned to us in July 1997. In starting at this point, I felt I would be able to gather useful data to improve both my practice as a classroom teacher, and which would also, in my role as Acting Head of the Department, help me to reflect on the way the various units are taught at Key Stage 3, with the aim of improving practice within the department.

Allan M. Mackinnon has pointed out that 'reflection-in-action' is a "term put forth by Donald Schön in his ... conceptualization of the nature of professional thinking" (Mackinnon, 1987, p. 44).

Mackinnon makes clear the importance that he attaches to 'reflection-in-action' with regard to teaching when he states that "good teaching depends upon insight and insight comes from reflection" (ibid., p. 46).

Quoting from Schön's book, *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Mackinnon states that he believes Schön "conceives of 'reflection-in-action' as a means by which professional knowledge is put into play, in terms of both 'problem setting' and 'problem solving' (ibid., p. 47).

Mackinnon continues, "when a practitioner sets a problem in a situation ... the practitioner engages in a 'reflective conversation' with the practice situation. Past experiences re brought to bear on the situation; frames are imposed and bring to attention certain aspects of phenomena; problems are set and actions that entail certain solutions are formulated" (ibid., p. 47).

Schön speaks of the 'reflective process' as being 'cyclic in character'; "it uncovers new understandings of events, which in turn, fuel further reflection" and Mackinnon believes that acts of reflection are seen to occur in three phases:

Phase I involves the "initial problem setting". Mackinnon believes that "the framing of the initial problem allows the teachers to formulate a conclusion (1) about the problematic phenomenon, as well as an implication (1) for future practice".
Phase II involves the "reframing" of the initial problem. This "reframing" does not "usually occur only once, but several times" as the "problematic phenomenon is re-examined from one, or perhaps several theoretical platforms".
Phase III – "the resolve" is the "product of all the work done in phase two" and usually leads to the formulation of "a new conclusion (2) about the problematic phenomenon ... and a new implication (2)" (ibid., p. 51).

Having started Phase I of the reflective cycle which was

Question 1

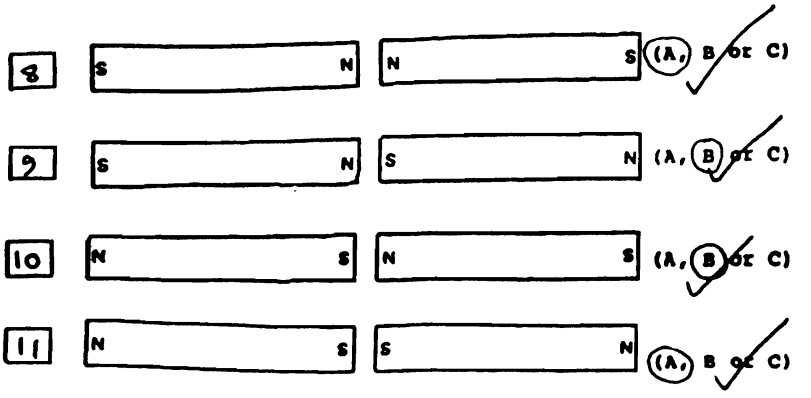
For questions 8 to 11 say what would happen to each pair of strong magnets.

Choose your answers from A, B or C :-

A. the magnets would move away from each other.

B. the magnets would move towards each other.

C. the magnets would do nothing.



to set out my initial problem: 'How can I (and subsequently the Department), help our pupils to achieve greater success in their SATs exams?', I then drew up my initial conclusion (1) which was that it was the language of the examination questions which was a barrier to achievement for our pupils.

Having then set Phase II in process by deciding to seek the answer to the problem in previous SATs papers, I decided firstly, to divide the questions up into the different topics taught at Key Stage 3. As a starting point, I decided to focus on the questions which dealt with 'electricity and magnetism', a unit which is taught in the Autumn term to all Year 8 pupils. It is a very popular unit with lots of practical work and pupils usually achieve high marks in their end of unit test.

As a consequence, I would have been confident that our pupils would do well in these questions in any subsequent examination.

However, I was to be disappointed when I analysed the three questions on 'electricity and magnetism' contained in the 1997 SATs papers.

Dividing the papers up into the six different tutor groups, I went through each paper and recorded the marks received by each pupil for each question. I then summarised the results for each tutor group and produced a summary sheet for the whole year group. There was clear evidence of 'across the board' underachievement.

These disappointing results confirmed my initial belief that our pupils fail to achieve the level that they are truly capable of because of their lack of exposure to the style and language of examination questions.

They were more successful in answering question number

Question 2

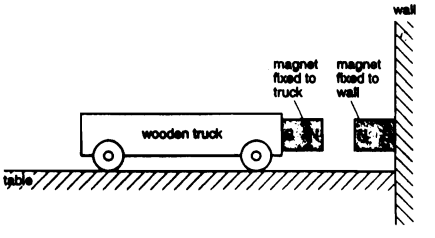
(a) The diagram shows two bar magnets.

The north pole and south pole are shown on magnet A. The poles are not shown on magnet B.

Describe an experiment you could do, using magnet A, to find which end of magnet B is the north pole and which is the south pole.

3 marks

(b) The diagram shows a wooden truck near a wall. There is a strong magnet fixed to the wall and a strong magnet fixed to the front of the wooden truck.



James holds the wooden truck so that it does not move. Then he lets go of the wooden truck. In which direction will it move?

(c) James removes the magnet from the wooden truck. He gives the truck a push so that it rolls along the table.

What effect will friction have on the speed of the truck as it rolls along?

4 because it is a 'boxed word' question of the kind they are used to in the end-of-unit tests currently in use with the Department. Our own test papers also contain a lot of multiple choice questions and pupils generally find it much easier to achieve success with these type of questions. They are not so successful in recall questions where they are required to provide their own explanations using extended prose.

Having also taken the time to record the correct and incorrect responses given by our pupils, my analysis, however, made it clear to me that our pupils are also failing to achieve success because they often cannot see the relationship between the 'school' science they undertake in a school laboratory and the 'real' science they are increasingly being asked to explore in their public examinations.

'The National Curriculum council Science: Non-Statutory Guidance' (June 1989, 3.3, p. A4) states that "school science is a reflection of science in the 'real' world", but we are clearly failing to communicate this fact to our pupils. They see the science they do at school and the science done in the 'real' world as two completely separate things and so are unable to relate the scientific concepts learnt to everyday situations.

An example of this is shown in two questions on the subject of magnetism. I will now discuss how these were tackled by our pupils.

Question 1 is contained in our end-of-unit test to test pupils' understanding of attraction and repulsion in magnets. Most of our pupils are able to complete the question successfully, and I am sure that if any pupil in Years 8 to 11 were stopped in the corridor and asked what would happen if the two North poles of a magnet were brought together they would be able to say that they would move away from each other, even if unable to remember the word 'repel'.

However, when asked to answer Question 2, an extended prose question on the same scientific concept (attraction and repulsion between magnets), very few of our pupils were able to understand and answer the question successfully. They were unable to transfer the concept of attraction and repulsion understood in the school laboratory to the use of magnets on wooden toy trucks.

This finding led to my completion of Phase II of the reflective cycle, causing me to "reframe" the initial problem and to look at it from a different theoretical platform, and then, to move on the Phase III, which was the formulation of a new conclusion to the initial problem.

This was that, whilst lack of exposure to the language of examination questions was clearly a very important reason for our pupils' failure to achieve greater success in their SATs exams, this was not, in itself, the main reason for our pupils' lack of success.

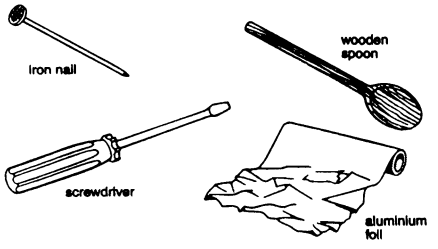
Their inability to relate the scientific concepts they are taught to everyday situations is, I believe, of far greater significance, not only in terms of future examination success, but also because it could have serious long-term consequences, both in terms of transferable life skills and the desire to study science further.

This difficulty could also help to explain the difference between our pupils' improving English and maths SATs results, and their science results which have not improved.

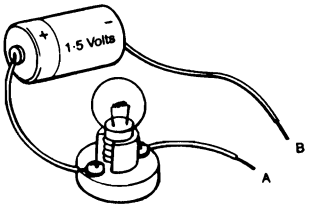
There could, of course, be a myriad of reasons why our pupils are currently achieving greater success in maths and English, but it would be very useful to analyse if the style

Question 4

The drawings show four objects.



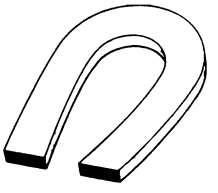
John tests each of the objects with the apparatus shown below.
He puts both of the wires A and B on each object to see if the bulb lights.



(a) Fill in the results table. Two have been done for you.

object tested	did the bulb light?
plastic screwdriver handle	no
steel screwdriver blade	yes
wooden spoon	
iron nail	
aluminium foil	

John then tests the same objects with a magnet to see if it attracts them.



(b) Fill in the results table. Two have been done for you.

object tested	did the magnet attract the object?
plastic screwdriver handle	no
steel screwdriver blade	yes
wooden spoon	
iron nail	
aluminium foil	

of teaching in maths and English does make links between 'classroom learning' and the 'real' world.

In discussing the purposes of science education, Black states that the purposes of a curriculum cannot be achieved unless there is "accessibility – pupils must understand and feel confident with the science they are studying ... relevance – pupils must be able to see the relevance of what they are trying to learn ... and enjoyment" (Black, 1992, p. 7-8).

In terms of the acquisition of life skills through science education, Black states that "pupils should be given a basis for understanding and coping with their lives". He believes that science has a lot to say about problems in people's personal lives, and, citing health as just one important example of this, where there are such problems as drug abuse and the AIDS epidemic, he states that pupils must be led to "embrace the need to look after oneself, and to help protect oneself and others" (ibid., p. 8).

I then went on to do a similar analysis of the other questions on the SATs papers, dividing them up as before into the different topics taught. This confirmed that pupils did find particular difficulties relating certain topics to their everyday lives.

This 'reflection-in-action' exercise has led to my re-evaluation of the effectiveness of our Key Stage 3 schemes of work, and as Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator, I would now like to co-ordinate the rewriting of all of our units of work, placing a greater emphasis on making science 'real' for our pupils.

How we can best do this, I am still not sure and this is an area where I would now like to do much more reading and research. If we were to be successful in achieving this, I am confident that it would be a very important step in helping to make school science "more accessible ... more relevant ... and more enjoyable" for our pupils.

In the mean time, I have started to rewrite our end-of-unit tests to include very few boxed word or multiple choice questions and many more recall questions which require pupils to use extended prose to answer them. I have also introduced homework booklets for each pupil, made up of differentiated questions taken from past SATs papers. These steps will help to increase the exposure of our pupils to the language and style of examination questions.

Having undertaken this extremely useful exercise, I fully support Mackinnon's contention that Schön's concept of reflection-in-action is indeed "applicable and appropriate" to the study of professional competence in teaching and that "a particular kind of thinking about teaching will enhance the process" of becoming a more effective teacher. It is certainly a practice that I would like to continue in future.

Note

[1] The name has been changed to preserve anonymity.

References

Black, P. (1992) The purposes of science education, in Whitelegg, Thomas & Tresman (Eds) *Challenges and Opportunities for Science Education*, in association with the Open University.

Mackinnon, A.M. (1987) Detecting reflection-in-action among preservice elementary science teachers, in Whitelegg, Thomas & Tresman (Eds) *Challenges and Opportunities for Science Education*, in association with the Open University.

National Curriculum Council (1989) *Science: Non-Statutory Guidance*. York: NCC.

NOTICE

The Chesterfield Papers

During the Autumn of 1997 and the Spring of 1998, thirteen lectures were delivered at schools throughout North East Derbyshire providing radical perspectives on the future of education in general and of comprehensive education in particular. Each of the speakers exposed a wide range of modern educational fallacies and provided radical alternatives to the current orthodoxies underpinning government education policy. The Co-ordinator of the Programme was Bob O'Hagan, Headteacher of Hasland Hall Community College, who said that one of the main aims of the Papers was to re-awaken the debate about the purposes of education. The Papers will be published by Kogan Page under the title *Modern Educational Myths*. Contributors will include: Michael Armstrong; Stephen J. Ball; Caroline Benn; Tim Brighouse; Clyde Chitty; Michael Fielding; Colin Fletcher; Valerie Hannon; Maurice Kogan; Bob Moon; Ken Spours; and Tom Wylie.

Mapping English Literature: understanding argument, improving learning and developing critical skills

Ian Duckett

This article [1] is based on papers presented at two conferences: the Teaching and Learning Argument Conference at Middlesex University, 4th September 1997, entitled *Understanding Argument, Improving Learning and Developing Critical Skills*, and the Skills versus Scholarship Open University Humanities and Arts Network Conference, 11 October 1997, entitled *Skills and Scholarship: two sides of the same coin.* The author teaches at Barnet College, London.

Teaching and learning argument is at the heart of skills development for students on academic courses. The higher level skills of understanding argument and critical analysis are built on key skills, especially communication and problem solving. It is my intention in this article to outline skills development and to suggest strategies for further enhancement of these skills in the context of curriculum enrichment.

This process involves four phases: first, a core/key skills pilot; second, the mapping of an academic subject, in this case, English literature; third, a focus on improving own learning and finding the encouragement of the skills for understanding argument, and fourth, critical analysis. In this article, I will deal mainly with the first two phases.

Understanding argument, improving learning and developing critical skills are three prongs of the plug which aims to generate academic skills and can be outlined through three inter-related projects in the GCE programme at Barnet College, exploring their potential for other educational institutions and drawing on the lessons learned from the A-level Core Skills Pilot, the English Literature Skills module and the introduction of thinking skills units on understanding argument and developing critical skills.

Fostering and nurturing the important transferable skills which enable students to understand argument, improve learning and develop criticism are at the heart of this paper.

Core skills Pilot

A Core skills Pilot across the A-level programme took place in 1994/95. In the last two years it has become an integral part of the College's successful A-level and GCSE programmes.

Mapping English Literature

Between 1994 and 1996 an attempt to develop Core skills through A-level English literature by mapping the assessment criteria for the AEBs 660 syllabus has been under way.

Improving Own Learning and Performance

The Teaching and Learning Styles Group at Barnet College has written and produced a cross-college Student Handbook on *Improving Own Learning and Performance* (1996) which covers the NCVQ Core skills for IOL&P and tackles the performance criteria for Levels 2 and 3.

Some Contemporary Contexts

A recent report conducted by *Skills and Enterprise* finds that human resources professionals consider 'soft skills, such as oral and written communication, team working, listening and problem-solving to be as important as more easily quantifiable academic qualities'. The Report also ranks time management and other aspects of study skills to be important. It seems to me therefore that communication, IOL&P, working with others and problem-solving are firmly at the centre of the skills debate.

Young & Leney (19970 write of the difficulty of combining "the idea of A-levels as 'gold standard' with the views strongly supported by the CBI, that even those with A-levels could lack core skills". If core or key skills initiatives are ever to be more than half-hearted political posturing, then this incompatibility can be overcome only if the NCVQ recommendations for the effective delivery of key skills units are put into practice:

> *successful integration of key skills units occurs where the key skills are acquired through settings which contextualise the key skills in ways meaningful to students.*

In the context of A-level subjects this means through mapping key skills across syllabuses and integrating them with subject matter to be assessed. It is this integration of skills development into the academic curriculum which concerns me in this article.

Understanding Argument and Developing Critical Skills

In the GCE programme Core skills is being used to develop the skills of argument and criticism to support academic activities both for A-levels and as preparation for higher education. Currently the University of Cambridge Local Examinations syndicate (UCLES) MENO Thinking skills Course is being used to support Core skills acquisition.

Core skills at A-level

Developments that have been enhanced by the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in relation to two different kinds of 'core skills' are those learning skills that are core to a student's whole learning programme and those study skills that are core, or central to a specific subject. The pilot scheme described below is intended to contribute to a more unified post-16 curriculum (Duckett, 1996). Clearly Core skills, be they generic core skills or the specific learning skills relating to a subject, have a major role to play, especially with less traditional students.

Core Learning Skills for A-level English Literature

The Core skills Pilot grew out of work on assignment based learning at Barnet College that has helped to identify the core learning skills relating to A-level English literature and relate them directly to the assessment objectives. The major influences have been work carried out through the AEBs London six English Literature Consortium and TVE Extension (TVEE)-funded projects including Barnet TVEIs collaborative project.

The first step towards more flexible approaches to A-levels involves identifying key, or central study skills relating to a subject in this case, A-level English literature, more specifically the A-level English literature AEB 660 syllabus. Staff development and curriculum development are often about change. Recent syllabus re-writes and alternations to funding methodology have created (to borrow the insidious market parlance so prevalent in post-Thatcherite FE) a demand for flexible approaches to A-levels.

The identification of skills and attitudes at appropriate times is a pre-requisite. In this case: comprehension; evaluation; appreciation; exploration; understanding; reflection; sensitivity; interaction.

It is then necessary to relate these to the aims of the syllabus. These examples relate to the AEBs English literature 660 Syllabus but the principles apply to any syllabus in any A-level subject and involve students in: appreciation of the wide variety of responses which literature evokes; exploration of texts in order to discover fresh insights; understanding of themselves and others; reflection on what has been read; an awareness of ambiguities and an expression of this awareness, where necessary; sensitivity to signs of mood and feeling; response in formats other than the traditional discursive or critical essay.

These changes need not be viewed in entirely negative terms. I will outline the response by one subject team to management calls for a flexible curriculum and progressive trends relating to assignment based and student centred learning.

Assessment objectives need to be matched with both the appropriate skills, and attitudes and the syllabus aims and objectives which are: see meanings beneath the surface of a text; understand the nature and interplay of characters; show appreciation of an author's style; make a well-considered personal response to a text; show how texts excite emotions in readers or audiences; make interested and informed conjectures, when asked, about the intentions of a writer; explore works written for a different kind of society and in a different idiom from the candidate's own; write effectively, and appropriately, in response to texts studied.

Armed with the results of our 'Skill Audit' we were able to produce an introductory skills based module including an identification of skills and attitudes, the aims of syllabus relating to practical criticism and comprehension and the assessment objectives. It is worth, for the purposes of illustration, pursuing one example in more detail. Meeting assessment object, ten involved the following activities: "write effectively, and appropriately, in response to texts studied". With this in mind students were asked to apply the following 17 activities to any text; empty mind of any preconceptions about writing; write down three things that the title suggests to you as an individual; agree on two or three best suggestions in your pair/group; now read the text – once to yourself – quickly!; one member of your pair/group reads the text; re-read the text individually twice; list, individually, all the things about the text that interest you for any reason. For example, usual words, words you like the sound of, repetition, patterns, contrasts, and anything else. The next stage is to agree a list of interesting features; taking a detailed look at the following aspects of the language; presence or absence of adverbs and adjectives, are verbs active or passive? Tense; find groups of words that contain a similar theme. Not worrying about whether this makes any sense at this stage; discuss whether or not any pattern is emerging yet; reading the text again. Thinking about: does what you have said make sense? Answering the following structures questions: Who is speaking? The poet or someone else? Who? Who is it addressed to? A particular person? The writer him/herself? Everyone? What is the writer's attitude to the reader? Angry? Joyful? Honest? Jokey? Teasing? Why is the text put down on paper the way it is? Describe how it is organised; what effect does it all have on you. Give another pair/group your text to read; talk them through it and answer any questions they might have; swap; choose either your text or the text you have just heard about and write about it, taking all the above into consideration and saying whether or not you like it and why.

Students were then asked to read a piece of criticism as a model and discuss the way it was constructed. The whole project has been popular with A-level students. A selection of comments from students involved in the activities described as part of the introductory module above reflect this:

> *It was an interesting way of introducing the subject of English literature by giving passages from various texts. It was very enjoyable to read. It's been a great and different experience studying this text. I've even showed it to a few of my friends and they say they liked it. I liked the different extracts from the novels that were all combined together in this module. I thought that it was a very good idea because it highlighted all the different types of writings.*

The staff development aspects has grown largely out of teachers working together on something that enhances the student learning experience, impacts on teaching and learning styles and develops the curriculum in its broadest sense.

Core skills

The general core skills, those defined by the NCVQ, in communication, working with others, improving own learning and problem solving, have been approached through a college TVEE-driven A-level Core skills Pilot which consists of two stages; the first, involving a taster assignments, has just been completed. It covered 256 students. This taster, built around the working with others performance criteria, has led to a bigger project which is based on a community action assignment designed within the framework of ASDANs FE Award Scheme.

Taster Assignment: working with others

Element 3.1: Work to given collective goals and contribute to the process of allocating individuals' responsibilities.

Performance Criteria

1. The accuracy of own understanding of collective goals is confirmed with the person(s) setting them.

2. The accuracy of own understanding of responsibilities and working arrangements is confirmed with others.
3. Own activities are directed towards achieving collective goals and meeting own responsibilities.
4. Information relevant to allocating responsibilities is fed into discussions at appropriate points and provided on request.
5. Information provided is based on appropriate evidence.
6. Offers to undertake specific responsibilities are appropriate.

Activity

1. In your groups identify a social or environmental problem you have noticed in the College.
2. In the half an hour or so allocated you should write a memo outlining a plan of action aimed at dealing with the problem you have identified.
3. Members of your group must perform the following roles: (a) Leader, (b) Scribe, (c) Researchers x 2.
4. At the end of the activity spend five minutes reflecting upon and identifying which of the performance criteria you have met.

Students who undertook the Scheme have subsequently been enrolled in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) FE Award Scheme at Level 3 and have been working on a community based assignment and a project based around their work experience.

It is too early to report on the outcomes of part two of the Core Skills Pilot, but I will tentatively assert that it has at the very least raised awareness among students, beyond the bland acceptance that study skills are a meaningless hoop to be jumped through in tutorial time and begin to demonstrate that an injection of core skills or central study skills can have some impact on a student's learning programme.

From the Heart of the Matter to the Keyhole: core skills to key skills

One of the debates fostered by the Dearing Review of 16-19 qualifications is the lax and inconsistent assessment procedures of NCVQ qualifications. Nowhere is this debate more heated than in the well-furrowed field of core skills accreditation (Duckett, 1997a).

Ever since I can remember there have been problems about the assessment of generic skills and general education aspects of vocational education, be it liberal education; general studies; communication skills; general and communication studies; social and life skills; people and communication and, more recently, common skills or core skills.

If then, there is nothing new about the problematic nature of assessing these transferable skills, supposedly a pre-requisite for a competitive UK industrial and service workforce, why the commotion on the pages of the education press and beyond? Perhaps it is because now, these 'core', 'key', 'transferable' or 'generic' skills are, for the first time, making an impact on traditional academia as well as vocational further education.

As the series of conferences in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, held as part of the consultation process for the Dearing Review, the issue most extensively discussed was core skills. The concerns and interests of the participants reflected the importance of core skills for both employment and lifelong learning.

General support for the development of written and oral communication skills, number, information technology, personal and interpersonal skills including working with others and taking responsibility for one's own learning, expressed by participants in the Review, reflects both the perceived needs of the employers and the aspirations of the students.

A CBI/TEC survey of 1995 ranked core skills in order of value to employers as: (1) communications; (2) working with others; (3) application of number; (4) improving own learning and performance; (5) problem solving; and (6) information technology. Ninety per cent of the employers surveyed rated communication as either first or second in importance and 85 per cent placed working with others in the top two skills.

Vocational and academic students alike seem to be in agreement about the value of core skills, once they understand the nature of them.

Students on the GNVQ Advanced Health and Social Care Programme at Barnet College commented positively on the opportunity to reflect on their own learning processes and felt that time spent on developing the non-mandatory core skills of working with others and improving own learning and performance, has enhanced their chances of getting into university. UCAS now emphasises the value of core skills through the Youth Award Scheme, FE Award Scheme and Universities Award (accredited through ASDAN – Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) in its notes for applicants.

A pilot scheme involving A-level students, including in a FEFC national survey, focused on communication, improving own learning and performance, working with others and problems solving, as part of a student enrichment and entitlement programme and led to some positive outcomes.

Julie, a student on the full-time A-level programme, welcomed the opportunity to gain control for aspects of the student learning experience not usually assessed in A-level courses. She said: "I can now see the value of thinking about the way I learn and working with other people. When I was introduced to the Scheme, I felt quite negative, but now I have a qualification that lists four important skills." Ellen, an A-level student at a neighbouring college which does not offer a core skills programme to its students said: "I would have loved the opportunity to have spent time working on my study skills and developing teamwork skills."

In the lengthy appendices of the Dearing Review in a section entitled *Breadth and Core Skills*, Dearing seems to be in agreement. "The most commonly expressed viewpoints referred to the need for core skills to be the same for all 16+ students, or affirmed that they should be mandatory."

On the surface at least, according to Dearing, employers and students alike, core skills are a good thing because employers and HE providers are concerned at 'deficiencies' (Dearing's term) in numerical and communication skills and that GCSE qualifications do not guarantee that students have been successful in developing these essential transferable skills.

The proposed change of name to key skills may at first glance seem to be merely cosmetic, but to me downgrades the skills from the foreground they should occupy at the heart of the learning experience and at the centre of

qualifications envisaged in the Dearing Review, to a simply mechanistic role aimed at opening the door for a glimpse of what is inside the big house of education. It seems a shame to have gone so far down the road of integration only to balk at the final hurdle and offer a learning support or basic skills model of 'core' or 'key' skills.

Flexible Approaches to A-levels: the case of English literature

The most important thing people learn through studying any written or spoken material, whether classed as 'literature' or not, is how to 'read between the lines' – that is, to grasp the context and subtext as well as what is openly stated. In the current situation, where the details of curricula are being more and more tightly specified by official diktat, it is becoming necessary for teachers who want to help students develop this capacity to learn, as it were, how to write 'between the lines' of those official curricula – in other words, to utilise the spaces within them to foster broader skills of critical reading (Duckett, 1997b).

From this perspective, we may be able to turn developments which would otherwise be threats to valid teaching and learning, for example, the pressure towards modularisation and flexible learning produced by outcome related funding, into opportunities for it. Since curricula must be re-written, there is a chance for us, through participating in that re-writing, to insert valid elements.

We should grasp this opportunity. In order to do so we need our own concept of what a coherent post-16 curriculum would look like. Such a curriculum should be based on four underlying criteria: it must be capable of being fully understood by all concerned; it must be planned; it must be enabling; and it must be about progression. For these criteria to be satisfied, all curricula would have to contain at their centre a large element of study skills.

This element of study skills should be subject-related, and it should be concentrated at or towards the beginning of any given programme. In the field of A-level English literature, it could be called 'key study skills' or 'central study skills', because the skills it would develop are those which unlock the process of studying literature and which are central to doing well in it. (Equivalent skills can be identified within all subjects.) Without such skills, no curriculum can be truly flexible.

Taking the AEB A-level English literature syllabus, our course team has identified as central the following skills: comprehension, evaluation, appreciation, exploration, understanding, reflection, interaction and sensitivity (although this might more correctly be termed an attitude). (A further skill – that of applying these at the appropriate time – is also necessary.)

Reading Between the Lines

These broad skills can then be linked with the AEBs syllabus aims, enabling us to say, for example, that for students to do well in the practical criticism and comprehension paper, they need to learn how to:

- appreciate the wide variety of responses which literature evokes;
- explore texts in order to discover fresh insights; understand themselves and others;
- reflect on what has been read; be sensitive to signs of mood and feeling.

They also need to develop and be able to express an awareness of ambiguities, plus a capacity to respond in formats other than the traditional discursive or critical essay.

From this synthesis of central or key skills with the official syllabus aims, assessment objectives can then be generated, for example:

The student can:

- see meanings beneath the surface of a text; understand the nature and interplay of characters;
- show appreciation of an author's style;
- make a well-considered personal response to a text;
- show how texts excite emotions in readers or audiences;
- make interested and informed conjectures when asked about the intentions of a writer;
- explore works written for a different kind of society and in a different idiom from the candidate's own;
- write effectively, and appropriately, in response to the text studies (Duckett, 1995).

Finally, on this basis teaching and learning modules incorporating the Central or Key Skills can be devised.

Mapping Key Skills Across English Literature

As a result of the Dearing Review the need for A-level students to achieve Key Skills qualifications has been highlighted as a matter of great importance. Before long it is likely that Key Skills will generate UCAS points for entry into higher education making the arguments for delivering Key Skills alongside A-level all the more compelling.

In order to map core skills across A-level English literature, it is necessary to highlight the skills which English literature encourages and enables students to develop at A-level.

English literature encourages and develops:

- a perceptive and personal response to an initially difficult text
- an elegantly phrased and illuminating analysis

The certification of Key Skills does not require a radical shift in the delivery of a A-level English literature course. It is merely a recognition that the student's working process naturally generates evidence of competence in many of the Key Skills. The teacher's first task is to appreciate when and how a particular activity opens up an 'evidence opportunity' and to identify this for the student. Of course, as teachers and students become familiar with the Key Skills specifications, it is likely that some minor delivery changes may be made. Introducing a discussion into a planned activity, for example, so that oral as well as written skills may be demonstrated.

Individual students will clearly have very different needs. The A-level student studying English literature, history and sociology, will have easier access to some skill areas than the one studying other combinations of A-level subjects.

The initial challenges seem to be:

- to acquire a clear understanding of the Key Skills specifications
- to consider and interpret the main terms. For example, appreciating that images in communication are not used with the figurative connotation that springs immediately to the mind of an English teacher. Specialist colleagues may be helpful in resolving ambiguities

- to examine the normal course activities as sources of skills evidence
- to consider whether some slight changes to course activities may increase the opportunities students have to develop their Key skills and enhance A-level achievement (Appleby, 1997).

The argument that Core/Key Skills have a significant role to play in the development of higher level academic skills seems to me to be incontrovertible: an able communicator, someone who is good at reflecting on their own learning processes, an effective team member and a good problem-solver cannot but be a better-rounded student who is likely to succeed on any course of academic study.

Note

[1] Historical variations in the use of core skills and key skills have meant that these terms are often interchangeable. I have, where possible, used the appropriate term for the first time of the project, initiative or learning programme concerned. I would add that for me the whole point is the importance of skills development within the curriculum and not the cosmetic changes that have been made from time to time during the last 20 years.

References

Appleby, P. (1997) *Key Skills with English A-levels.* London: RSA.

Duckett, I. (1995) Black British poetry and the new curriculum, *English in Education*, 29(3), pp. 21-25.

Duckett, I. (1996) Core skills at A-level, *FORUM*, 38, pp. 44-45.

Duckett, I. (1997a) Core skills from the heart of the matter to the keyhole, *FORUM*, 41, p. 65.

Duckett, I. (1997b) Breadth and the core, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 21, pp. 347-356.

Young, M. & Leney, T. (1997) From A-levels to an advanced curriculum of the future, in A. Hodgeson & A. Spours (Eds) *Dearing and Beyond: 14-19 qualifications, frameworks and systems.* London: Kogan Page.

Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement,* 4 September 1998

Literature and Teachers: the great English scapegoats

Victoria de Rijke
The author is Senior Lecturer in English, School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Middlesex University.

This article began in response to an apparently increasing number of articles in journals and the national press pointing to the unfortunate 'under performance' of boys at school, in particular in English. In addressing a number of simplifications that characterise these pieces, the article will also celebrate *FORUM*'s 40 years of publication by pointing to the dual value of historical reflection and learning from things that last.

Firstly, it must be pointed out that the history of education is itself a sexist one; that education in Britain was originally for boys alone (for the first twelve hundred years!) and that elementary and secondary education for all has existed for only the last 70 years. Jacqueline Rose has pointed to the sexist history of children's literature, where fiction marketed for girls was a miscellany as opposed to traditional genre writing for boys. As she says, "in the distinction between the two, literature for boys appears as the marked term of the opposition which stakes out its opposition against the rest". Rose refers to a 1887 study of what literature is appropriate for each gender by the writer Charlotte Yonge, which included a separate chapter on reading for boys, but not one for girls, with the explanation: 'Boys are here treated as a separate subject. The mild tales that girls will read simply to pass away the time are ineffective with them. Many will not read at all'. The stereotype, therefore, is as old as the publisher's invention of separate literature for each gender (twice the profit potential, after all!).

It is also relatively recent (1967) that the United Nations passed a declaration on the elimination of discrimination, and the Sex Discrimination Act became law (1975) which logically means our society still has a long way to go in climbing out of its well entrenched position of gender bias.

Secondly, there is frequently an implication in articles examining this subject that the feminist revolution could somehow be responsible for the under performance of boys. This is arrant nonsense, though it is possible that the achievements of girls – given a level playing field – are only now being fully recognised.

It is also possible that boys are suffering from feelings of emasculation linked to the apparent strength and vitality of 'girl power', but surely it takes more than a few spice girls to reverse the trend of a thousand years of history?

The serious research carried out by feminists since the 1970's offers evidence showing boys' monopoly of physical space, teacher time, attention, and even verbal interaction, but it would appear that boys are not benefiting from their extra share of the resources.

Some research has argued that boys in mixed-sex classes may seek to emphasise their masculinity by being as unlike the girls as possible, yet single-sex schooling has also been proved to benefit girls even more. Some possible reasons for this might be that boys' current behaviours are out of step with the times, are simply too old-fashioned. What Dale Spender called 'the (male) language of authority' has shifted culturally to 'a (female) language of cooperation'; and it seems boys have become effectively 'deskilled'.

One of the significant changes to our school system has been the flat testing of all pupils without rigging the tests to favour one gender, as was the former 11+ for boys. This has resulted in the open publication (through surveys, league tables, and SATS results) of test findings that demonstrate girls are doing slightly better in almost every curriculum subject, although the difference in English remains fairly wide. There is concern about this, and the Office for Standards in Education commissioned Report into "Boys and English" of 1993 is an example of acting upon that concern. This Report, based on observations made by inspectors in 51 secondary schools over two years found a 'persistent vein of low achievement, which is in turn associated with attitudes to writing and reading which are less positive than girls'. The Report appears to attribute this attitude problem to that of the English teachers who 'often have lower expectations of the boys than of girls', which influenced their progress. It would also appear that some schools have mistakenly subscribed to the discriminatory notions that boys require distinctly boyish treatment in order to succeed, which has resulted in further stereotyping of pupils' attitudes about poetry, writing, and particularly the affective aspect of English studies. Issues of the domination of space and oral discussion by boys were noted (as they have been for 20 years of feminist research) but inspectors found 'this did not always work to their advantage. Indeed it often detracted from their own learning as well as that of the class as a whole', highlighting the need for teachers to pro-actively seek equal contribution and levels of progress for every pupil's benefit.

The Report offers evidence that enthusiastic, highly organised and sensitive teaching which actively encourages all children as a community of readers, works best. This community requires positive attitudes towards the subject and acceptance of anyone's perspective and interest.

Far more research needs to be done, however, into the raising of boys' self-image and learning, and on the relative influences of parenting, media, peers, teachers and curricula on their schooling.

We need to know what kind of learning atmosphere can be offered in which boys thrive best, without detracting in any way from the achievements of girls by reverting to 'boy pleasing' strategies such as footballers' biographies in the English curriculum.

It is perhaps important to remember that most of the material on the English National Curriculum syllabus is

already written by men from Chaucer or Shakespeare onwards, and labelling English as a 'sissy' subject is clearly misplaced. The English Curriculum, like most of the rest of the Curriculum, was historically directed at boys, and founded upon the improvement and control of moral behaviour.

As Terry has pointed out, the rise of English came about through the failure of religion. George Gordon, a much earlier Oxford Professor said: "England is sick ... and English literature must save it", going on to suggest that the subject could "save our souls and heal the State". In 1921 a report on the teaching of English in England found that if the subject is 'ably and enthusiastically taught, the child's natural love of goodness will be strongly encouraged and great progress will be made in the strengthening of the will ... and the full development of the mind and character of English children'. But this was in the post-Rousseau and Froebel days when people believed children to be 'naturally good'. We exist in a time that encourages us to think of children as highly ambivalent in moral terms; and boys in particular as potentially bad, if not evil. The present Government's position is one that favours surveillance and authoritarian restraint; child curfews to control their freedom to roam, play and make trouble, suspensions from school, and even lately, hints at issues of parental responsibility and training. "Tough on children, tough on the causes of children?"

English has invariably been the scapegoat: Matthew Arnold advocated cultivating the Philistine working classes through English literature, and in fact the subject was first taught in Mechanics Institutes and Working Men's Colleges, as the 'soft' option: 'a suitable subject for women and second and third-rate men who become schoolmasters'.

It is worth noting here that the gender gap is nowhere near as pronounced as the class gap: the most affluent children continue to gain high qualifications, and the most disadvantaged none at all. Strangely little cultural regard is made of this.

Historically then, the liberal view of English as a humanitarian subject has been questioned strongly as middle-class in its conception and delivery; thereby alienating a great many pupils, and it has also been as strongly criticised for the misogyny inherent in many "classic" works of literature and the workings of the English language itself.

When I first started teaching at Middlesex Polytechnic, six months of the English foundation first-year course consisted of Homer through Racine to Shakespeare, the (male) Romantics to the modern short story and the poetry of TS Eliot, and for the remaining six months all 12 books of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Dickens's (massive) *Little Dorrit*. In the two texts written by women, the female characters depicted were suicidal; as they were in four or five of the overall texts studied! What Milton and Dickens felt about women is not perhaps their greatest contribution to the English literary heritage; the semantic derogation of 'little' (nameless) Dorrit sewing silently in the dark is perhaps one of the most striking illustrations of Dale Spender's thesis for 'man made language'. Feminist critics have made an enormous contribution to the contemporary challenge to the received 'canon', and from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* of 1929 to Toni Morrison's *Rootedness* of 1984, the message of learning from reflecting critically upon the power relations and sexual politics of our cultural pasts has been strongly made.

This English course in question has since been revised; partly perhaps out of a political correctness to refer to more culturally diverse literatures, but interestingly what is lacking now is the historical contextualisation that the original course insisted upon. One of the essays set to students was to critique the sexism evident over the years of "great" English literature, and to suggest a preferred syllabus for study. Activities such as these 'lay bare the device' in the best Brechtian sense, and offer students rare opportunities for the critical examination of political and personal allegiances in themselves, their teachers, and their curricula.

As the 20th century drew on, it would seem that English as a subject shifted from feminine to masculine, linked to wartime nationalism and the threat to traditional culture from mass society.

Now, in the last part of the 20th century, after an industrial and technological revolution, English continues to be the most controversial subject in the National Curriculum, as both the harbinger of traditional values and the rapidly changing language of modern communication.

We cannot pretend to ourselves that English has ever been a subject exclusively for girls, or that boys don't have a 'natural' interest, given that subjects have always been constructed and directed at both genders for economic and cultural reasons. We cannot pretend that it necessarily makes any difference to boys to be taught by women or men since it is patently not someone's gender that determines whether they make a good enough teacher. There are many women in teaching; particularly at primary level, and most of the men quickly seem to make either Senior Managers, Departmental and Deputy Heads or Headteachers. Why is that? Do men prefer administration to teaching? Do they prefer higher salaries and greater control than mere classrooms full of individuals? Do we all prefer it this way, in the broader cultural scheme of things?

There are many men in other sorts of jobs (professional football for instance) and for similar reasons of balance and positive role models I'd like to see more women there, but we have to accept that change will be slow if it comes at all, and that there are many cultural reasons for these inequalities.

What is disturbing is the scapegoating of English literature as somehow inherently girlish in the way it is taught, and the 'dumbing down' of boys in expectations of their abilities and interests.

There is nothing a biography about Paul Gascoigne could say that Barry Hines book *A Kestrel for a Knave* hasn't said about football, working class lads, and the passionate dream of a life beyond it all, and literature to which both girls and boys can respond with intense emotional and intellectual vigour. And there is more that this novel can do that Gazza's biography could not, and that is in the empathy with what Hines said himself about his book: 'to write about potential which is unrecognised and tragically wasted'. Whatever Gazza's tragedy may be, it was never as acutely painful as going 'unrecognised'.

Written by an ex-English and PE teacher in 1968 and reprinted over 28 times by Penguin alone, *A Kestrel for a Knave* has been on the GCSE syllabus since the 1970's, and inspired Ken Loach's socio-realist film *Kes* of 1969.

It depicts a boy who is 'under performing' at a school in the industrial north of England, yet who shows a rare achievement in training a kestrel. The story of Billy is unheroic, and ends tragically disillusioned. As a superbly disquieting critique of the education system within the limits

of a study guide, and as an example of non-patronisingly expressive writing, I quote almost in full Graham Handley's Introduction to the *Pan Revision Aids* of 1977:

> *His discovery of Kes is his education, his training of her his integrity, her murder the depths of his disillusion. Use what I have said above as a guide to your own discovery of Billy; you will, if you read closely and imaginatively, find much more than I have said here. you may find yourself moved to anger, frustration, outrage, by Billy's various plights; you may find yourself in part at least understanding why it is that society has no time for the kind of boy that Billy appears to be ... Do not, in your reading, forget that he is a small boy ... There are many portraits of children in literature ... (who) ... all too frequently suffer from idealisation, an excess of goodness (or badness), a lack of reality, a cloying approval. Billy is not such a portrait; Billy is, movingly, painfully, a life.*

A Kestrel for a Knave is part of what is a great English literary tradition; it owes a debt to the English Romantics such as Keats, where suspense rises in the threat to the kestrels life and ominously 'no birds sang', to Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre* in the quest for identity and intimacy, and to D. H. Lawrence's passionate and naturalistic belief that 'if men were as much men as lizards are lizards, they'd be worth looking at'. Like Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* before it, *A Kestrel for a Knave* celebrates the vernacular in such a way as to question the whole notion of what constitutes 'proper' or 'standard' 'Englishness'. No-one can resist the oral vitality of such language play: 'lifting t'book' (stealing a book when the library won't let him borrow one) an elder brother who is 'cock o' t'estate' whose 'or else' is 'else tha dies', or the wonderfully onomatopoeic and emphatic 't'smack' (exactly). TV football commentators would do well to read *Kes* again and improve their often desultory platitudes: 'well, it's a game of two halves' ... etc., for the metaphoric verve of 'cudgel it upfield in a travesty of a dribble'. As the headteacher says to the boys lined up outside his office for a thrashing, 'You're just fodder for the mass media!'.

With fiction like this available to us let's not pretend that literature or teachers are at fault here; if boys are under-performing, then society as a whole needs to examine how its expectations of half the human species might be detrimentally affecting their learning.

An increasing body of research makes the link between the threat (and evidence) of male unemployment as a significant disincentive to boys working hard at school, and too few good male role models in their lives. Reading biographies about Gazza will address neither of these, but studying English as an ideological system as well as a subject may offer some images of masculinity and femininity both genders can question or identify with, and ultimately learn something from.

If you consider each boy (and girl) as made up of all the 'texts' that have shaped their lives, written texts can represent only a tiny proportion of influence, and easy assumptions about gender identification get us nowhere. When I read *Kes* as a young girl, I identified with Billy; I 'was' Billy, and when boys study *Jane Eyre*, then many will feel for her, feel like her, 'be' her in the moment of reading. The cultural self is a many-faceted thing, and with the digital age, the possibility to fictionalise yourself (such as swapping gender in chat groups on the Internet) is ever more open to experiment.

As Bronwyn Davies pointed out in her research on preschool children and gender, 'masculinities and femininities vary in the same way as, say, intelligence' (and subjected to similarly nonsensical simplifications). The challenge for Davies is for us to move beyond male-female dualism, in terms of the existing variety and complexity of positions available to persons. Teachers can contribute to this challenge, as can literature, but ultimately politicians, parents and cultural communities have the greatest influence. Perhaps they should start encouraging good listening skills, sustained concentration, equal measures of self-confidence with self-discipline, co-operation, consideration, application, enthusiasm and quiet independence in equal measures to all genders.

That is what makes a good performer at school, in English as in everything else.

Letter to *The Times Educational Supplement*

Gender on the agenda at last

Having taught young children for many years, I am delighted both as a teacher and as a psychologist, that the research which demonstrates the differing developmental rates of boys and girls is at last being taken seriously in terms of its implications for education. ("Call for boys to start a year later", *TES*, June 26). What should now be taken seriously is the appropriate curriculum for all young children – not just boys. That girls may be able to cope is by no means an indication of appropriateness. As it is, staying down an extra year in a reception class will hardly be helpful if it is no more than a diluted version of the increasingly formal curriculum children are shortly to experience in the rest of their infant schooling. In our education statistics we have a tail of under-achieving, disaffected boys which also figures largely in the exclusion rates. We also know the countries with whom we are in competition start formal schooling one or two years later than Britain and do not appear to have the same problem.

Many knowledgeable and experienced practitioners already know what an appropriate curriculum could and should look like for children in this age group. In the political era that prides itself on making bold moves, perhaps a move towards it would be both bold and enlightened.

Annabelle Dixon
TES Research Fellow, Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge

Pupils' Awareness of Multi-cultural Issues in History

Sarah Miles
Having completed her PGCE year at Goldsmiths' College in 1997-98, Sarah Miles is now teaching at a C of E primary school in south-west London.

> *Our society is a multicultural and multiracial one and the curriculum should reflect a sympathetic understanding of the different cultures and races that now make up our society. We also live in a complex interdependent world and many of our problems in Britain require international solutions; the curriculum should therefore reflect our need to know about and understand other countries.[1]*

For many years, multicultural issues have been considered important within the educational world. However, I have been struck deeply by the way in which policy statements such as this one and a great many previous and subsequent statements have failed to be translated into practice. I am concerned that policies are not being implemented and that space is not being found to introduce multicultural issues across the curriculum.

This neglect of multicultural issues is particularly true within the subject of history at all levels. The history being taught in schools remains predominantly British and the dominance of British history permeates all levels of education. When I stated at university that I wished to study an option on Indian history,[2] my tutor told me that I should not do so because the names were confusing and difficult to spell: there is amongst many groups an expectation that British history should be first priority for the British.

In this article I have chosen to focus on how primary history teaching is, in fact, meeting the needs of a culturally diverse society, as Britain is today. This issue is a highly controversial one, with, sadly, many people wanting history to stress 'Britishness' without really thinking about what exactly is being defined: also, Britain is but one country within a large world and that fact must also be remembered. My classroom research was conducted at a predominantly 'white' primary school in the London Borough of Greenwich.

School Policy into Practice

To determine how this school addressed multicultural issues across the curriculum, and especially in history, I researched the humanities and equal opportunities policies and also the schemes of work. The policies were, I found, well-written, and could link well to a multicultural history curriculum.

Within the humanities policy there is a special section devoted to equality issues, which recognises that:

> *there are definite equality issues in the teaching of the humanities.*

The policy goes on to consider the many ways in which these equality issues will be addressed. The policy recognises a variety of ways of doing this:

- by promoting positive images through careful, up-to-date resourcing;
- by challenging stereotyping;
- by showing sensitivity for different culture;
- by evaluating content to ensure a balanced overview for the school.

These are all fine things to aim for. However, my concern is that policies such as this are not always being put into practice. Despite the concern with resources, most of the history resources which I saw being used in the school were white-oriented and Anglocentric. Obviously, 'the Victorians', which was my class's history topic while I was undertaking my research, does have to be, to some extent, an Anglocentric topic. However, I would argue that an attempt should be made by the class teacher to broaden the perspective of the history which the children are covering. Indeed, in the half-termly scheme of work a reference was made to the Empire. However, as time became short towards the end of the term, this was the first aspect of history to be withdrawn from the children's curriculum. I fear that this fact reflects the low priority accorded to multicultural issues in history, namely that they are fine if you can fit them in, but are not really essential and are easy targets to pick on when something has to be selected to be left out.

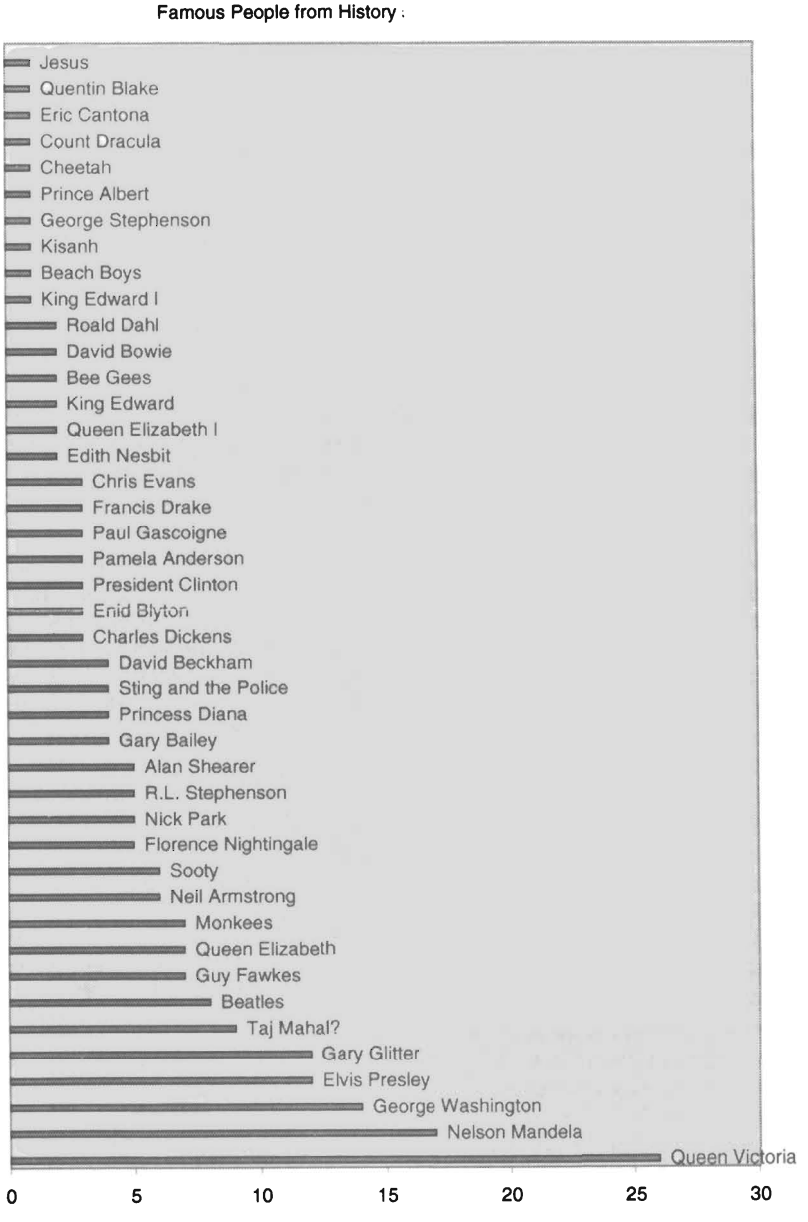
My Research Findings and the Problems they Reveal

I undertook two very different pieces of research at this school to try to determine how aware the children were of multicultural issues in history. These two pieces of work served two different purposes:

- I wanted to find out which historical personalities the children knew about.
- I wanted to see how the children would react to a lesson about a 'multicultural' aspect of history, and also to note how this affected their thinking in history and in other subjects. To do this I was also interested to note down any comments the children made outside the context of this lesson about the history of different ethnic groups.

I shall consider, firstly, my quantitative research: were the children in my class aware of historical figures beyond Britain, or even from different ethnic groups within Britain? I shall then move on to consider what the children said in the lesson during which I undertook my qualitative research to see what the children actually thought about being asked to do multicultural history.

I used a 'Circle Time' lesson to find out about historical personalities of whom the children were aware. I used a basic questionnaire which I gave to each child, following a brief introduction, and asked them to fill it in individually. The children worked quietly for 20 minutes on their questionnaires, and then I drew the children together to talk about the personalities whom the children had identified and why they were important. I used this time to ensure that the children knew about each other's ideas, and I felt that it was important to get the children talking to try to remove any misconceptions which they had.



The questionnaire results were very interesting indeed, as is clear from the chart accompanying this article: many of the people whom the children listed were people whom they had recently been studying in one way or another which did not surprise me. These ranged from Roald Dahl to the Monkees: their most recent topic was the Victorians, hence the fact that all 26 children named Queen Victoria as one of their historical personalities. I suspect the topic also led on to the inclusion of Prince Albert, George Stephenson, Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale. However, there were no references to Mary Seacole which is disappointing, since she is one of the best resourced figures for multicultural history in this country and her time of influence was during the Crimean War in the same way as Florence Nightingale who received five mentions: I later read the children an extract from 'The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole' to try and fill this gap, but I felt it was disappointing that Florence Nightingale was a comparatively well-known figure and Mary Seacole was neglected.

Generally, the children's responses were full of figures whom they had heard of through popular culture, from football to pop music! TV stars also featured though I was somewhat bemused about their possible historical significance, while Sooty has endured as a popular figure for many years, I am a bit dubious about the longevity in terms of fame of Chris Evans and especially Pamela Anderson. I am sure Jesus, who got only one vote compared to Pamela's three is a far more significant figure!

In terms of multicultural history, the figures which the children suggested were very limited indeed. Nelson Mandela was actually the second most popular figure named, which was pleasing. However, Nelson Mandela was named far more regularly as a specifically 'African' figure than he was as a historical personality. The children named him when they were forced to think about someone from Africa, but otherwise he didn't seem to have leapt into their heads as a historical figure. I fear this may be a result of the poor coverage of Africa in general within primary schools. Where Africa is considered in both history and geography, it tends to be in a specifically 'African' context. Africa rarely arises in a regular history or geography topic, and thus, to many of the children it seems to stand alone somehow. However, despite this criticism, I suppose we should be grateful that Nelson Mandela was mentioned at all!

These figures show the dominance of Britain in the children's understanding of the world. However, they also show the importance of America relative to Europe, Asia and Africa. Possibly, this is because of the dominance of America in many books and television programmes in world history and the dominance of American culture in general. George Washington was the third most popular figure after Queen Victoria and Nelson Mandela, and I feel that this shows the importance of America in the children's minds. It is probably also reflective of the fact that George Washington was involved in a part of America's history which is very closely linked to Britain: the war and declaration of America's independence. Other American historical figures mentioned were Neil Armstrong and Bill Clinton: the former probably because of the children's interest in space in general! Other figures were more to do with entertainment: Elvis Presley, the Beach Boys, the Monkees and the one which shocked me most of all, Pamela Anderson. It became apparent through this piece of research that after Britain, it was America which was forefront in the children's minds, and by that I mean the United States of America, because no children took the opportunity to include anyone from either Canada or South America.

Before considering the lack of African and Asian figures in the children's responses, which was what I was expecting most of all, I shall consider the results of the questionnaire in terms of Europe. Several children wrote people down within the European category, but these people were almost always British: the only two exceptions were Eric Cantona and 'Count Dracula'. I was expecting the children to be able to name European figures other than these. However, they were obviously stuck when it came to Europe. This is despite the importance of European studies in an age when we are supposed to be forging closer links with Europe. I think this is something which needs combating within the field of education, especially within a class which included children with French and Turkish origins.

However, the main focus for my attention was the results which I obtained pertaining to awareness of African and Asian figures. As I have already stated, Nelson Mandela was a popular choice, although he was included only as a 'person from Africa' and not as a famous person in his own right in many cases. Beyond Nelson Mandela, there was only one other mention of a 'person from Africa' and that was 'cheetah'. It appears that the children know more about African animals than they do about African people. While, of course, it is good that children know about different types of animals there seems to be a problem here in terms of balance. I was disappointed to discover that African animals are more well known that African people, and I am sure others would feel the same way. Clearly, something needs to be done to increase the children's knowledge of the African continent in history and beyond. There was a similar problem where Asia was concerned. Nine children mentioned the 'Taj Mahal' rather bizarrely as an important person from Asia; one child mentioned 'Kisanh' who was, I believe, a Hindu figure; one child mentioned Jesus. However, these results do not really demonstrate that the children had any knowledge of Asian historical personalities, since they were more aware of the Taj Mahal, a building, than any people. While, of course, it is good that they are aware of Indian architecture, I think it is disappointing that this one building is more well known than any Asian personalities: I hope for some children at least to be able to think of Gandhi or Nehru or Aung San Suu Kyi or one of the multitude of Asian figures who have featured in history. I myself would have placed Jesus in the Asian category. He was mentioned by one child as an important person from history, which I was pleased about because even the most devout atheist will accept that Jesus was a historical figure. However, it reminded me of the fact that very often Jesus is portrayed as a western figure, rather than as an inhabitant of the Middle East: far too often Christianity is portrayed as a western religion and Christ as a European. Maybe children should learn that Christianity had its origins in Asia and that, currently, the place of largest growth in the Christian church (and home to the largest church itself) is South Korean. Both Asia and Africa are neglected in many schools if my findings are taken as at all representative.

This quantitative research provided the foundation for my qualitative research in the school and the work which I undertook to find out how the children would react to the inclusion of multicultural history in the curriculum. One incident while I was a teacher at the school showed me the importance of this. In the context of a role play, where Victorian slum dwellers and council representatives (both played by children in the class) were discussing how the living conditions in the slums could be improved, one child said:

We could bring people over from Africa and India.
What for? I asked.
To clean the streets.
But couldn't they do other jobs instead?
No. We should make them clean the streets.
But what if they didn't want to?
We'd make them do it, and we'd kill them if they said no.

While I would like to stress that this discussion took place within a role play scenario, I feel that it still shows that this particular child saw immigrants as playing insignificant roles within history: the others clearly agreed, including one girl in the class who is herself of an 'minority' ethnic background. I felt that this discussion showed the importance of multicultural history focusing on the lives of people from different social groups. It must not be forgotten, that many early immigrants were slaves, or, if they were free were still forced into degrading forms of labour, but this needs to be discussed sensitively, and the causes for this discussed. Also, children should learn about significant contributions made by individuals from minority ethnic groups such as Dadabhai Naoroji: a highly educated Indian who became MP for Finsbury in Britain as well as being a prominent member of the Indian National Congress and

famous for his 'drain theory' which described how the British were destroying the Indian economy and through that Indian society as well.

As an experiment in teaching multicultural history, and to record the children's responses, I taught and recorded a lesson with the same group of six children as I worked with for the role-play lesson just described, where we focused on multicultural aspects of the Victorian era. I did this using resources which I found myself, proving that they are available if teachers are prepared to take the trouble to look for them. I made the lesson quick-paced, starting from thinking about the British Empire then thinking about the role of various people who had either emigrated to Britain or played a significant role in terms of 'black' issues in the world beyond. The children certainly enjoyed the lesson, and I felt, overall, that it was productive in getting them to consider why Britain had an empire and also why black people have often been treated poorly in general.

The lesson started with the children looking at a map showing the growth of the British Empire, 1815-1930, and we spent some time discussing why the different countries were specially marked on the map and having a discussion about what we knew about those countries. One child had visited Australia and was able to talk about his experiences there and another girl of Indian origin was able to share what she knew about India although she couldn't remember her only visit there, which had been when she was very young. The children were certainly entranced by some of the more exotic place names such as 'Mosquito Coast' and, of course, 'Christmas Island'. However, they did not stop on this level, because I encouraged them, gently, to move on and think about why Britain had had an empire and had ruled such a variety of different places all over the world. We did discuss why the Empire existed, including, of course, the important fact that Britain was not the only country to have a world-wide empire during the 19th century. I was conscious of the fact that children might see Britain as the only 'villain' and did not want children to think like that. The children were able to talk about a wide variety of possible reasons for imperialism, such as simple greed, and moved on to more complex reasons such as international competition and theories of 'difference'. Obviously, they did not use these terms, but I did sense that those were the ideas which they were getting at when they spoke using words such as:

They thought they were best.

They wanted to do it because everybody else did it too.

With a little prompting they split up the issue of 'greed' into subsections: greed for money, greed for land and greed for power, and recognised the selfishness of Empire. The discussion showed me that children are, from a young age, capable of handling issues relating to the empire. Therefore, I believe, they should be given opportunities to do so, accessing real stories, pictures and other resources as they should with history in general.

After dealing with the Empire (very superficially, of course, given the limited time which I had available), I then moved on to talk about a variety of black people, in Britain and elsewhere, but focusing mainly on some of those who had played important roles within British society. I used visual stimuli for this discussion. I had prepared a photocopied sheet featuring pictures of Mary Seacole, Dadabhai Naoroji, Abdul Karim and a mixed-race group of seamen. This built upon previous work which the children had done about using photos as evidence of history, so they had some skills to apply when looking at these pictures. One thing which clearly struck them, as evidenced by our discussion, was the simple fact that neither Dadabhai Naoroji or Mary Seacole looked particularly black. One child actually said that Dadabhai Naoroji couldn't be from India because he didn't look Indian. Another thought he was actually Socrates from *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*! Since the representations of these figures which I had copied were not actually photographs, we were able to have a discussion about the representation of people in drawings and paintings and also think about why they looked so very 'white'. The children were also struck by how exotic Abdul Karim looked by way of a contrast. This led to discussion about why British people might have wanted to have oriental servants:

I suppose it made them look important

said one child, recognising the fact that slaves or foreign servants had been regarded as status symbols. Although they were not using the technical terms, they were addressing the issues of slaves being treated as chattels, as 'objects' rather than the people they were: they were not treated as men and brothers or women and sisters. Throughout their responses to the pictures, the children showed that they were able to handle the issues and think about them. This proves that these issues should not be neglected since they are, I believe, far too important to neglect. Generally, I felt that the children responded well to the discussion, they were keen to look at the pictures and to discuss why the different people in them were important. Although the written output of this discussion was negligible, I was certain that profitable discussion had taken place, and I feel confident that scenarios could be developed to enable productive discussion of sensitive multicultural issues from within history. I would certainly recommend that teachers really strive to get hold of picture resources such as those which I used, since I am sure that these could be used very effectively to introduce children to all different aspects of history, but particularly in this respect to multicultural history.

After looking at the pictures and talking about the individual people whose pictures were featured, I introduced the children to the text which I had prepared about various 'multicultural' figures from history, including those featured on their picture sheet, but going beyond that to include figures such as M. K. Gandhi, Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. The children then filled in some simple questions about what these people are remembered for. I was interested by what the children actually chose to write down from the information which I had given to them. Two out of four children who had the choice described Abdul Karim as a slave, although in our discussions and in my written text I had actually referred to him as a servant. I think perhaps the children had tended to link black figures whom they had heard about in history to the institution of slavery, because stories which feature blacks from history tend to focus on aspects such as slavery and people such as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. This is probably what they are used to thinking about, so therefore it was figures such as Dadabhai Naoroji, who became Britain's first black MP in 1892 who surprised them most of all. This is one of the aspects of black history in schools which I personally find most disappointing. Those blacks who are represented are usually subservient to white 'masters' in some form or another. Black leaders are treated as going against the norm. I think it is very important that

black leaders are considered too and are given the credit which they deserve.

Another vitally important fact to remember when thinking about black history in schools is that black history did not begin with colonialism. Other cultures flourished before the arrival of slavery and the colonising powers. It was Britain which was the beneficiary from slavery and colonialism, and the British developed highly racialist theories, partly to justify their oppression of other people. I believed that multicultural history teaching should therefore encourage children to take a more realistic view of the history (and also the current state) of Britain itself, as well as the role of multicultural history both within Britain and beyond. Obviously, my lesson was focused on the Empire, and I know I neglected pre-colonial history, but I felt that this was the most important issue to address in a term during which the children in the class were studying the Victorians as their focus topic.

This lesson showed me that it is both important and possible to provide children with a quite detailed understanding of multicultural aspects of history. Resources are available, even though it is sometimes necessary to spend quite a lot of time and energy in finding them. The children enjoyed the lesson, and thoughtful discussion was provoked. However, I had to be aware throughout of the potential sensitivity of some of the issues which we were discussing and I am aware that some of these issues could produce difficulties when attempting to handle a subject such as this with a whole class rather than just with a small group. I was left at the end wanting to do much more to introduce the children to more aspects of multicultural history and develop their thoughts and knowledge. I hope that I stimulated the children in the same way.

Notes

[1] DES (1977) *Education in Schools: a consultative document*, p. 41. London: HMSO.

[2] The course was entitled 'India: indigenous politics and imperial control' and was a special subject for the Final Honour School in Modern History at the University of Oxford.

Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 3 July 1998

Bandwagon to Tumbrel

Annabelle Dixon

Annabelle Dixon, reviewing 30 years of experience of teaching young children at classroom level suggests there could be an alternative way of regarding the changing popularity of child-centred education.

It might be expected that an overview of the last 30 years of early years education would simply chart the manner in which public support for child-centred education in the late 1960s and 1970s has all but evaporated by the end of the 90's for reasons that are mainly political. Yet, as I considered the various movements within early years education during that period an unexpected pattern began to emerge. A pattern of consecutive enthusiasms and consecutive boredoms in which child-centred education, through a variety of misunderstandings, misinterpretations and opportunistic endeavours, became an unwitting part and may help to explain the apparent volte-face of many of its erstwhile supporters. Those who have remained with it, however, are those who have understood its underlying principles, albeit they have suffered critical inclusion in an interpretation that was none of their making.

Nonetheless, it would be understandable to think that such an adherence to basic principles might engender tedium over the years, even though the incorporation of new knowledge and insight may have added depth and interest.

A long-standing friend recently admitted being appalled at the idea of my having worked for 30 years at the same thing, as he saw it. His own accomplished life has included, amongst other things, information technology, counselling and being a restaurateur, designer, potter, teacher and apiarist. My argument was that with the regrettable exception of the latter and the addition of peaceworker, naturalist, painter and storyteller, I had in my life as a teacher of young children, probably covered as many areas as he had. Obviously not to the same degree but to one that was nonetheless satisfying. The application of the basic principles often led one into unexpected by-ways.

Unconvinced and expanding on his reasons for moving from one mode of life to another, he explained that he liked to follow up an interest, learn about it at depth, practise it and then move on when it became predictable and boring. I could identify with the first three reasons but recognised that why I may have remained teaching young children was that because of the quality of my initial training which considered in-depth and detail how young children learned, teaching never reached the point of becoming either predictable or boring by its very nature. Each child presented itself as a unique being of unknown potential both to myself and the child concerned and thus became of intrinsic and continuous interest and no child was ever entirely predictable. There is, I believe, a psychological and human need for a measure of unpredictability but one which is not to be confused with the need for novelty or stimulus and to which I shall return. We continuously test ourselves and our internalised 'theories' about the world even if this is neither conscious nor verbalised. For Nathan Isaacs, a metallurgist and scientist of some renown in the 1940s and 1950s, a deep interest in children's intellectual development led him to recommend that children ought to be encouraged to verbalise these 'theories'. He advised asking children what had 'surprised' them about events or experiments thus revealing to child and teacher alike what previous hypotheses had had to be adjusted. Later, I came to see that this extended to their social and emotional life as well. Perhaps I always found children surprising; it has to be admitted that some remained completely baffling and continued to do things, as one five-year-old once said to me indignantly "for no good reason".

Where though, does this place the need for novelty and stimulus and how have they found expression over the years in the various approaches to early years teaching? A job, which, as my friend and doubtless many others, including teachers themselves, see as particularly prone to tedium, as they regard it as being based mainly on the inculcation and repetition of a limited number of basic skills. The search for stimulus and novelty is an attempt to overcome the tedium and, over the years, has taken many, and most bizarre forms and I would maintain that this is where competition, marks, stars and 'smiley' faces have their hidden rationale. There is an underlying recognition that the bored child equals the naughty child and attempts to come to terms with this problem have preoccupied many a teaching generation. That the nature of boredom was understood to be best met by novelty and stimulus rather than challenge and discovery had results which are described further on.

Naturally, in the extraneous detail of school life there will always remain tedium and predictability of many sorts, some essential to the 'calm ordering' of school matters, some of which give young children a necessary sense of stability and security and some, perhaps not quite so necessary, of such a mind-numbing character that this may well have been and is, the effect they are actually having. This was largely the teaching world I entered in the early 1960's when, contrary to the peddled myth, very few schools indeed were 'Plowdenesque'. Even reception classes had their rigid timetables. For example, the children moved around every 20 minutes from the activity table – lacing, jigsaws etc. to their reading table, all chanting the same book at once, following the most able child a microsecond later, if one listened carefully enough, then on to the writing table where letters were traced, tongues were pushed out between teeth and pencils dug into the paper. Plus ça change. To those whose heaven consisted, and consists, of a safe, orderly, predictable world it looked ideal and had a certain sentimental attraction. If teachers watched the clock, as they noticeably did, it was hardly surprising. The regime was as tedious for them as it was for their children and they found themselves caught in their own trap. I recall the exasperation of one such teacher with a bright six-year-old who stubbornly refused to advance through all the colour-coded reading cards as he said he was bored with them and only wanted to complete the final one. While acknowledging his capabilities she insisted on their

completion as she said it wasn't right that he should set the rules. He consequently sat with head down, arms folded and eventually became a school refusal until he was moved to another class. The principle was one of permission to set one's own agenda not one of streaming, although that was, and has, remained fairly common practice under the guise, in latter years, of transformation into a bird, a flower or a cuddly animal.

Released into another class, the child demonstrated what he could do once he was able to set his own challenges. It transpired that he had a reading age of ten, so he was more than able to undertake the writing of, by his own choice, a book about chess, a guide to playing the piano, and a simple dictionary. As I saw it, it wasn't an abnegation of professional authority or responsibility to allow him to set his own tasks, within which he learnt the secretarial skills of handwriting and spelling, etc. but rather a positive assumption of them. By the early 1960s, some psychologists and educators were starting to turn away from the deadening effect of the regimes described above and were starting to train student teachers to look in-depth at the intellectual, social and emotional development of children and what kind of practice and resources would be necessary in order to promote it. In the event this meant a multiplicity of responsibilities. Not only was it to see that children acquired the necessary skills in reading, maths and writing, etc. but also that it made personal sense to them. Besides which was the provision of opportunities, through a variety of activities and resources, to enable the children to find out who they were. It was no dreamy, dewey-eyed ambition, but the reality of coming to know who you were as a person, e.g. to know you were the kind who needed reassurance, who worked best in a group, or alone, who had talent at acting, drawing, etc., the kind who needed to count to ten when aggravated, who was forgetful, who daydreamed, was generous, etc. "I didn't know I was kind 'til Joe told me" related a five-year-old.

It was all very different and was open to both virulent criticism and unfortunately, an imitation that skimped the infrastructure of basic principles and settled for, in Chomsky's terms, the "surface structure". Happy days for the critics when the latter became the more widespread in practice. As I later came to realise, those whose own training had been centred on the tedium of drilling, saw this form of education as an escape from the boredom they had experienced themselves. It was not the first or only attempt at relieving boredom and as a young teacher I had been aware of a succession of educational bandwagons, for example, i.t.a., Cuisenaire Maths, Fletcher Maths, Colour Factor, Reading by Colour, Topic Webs, etc. Encouraged by astute publishers the enthusiasms waxed and then inevitably waned and I thought of them as magic medicine being sold to the credulous or desperate. It is now my contention though, that it represented a need for teacher novelty or stimulation which explained the temporary nature of the enthusiasms and that, in turn, child-centred education fell neatly into just such a pattern, and was the reason for it being consequently misunderstood and misapplied. Stimulus and novelty was certainly there all right: infant classrooms were converted wholesale into underwater caverns, safari tents, mediaeval castles, spaceships and so on and so on. The Three Bears' house was replicated endlessly and lots of green leaves and large, teacher-painted feet dangling from the ceiling indicated Jack and the Beanstalk had taken over the room. This indeed was the give-away. The choice of interest lay with the teacher and much of the consequent work, often lasting half a term or more, was designed around the topic. It often brought praise and appreciation from heads and advisers and was therefore replicated but whether the children always had an understanding of what was going on or any real interest was debatable. What might have been suitable for eight- and nine-year-olds was considered appropriate for younger children who were often quite bemused by it all.

If one asked them about their "exciting" surroundings a different picture often emerged. Two five-year-old children come to mind who were supposed to be selling each other an exotic holiday, the classroom having been converted into a travel agents. It was a role far from their experience and needs. In a box near them on the floor, filled with holiday brochures, was hidden a baby doll. "Actually", said the small girl confidentially and pointing to the boy, "He's the dad and I'm the mum and in there", she said lifting the brochures up, "is the baby". Rarely, in such circumstances, was the development of the children's own imagination being put first. The individual and modest sized achievement, the moth made out of a scrap of ribbon, the small clay puppy under an even smaller clay blanket were not dramatic enough. In another class, I remember the children being encouraged, exhorted even, to paint lots of lovely patterned fish with lots of lovely silver paint, so that they could be cut out and hung from the ceiling. A recalcitrant child wanted to paint a fire engine but was given the impression that would not be entirely welcome. Knowing the background of the children, it was unlikely he had ever seen shoals of fish, nor was ever likely to, but he had recently seen a fire engine.

Spooky Halloween masks, giant spiders, huge foil covered spaceships, egg box dinosaurs, etc., thus came to represent what was considered to be 'child-centred' education in the 70's and 80's and when it fell from favour, it unfortunately impugned the less flashy practice that relied on a deeper understanding of young children and their needs. A classroom or early years environment based on such principles may look busy and well resourced but not particularly exciting or stimulating to the adult observer, who may only see an abundance of children's work but few dramatic topic displays. To those involved in the life of such classrooms though, the excitement is real enough. What can be more fundamentally interesting than having the time and resources to find out who you really are, what you can do, how far you can reach and the diversity and fascination of the world around you. Some tasks may remain a chore, but there is no need of manufactured, synthetic excitement because such an environment has its roots in the real excitement of finding out what the world is about and what it is to be human. To have been involved for 30 years alongside young children, helping them make such discoveries, has been a privilege like none other.

Baseline Assessment: are we asking too much?

Elaine Hall, Patrick Easen, Joan Santer, with **Elaine Mason**

Elaine Hall has been part of a research team, funded by the N.A.H.T., investigating baseline assessment at the University of Newcastle. Their findings with regard to the variability of theoretical assumptions, underlying values and the consequent range of questions should lead to no little disquiet as to their present validity.

From September 1998 it is a legal requirement that all schools begin Baseline Assessment. Of course, many schools already assess their pupils on entry regarding this as an important component of good practice. Now, however, everyone will be obliged to do so and must use one of the 90 schemes accredited by QCA. The lay person would be justified in assuming this to be a positive move; after all, proponents argue that Baseline Assessment is a powerful tool which can pinpoint stages in young children's development, inform the curriculum delivery of their teachers and improve the effectiveness of the school which they attend. However, such a plethora of schemes exists that individual schools could not hope to evaluate them all. In practice, for perfectly understandable reasons, many have chosen to use the scheme created or favoured by the local authority. In response to some concern about the implications of what was happening with Baseline Assessment, the National Association of Headteachers commissioned a piece of research by the Early Childhood Research group at the University of Newcastle. This article raises some of the issues emerging from the work.

Why Have Baseline Assessment?

At one level the logic of Baseline Assessment is impeccable. In recent years the school effectiveness movement has provided a considerable body of research evidence that children's education is affected by the school they attend. Furthermore, it suggests that there is one particular factor associated , at a classroom level, with effectiveness – the 'opportunity to learn'. Providing learning time is straightforward, but it counts for little if the pupils do not understand what they are required to do, or if the pacing or sequence is faulty, or the work too hard or too easy. Helping a pupil to progress, therefore, means that a teacher need to know not only where a child is going in his/her learning, but also where (s)he is at the moment so that the right 'opportunities' to learn may be credited. Indeed, some would argue that this is the most important purpose for assessment and where better to start than on entry to school.

What is Emerging about Baseline Assessment-in-action?

The problem starts with trying to turn an attractive idea into workable practice. The National Framework for Baseline Assessment (SCAA, 1997), highlighted key principles upon which to base schemes. These were divided into those considered essential and those described as additional. The essential requisites of Baseline Assessment required schemes to focus on literacy, numeracy and personal and social development, to contain sufficient detail to inform about children's learning needs and to contribute to "value-added" measures. Moreover, schemes should be unobtrusive and manageable, involve parents as carers and take account of children with English as a second language. SCAA listed other principles, including the potential of Baseline Assessment to build on records from pre-school providers and integrate with later assessments and to include the other four desirable outcomes not incorporated in the essential principles.

Of the large number of schemes drawn up, the researchers were given access to and analysed approximately half as part of their work. Although the research itself deals with much more, this article considers the point that the schemes do not seem to be doing all that is being asked of them. In particular:

- a wealth of detail about the children is produced but the degree to which schemes' grading criteria are based on good research evidence about how children learn is open to question;
- the schemes focus on literacy, numeracy and personal and social development but vary widely in the emphasis placed on different skills within these areas;
- while great efforts have been made to produce data which can be used to calculate "value added", finding ways of making the concept of "relative progress" or "value added" workable is not without difficulties.

The constraints of space mean that only a few examples can be used to illustrate these issues.

How Does Recent Research Fit with the Schemes?

One of the problem we have found is that the way schemes tend to conceptualise children's learning tends not to square with research evidence of how children acquire competence in areas such as literacy and numeracy or, indeed, with how children approach learning as a whole. For example, there has been a huge amount of research into the acquisition of early mathematical concepts and skills of school-age children; yet, as Thompson (1997) states, "very few researchers, especially in Britain, have attempted to investigate the mathematical knowledge or analyse the level of development of the number understanding of pre-school children". One illustration of this is the way in which the schemes rely heavily on assumptions about one-to-one correspondence preceding awareness of addition and subtraction, assumptions not borne out by current research. In many cases it was unclear what, if any, research

underpinned the schemes and this is a serious criticism. If schemes do not reflect our best understanding of children's learning, then professionals cannot rely on them to inform their curriculum planning.

Do Schemes Mean the Same Thing When They Refer to an Aspect of Learning?

The ordering of skills, even the choice of skills, differs considerably between schemes. As the variety of assessment headings in the various Baseline Assessment schemes show, there is no general consensus, for although the general headings are similar and focus on the same areas (for example in numeracy assessment the headings, 'Using Mathematical Language', 'Development of Number Concepts' and 'Shape, Space and Measure' are widely used) the assessment items/indicators and styles are multidudinous across the schemes and could lead to very different scores attributed to similar children.

This lack of consensus, is most pronounced in relation to personal and social development. The following examples, drawing on assessment criteria from just four schemes, illustrate how individual children may be differently perceived and, consequently, assessed using different schemes. Child A, attending a school in the North East, is being assessed on her attitude to school, ability to express opinions and to play collaboratively, Child B, attending a school in the South East, is being assessed on his concentration and ability to behave appropriately. Child C, attending a school in the North, is being assessed on how independent she is and the quality of her relationships with others and Child D, attending a school in the South, is being assessed on his collaborative skills, communication with adults, sensitivity and compliance. This makes comparisons of children assessed on this aspect of learning using different schemes very difficult – a potential issue for individual children moving school as well as for policy-makers seeking a national perspective. This is an anomaly which, in turn, poses two questions: are the schemes based on conflicting models of children's development (and we are not told, in most cases, the bases for the scheme's design) or, if the ordering is merely arbitrary, why order them at all unless the need to rank children is superordinate to the need to understand their development?

It is a case for some concern that the personal and social development sections of the schemes appear to be informed primarily by the "ideal" child to teach or manage in a classroom rather than the observed behaviour of children in natural settings. From a careful examination of the sub-headings, Concentration or Attitude to Learning across the Schemes, a general description of the "average" four-year-old begins to emerge. S/he ranges from the flitter with a short attention span who is unable to stay on task, to the child who demonstrates an ability to stay on task, without being distracted and with little or no teacher intervention, for more than ten minutes. Such criteria seem incompatible with the research of Athey (1990). Her work on children's schemes suggests that, despite a child's apparent flitting from one activity to another, s/he may be engaged in exploring a single idea across a range of resources. Athey argues that this "schematic" behaviour illustrates a consistent thread of thinking through the separate activities. An assessment schedule which reinforces judgements of children's behaviour based on what it is convenient in management terms for them to do rather than what best serves their learning is at best inadequate, at worst damaging.

Does Baseline Assessment Allow Useful Comparisons of "Value Added"?

One purpose specific to Baseline Assessment expressed by SCAA (1997) is to:

> *measure children's attainment, using one or more numerical outcomes which can be used later in value-added analyses of children's learning.*

However, as we have seen, the schemes have considerable variation in the ordering of the skills and the level indicators attributed to stages of development. This raises questions about the compatibility of assessments derived from different sources and renders any external comparison with schools using different schemes extremely difficult. This is because, despite the introduction by SCAA of Baseline Assessment Scales, with the current wide-ranging selection of Baseline Schemes utilising different emphases and methodologies, there are issues about the nature and quality of any data that may be generated for this purpose. In order to calculate any "value added" in the early years of schooling there has to be high quality data that may be used as the basis for comparing like with like. This means that the same data ought to be collected in the same way from different schools and this is before we consider problems of mapping baseline data onto end of Key Stage 1 and 2 data. It is here that two key aspects of Baseline Assessment come into conflict: the desire for homogeneity in order to compare schools' performance and the accent on local, responsive, relevant design to assess children's performance. Since QCA have supported the development of local schemes, it is fair to assume that the latter aspect is the most valued, an emphasis which will be welcomed by most practitioners.

At a deeper level, there is a potential danger with the concentration on "value added": that the destination is obscuring the journey. Each years professionals are becoming more concerned with "preparing" children for Key Stage 1 than with developing the skills and experience appropriate for three- and four-year-old children. Cathy Nutbrown illustrates changes in official thinking in terms of curriculum for five-year-olds demonstrating the changes in expectations in from 1989 to 1996.

> *In 'Reading', for example, in 1989 the lower achieving seven-year-old was expected to begin to recognise individual words or letters in familiar contexts (DES, 1989). In 1995 the requirement for the same group of seven-year-olds was modified to state that they should recognise familiar words in simple texts (DfEE, 1995). In 1996 it was stated that five-year-olds, having attended voucher funded pre-compulsory provision should, on entry to school, recognise their own names and some familiar words (DfEE/SCAA, 1996a). (Nutbrown, 1997)*

This "curriculum push" is the result of a growing trend in education which, in part, influenced by the idea of education as training, seeks to rank some areas of human development above others and to saturate the timetable with them. As a recent *Dispatches* documentary has argued, our emphasis on early formal training has not only retarded young children's development in physical and social-emotional areas but, ironically, has failed to produce academic results in line with other European nations.

Baseline Assessment will not do all the things which have been asked of it but it is a potentially useful tool for the early years professional provided that it is not based on an inappropriate model of child development. It cannot

replace the sensitive observation which, over time, best informs a teacher of the growing understanding of each pupil. As many schemes are in use, even broad comparisons cannot be made between schools or local authorities and given the difficulties of comparing different kinds of data, value added calculations will be difficult to make in individual schools. It is most important, therefore, schools to choose schemes which are easy to administer and provide meaningful data for staff and parents and above all which place the best interests of the child above all other considerations.

References

Athey, C. (1990) *Extending Thought in Young Children.* PCP.

Nutbrown, C. (1997) *Recognising Early Literacy Development: assessing children's achievements.* PCP.

SCAA (1997) *The National Framework for Baseline Assessment: criteria and procedures for the accreditation of Baseline Assessment Schemes.* London: HMSO.

Thompson, I. (1997) *Teaching and Learning Early Numbers.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 10 July 1998

Tribute to Brian Simon

On 15 July 1998, Brian Simon was awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters at the University of Warwick. We print below the tribute paid to him on that occasion by Professor Robin Alexander, Director of the University's Centre for Research in Elementary and Primary Education.

Mr Chancellor, it is my privilege to introduce to you and to this Congregation Brian Simon, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Leicester.

Brian Simon's career has taken him from the political and intellectual cauldron of 1930s Cambridge to the London Institute of Education, the presidency of the National Union of Students, five years of war service, school teaching in Manchester and Salford, 30 years at the University of Leicester, and an exceptionally productive period termed, misleadingly, retirement. Brian Simon is Britain's leading educational historian and one of the outstanding figures in the post-war development of educational studies as a field of serious academic endeavour. His output is immense; its quality formidable. As if that were not enough, he is also one of Britain's most persistent campaigners for educational equity and excellence.

In the first of the four volumes of his monumental history of education in England and Wales from 1780, Brian Simon traced the emergence of a national system of education which in the guise of patrician benevolence reinforced social inequality and marginalised the efforts of those who worked outside the system to educate themselves. The final volume, covering the period 1940 to 1990, achieves the difficult feat of balancing historical distance with personal engagement, for here Simon recounts a politically-charged story in which he is protagonist as well as observer. In the end, however, the historian wins through, not least because of the scrupulous way he handles an encyclopaedic range of historical sources, including the unique press archive jointly assembled over some 50 years with his wife Joan Simon, the distinguished historian of Tudor education and Brian's collaborator on many projects.

The Simon historical lens is one of conflict. Progress, if achieved, is hard won against the odds and must never be taken for granted. So, too, for Simon the educational campaigner. His name is indelibly linked with the cause of non-selective comprehensive education, a cause pursued first through his pre-war work in the Labour Party and subsequently through articles, books and the pages of *FORUM*, the journal which he founded with Robin Pedley and Jack Walton exactly 40 years ago and to which both Brian and Joan Simon contributed numerous trenchant pieces. Forum remains successful and influential today because – as Brian characteristically warns in his article for the 1998 anniversary issue – 'the struggle continues'.

Teaching in Manchester and Salford primary schools immediately after the War, Brian Simon saw children allocated irreversibly to A, B, C and D streams by the age of 11, often indeed by the age of 7, on the basis of a crude system of intelligence testing. He was impelled to probe the scientific claims of these tests, as always counterbalancing moral indignation with meticulous scholarship. He and others challenged Cyril Burt's assertion that human intelligence is both fixed and precisely measurable, steadily building a case against early streaming and selection which culminated in the evidence submitted by Forum to the Plowden Committee in 1963, a case which survived searching cross-examination by committee member A. J. Ayer, led to the collapse of the 11-plus and paved the way for the Labour Government's endorsement of comprehensive schooling in 1965.

That was just the start. On the one hand comprehensive education had to be defended and perfected, and to this task Brian Simon committed himself unstintingly. On the other hand, the newly-liberated system of primary education required a new pedagogy. In pursuit of this, Brian Simon made these seminal contributions.

The first, following trips which he and Joan Simon made to Soviet Russia in the 1950s and 1960s, was his demonstration, against the tide of British fatalism institutionalised by the tripartite system, of the empowering potential of Russian psychology, especially the work of Vygotsky and Luria. Long before constructivism became fashionable, Brian and Joan Simon were jointly presenting Vygotsky's and Luria's ideas to western readers through Joan's translations from the Russian, and helping to broaden the focus of teacher training from how children develop to how they learn, to the key role of language in this, and to a recognition of the limitlessness of human potential.

Next, new theories of learning required new approaches to teaching, and especially they required an answer to the question 'Which classroom practices really make a difference?' For this, systematic classroom research had to become the empirical cornerstone of pedagogical analysis. True innovator that he is, Brian Simon was researching classrooms over 50 years ago. His minute-by-minute lesson observations from a Manchester primary classroom in 1947 are striking not just for their methodology, but also – dare I suggest – because what he recorded in 1947 bears a more than passing resemblance to that flagship initiative of 1998, the literacy hour. The preoccupation with classroom research was to culminate in the groundbreaking ORACLE study of primary teaching which Brian Simon directed in the 1970s with Maurice Galton.

Finally there was the notion of pedagogy itself. It was Simon who in 1981 famously asked – and answered – the question,'Why no pedagogy in England?' and insisted that close analysis of the art, science or craft of teaching should become the core of teacher training and educational research. It now is.

No account as brief as this can do justice to the quantity, range and influence of Brian Simon's work. Yet we can pick out the common threads. One is his uncompromising pursuit of truth through scholarship and argument. Another is his celebration of the power of collective effort and action. The third, and the thread which links Simon the scholar with Simon the campaigner, is his unswerving commitment to the causes of social justice and human perfectibility.

Private Firms Bid for Failing School

The following item written by Judith Judd, Education Editor, appeared in *The Independent*, 5 September 1998. *FORUM* readers will find this development very disturbing.

Kings' Manor School, Guildford, could be the first state school to be run by a private company

The first contest between private firms to take over a failing secondary school is about to begin. Councillors in Surrey will meet on Monday to discuss proposals from three companies to turn round Kings' Manor comprehensive school in Guildford.

Last night the Department for Education said that it would not rule out the idea. Ministers are encouraging companies to take part in education action zones designed to raise standards in underachieving schools.

The three companies asked by Surrey County Council officials to submit plans are the Edison Project, which runs schools for profit in the United States, Nord Anglia, the largest commercial education organisation in the UK, and CfBT, a non profit-making organisation that provides education services.

Councillors will be asked to decide whether the school should be closed or given a fresh start with a new head, governors and staff.

Takeover and investment by a private firm will be only one of several options on the table but Dr Andrew Povey, chair of the education committee, said that he was very interested in the idea. He pointed out that the school's numbers had fallen sharply and inspectors reported in July that measures were needed to improve behaviour, attendance and pupils' progress.

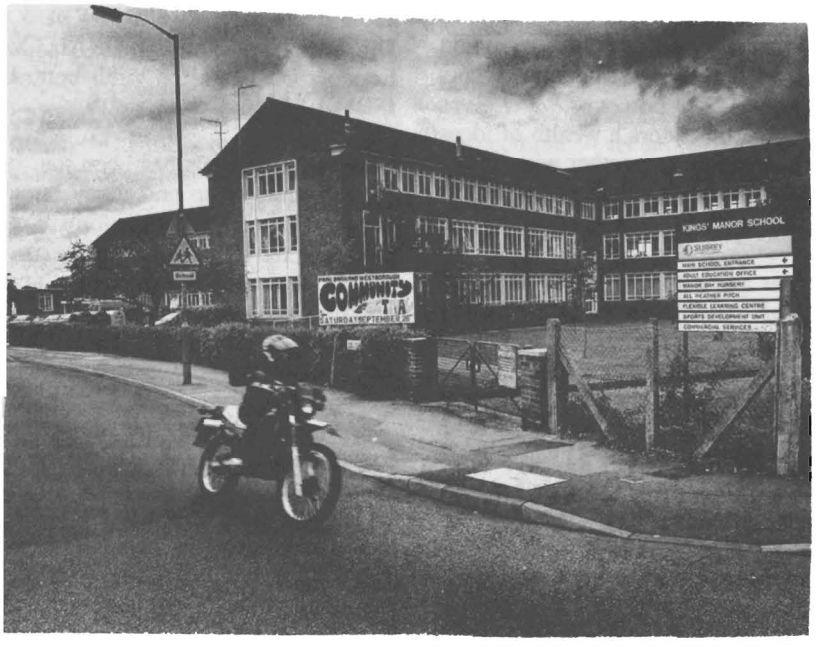
"We feel that the only way we can make a success of it is by doing something really radical," he said.

"We are way ahead of the Government here. In reality, there is very little private sector involvement in the action zones and they are not giving the management of schools to outside parties."

If the idea of private-sector management is accepted, formal bids will be invited from companies.

Edison proposes that it would invest in the school and manage it in return for retaining excess income or a management fee.

Nord Anglia proposes a 'Millennium school' specialising in information technology and business studies with a fee related to the school's performance.



CfBT would be interested in a specialist business school with 10 per cent selection of pupils and teachers receiving performance-related pay.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said that the school should continue to be run by the local authority. "Earlier this year, David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, committed himself to saying that education should not be run for profit. We expect him to stick to that."

At a meeting on Thursday 15 October, Surrey County Council took a decision to invite bids for the contract to run Kings' Manor School, thereby effectively selling it off to the private sector.

Book Reviews

The Power of Babel: teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms

VIV EDWARDS, 1998
Stoke-on-Trent: Multilingual Matters/Trentham Books.
£11.95, ISBN 1 85856 095 0

In his foreword to Viv Edwards's *The Power of Babel: teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms*, Jim Cummins concludes that 'this inspiring and unpretentious book illustrates vividly how we can implement a global education philosophy together with a multicultural and anti-racist perspective'. It is precisely how this education philosophy can be implemented in multicultural classrooms which makes this book both timely and topical for teachers in Britain today.

There can hardly be a more opportune time for the appearance of this book. At the end of the 20th century, all children are becoming members of a global community characterised by unprecedented diversity of culture, language, 'race' and sexual orientation as well as technological change. Within this context, Edwards argues that both a sensitivity and knowledge about languages and cultures must be a vital part of the repertoire of both teachers and children in our classrooms. *The Power of Babel* gives teachers, students and teacher educators a wealth of ideas with which to enter the next century, together with names and addresses of organisations and publishers to support teachers in developing their own practice and research in the field.

The book was written as a result of collaborative work between the University of Reading, Berkshire Equality Services and Oxfordshire Section 11 Curriculum Project to provide in-service training for over 200 teachers over a two-year period. Some of the teachers worked in schools where a very high percentage of the children came from minority communities; others were in schools where there were very few bilingual pupils. A central feature of the ten-day course was a classroom action research project which required teachers to apply what they had learned to their own classrooms. It is issues raised during the course which are explored in the book and which are illustrated through case studies sited in individual classrooms and schools.

There are ten chapters in the book, each of which may stand alone for teachers interested in one particular area of development. The scene is set in the introduction which explains the impact of policy decisions on education for a multicultural society and is essential reading for students and those new to the field. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 cover the areas of 'finding out', 'the welcoming school' and 'new arrivals'. They show examples of language surveys and directories, making a language book, work on names as well as ideas for working with families. A teacher's diary shows an authentic account of day-to-day classroom work. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 cover the area of spoken and written language and discuss ways in which teachers find imaginative ways to develop biliteracy. Case studies show innovative approaches with bilingual books and computer programmes and stress the importance of the wider family (especially older siblings) as well as the community in mediating literacy practices. The final chapters in the book provide lists of useful organisations and references for those interested in developing further classroom work. Throughout, the book is beautifully illustrated with both photographs and examples of children's work.

The book reveals a wealth of information and knowledge, sensitively shared with teachers. Apart from its fund of practical knowledge, it argues clearly for the recognition that we all live in a culturally and linguistically diverse world where demands on children are constantly changing. Teachers, especially, need to understand the strengths brought by bilingual children to school learning, strengths which she would like to extend to all children in classrooms, especially to those of monolingual backgrounds.

Eve Gregory
Goldsmiths College, London

Bullying: home, school and community

DELWYN TATTUM & GRAHAM HERBERT, 1997
London: David Fulton Publishers. 184pp. £13.99,
ISBN 1 85346 445 7

Bullying in schools has been the focus of much attention for ten years or so and many books on the subject have been published. Delwyn Tattum himself has written several, including the booklet *Bullying – a positive response* (1990) which was a relatively early, and extremely valuable, contribution to the debate.

So the basic issues – raising awareness, assessing the extent of the problem, devising and implementing strategies to tackle bullying – have all been discussed at some length.

Any new book must, therefore, bring a new perspective to the matter. This is just such a book. It has two basic premises.

First, it makes the point that schools are only a part of the wider community, and that therefore any serious attempt to deal with bullying must involve that community. 'The complex nature of bullying cannot be divorced from the social interactions, the relationships and the patterns of behaviour of a whole community'. Of course, schools are an important element – perhaps the single most important one, since they are where young people come together in large numbers for a sizeable proportion of their time. Schools are now expected to explain to parents how they tackle the problem – having a bullying policy is no longer seen as an admission of failure.

However, schools are finding it increasingly difficult to tackle social problems, because of the twin pressures of government interference in education and the lack of resources. 'This situation is further aggravated in schools by factors such as the increasingly centralised control of narrowly focused curricula and assessments and tests conducted in a context of competitive league tables seemingly as much obsessed with failure as with anything else.'

So, it cannot all be left to the schools. The home, the

workplace, the armed forces, prisons, etc. are all places where bullying can – and does – take place. They must therefore be involved in any coherent attempt to tackle the problem. 'The behaviour of the individual cannot be taken out of the social context in which that behaviour takes place.' The outcomes of inappropriate parenting are described. 'Aggressive preschool children are often very hard to cope with at home and within the nursery. By the time they reach primary education they have already learned that aggressive acts such as pushing, shoving and snatching are ideal for satisfying their short-term needs and objectives.' The book provides invaluable material from projects which involved parents, and suggests that the importance of working with parents is still not sufficiently appreciated. Rather, there is a 'retrospective retribution' culture which results, for example, in politicians seeking to punish parents for the behaviour of their children. 'Parents should be advised to take an interest in the social life of their child in school – not just academic progress.'

The book's second premise is that preventative measures are more important than reactive crisis management. 'Approaches that focus on bullies and victims and that rely on extra policing by teachers and other adults are exacerbating the problem ... Schools can work with all children to create a community that is intolerant of bullying.'

So measures which promote self-esteem and empathy are important. 'Peer mediation should be included in the School Development Plan and in pastoral care, behaviour and bullying policies.' The necessary skills should be in the curriculum. 'When a pupil gets a maths problem wrong, our first strategy is to teach. When it is the behaviour that is wrong, we tend to criticise or punish.' The result of this is that 'Some, perhaps many, bullies are well into adulthood before they make a link between their bullying activity and the painful feelings of their victims.'

The book is in three parts, dealing with home, home and school, and home, school and community. Each has an introduction by Delwyn Tattum. The 14 chapters, by 24 contributors, include interesting accounts of a wide range of projects run by schools, play groups, Family Service Units, the police and Young Offender Institutions. There is much valuable information here presented in a very readable style.

Bullying is cyclic in nature. Bad parenting produces the aggressive child, who becomes the bully, the criminal and the violent father or mother, and so the cycle begins again. Yet no-one is born a bully. 'Human beings are born with the natural capacity to be kind towards others.' Anything we can do to break the bullying cycle is worth doing. This book makes a valuable contribution to that work.

Derek Gillard, *Oxford*

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools Since 1944: standard bearers or turbulent priests?

JOHN DUNFORD, 1988

London: Woburn Press. 255pp. £18.50/£37.50, ISBN (paperback) 0 7130 4028 9 (hardback) 0 7130 0210 7

The best obituaries are written by those who have a fascination with the deceased, who know enough of the 'inside' of their lives to offer insightful, characteristic details, but who are detached enough to be able to offer an assessment with a measure of objectivity. John Dunford's *Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools since 1944* (Woburn Press, 1998) has these qualities. Its main title, prosaic and not entirely accurate since its first two chapters deal with the period prior to 1944, promises a straightforward "official" history of that body; its sub-title, *Standard Bearers or Turbulent Priests?* promises a more interesting, ambiguous and intriguing account. Both promises are largely fulfilled.

I had not expected to read an obituary. In fact as a former HMI I had not come to terms with the demise of the Inspectorate until I read this book. I knew, of course, that after a century and a half of close involvement with central government, working post-war as an integral, though semi-detached, part of the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education and Science and briefly the Department for Education, HM Inspectors of Schools, including myself, had become the professional arm of OFSTED in 1992. I had assumed that since my colleagues and I were recognisably the same people with the same idiosyncratic blend of experience, expertise, independence, compliance and pertinacity HM Inspectorate had continued to exist, albeit in a different environment and under different management. I was wrong. Only now, six years on, with the advantage of near hindsight born of personal experience and of far hindsight provided by this book have I come to accept (with great regret) the disappearance of a unique institution as a result of what John Dunford terms "a needless act of destruction" brought about by the 1992 Education Act.

The book captures many of the key features of HM Inspectorate – its independence of judgement (reporting what it found, not what others wanted it to find); its ambivalent relationship with the teaching profession – respect tinged with fear and suspicion; its uncomfortable position within the Ministry or Department, in it but not of it ("professionals operating in a bureaucratic environment"); and its fraught relationship with central government especially in the 1980s and early 1990s with its published reports documenting the sometimes detrimental effects of government policy on the maintained sector.

Appropriately the book makes much of the continuities underlying the work of the Inspectorate since its inception in 1839 – "the same emphasis on advice and improvement to the education system, the duty to report to the central authority, the insistence on not interfering with the school management and the intention to contribute to the work of the local people responsible to the school." Perhaps it makes rather too much of the educational expertise of HMI: subject-, phase- and inspection-related. It rightly asserts the crucial role of inspection evidence, gathered first hand by HMI, as providing the bedrock of advice offered to government and the source of its educational legitimacy. It explores the paradox of a body with no policy-making or executive powers yet exerting great influence – "power without responsibility" as the Inspectorate's right-wing critics used to assert!

The author's fascination with his subject comes over clearly. Every fact, including the occasional apocryphal "fact", is grist to his mill – so much so that the book's second sub-title might well be *All I have found out about the Inspectorate*. He has, however, found much of interest – to insiders like myself (fascinated by some of his disclosures), to those interested in penetrating the mystique (partly self-induced) of a unique body, and to those

concerned to explore the intricacies of educational policy-making post-war. He is generally supportive of the work of HMI – as illustrated by his closing reference to "the decimation of the Inspectorate by the 1992 Education Act and the consequent abandonment of much of its valuable work" but his support is not uncritical. In an example particularly telling for readers of *FORUM*, he shrewdly points out how "the part played by HMI in the introduction of comprehensive schools reveals the Inspectorate at its most conservative". Again he rightly castigates HMI for not adapting quickly enough to the changed circumstances of the early 1990s, thereby giving others the opportunity to carry out a major reform of school inspection".

The sources for the book are wide-ranging – documents from the Public Record Office, papers from HMI archives, newspapers, official reports, books, pamphlets, articles and, particularly, interviews from those in a position to know. The latter are the source of many insights; my favourite is Eric Bolton's comment, made shortly before his retirement, that "HMI should be turbulent priests. They should not be anybody's trusty bedfellows" – an apt description of their role under him and his predecessor but no longer true of what remains of HMI in OFSTED. As an historian John Dunford is strongest and most insightful when he stands back and provides an overall appraisal of a particular facet of HMI's work – as he does towards the end of each chapter. Many readers, however, will find the detail more fascinating, though to my mind the detail (some of it tangential) sometimes obscures the main message.

John Dunford is not the only person to have provided an obituary of HM Inspectorate. Eric Bolton did so briefly, when describing the reconstitution of HMI in OFSTED as "a small but important educational tragedy". What this book does is to document clearly and authoritatively that the former Senior chief Inspector was only half right.

Colin Richards
University College of St Martin, Lancaster

Education 14-19: critical perspectives

SALLY TOMLINSON (Ed.), 1997
London: Athlone Press. 222pp. £14.95/£45.00, ISBN (paperback) 0 485 12131 X (hardback) 0 485 11512 3

The first decade of the 21st century will surely see a move towards a more coherent framework of qualifications in England and Wales. The debate about this during the second half of the 20th century has been bedevilled by crude politics and, in particular, by misleading assertions about the value of GCE Advanced level as a benchmark for that much-abused word, standards.

Sir Ron Dearing's final report on 16-19, *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds* (SCAA, 1997), failed to develop the more radical ideas which he had begun to espouse in his Interim Report and the Government's subsequent consultation document, *Qualifying for Success* (DfEE, 1997), was even more a pale shadow of what might have been. The Government's final decisions, to be implemented from September 2000, were a major disappointment to those who believe that radical measures are required in order to establish a system of qualifications which will serve all our young people and which will simultaneously form the basis for lifelong learning.

The lack of radicalism in the Government's proposals was compounded by the fact that they covered only the 16-19 age group, when what is clearly required is a greater coherence across the 14-19 cohort. If what is recommended for this age group is also to include the building blocks for lifelong learning, then it should properly be termed post-14 and policies should be developed in this context.

Written while the Dearing and Government consultations were taking place, Tomlinson's book is a first-class contribution to the current debate. The field is covered in both breadth and depth and there is a consistency of style which is often absent from books which comprise a collection of chapters written by different authors.

I particularly enjoyed the analogy at the start of Geoff Stanton's chapter. A car company decides that its model range requires revamping and commissions three new models. Each is designed by a different division of the company. Vehicle parts which perform identical functions in the different models have different designs and even different names. Complaints pour in from both customers and garages and the divisions are reorganised. It is argued by the company that the new models are basically fine and that the problems derive from users being reluctant to change or failing to understand innovative features. Meanwhile, the company directors and their families continue to use a vintage model which is preserved from change. Eventually, the Dearing Corporation is asked to review the whole range. Readers are left to speculate on which of NVQ, GNVQ and A-levels might be represented by the Granada, Escort or Fiesta.

The scene is set in the early chapters by Sally Tomlinson and Richard Pring, who argue cogently for a system of qualifications which is educational, rather than utilitarian, and which reflects the needs of the early 21st century for a more unified society, instead of that of the 1950s when Ordinary and Advanced levels prepared young people for their places in a clearly stratified society. The authors argue, as many have done during the last eight years, that a unified framework of academic and vocational qualifications is required, in which the current terminology becomes redundant. Although Alan Smithers argues for separate tracks, he too advocates greater coherence.

The final section of the book examines issues of ethnicity, gender and special educational needs within the 14-19 age group. Tamsyn Imison's conversations with her sixth form girls shed particularly interesting light not only on gender issues, but on the views of young people themselves about the opportunities and courses with which they are presented. So rarely do we hear the younger voice in these debates. The book ends on a positive note with an account of the ASDAN scheme by Roger Crombie White.

From both Conservative and Labour Governments, there has been too great an emphasis on the politics of changing the qualifications system. This book rightly emphasises the educational and social need for change. It is a persuasive argument and, in the not too distant future, it will surely prevail.

John Dunford
Secondary Heads Association

Modern Times? Work, Professionalism and Citizenship in Teaching

MARTIN LAWN, 1996
London: Falmer Press. 160pp. £13.95, ISBN (paperback) 0 7507 0496 9 (hardback) 0 7507 0495 0

Martin Lawn is an original and perceptive thinker in education with an increasing corpus of work to his credit. His analysis, specifically of teachers' work (or 'labour process' as he prefers to put it) is both historically and sociologically informed. Basically, he is concerned to promote understanding – to delve below the surface in his explication of change. He is the enemy of sentimentality, searching, rather, to explicate the myths underlying educational control. In this sense his contribution is unique.

This book contains a set of 11 discrete essays on aspects of the politics of teaching and education covering the period from World War 1 to today. Several have been published before (though now revised); some are new. All are linked to the author's main thesis thereby presenting a unity.

This thesis is challenging. In the author's view the period between 1920 and 1990 constituted a distinct phase in state education 'which has come to an end'. These decades saw the development of a mass public elementary (and later secondary) school system, the establishment of a trained teaching force and 'the foundation of a local and national public service of education, linked closely to the expansion of state welfare'. These decades, Lawn argues, were 'permeated by myths' – of 'national identity and democracy, of progress, of professionalism and partnership, of public service and provision'. These may not be untrue, but are primarily 'necessary controlling devices', disciplining the employees of the state.

All this was brought to a close ('a juddering halt') by the Thatcherite reforms of the late 80s and 90s. Several of Lawn's 'myths' (for instance, that of a 'partnership') were now cruelly exposed for what they were. The radical changes now brought about involved 'a major restructuring of teachers' work' and a significant break with 'the previously dominant discourse about the education system in England'.

Lawn focuses on a number of different historical developments to illuminate his thesis. For instance, he sees the 'Partnership' myth as basically the imposition from above of new techniques of central control both of teachers (potentially subversive) and of educational policy. Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education, 1924-29, is credited with the substitution of a colonial type of indirect rule for the strict centralisation of the earlier period. A certain autonomy is conceded, but within very strict limits. All this is seen as a direct (and subtle) response to contemporary fears (in the early 1920s) of a strongly radicalised teaching force and the danger this represented to the state. The concept of 'professionalism' is analysed in a similar mode. Lawn has done extensive research into teacher protest movements in the early 20th century, and builds here usefully on this knowledge.

Among other aspects that interest Lawn are pedagogic shifts or transformations and their relation to overall structural change. A chapter on army education in World War 2 (ABCA, etc.) relates the 'democratic' discussion style pioneered in the army (and linked to a 'citizenship' ideal) with a parallel pedagogic shift in the early secondary modern school. Here, *FORUM* readers will note, Edward Blishen, founder member of our Editorial Board, comes out with flying colours.

Such studies (and interests) are unusual and Lawn makes them both fascinating and illuminating. There are chapters on the 1985 teacher strike, on the teacher unions and their role in the past, present and future, on the curriculum and teaching methods, on policy and structure, and on the present highly fractured situation. Lawn makes no firm predictions for the future. He has, however, published here a set of essays which certainly illuminate the present, and are well worth serious study. Hopefully he will take his analysis further into the uncertain future.

Brian Simon

Living Community, Living School

CHRIS SEARLE, 1997
London: Tufnell Press. £11.99, ISBN 1 872767 27 3

I started reading this book in July 1997 on a Birmingham-to-London train taking me to an interview for a chair in Educational Studies at Goldsmiths College – knowing that Chris Searle would be one of my new colleagues if the day went well. So compelling and engrossing was the text before me that the notes I had prepared so carefully for my presentation and interview were never again consulted. For the essays in this remarkable collection convey a powerful vision of what education could be like if it were seen, not as the mere imparting of information, but (to quote from A. Sivanandan's excellent Preface) as 'the eliciting of every conceivable possibility of the human mind and soul'.

The book was published in June 1997, but Chris Searle's challenging Introduction was written while the Conservatives were still in power. Sadly, the link between Thatcherism (or Majorism) and 'New Labour' is so powerful that all of Chris's observations are still applicable eighteen months after the General Election.

We are still coping with the moral barbarism of a market system of education which celebrates the success of the few at the cost of the failure of the many. We are still saddled with the narrow confines of an exclusive, mono-cultural, government-determined national curriculum with its curious and out-dated concept of what it means to be British or, more specifically, English. That Curriculum may be steadily falling apart under the weight of its own contradictions, but it is being replaced, not by something liberating or life-enhancing, but by a new structure that, for most children at most ages, will be narrow, prescriptive and dull. Above all, we still have all the main features of the elaborate edifice created by many years of Conservative legislation (which New Labour shows no inclination to tear down or even tamper with): league tables, testing at seven, eleven, fourteen and sixteen, undemocratic and powerful education quangos, sharp divisions and inequalities within the school system – particularly at the secondary stage, attacks on so-called 'failing schools', persecution of the alienated and the dispossessed who have to be removed from mainstream schooling to placate the atavistic forces of the NASUWT.

Chris Searle has a vision of a different, community-oriented approach to education which seeks to empower local inner-city communities and create a moral

groundwork based upon internal and external solidarity. As far as Chris is concerned, 'the "community school" must never be a narrow or parochial concept, but a school of the world. It is a base for affirming and extending the internationalism of its very nature and commitment. Its curriculum, quite simply, is not of one "nation" but of all nations; not of a single British people but of all life and peoples – the unifying of cultures and nature as a power for development, justice and beauty' (pp. 4-5).

Chris Searle had the opportunity to give practical expression to his vision at Earl Marshal School, an inner-city comprehensive in Sheffield. But his pioneering work there was brought to a premature end at the end of 1995 by an unholy alliance of David Blunkett, the NASUWT and Chris Woodhead's OFSTED. Chris tells the story of this 'betrayal' in the final chapter of the Book: "OFSTEDed, Blunketted and Permanently Excluded".

Two centuries ago, Tom Paine said that 'we have it in our power to begin the world all over again' (*Common Sense*, 1776). That is a noble and encouraging observation, but, as the author of this book points out, we could do so with much greater facility if we did not have the incubus of an imposed curriculum, several backward-looking Education Acts and a tendentious inspectorial system weighing us down.

Clyde Chitty
Goldsmiths College, London

What is History Teaching? Language, ideas and meaning in learning about the past

CHRIS HUSBANDS, 1996
Buckingham: Open University Press. 150pp.
£13.99/£45.00, ISBN (paperback) 0 335 19638 1
(hardback) 0 335 19639 X

This is a very interesting, readable and relevant book. The author draws freely on the most recent research on the teaching and learning of history to examine both how pupils make sense of the past and the relationship between how historical interpretations are constructed and how pupils learn history in schools. He is generous in his acknowledgements to others, his references actually constituting in themselves a riveting account of recent research and the fierce debates over history and history teaching. Above all, however, his own deeply-felt fascination in history and his passion for enabling others to explore historical ideas creatively come through on every page.

Much of the book concentrates on what is historical enquiry, how to generate genuine historical thinking in pupils and the significance of language in this. Husbands rightly worries about any over-emphasis on primary evidence in the classroom to the detriment of secondary evidence and context. But he does urge the need for pupils to have an 'interpretative framework for their understandings of the past' and thus a need to understand about historical enquiry, evidence and interpretation. Correspondingly, he explains how teachers can appreciate and utilise the different types of thinking, language, talking and writing that can take place in the history classroom, including the way in which pupils draw on their own ideas and knowledge to interpret what they hear in class.

Husbands also gives a welcome blessing to the telling of exciting stories in history, provided the teacher creates the conditions whereby the listeners realise the obligation to interpret the story and investigate further. Such enquiry and the use of imagination disciplined by evidence is located at the heart of good teaching and Husbands makes thoughtful suggestions as to how teachers might help the development of creative thinking, enquiry, discussion and writing and describes assessment which promotes these.

In all, husbands stresses that history is a 'problem-solving discipline' based on 'adductive reasoning' which all pupils, including the younger and 'less able', can do and will enjoy doing, if given the chance to explore in their own ways. The uneven nature of the way pupils exhibit historical skills means that they do need a wide variety of activities and time for debate, analysis and the exchange of ideas. Husbands gives much fruitful material for thought on how this may be achieved.

Ruth Watts
School of Education, University of Birmingham

Goldsmiths Journal of Education

The *Goldsmiths Journal of Education* is a twice-annual peer-reviewed publication from the Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London. The editors are concerned to attract contributions from a range of scholars and professional educators, including teachers in all sectors of the educational world as well as those working in related fields. Contributions as especially welcome from previously unpublished authors, in particular graduate students engaged in advanced studies in education and cognate areas.

Manuscripts submitted to the *Journal* may comprise analyses of existing practice, methods and programmes; critical discussions and accounts of new ideas; and reports on research activities with either empirical or theoretical emphases. Contributors are encouraged to write directly about their experience and not to feel constrained.

Correspondence General enquiries should be addressed to Professor David Halpin, Co-ordinating Editor, Goldsmiths Journal of Education, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, United Kingdom (eds01dh@gold.ac.uk, or telephone 0171-919 7304).

Orders and enquiries about subscriptions should be addressed to Linda Collins, Departmental Administrator, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, United Kingdom (l.collins@gold.ac.uk, or telephone 0171-919 7303).

Manuscripts, in three copies, should be 1500-2500 words, double spaced, printed on one side of A4 paper, and contain an abstract of not more than 50 words. A front sheet should bear the name of the contributor/s with an indication of their professional role if applicable, the title of the article, and an address for correspondence (including a telephone number). Please also supply a copy on an IBM format disc in either MS Word or plain ASCII. Manuscripts should be sent to Professor David Halpin, Co-ordinating Editor, *Goldsmiths Journal of Education*, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths College, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, United Kingdom.

ORDER FORM

Institutional and personal annual subscriptions (two issues): £10.00 (single copies £5.00), post free.

☐ Please enter my annual subscription to *Goldsmiths Journal of Education*. I enclose £.....
☐ Please send a single copy - issue number.....
☐ I enclose a cheque payable to Goldsmiths College

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....

Please return this form with payment to Linda Collins, Departmental Administrator, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, United Kingdom

Back numbers of *FORUM* can be ordered from:
Triangle Journals Ltd
PO Box 65, Wallingford
Oxfordshire OX10 0YG
United Kingdom

Email:
journals@triangle.co.u
Web: www.triangle.co.

Single copies:
£6.00 (individuals)
£7.00 (schools)
£12.00 (libraries)

0963-8253(199809)40:3:-X