FORUM

for promoting comprehensive education

TRIANGLE

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Has Anything Changed?

On that exhilarating night in May 1997 when New Labour won a landslide election victory over the Tories, it really did seem to many people that we would soon be at the point where *everything* had changed. In fact, of course, *nothing* has changed – at least not for the better – and nowhere is this more true than in the field of education.

Immediately following this Editorial we are proud to reprint a powerful *Guardian* cartoon by the brilliant Steve Bell showing the hapless Education Secretary mouthing the slogan: 'Read My Lips! – Loads More Selection'. We are told that David Blunkett has the main education newspaper items read to him every morning; and one imagines that this particular gem will have sent him incandescent with rage.

Yet, as Roy Hattersley has often pointed out, there is a sense in which the Education Secretary is a genuine object of pity. If he ever devised a plan to promote comprehensive state education without independent or selective enclaves – and one admits it may be a difficult scenario to imagine – it would doubtless be vetoed by the tight group of trusted advisers who enjoy easy access to Tony Blair. There is evidence to suggest that in the area of educational policy-making, Andrew Adonis, Michael Barber, Chris Woodhead and, before his fall from grace, Peter Mandelson, have wielded more power and influence than have David Blunkett, Estelle Morris or Baroness Blackstone. After all, much of the educational thinking outlined in the 1997 White Paper *Excellence in Schools* was foreshadowed in the 1996 book *The Blair Revolution: Can New Labour Deliver?*, co-authored by Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle, and in the 1996 book *The Learning Game*, written by Michael Barber.

Quite apart from the mess over selection policy, it seems clear that so many of New Labour's educational 'mistakes' over the past two years were deadly 'own-goals' and could so easily have been avoided.

The phasing of the 1998 pay settlement – inexplicable during a teacher supply crisis – was a crass decision which lost much teacher goodwill.

It was surely a grave misjudgment for the former Minister of State Stephen Byers to 'name' the 18 'worst performing schools' shortly after taking office. And it was equally foolish of Tony Blair to announce on the BBC television 'Breakfast with Frost' programme *before* the 1997 General Election that Chris Woodhead would enjoy his full support as Chief Inspector of Schools in the event of a Labour victory. Such ill-conceived pronouncements conveyed a clear message to teachers that New Labour would not attempt to change the balance between pressure and support, as Tony Blair had promised before the Election. At the same time, a government with a genuine belief in the professionalism of teachers would have created a General Teaching Council with the Teacher Training Agency under its control, rather than the other way round.

The introduction of student tuition fees – currently causing difficulties in the aftermath of the elections in Scotland – and the proposal in the 1998 Green Paper *Teachers – Meeting the Challenge of Change* to introduce performance-related pay for teachers (discussed in this number by Sheila Dainton of the ATL) were hardly calculated to convince students and teachers that New Labour was anxious to take account of their interests.

Then again, the pre-publicity for a recent set of policy initiatives directed at inner-city education was an excellent example of how to cause maximum confusion while, at the same time, continuing the Tory policy of alienating teachers in inner-city comprehensive schools. A front-page story in *The Sunday Times* of 21 March announced that 'an elite 10 per cent of pupils at comprehensives' were to be 'creamed off and given special tuition in an attempt by Tony Blair to stem the exodus of middle-class children to private schools'. At least 100,000 children would benefit initially from the Scheme which would, predicted *The Sunday Times*, 'sound the death knell for mixed-ability teaching in comprehensive schools'. It wasn't too clear how the new arrangements would operate, but it seemed likely that the 'elite pupils' in the biggest cities, including London, Birmingham and Manchester, would be singled out for extra attention and tuition, sometimes after school or at weekends and sometimes at nearby specialist schools.

Somewhat predictably, this initiative was seen by many headteachers and union leaders as signalling yet another vote of no confidence in inner-city schools. In the words of John Dunford, General Secretary of the Secondary Heads Association: 'this is not modernising the comprehensive system; it is undermining it'. And according to Nigel de Gruchy, General Secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, 'if this hare-brained scheme is designed to reassure the middle classes, it will not succeed. Desperate middle-class parents can usually afford extra tuition for their children. Their real concern is social. They don't want their own children mixing with rough youngsters'.

Finally, the Tory obsession with market forces and privatisation seems to have acquired a new and unexpected prominence on the New Labour education agenda. The more obvious examples here are the privatising possibilities implicit within the Education Action Zones Project; the decision to allow a private sector takeover of a state secondary school in Guildford, Surrey; and the naming of ten consortiums that will take the lead in privatising state education in areas where the local authority is found to be failing to provide an adequate service for the pupils in its schools.

Yet re-reading the opening section of this rather depressing Editorial, I have to concede that there is *one* major exception to that paragraph's pessimistic verdict.

This concerns the response of New Labour to the recent nail bomb atrocities which, at the time of writing, have been designed to bring bloodshed and chaos to a number of 'marginalised' communities in London: in Brixton, Brick

Lane and Soho. Generally speaking, the response of leading politicians like Tony Blair and Jack Straw has been sincere and apposite, showing genuine concern and sympathy for the groups of individuals principally affected. The Tories would have mouthed platitudes about the unforgivable threat to law and order and the need for all citizens to be vigilant; but, with a few honourable exceptions, their 'concern' would have been trite and synthetic.

It seems to me arguable that it was the brutal and dehumanising culture of the 1980s which paved the way for, and to some extent legitimised, the many atrocities of this current decade. It was, after all, Mrs Thatcher who idolised Enoch Powell and talked of the country being 'swamped by immigrants'; and it was her Government which attacked the recognition of lesbian and gay sexualities by incorporating the notorious Clause 28 into the 1988 Local Government Act. The phrase outlawing 'the promotion of homosexuality' in schools had the insidious and intended consequences of both constructing all teachers as the potential corrupters of their pupils and encouraging young people to think of gays and lesbians as evil, perverted child-abusers.

All this gives us a powerful insight into the Tory Mind. In *Lucky George*, his recently-published 'Memoirs of an Anti-Politician', ex-Tory MP and ex-Minister for Higher Education George Walden writes: 'scratch the topsoil of the most modern-minded Conservative, and one millimetre down you will find, more often than not, an impermeable layer of Jurassic prejudice' (p. 293).

I would argue that with regard to the important issue of 'what it means to be British', things *have* changed – even if we still have a long way to go if we want to create a truly decent civilised society in which all forms of diversity – racial, cultural, religious and sexual – are welcomed and 'celebrated'.

In a well-timed speech in Birmingham on the 2nd May, intended to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Sikh religion, the Prime Minister spoke eloquently of the need to build 'the tolerant multiracial Britain the vast majority of us want to see'. He argued powerfully that an attack on any section of the community was an attack on Britain as a whole:

> When one section of our community is under attack, we defend it in the name of all the community. When bombs attack the black and Asian community in Britain, they attack the whole of Britain ... When the gay community is attacked and innocent people are murdered, all the good people of Britain, whatever their race, their lifestyle, their class, unite in revulsion and determination to bring the evil people to justice.

What is also clear is that education itself has an important role to play in defeating the sort of vicious nationalism that tolerates attacks on minorities and replacing it with a vision for the 21st century based on respect for human diversity.

Clyde Chitty

Steve Bell, *The Guardian,* 23 March 1999

Think Again, Mr Blunkett

Sheila Dainton
Sheila Dainton is an Assistant Secretary in the Policy Unit at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL). In this article she highlights aspects of the Association's response to the government's Green Paper *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change*, and reports on a wide-ranging consultation process carried out by ATL since the beginning of the year.

No one should deny that consultation on the Government's Green Paper *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change*, has been a major event. Putting to one side niggling concerns about the questions leading the answers in the official response form, the extent of the consultation – complete with wide-ranging press coverage and ministerial roadshows – has been encouraging. At the time of writing, a matter of days before consultation ends on 31 March, the DfEE has received over 24,000 responses. But whether or not the Green Paper has captured hearts and minds is another question.

Key issues, especially relating to pay, remain subject to intense debate. What is negotiable and what are the trade-offs? (Stick with the performance threshold and appraisal linked to targets, but ditch the current proposals for relating performance to pay, at least in the early implementation phase?) What is non-negotiable? And would toughing it out be a wise long-term strategy? Will the Government listen – and will David Blunkett think again? The big question is this: to what extent, if at all, is David Blunkett – backed to the hilt by Tony Blair – prepared to ride roughshod over the teaching profession and its unions?

In their respective forewords to the Green Paper, Tony Blair and David Blunkett make it clear that, while they will be responsive to suggestions for improvement, they definitely mean business. The Prime Minister's declaration that the *status quo* is not an option is unequivocal. But after over a decade of untried, untested reforms imposed under the Conservative administration, one thing is certain: change can take place only *because* of teachers, not *despite* them.

As ATL's response to the Green Paper states: 'Our commitment is to change which works and brings improvement, change which is permanent rather than evanescent. A crucial driver of change will be the willing engagement and willing support of individual classroom teachers and heads. It will also rely upon the support and backing of those organisations which the great majority of individual teachers have chosen to voice their collective professional view. Attempting to press-gang the teaching profession by regulation will not work because it will not capture hearts and minds'. The Government has done much to precipitate a head-on confrontation with teachers and their unions at this year's Easter conferences.

What do Teachers Say?

Over the past three months ATL has conducted a wide-ranging consultation. This has included an independent in-depth telephone survey of over 500 teachers (not all ATL members), focus group meetings with teachers and with student teachers, and meetings of local ATL branches and, at a national level, of branch secretaries.

Results from the telephone survey reveal that the vast majority of teachers (94%) feel that their profession is becoming less attractive to enter under the new Government. Whilst almost half the teachers agree that Government policies are generally moving in the right direction, fewer than one in five are satisfied with policies relating to education.

In spite of the Government's widespread consultation, not one of the 36 teachers participating in ATL's focus groups felt they had any say in the changes proposed in the Green Paper. There was a general feeling that, historically, decisions about teachers and teaching have always been made above teachers' heads by people with little knowledge of the real issues. These comments sum up the general feeling:

> *I think to be honest a lot of staff are very cynical.*
> *...the idea of a consultation exercise ... a complete and utter waste of time and whatever the Government wants to do, it will do, and whatever comments we make will be ignored.*

It is clear that many teachers who hoped (whatever their political allegiance) that a Labour Government would mean change are becoming increasingly convinced that politically they are being delivered more of the same. The last Government made the fatal mistake of resolutely declining to work with the teaching profession in partnership almost as a matter of principle. It bequeathed the new Labour administration a climate of distrust. This Government shows every sign of being about to compound this distrust by repeating the errors of its predecessors.

The Technical Consultation Document

Several weeks after the Green Paper was published, the Government issued a *Technical Consultation Document on Pay and Performance Management* (TCD). Those expecting answers to the many questions left hanging in the air in the Green Paper were disappointed – and justifiably so. The TCD bears all the signs of a hastily put together draft, with scant evidence that important answers to genuinely 'technical' questions had been properly developed.

Conversations with senior civil servants and government advisers have revealed a fundamental lack of clarity about a whole series of procedural issues. These issues include details of new pay structures above the proposed performance threshold, which will be the main career path for most teachers.

The Performance Threshold

Putting to one side concerns about the desirability of a performance threshold (is performance below the threshold not 'good enough'?), and critical issues about the equitable

assessment of candidates against the standards (extremely challenging under the proposed timescale), key concerns about the new structures above the threshold include:

● *Moving to a different contract.* Many teachers are already working far beyond the annual 1265 hours, 195 day framework. They will not wish to trade in that contractual safeguard even for a pay increase of up to 10%. Working flat out already (not just in the classroom but for many hours outside it) they will feel unable and unwilling to commit themselves to even more.

● *The aggregate paybill and its distribution.* It is unclear what numbers of teachers will receive what levels of rewards. Will it be better or worse than at present? Is transition from the system of responsibility points expected to subsidise part of the new system, or wholly fund it?

● *Changes in individual career rewards by value and time.* The proposed maximum three salary steps in post appear to represent a lower salary ceiling achievable over time than do present arrangements for promotions with progressively high responsibility points.

● *Fairness.* The proposed arrangements do not yet offer any reason to believe that part-time teachers and teachers returning from a career break will have greater access to higher pay points than in the present inequitable system.

● *Career mobility.* The proposed arrangements for salary placement in a new school are opaque. Teachers need to be confident, not least in relation to school funding, that salary points awarded for their level of contribution in one school will normally be honoured in any other school.

In its response to the Green Paper, ATL concludes: 'Will high achieving teachers, working at a school which has acknowledged and rewarded their contribution, risk moving to another institution in which, effectively, they have to start from scratch? We doubt it. It is far more likely that teachers will plump for employment security rather than opt for an employment flutter in an unknown context. The Government may, unwittingly, be concocting a recipe for stagnation rather than fluid dynamic change ... These issues cannot be fudged. Much more information must be provided before any transition can be accepted by teachers with confidence.'

Performance Management

The TCD introduces the concept of 'performance management', but it does so without first attempting to reach agreement across the teaching profession as to the meaning of 'performance' or indeed the meaning of 'performance management' – and how it is to operate effectively. One thing is certain. The introduction of performance management and the performance threshold will significantly increase the workload of senior managers and headteachers. This increased workload is likely to be particularly acute in the two-year period commencing in September 1999.

A significant amount of the practical detail, setting out further information, will be contained in the promised *Performance Management Handbook.* This handbook is to be produced in two parts. The first part will focus on appraisal procedures; the second part will describe the processes to be followed by the headteacher and governing body in

making the link between appraisal outcomes and teachers' pay. The criteria by reference to which key decisions about pay are to be made under the performance management system and for crossing the performance threshold have to be accessible and transparent at both organisational and national level. They need to have the essential quality of being workable and understandable to the extent that they can be applied in practice by hard-pressed teaching staff. As drafted, the proposals in the TCD do not comply with these essential requirements.

The Timescale

The Green Paper proposes the following schedule of changes:

April 1999 - Publication of draft regulations on new arrangements for teacher appraisal
September 1999 - Introduction of new arrangements for teacher appraisal
March 2000 - Eligible teachers to notify headteachers of intention to apply for threshold assessment
End May 2000 - Applications (and supporting evidence) to cross the performance threshold to be submitted to headteachers
September 2000 - New pay structure introduced

The timescale raises questions as to whether this is a full and proper consultation exercise in accordance with the well-publicised intention of the Government. For example, the deadline for completion of the consultation period is 31 March 1999 yet the Government will issue new draft Regulations on the revised arrangements in April 1999, a matter of weeks after the consultation has closed.

The Government's sense of urgency to 'modernise' the teaching profession must surely be tempered by the harsh reality, as experienced by teachers in schools, of the plethora of failed initiatives which has characterised the past 25 years – particularly in reforming teachers' reward systems.

The 1970s saw the introduction of a senior teacher scale, virtually unknown in primary schools. Later came incentive allowances. The additional money which the then Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker, claimed would create substantially more promotion opportunities largely leaked into the transitional cost of moving from one pay structure to another – and many headteachers, particularly in the primary sector, decided that they could not identify any fair basis for awarding an incentive allowance to one teacher as against another. More recently, 'excellence' points were introduced. Yet another failure. Without clear and objective criteria for deciding who should be granted them (and patently insufficient money to award them to all who might qualify) headteachers and governors have understandably shied away.

The key lesson to be learnt is surely this: solid work in progress, achieved in partnership with teachers and other stakeholders, has to be preferable to yet another untried, untested, and hastily-imposed 'solution'. As things stand, the risk of introducing another botched attempt at reforming the rewards structure for teachers is unacceptably high.

In its response to the Green Paper, ATL concludes: 'We strongly advocate that the Government relax its over-ambitious timescale. We consider it essential that the Government: first, trial the new appraisal arrangements; second, dry run the performance management arrangements; and, only thereafter, decide on whether or not to proceed with a highly specified performance related pay scheme.'

Linking Appraisal to Pay

There are mixed views on the current appraisal arrangements, due not least to the wide variation in teachers' experiences of appraisal. Those with positive experiences regard the current appraisal arrangements as a welcome opportunity to discuss their strengths and, importantly, their weaknesses. Where it works well, appraisal can provide strong support for individual teachers in their current post, and in planning future career moves.

The model of appraisal set out in the TCD can be construed as a significant change from the appraisal system with which many teachers have become familiar. All the available evidence suggests strong opposition to the Government's current proposals. Concerns focus on three issues.

First, teachers fear that, in practice, the proposed appraisal targets will turn out to be mechanistic and almost exclusively dominated by pupil test and assessment performance or public examination achievement. Second, any opportunity to speak honestly and openly about perceived weaknesses as well as about strengths in a positive, constructive context will disappear. Third, teachers fear that the process will lack transparency, particularly as there appears to be no right of appeal or means of challenging any deficiencies in the process.

A hypothesis that student teachers may look more favourably upon the proposals for linking appraisal to pay was disproved during the ATL student focus groups. While some were willing to 'give it a go', others expressed concern, based on first-hand experience during teaching practice, about the potential for personal bias and favouritism on the part of the headteacher. There were strongly-held feelings that performance related pay would militate against teamwork, perceived by the overwhelming majority of the students as the essential component in improving standards across the school as a whole. As important, several mature students with previous work experience, where performance related pay was a key component of the employment package, were extremely hostile to the proposals. Their attitude is best summed up by a student who said: 'We had it in my last place. It's dangerous and divisive ... they said it was transparent, but disclosing your salary was a sackable offence.'

Taken as a whole, the Green Paper's proposals for performance related pay are complex, burdensome and will generate unnecessary bureaucracy at a time when the Government has made a public commitment to reducing bureaucracy in schools.

Recruitment and Retention

First, a word about retention. Fifty per cent of the teaching workforce is over 45. Yet the proposals in the Green Paper have little to offer this important group of teachers who help to form the backbone of the profession. What are the prospects for an ageing, demoralised and disaffected workforce, already working under considerable stress and carrying a heavy workload, which saw the last Government's changes to premature retirement arrangements as blocking off the only career prospect which had kept many going? The Green Paper remains silent on this crucial issue.

On the recruitment front, there is a mountain to climb. Only time will reveal the extent to which the Government's proposals address severe general recruitment problems which could reach crisis proportions, and in some curriculum areas already have. Many had hoped for a substantial, across-the-board pay increase for all teachers in the current pay round. This has not happened. Policies to attract more young (and indeed older) people into teaching may be made more difficult than in previous periods of high demand for teachers, because of the competing demands for highly qualified labour and because of the sharper public focus on the quality of teachers.

Teaching is a heavily female-populated profession, particularly in the primary sector, but women now have a wider choice of careers than in the past. Some of the perceived trade-offs of being a teacher, including a high level of professional autonomy, a degree of flexibility outside normal teaching hours, and the family/woman friendly nature of the job, are fast disappearing. For many women, the flexibility to move between full-time and part-time teaching without jeopardising their career is crucially important, for it is mostly women who combine working with raising families. Moreover, some women's career aspirations can be fully realised only after they have raised a family. As it stands, the proposed 'fast-track' is definitely not designed for them.

Nowhere does the Green Paper even begin to address these questions. Rather than explore the possibilities for lateral mobility or horizontal fast tracking, the emphasis is solely on a vertical (some would say singularly macho) model of career progression – ever onwards and upwards. Is this the most helpful way forward?

ATL's 25-page response to the Green Paper *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change*, is available from ATL Publications Despatch, 7 Northumberland Street, London WC2N 5DA. Phone 0171 782 1584, fax 0171 9301359.

STATE SCHOOLS
New Labour and the Conservative Legacy

Edited by
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Eighteen years of Conservative stewardship ensured that the
Labour Government's education policy did not begin with a
tabula rasa, for its starting point has been defined by the
previous government to a greater extent than has been the case
with any other incoming government. In this book a number of
practitioners discuss the micro effect of the policies in their
schools. The book will make an important contribution to the
continuing debate about the best way forward for state education
in England and Wales.

John Dunford & Clyde Chitty. Introduction
C. Eric Spear. The Changing Pressures on Secondary Schools
Clyde Chitty. The Comprehensive Ideal
Peter Downes. Changing Pressures in the Secondary School
John Dunford. Towards Rationalisation? The 14–19 Curriculum
Pat Collings. Schools in Deprived Areas
Roger Seckington. Community Schools
Tamsyn Imison. A View from London
Martin Lawn. Following the Third Way?
Teachers and New Labour
John Dunford. Inspection: from HMI to Ofsted
Robert Godber. The Rise of Parent Power
Clyde Chitty & John Dunford. Conclusion

Kings' Manor School: an experiment in privatisation?

Derek Gillard
Derek Gillard began his teaching career in 1966 at Queen Eleanor's CE Primary School and then went on to teach at Westborough County Primary School, both feeder primary schools of what was then Park Barn County Secondary School in Guildford. His concern at the recent events surrounding Kings' Manor School relates to the direction of government education policy and, in particular, the creeping privatisation of state education.

The School and its Area

Park Barn County Secondary School was opened in the late 50s to serve a large area of north-west Guildford including Onslow village and the Park Barn and Westborough estates. Its name was changed to Kings' Manor School in 1991, when parents were being given the right to choose their children's schools and it was felt that the Park Barn tag might limit the appeal of the school to residents of the estate.

The Park Barn and Westborough estates have always suffered from public perceptions of the area. Indeed, in a report on Kings' Mahor School (11 September 1998), *The Surrey Advertiser* described Park Barn as 'one of the most deprived areas of Guildford'. In response to the resulting wave of protest, the paper published a piece by Simon Wicks: Park Barn – a crisis of identity (*The Surrey Advertiser*, 2 October 1998).

In his piece, Wicks pointed out that Park Barn comes 28th in the county's league table of 30 deprived areas. Quoting Wendy Allison of the north Guildford project, he wrote, 'Park Barn and Westborough have one of the lowest income per capita ratios in Surrey and the educational abilities of young children entering school there are considered to be relatively low'. According to the Surrey Area Profile, Westborough has 7.3% unemployment, 18.9% of children are in low-income families and 43.6% of the residents rent from the local authority. In terms of resources, however, the area is relatively well off. The council houses are 'smartly double glazed and centrally heated'. There are plenty of play areas and a new £1.3 million Day Centre for the over 55s.

Community worker Jonathan Hayes told Wicks, 'This is a mixed community, with university lecturers and the long-term unemployed among its residents. Crime is low. It has been tagged 'deprived' because of the concentration of rented housing and the fact that national housing policies mean tenancies are awarded only to those with 'genuine need'.

Hayes went on to say, 'It is partly the contrast between the various sectors in the community that has affected Kings' Manor School. Parents, given more choice nowadays, choose not to send their children there because the area is deemed to be 'deprived' and the label becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Inevitably, a label that is appropriate for a section of the community ends up colouring the whole area. A falling school roll means less funding which in turn means the school cannot function as well as it should.

Under-resourced and with falling morale, it becomes a 'failing' school, according to OFSTED's criteria'.

Today, the school roll stands at just 395, with 23 in the sixth-form.

OFSTED itself (1998) identified a number of factors affecting the school, including:
- its situation in 'an area of some social deprivation';
- the attainment profile of pupils on entry, which is 'skewed increasingly towards below-average attainment';
- the fact that, since 1994, the school has received a 'significant proportion of pupils during the school year ... including pupils excluded from other schools';
- a high proportion of travellers' children;
- the fact that 22% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals; and
- the fact that 25% have special educational needs, including 9% with 'statements', ranging over physical disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The previous OFSTED Inspection, in December 1993, had identified strengths, but also some behavioural problems among pupils, and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning and in some aspects of provision for pupils with special educational needs.

In 1997, the school carried out an interval review, and this was followed by an LEA inspection. As a result of these, the school began to address a number of urgent priorities including standards of achievement, the quality of teaching and the school's ethos. Guidance and policies relating to these were put in place, and the senior management team and heads of faculty began a programme of monitoring the effects of these initiatives.

The 1998 Inspection

OFSTED inspectors visited the school on 14-15 May 1998 and three HMIs carried out a Section 10 inspection of the school on 6-7 July. Following these inspections, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector concluded that 'the school requires special measures, since it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education'.

The following are extracts from the Inspection Report, which drew on the evidence of both the May and July visits.

The main findings of the inspection are:
- in 1997, overall GCSE results, and results in the core

subjects, were low, even in comparison with schools with some similar characteristics. At Key Stage 3, results in the statutory tests were low in English and mathematics; there are weaknesses in the standards achieved by pupils in the classroom in all the core subjects, especially in English and mathematics, and in standards in basic literacy and numeracy skills;

● the progress made by pupils was satisfactory or better in just under half of the lessons;

● the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in just under three-fifths of the lessons;

● in some parts of the school there are good learning environments and evidence of pupils' hard work in preparing coursework for GCSE, for example in the library and in the technology faculty, and also in other subject areas including art and science;

● provision for pupils who have special educational needs is well organised by the learning support faculty. The school is beginning to work towards a whole-school approach to meeting the needs of these pupils, but practice is not yet consistent across faculties;

● the behaviour of pupils around the school is broadly acceptable, with some exceptions. The significant numbers of disabled pupils in the school are treated with consideration and respect by their peers, and by the staff of the school. In the classroom, pupils' behaviour is variable, in response to the quality of teaching. When teaching is less than satisfactory, there is evidence of some uncouth behaviour, inattention, restlessness and disaffection. Pupils' response was satisfactory in three fifths of the lessons;

● attendance rates are poor and unauthorised absences and temporary exclusions are high;

● the senior management team has correctly identified urgent priorities for the school: raising standards; improving the quality of teaching; and addressing the ethos of the school. These three strands are sensibly reflected in the governing body's committee structure. The leaders and managers of the school demonstrate, in their recent thinking and activity, clear vision and a sense of priorities, but they have not yet managed to achieve a positive impact as a result of these initiatives;

● senior and middle managers are increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of pupils' work and of teaching, and in planning, year-on-year, for improvement, but there has been no longer-term planning in recent years, and there are weaknesses in the detail and style of the current year's management plan;

● the senior management team is large for a small school, with a range of roles of varying status, and some complex and somewhat confusing lines of management. It is necessary for these to be clarified, and for the headteacher, supported by the governing body, to draw on the varying strengths within the team to push harder for full implementation of the policies now in place;

● the commitment of staff to the school and the pupils is strong, as are their feelings of uncertainty about the future of the school. It is necessary for the school's leadership to address the needs of those staff who have difficulties with the undoubtedly

challenging mix of pupils, and to raise their expectations of the pupils in order to focus on raising standards.

In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, staff and the LEA need to address the following key issues:

● improve the progress pupils make in subjects, in lessons, and over time, and by that means to improve their attainment;

● raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, and improve the quality of teaching and lesson planning;

● make better use of time in lessons so as to stimulate pupils' attitudes, interest, motivation and willingness to work;

● develop more comprehensive literacy and numeracy policies, and a whole-school approach to their implementation;

● improve attendance;

● improve pupils' behaviour, through more effective implementation of the behaviour policy, and reduce the number of exclusions;

● improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, in order to implement the range of policies now in place.

In the aftermath of the inspection, Surrey Council proposed closing the school. They were somewhat taken aback when 500 angry parents turned up to a meeting to demand that it should be kept open. Ben Cartwright, Chairperson of the Kings' Manor Community Group, told Jamie Wilson and Rebecca Smithers (*The Guardian*, 9th February 1999) that 'the school began to run into difficulties 10 years ago. It was under-subscribed, and children excluded from other schools were sent there. Matters came to a head last year when the Local Education Authority published a paper on the future of education in North Guildford. They recommended closing the school'. As a result, the Community Group was set up. We won that battle, but the next thing the LEA suggested was privatisation.

My Correspondence

I first became aware of the situation when letters supporting the school began to appear in *The Surrey Advertiser*.

On 22 September I wrote to the Head Teacher, Greg Gardner, 'to offer my moral support to you and your staff in your present circumstances'. In his reply, he said he was sad that the strategies which he and his staff were putting in place were not to be allowed to bear fruit. Of himself, he said, 'I am thinking of joining voluntary services – something they cannot sack you from – to carry on the fight to correct some of the appalling inequities in a society where the gap between the rich and the poor has reached grotesque proportions'.

On 17 October I wrote to Heather Hawker (Chair, Surrey County Council), Dr Paul Gray (Director of Education, Surrey County Council), Andrew Smith (my MP, Oxford East, and Minister for Employment, Welfare to Work and Equal Opportunities) and David Blunkett.

I pointed out:

● that Kings's Manor School suffers from the effects of selection by other secondary schools in the area;

● that a third of its pupils have either been expelled from other schools or have special needs of various types;

- that it does an outstanding job for pupils with physical disabilities; and
- that its work on literacy (with its feeder primary schools) has been recognised by the Government with a grant of £100,000.

I suggested that the fact that OFSTED considered it a failing school 'merely demonstrates the absurdly narrow definitions within which OFSTED inspectors work'. In my experience, I wrote, 'most OFSTED inspectors wouldn't recognise real education if it hit them in the face'.

However, my main criticism were not of OFSTED, nor of the County Council, but of the policies of both the previous and the present governments which, in my view, had caused this situation. The combined effect of league tables and parental choice is, inevitably, to cause good schools to become more popular and poorer schools (usually those in less affluent areas) to become less so. As these schools become less popular, so they find it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain good staff. It is a vicious circle. Rather than improve the situation for pupils in the poorer areas, therefore, national education policy actually exacerbates the problem and widens the divide.

In my letter to David Blunkett, I asked why he was not prepared to end the iniquitous practice of selection of pupils by ability or aptitude. I reminded him of the words he had used before the election: 'Read my lips. No selection'.

The Replies

In her reply, Heather Hawker said she was 'pleased that the Education Committee has committed itself to the continuation of a schools on the Kings' Manor site. My personal belief is that everybody involved (the school, the community and the LEA) share a common goal which is to see the creation of a thriving school to serve the Park Barn area. We are pursuing a range of options including a partnership with the private sector, but at this stage no decisions have been taken'.

Surrey's Director of Education, Dr Paul Gray, wrote, 'It is precisely because Kings' Manor has, in effect, become a 'poor relation' locally that I decided some 15 months ago to intervene directly. For all of the reasons you have described, the roll at Kings' Manor has plummeted and its intake is unbalanced. LEA inspectors identified serious weaknesses and there then followed a period of even more intensive support from the County Council. In the event (and despite the best efforts of all concerned), we have been unable to turn the school around and my politicians felt strongly that it should close. I took a different view, believing that it is possible to have a successful school on the Park Barn site but that it must be sufficiently distinctive to be attractive to parents in the Guildford area'.

Andrew Smith, my Oxford MP, replying on behalf of David Blunkett, wrote, 'We have encouraged LEAs to use innovative approaches to tackle failure. These may include seeking private sector advice and consultancy. I hope that Surrey will bear three principles in mind. First, the law does not allow the governors or the LEA to abandon their responsibility to raise standards. Second, the choices they make about how to carry out that responsibility must be motivated by the best interests of pupils. Third, they must ensure that any expenditure represents the best possible value for public money'.

He went on to emphasise, 'There is no question of a state school being run for profit by a private company. Governors control school budgets and they must be spent for the benefit of pupils. This does not rule out buying services from private companies. That is common practice for services like cleaning and catering. Buying educational or management advice is less common. It is certainly not unlawful nor – where it represents good value for money in terms of raising school standards – objectionable... Our policy is to focus on standards, not structures... We are not in the business of ruling out solutions which might help failing schools get back on their feet more quickly. Whatever the decision on Kings' Manor, we will wish to see whether it is effective. Our prime concern must be to ensure that pupils receive the excellent standard of education to which they are entitled, and as soon as possible'.

The Process

At the Education Committee Meeting on 2 November, Paul Gray promised to 'keep the options open for Kings' Manor School' and said that one of these options would be 'keeping the school under local authority control'. Concerns were expressed about the costs of the tendering process and the timescale, and doubts about the legality of paying a management fee over and above the cash provided per child (*The Surrey Advertiser*, 6 November 1998).

There were nine replies to the request for 'expressions of interest'. The parents' preferred bidder was the Guildford Community Education Trust. It was the only local one, set up for the purpose by 14 local churches. It was not shortlisted. Surrey County Council would not say why, though it is believed it is because, being newly set up, it could not demonstrate a track record, financial resources or expertise. However, when the Edison Project, the American backers of one of the four shortlisted bidders, withdrew their support for the bid, the Council was obliged to think again. They couldn't be seen to reject the local bid on the basis of a lack of track record whilst allowing a bid from another organisation which also had no track record.

Proposals had to be submitted by 18 January. Francis Beckett, writing in *The Guardian* (19 January 1999) said, 'It was all done with obsessive secrecy ... Substantial bonuses were secretly offered to the successful bidder if pupil numbers rose'. Surrey County Council 'refused to tell parents, governors, teachers or even Mr Gardner anything at all about who is bidding or what is on offer'. The Parents' Action Committee request to have a representative on the Kings' Manor Contract Sub-committee was refused, even though one could legally have been co-opted. Dr Andrew Povey, Conservative Education Chairperson said, 'Some of the Parents' Action Committee have a political agenda'.

In the event, the contract was offered to 3Es Enterprises. Jamie Wilson and Rebecca Smithers reported that 'the 3E's bid was the unanimous choice among local people' (*The Guardian*, 9 February 1999). Inside the school, a small band of parents cheered when the Head, Greg Gardner, announced the result.

3E's Managing Director, Stanely Goodchild (former Chief Education Officer for Berkshire), told Simon Wicks (*The Surrey Advertiser*, 26 February 1999) that his firm was pledged 'to transform the ethos of the school and drag it from a downward spiral that has seen pupil numbers fall by 50%. We want this school to be a school of distinction and we want it to be owned by the local community'. He believed that, with local support, it could become a 'college of national and international repute, with very clear specialisms'.

3Es will set up a voluntary aided school on the King's

Manor site in September 2000. The firm will be paid 'a management fee and generous performance bonuses'. The county has also promised £1 million for refurbishment and £150,000 for new technology.

According to *The Surrey Advertiser* report, 'The contest was won on the basis that 3Es would set up an arts and technology college, with an emphasis on vocational qualifications and commercial sponsorship. Their plans include a name change – possibly to Kings' College for the Arts and Technology, entry tests to ensure a fully comprehensive intake and extensive community involvement... Mr Goodchild and his wife Valerie Bragg, principal of Kingshurst City Technology College, also have telling experience of reviving under-achieving schools, including Garth Hill in Bracknell'. Mr Goodchild 'could not offer guarantees that existing staff would be kept on if they did not subscribe to the 3Es ethos' (Simon Wicks, *The Surrey Advertiser*, 26 February 1999).

Greg Gardner remains puzzled. Why is Surrey County Council, which is proud of the reputation of its education service, so keen to enter into an arrangement which will, inevitably, take away a level of local control? What is the nature of the contract about to be entered into? What happens if it goes wrong? And will the parents – who have campaigned so effectively for the retention of the school – still feel it is 'theirs' when it is run by a trust whose approach may cut across their interests?

Conclusions

I don't know the staff of Kings' Manor School. I don't know how good they are as teachers and managers. I don't know how far they themselves have contributed to the situation in which they now find themselves.

But it does seem to me that here is a school trying to offer a good, humane education to all its pupils, a large proportion of whom are 'disadvantaged' or 'disabled'. I am not alone in this view. From the many letters which have appeared in *The Surrey Advertiser*, it is clear that the school enjoys a high level of support among parents and the local community. Fancis Beckett, writing in *The Guardian* (19 January 1999) pointed out that the school's unit for pupils with physical disabilities was 'widely admired'. Jamie Wilson and Rebecca Smithers reported that 'Kings' Manor, a 1950s red brick structure, lies in one of the most depressed areas of the town. But from the inside you would not know it was a failing school. There are no broken windows or litter; instead the rooms are bright, with decorations on the walls. Last night pupils were rehearsing for a production of *The Wizard of Oz (The Guardian*, 9 February 1999).

So why does the school find itself in its present situation? The following factors have all played a significant part:
● public perceptions of the area the school serves;
● inflexible funding formulae;
● annual budget cuts;

● an imposed and restrictive curriculum;
● testing and league tables and the resulting view that a school can be only as good as its test results;
● parental choice;
● pupil selection;
● the level of exclusions from other schools; and
● the culture of 'name and shame'.

What, I wonder, could the present staff have achieved with a management fee, generous performance bonuses, £1 million for refurbishment and £150,000 for new technology? We shall never know. They are to be sacrificed on the altar of New Labour's vision of education for the 21st century.

But what *is* that vision? Perhaps there is a clue in Hackney. Following a fairly damning OFSTED Report, some of its services are to be hived off to outside contractors. (Rumour has it that Downing Street wanted the whole LEA contracted out, but apparently the OFSTED Report wasn't quite damning enough.)

Why should Blunkett want private contractors to run Hackney? Decca Aitkenhead (*The Guardian*, 12 March 1999) offered two possible explanations. The more hopeful one would be that Blunkett is in torment with every day that passes and every Hackney school pupil doesn't have a place secured at Oxbridge ... Alternatively, it might be the case that the Department for Education is currently awash with advice from consultants, all 'advising' that schools would be transformed if only the Government would let private companies such as Nord Anglie or Edison get their hands on them ... the Chair of the Local Government Association's education committee warns of 'shadowy creatures' lobbying in their own interests ... it is clearly the case that these consultants stand to profit in the long run if they can convince the Government that local authorities have no right, God given or otherwise, to run their own education.

In practical terms, having a private contractor run some of Hackney's services will actually make very little difference, since local authorities now have very limited responsibilities and very little to do with the day-to-day running of schools. 'If you wanted to make a dramatic improvement to Hackney's schools, changing the organisation which looks after data analysis and the like would not be your biggest priority. If, on the other hand, your main concern was to start setting precedents for privatisation; if you wanted companies to secure some experience; if you wanted to steer towards a system where state education was no longer the norm, it would make sense to start in Hackney' (Decca Aitkenhead, *The Guardian*, 12 March 1999).

Or in Kings' Manor?

Extracts from OFSTED Report on King's Manor School Crown Copyright, 1998.

Standards, Progress and Improvement: towards an appraisal of the OFSTED Inspection system

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Seven years after its legal establishment and six years after the start of the first school inspection cycle, it is timely to reappraise the workings of OFSTED. OFSTED, of course, claims with some justification to be keeping its operations under constant review. It sees, for example, its proposals for a differentiated system of school inspection to be introduced from January 2000 to be one result of that process. However, to adapt the words of the hymn-writer, OFSTED's internal reviews and external 'consultations' provide little evidence of how and to what effect that organisation 'moves in mysterious ways its wonders (blunders?) to perform'. The publication of the Parliamentary Select Committee Report on OFSTED and the Brunel Study, *The OFSTED System of School Inspection: an independent evaluation* (CEPP, 1999), provide evidence and judgement to aid the necessary process of *external* review. Carol Fitz-Gibbon's article in the Spring 1999 issue of *FORUM* is another contribution, focusing particularly on some of the methodological issues involved in the making and validation of inspection judgements.

This article provides a critical examination of three concepts central to the revised requirements made of registered inspectors by OFSTED (1998) as schools are inspected as part of the second cycle. These concepts are *standards, progress* and *school improvement*. By reference to primary school inspections in particular I want to argue that OFSTED's understanding of these terms is partial and its procedures for arriving at judgements of *standards, progress* and *school improvement* are flawed. As a result, the findings of the second cycle of school inspections cannot provide justifiable evidence of improvement (or its lack) in specific schools from one inspection to the next, justifiable evidence of improvement (or its lack) in the school system as a whole, or justifiable evidence of the validity (or otherwise) of OFSTED's strap-line 'improvement through inspection'.

In setting up OFSTED in 1992 the Education (Schools) Act required inspectors to 'report' on:
- the quality of education provided by the school;
- the educational standards achieved by the school;
- whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed efficiently; and
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school.

Educational standards were not defined in statute nor was the term *report*. At the time and for some years afterwards *standards* in the primary curriculum were broadly conceived by OFSTED and others as related to pupils' attainments across the range of subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and any other curricular areas taught, *as judged by inspectors drawing on a wide range of evidence*, in particular evidence gathered as a result of first-hand observation, but also including test data where relevant (again as *judged* by inspectors). Such professional judgements were to be made during school inspections and *reported* in published reports. Hence the term *report* included the notion of professional evaluation followed by public disclosure of that evaluation.

Since the publication of *Inspection 98* by OFSTED, *standards* in English, mathematics and science in primary schools have been reconstrued much more narrowly and in my judgement, dangerously in terms of pupils' test results at the end of keys stages, as evidenced by their prominent publication under the heading 'Standards in subjects' in summary reports for parents. Inspectors' judgements of standards in these subjects are regarded as far less important and presumably far less reliable than standards measured in terms of the proportions of pupils achieving Levels 2 and 4 on the tests. Inspectors' judgements are still required in relation to the two other newly designated 'core' subjects of information technology and religious education but presumably only because national test data do not exist for these (as yet). To all intents and purposes, in the three subjects that really matter in the Government's and OFSTED's eyes standards are now to be equated with pupil performance on tests (of dubious reliability and validity in my judgement); inspectors' judgements count for little. It is true that OFSTED still adheres to the letter of the 1992 Act – inspectors continue to *report* on standards – but not to its spirit since the judgements of standards inspectors report in mathematics, English and science are not primarily their own professional ones, but those of the devisers of the national tests and of those centrally who determine what constitutes an appropriate test performance for each

'level' (Richards, 1999). Who are these unseen determiners of standards? What procedures do they use? How valid and reliable are these? These arbitrators of what constitutes *standards* are not identifiable and are not accountable. In a very real sense OFSTED is in danger of breaching the very statutory basis on which it was established; it no longer purports to judge and evaluate standards using the professional expertise of its inspectors. Does it *not* trust their judgement?

OFSTED currently makes much use of the concept of pupils' *progress* both in reports on individual schools and in its Annual Report. This involves inspectors in 'assessing the rate, breadth and depth of learning in each year based on the gains in knowledge, skills and understanding pupils make in lessons and over a period of time' (OFSTED, 1998). Judgements of *progress* were introduced in a laudable attempt to try to give schools credit for the so-called 'value' they add to pupils' education and thus to recognise the achievements of teachers in schools where pupils may have below-average standards of attainment as measured on national tests, but nevertheless be making good progress in their learning. However praiseworthy, the attempt is doomed to failure because of flaws in the way the concept is employed and in the procedures used to assess it.

Assessing *progress* in individual lessons involves at least three sets of judgements: (a) judgements of pupils' knowledge, understanding, skills or attitudes at the beginning of a lesson; (b) judgements of these at the conclusion of a lesson; and (c) criteria for determining the worthwhileness or otherwise of any changes detected. Except in a few instances (involving, for example, the demonstration of physical skills by pupils), OFSTED Inspectors in their visits to classes do not have, cannot gain the detailed knowledge of (a) or (b) and therefore cannot gauge the degree of change in pupils' knowledge, understanding, etc. Nor does OFSTED provide them with more than general criteria subject to multiple interpretation as a basis for helping them decide whether change (where it can be identified) equates to improvement and thence progress. Of course we hope and believe that most pupils do make progress in lessons but this is not, except in the cases mentioned, detectable to any significant extent through observation by inspectors. It might be assessable if inspectors had the chance to question pupils closely before and after a lesson, but such conditions rarely obtain in the frantic conditions of inspection. The judgements about *progress* which OFSTED Inspectors are required to make and on the basis of which OFSTED creates so much data are inferences only, based mainly on the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' observable response. Echoing Carol Fitz-Gibbon's points, has OFSTED even tried to attempt to establish the reliability and validity of such inferences? I fear not.

Equally problematic are judgements of progress made not on the basis of individual lessons, but on scrutiny of pupils' work from different year groups. When required to make judgements of the progress children make over the course of their primary education in a particular school, Inspectors have to resort to samples (only) of the work of different year cohorts of pupils at any one time, not extensive samples of work of the same cohort of children over time,

e.g. between Year 1 and Year 6. In such scrutinies like is not being compared with like; the populations are likely to vary in a variety of ways. Even when it is possible to compare the work of the same year group over time, all sorts of factors could account for changes in the quality of work scrutinised, many of which were not under the direct influence of the school, and of those which were some or all may no longer apply. Such scrutiny of pupils' work, also usually conducted hurriedly and superficially due to inevitable time constraints, is a totally inadequate basis for judging the progress children make through school. This throws great doubt on the weight OFSTED places on its overall judgements of progress, as evidenced by copious references in its Annual Report.

School improvement, the third concept in my trilogy is also highly problematic when applied in the context of the second cycle of inspections. To validly judge the extent of school improvement from one inspection to the next requires at least the following: (a) in-depth knowledge of the school at the time of its first inspection; (b) in-depth knowledge of the school at the time of its second; (c) the same criteria employed on both occasions; (d) the criteria employed in the same way on both occasions; and (e) criteria for judging the worthwhileless and extent of any chances detected. In reality, published Inspection Reports, even when complemented by PICSIs and PANDAs, cannot provide the detail required for (a) and (b); inspection by exactly the same team on both occasions might provide them, provided Inspectors have good memories and plentiful written evidence from the last inspection but such a situation rarely, if ever, obtains. To a significant extent, there have been changes to the inspection criteria over time, and changes in the instructions given Inspectors in how to apply them which render inter-inspection judgements questionable. OFSTED has no way of guaranteeing (d) though its monitoring programmes help to some degree, but not in the case of every institution. In relation to (e) the general guidance offered by OFSTED is not specific enough to help Inspectors judge whether the changes inferred constitute improvement in terms of educational values.

Where does this leave OFSTED? Certainly in need of review in terms of the concepts it uses, the way it operationalises them, the methodology it employs, as well as in terms of its administration, management and accountability. It is questionable whether 'improvement *through* inspection' is a reality in many schools; it is just as questionable whether the changes OFSTED has introduced, particularly since the publication of *Inspection 98* and its proposals for a differentiated system of school inspection, constitute improvements *to* inspection.

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Sociologising the 'Third Way': the contribution of Anthony Giddens and the significance of his analysis for education

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Reinventing politics means creative or self-creative politics which does not cultivate and renew old hostilities, nor draw on and intensify the means of power within them; instead it designs and forges new contexts, forms and coalitions. (Ulrich Beck, 1997, p. 136)

Sociological Analysis and Political Practice

It must be enough to make some members of sociology's professorial 'old guard' wince, while at the same time wish that it were their names and work rather than his that were so prominently portrayed. I am referring to the Winter display in the foyer of the Torrington Street Branch of *Dillons* in central London that announced the fact that Tony Giddens' new (1998) book, *The Third Way*, was one of its seasonal bestsellers. The knowledge that he has already written or edited over 20 other substantial texts in their field, including a hugely used and much reprinted introductory volume on sociology (1986), must equally rankle, not to mention his brilliance as a lecturer and media raconteur. And then there is the awareness that Giddens also helps to run a successful publishing concern that they would give their right arm to be published by, attends consultations at the White House, has achieved the status of one of Prime Minister Blair's favourite intellectuals and become the new Director of the LSE. Just how can any sociologist achieve so much, and in so short a space of time, one can imagine them thinking. And why has he succeeded in becoming such a high-profile public intellectual, when hardly any of us have, or are ever likely to?

The answer is simple. Unlike the rest of the current sociological community, Giddens is, as a reviewer of his work recently put it, the person 'who has most radically, and successfully, revised the language of social science' (Lemert, 1999, p. 183) and, in doing so, made sociology relevant, even popular, again. On the way, Giddens has given us 'structuration theory' as the basis for reformulating the primary tasks of sociological analysis. These tasks he defines (somewhat inelegantly) in his (1976) book, *New Rules of Sociological Method*, as: '(1) the hermeneutic explication and mediation of divergent forms of life within descriptive meta-languages of social science; and (2) the explication of the production and reproduction of society as the accomplished outcome of human agency' (p. 162). What this means, in plain English, is that the ways sociologists speak, write and theorise about society obey the same recursive rules that 'govern' how people generally act in it. Sociology thus performs a 'double hermeneutic' – it spirals in and out of the knowledge people have of everyday life, and thus is 'inherently and inescapably part

of the 'subject matter' it seeks to comprehend' (Giddens, 1986, p. 156).

This way of engaging with the structure-agency problem has huge consequences for how the relationship between sociological theory and societal practice is conceived. In particular, it points up the theorem that sociological knowledge of contemporary society does not, as such, comprise a representation of the social world, which then forms a basis for action. Instead, this knowledge is potentially *constitutive* of the very social world it seeks to represent. Indeed, at its best, the reflective application of sociological knowledge can enable us to meet more confidently the challenges of new circumstances and conditions in the social world. This realisation has two specific and very important consequences. First, it means that to engage with questions of the role of the individual in society, social progress, social change and the normative grounds of politics, arguably *the* most important political questions we face today, is to engage *simultaneously* with some of the central problems of sociology – such as ones to do with personal identity, changing family norms, poverty, political praxis, and the rest. Second, it means that knowledge of society can take a variety of legitimate forms, including, and most importantly as far as evaluating Giddens' contribution is concerned, forms which are essentially analytical and theoretical rather than conventionally empirical.

In his case, Giddens' major contribution has been to invent, via his theory of structuration, a new method for thinking about society. This method establishes not only a fresh conceptual basis to understand the social world but, concomitantly, a critical role for sociology that puts it in the forefront of political analysis. Thus, those people – and there are many of them about – who complain that Giddens' work is insufficiently grounded in any direct empirical study of social things both misunderstand and misrepresent his approach. As to the latter, Giddens himself considers his theoretical work rigorously empirical in its sources and frames of reference. True, he doesn't do empirical work himself, but his theoretical outpourings are most definitely informed by other people's. As to the former, it can justifiably be argued that the sort of sociological problems with which Giddens engages – how is society changing and what are the parameters of future change? – are not, in any event, ones that lend themselves to straightforward empirical investigation. As Lemert (1999) argues, 'some questions ... can barely be asked if the only proper answer to them must be put in the language of proof and the grammar of empirical data' (p. 181).

The degree to which we do or do not for example live in a 'postmodern world' is one such question, for it cannot be answered directly, least of all verified or falsified

empirically. It can only be addressed analytically and in the knowledge that the methods of enquiry normally drawn upon to investigate society are themselves part of the equation. Ironically, on this very point, it has been one or more of my post-structuralist colleagues who have suggested to me otherwise, arguing that Giddens should do less desk and more fieldwork. But this is silly, not least because, as I have just stressed, the very post-structuralism attitude they seek to commend is one in which, presumably, empirical methodology and associated fieldwork have a dubious and problematic status. A more frustrating consequence of this form of critique is that, if it were taken literally and generalised, the result would be to damage fatally a host of other very powerful analytic (almost 'virtual') sociological categories and frameworks, all of which arise out of a critical engagement with social reality, but which, because of their nature, are not verifiable through direct observation. Included in this loss in the field of sociology of education would be Basil Bernstein's 'classification and framing of educational knowledge' (and the more generally applied 'hidden curriculum'), Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the 'habitus', and Michel Foucault's concepts of 'discourse' and 'discursive practices'. It would also constitute an undermining of the careers of several professors of sociology of education whose reputations partly derive from successfully using these and other similar terms in their work.

But Giddens' success as a *public* intellectual does not derive from the popularity of his academic and theoretical writings about the constitution of society, none of which it is reasonable to assume has been either read or referred to by Mr Blair. The Giddens' *effect* ultimately arises instead from his more recent capacity directly to speak to those who read him about matters that concern them – about their life-worlds, about their society and how both might be renewed and improved. In a recently published extended interview (Giddens & Pierson, 1998), Giddens remarks at one point that 'critique is only effective if it leads to a better way of doing things' (p. 154). This attitude interpenetrates much of what he has written in the past eight years – in particular his (1991) treatise on modernity and its relation to the self and subsequent studies of the role of sexuality in modern culture (1992) and the future of radical politics (1994), the latter of which stands as an extended preface to his (1998) book about the third way. These volumes, which overlap and cross-cross one another, seek to identify and engage with a set of key issues presently impacting upon contemporary Western society. Although they are not written in commonplace English, their different subject matter is immediately recognisable and relevant. This is neither incidental nor accidental. On the contrary, these books are physical embodiments of Giddens' conception of sociology – onewhich, to repeat an earlier theme, that entails him engaging in a recursive way with society and its problems in order to contribute to their reconstitution and resolution. Again, Lemert (1999) puts this very well when he observes that Giddens acts as if he was 'the universal person in modern society' (p. 190). Consequently, his sociological language 'has the effect of creating a degree of drama' in which we, his readers, are placed 'in the very presence of the thing itself, the world itself'.

Third Way Politics are Neither Left Nor Right

This is particularly the case in Giddens' new book, *The Third Way* (1998), which, alongside his earlier (1994) *Beyond Left and Right*, is concerned with identifying the essential elements of a new political philosophy and economy better able than either state socialism or free-market neo-liberalism to comprehend and confront the major contemporary transformations in our social and economic life. According to Giddens, the ideas of the free-market right, in this country and elsewhere, have been destructive and self-defeating. On the other hand, socialist programmes and policies in a variety of other national contexts have faired no better, and are in serious disrepair. But it is not simply that these political frameworks have produced ineffectual policies. It is also the case that neither has an adequate enough understanding or diagnosis of the nature of modern society, with the result that they each start out 'on the wrong foot', so to speak. As Ulrich Beck (1997), who has strongly influenced Giddens' views, puts this: '... more and more often we find ourselves in situations which the prevailing institutions and concepts of politics can neither grasp nor adequately respond to' (p. 7). Consequently, there is a need for an alternative kind of politics – what Giddens calls a 'third way' – that entail new thinking and innovative policies more 'fit for purpose' than those emanating from either the traditional left or right, both of which are now seriously 'caught out of position' by the changes underway in modern capitalist societies. These changes include, first, the growth of increasingly global markets that make it difficult substantially to contain national economies within sovereign boundaries. Second, there is the advance of technology and the rise of skills and information as the key drivers of employment, which together undermine old patterns of work and place an unprecedented premium on the need for high educational standards for the many, not the few. Third, there is the emergence of a new individualism in which people, in retreat from custom and tradition, are compelled more and more to constitute themselves in their own terms. Fourth, there is the breakdown of the old structures of the life-cycle on which much of this century's welfare and education are founded. And, fifth, there is the rise of ecological politics and the growing demand that environmental problems should be better integrated into democratic deliberation.

Responding to these changes, however, does not entail the abandonment of values ordinarily associated with the political left. On the contrary, Giddens is concerned to articulate his political third way with a set of common foundational values which most socialists would readily acknowledge as central to their own political outlook. These include freedom, equality, emancipation and co-operation. The difference is that Giddens translates these values within a social democratic rather than democratic socialist political framework. However, he is anxious to spell out that a renewed social democracy will not of *necessity* meet adequately the challenges of the new millennium. His then is 'a critical theory [of society] without guarantees' (1994, p. 249) – that is to say, a radical thesis about the nature and future of political economy which does not entail even a smidgen of historical inevitability. Thus, in contrast to some versions of Marxist utopianism, Giddens' conception of the future eschews intrinsic solutions. Nor does it propose any social force, least of all the organised working class (whatever that might be now), as the inherent bearer of a better society. On the contrary, in the latter connection, Giddens cautions us from thinking that any group today 'has a monopoly over radical thought or action in a

post-traditional social universe' (1994, p. 250) where life for the majority is no longer constructed against the backdrop of a single 'grand narrative', but rather invented as a means to its own ends. Indeed, with ever decreasing direct lines to what kind of life is most worth living, everyone now is required to contemplate and decide between a plurality of scenarios.

This requirement is giving rise to a new form of 'generative politics' (op cit, p. 15). This mode of political activism entails social arrangement from below – a politics that 'breaks open and erupts *beyond* the formal responsibilities and hierarchies' (Beck, 1997, p. 104) and which 'seeks to allow individuals and groups to make things happen, rather than have things happen to them, in the context of overall social concerns and goals' (Giddens, 1994, p. 15). 'Making things happen' in this way requires the state to take on new roles. In particular it must underplay its function as monopolistic provider of welfare services and strengthen its capacity to create the necessary regulatory frameworks within which public, private and voluntary sectors co-operate. This entails providing as well the necessary infrastructures to ensure that socially excluded groups can act as full citizens and thus take greater control over the nature and direction of their own lives. In *The Third Way*, Giddens associates this form of political behaviour with a series of policy innovations including: reducing the power of the executive in British politics and strengthening its accountability; promoting experiments in direct democracy; community-based approaches to crime prevention; encouraging co-parenting and mutual rights and responsibilities; replacing traditional poverty programmes with community-focused, participatory initiatives; and creating new forms of 'positive welfare' that invest in the prevention of failure rather than in the inadequate amelioration of it.

Not surprisingly, the space carved out by Giddens here, as well as others broadly sympathetic to his conception of the third way (see, for example, Barr, 1998; Blair, 1998; Hargreaves & Christie, 1998; and White, 1998), has not gone unchallenged. Chantal Mouffe (1998), Decca Aitkenhead (1998), Perry Anderson (1994) and Stuart Hall (1998), for example, all insist on the continuing necessity to configure political activism around the traditional antagonisms of left-right. Hall, in particular, is hostile to the implication in the third way that radical politics can proceed in the absence of conflicting interests: 'a project to transform and modernise society in a radical direction, which does not disturb any existing interests and has no enemies, is not a serious political enterprise' (op cit, p. 10). Eric Hobsbawn (1998), Martin Jacques (1998) and Will Hutton (1998), on the other hand, argue that Giddens' third way lacks a sufficiently robust political economy because it accepts capitalism largely as it is and assumes as a consequence that growing inequality can only be, at best, mollified. Finally, Ted Benton (1999) attacks the very foundations of Giddens' analysis, claiming that he has misunderstood the nature of globalisation, argued against a caricature of the socialist project and failed to take seriously into account the on-going important of class as a significant source of social identity.

But these dismissals of Giddens' attempt to plot a third way are not altogether fair. In actual fact, Giddens nowhere denies the continuing salience of the left-right distinction in terms of its capacity to elevate successfully issues of equality and emancipation. What he does insist is that it

'hasn't now got the purchase it used to have' (1998, p. 41), and that the 'equation between being on the left and being radical no longer stands up' (op cit, p. 46). And this must be true, given the current demise of conservatism, neo-liberalism and socialism as forms of effective economic management. It isn't fair either to suggest that Giddens considers there to be no longer any conflicting interests. One has only to read his account of the challenges faced by ecological politics to see that this is not true. What Giddens does deny is that there are many conflicting interests that, by definition, cannot be reconciled. His view is that most can be, even though the outcome (as say, in the North of Ireland) may not amount to a *final* resolution. The point too is that in a world of greater interdependency, certain interests may find it actually expedient to seek rapprochement with historic 'enemies'. Nor is Giddens complacent about the importance of reforming capitalism so that the needs of the less well off can be more effectively attended to. Again, in actual fact, admittedly largely following Soros (1998), he suggests a number of practical ways in which the global economic order could be better and more humanely regulated, including the establishment of an 'Economic Security Council' within the United Nations. Benton's seemingly more devastating critique also falls away on close inspection. Besides being based upon a radical distortion of Giddens' actual position on globalisation, it embraces a highly contestable assessment of both the reality and potentiality of class politics. Where it seems strongest is in its objection to Giddens' refutation of socialist politics which, it has to be conceded, is narrowly focused on its capacity to manage effectively national economies. However, while Benton is right to point up the significance of variants of socialism other than the revolutionary kind, he fails to explicate how any of these might in practice address adequately the major social transformations of our time. Associationist socialism is undoubtedly attractive as a mode of social living, and I have written positively about it myself elsewhere (see Halpin, 1999). But, as one of its most fervent theorists and advocates, Paul Q. Hirst (1994), has argued, it is hardly a satisfactory means for running a modern society as a whole.

But this is to stray from the main point. My purpose is not to defend the detail of Giddens' conception of the third way – he is more than capable of doing that himself, and has begun to do so (see Giddens & Peirson, 1998). My purpose is rather to point up the potential of his analysis which, however it is regarded, undoubtedly encourages critical reflection on the limitations of the here and how and on ways to improve them. As such, it offers a model exercise in both asking and prompting the asking of questions. Nowhere does it pretend to be putting all the right questions, least of all every question that has been asked about the future of social democracy. To that extent, there is a sense in which some of Giddens' critics may have misunderstood his project, which is not to provide a new totalising analysis, but to offer a heuristic framework within which alternatives can be generated and their relative merits deliberated. To that extent, Giddens' promulgation of the third way represents a further example of his conception of the potential of sociological reflection – namely, to offer diagnoses that help to reconstitute the social world and assist in the reconfiguring and resolution of its problems.

The Third Way and Labour's Education Policy

While the British Labour Party would be the first to deny that its policies since achieving power in 1997 are based on Giddens' conception of the third way; and while Giddens would not wish it to be thought that his analysis of a politics that is 'beyond left and right' was written with New Labour specifically in mind, there is more than a family resemblance between the *tenor* of its modernising project and his. On the other hand, close inspection of what the Labour government has sought to do, in the education context and elsewhere, suggests that its politics in power are not quintessentially those of Giddens' third way. Certainly, in education, as Power and Whitty (1999) so successfully point up, what seems to have happened is the generation of a curious, incoherent even, 'pick and mix' of policies that possess both old left collectivist and new right characteristics. For example, Labour has retained much of the previous Tory emphasis on the education market place, while at the same time sought ways to redistribute resources to 'benefit the many not the few'. Looked at as a whole, though, it is difficult to discern in all of this 'drawing together' much, if anything, that is distinctively 'beyond' what was tried before.

The exception may be the government's education action zones (EAZ) policy which it has specifically linked with the concept of the third way (see Hodge, 1998). The context for this initiative is Labour's national strategy for neighbourhood renewal that aims to put in place a plethora of reforms affecting decaying housing, vandalised public spaces, youth unemployment, substandard schools and unhealthy lifestyles. Labour has set up a Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to co-ordinate the whole package. EAZs, however, are conceived in particular as 'the standard bearers in a new crusade uniting business, schools, local education authorities and parents to modernise and improve education in areas of social deprivation' (DfEE, 1998). As such, they are regarded by New Labour as a significant blueprint for 'the future delivery of (all) ... public services in the next century' (Rafferty, 1998). Around one million pounds has been made available to each zone annually, £750K of which comes from the Government, the rest from other sponsors. The areas selected include a mix of urban and rural locations, in each case usually involving around 14 to 20 schools. Zones are expected 'to set and meet tough targets' (Labour Party, 1997) and to be innovative. They are also required to develop a detailed 'action programme' drawn up by an Education Action Forum (EAF) made up of one or two members appointed by the Education Secretary, parents and representatives of the governing bodies of participating schools and the local business and social communities.

While some of the policy's features resemble closely some earlier experiments designed to address persistent low educational achievement in areas of multiple disadvantage, in particular the Educational Priority Areas (EPAs) policy, there is much that is novel in and arguably 'third way' about the EAZs policy, in particular its efforts to promote a variety of partnership arrangements to encourage new forms of educational provision. The policy's commitment to across-the-board experimentation in curriculum provision, which entails schools being allowed to opt out of teaching the National Curriculum, and its innovative approach to educational self-governance are also noteworthy. Indeed, in the latter case, if they fulfil their potential, the EAZs, could provide a significant site of

generative politics within which individuals and groups, representing a wide variety of sometimes conflicting interests, deliberate and decide upon local education policy and provision.

But what is the policy like in practice? Clearly, it is far too soon to judge the degree to which it is helping to lever up educational standards. On the other hand, there are some early disappointing signs that suggest the EAZs currently underway are not overmuch in the vanguard of reform. A form of first way conservatism rather than third way innovatedness seems to have taken hold in many places. For example, a recent review of the content of the initial wave of 25 successful applications for zone status (Riley, Watling, Rowles & Hopkins, 1998) draws attention to the extent to which only a small minority of these seeks to break with convention: 'there are few radical proposals to make major changes to the National curriculum (the review concludes) ... and no one has proposed sweeping changes to the role of governors' (p. 7). Relatedly, while many of the initiatives proposed have the potential to raise standards, the actual 'targets for improvement (literacy, numeracy, attendance, parental involvement and expectation, etc.) are conventional ambitions in local education authorities (LEAs) and schools across the country' (op cit, p. 11). There is also the worry that, whatever happens, the scale of resources dedicated to the initiative is proportionately far too small (Plewis, 1998) and the fear that, without a strategy for generalising good practice, it will be difficult for it to have any more than immediately local benefits. Even locally, as Power & Whitty (1999) observe, 'it is hard to see how any gains can be sustained once the funding stops' (p. 10).

Much more worrying is the pattern of consultation evident in the start-up phase of the policy. In this connection, it appears that the first wave of zones were inaugurated with very little preliminary debate among the various vested interests that will run and teach in them, and for whom they are intended to benefit. LEAs mostly authored the first bids and teachers, parents and other community concerns, including business ones, were barely consulted (Skidelsky & Raymond, 1998). Indeed, at a meeting convened by the National Union of Teachers for its representatives in zone schools towards the end of the previous academic year, a significant proportion of those present indicated considerable ignorance about the policy, both generally and in terms of its likely impact on their places of work. The impression created was one in which head teachers and local officials were the people mostly 'in the know' and 'in the lead'. Of course, all this may change once the policy is fully enacted on the ground. Even so, it reflects an inauspicious start to an initiative the third way rhetoric of which is based upon the principles of collaboration and partnership.

'Either-Or' or 'And' in Education Policy

While New Labour's education policies so far provide us then with little indication of what a third way in this area might look like, this does not render Giddens' appeal to find one obsolete. The social transformations to which he draws attention simply warrant a better response than the one Labour has so far been able to define. In particular, Giddens' analysis, at least, suggests that, in thinking about the form and content of new school reforms, Labour should look seriously 'beyond' the 'either-or' bi-polarisms that have bedevilled policy development in the past. Among

other things, the politics of 'either-or' alleges: either state monopoly or privatisation; either comprehensive schooling or selection; either setting or mixed-ability teaching; either phonetic or whole language approaches to reading development; either single-sex education or co-education. By contrast, the sort of politics being advocated by Giddens are the politics of 'And' – a mode of politics that favours solutions that come less from either the outer limits of political analysis or the fashions of the moment, and more from a strategic mix of genuinely experimental proposals whose ideological derivation is neither here nor there but which connect meaningfully with what is actually happening in society. While this mode of political pragmatism is clearly value-based, it is not ideologically-driven in the way that, for example, are both Marxism and Neo-Liberalism, each of which exhibits strong exclusionary characteristics, which the former seeks to move beyond. We should then take this approach far more seriously, in my view. Moreover, sniping at it from within a universe of fixed categories is to ignore its sophistication and potential relevance.

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BUSINESS, BUSINESS, BUSINESS

New Labour's Education Policy

A DAY CONFERENCE

Organised by the Hillcole Group of Radical Left Educators

Saturday 23 October 1999, 10.30am – 4.00pm
The Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London
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Speakers confirmed include

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Caroline Benn (Hillcole Group, writer and adult educator)
Christine Blower (schoolteacher, national ex-president NUT)
Clyde Chitty (FORUM magazine and Goldsmiths' College)
Mike Cole (Hillcole Group, Brighton University)
Rosalyn George (Hillcole Group, Goldsmiths' College)
Richard Hatcher (Education and Social Justice,
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Dave Hill (Hillcole Group, University College Northampton)
Janet Holland (Hillcole Group, South Bank University)
Rehana Minhas (Haringey LEA)
Martin Powell-Davies (schoolteacher,
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Jan Pollock (NATFHE Rank and File, London City Lit.)
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What Future for the National Curriculum in the Next Millennium?

At a time when the National Curriculum is still the subject of heated debate, we publish two articles that originally appeared in the January/February number of *Report*, the magazine of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. In the first, **Clyde Chitty** argues that the whole curriculum structure is in danger of collapse; and in the second, **Richard Pring** questions whether our schools have abandoned their responsibility to nurture good citizens.

Entitlement was seen by many as one of the key principles underpinning effective curriculum construction in the period immediately following the 1976-77 Great Debate in Education. It was certainly dear to the heart of the old HMI which laid out its plans for a common entitlement curriculum for the secondary age range in the three Red Books published between 1977 and 1983. Indeed, 'towards a statement of entitlement' was one of the sub-titles of Red Book Three which outlined the general conclusions of the group of HMI and five local authorities engaged in the process of finding a suitable framework. After a lengthy period of wide-ranging discussion, it was decided that an entitlement curriculum could be defined in terms of a synthesis of the vocational, the technical and the academic – with no pupil being encouraged to concentrate on one at the expense of the other two. In the words of the authors of Red Book Three:

> It seemed to us essential that *all* pupils should be guaranteed a curriculum of a distinctive breadth and depth to which they should be *entitled*, irrespective of the type of school they attended or their level of ability or their social circumstances, and that failure to provide such a curriculum is unacceptable ... The conviction has grown that all pupils are entitled to a broad compulsory common curriculum to the age of 16 which introduces them to a range of experiences, makes them aware of the kind of society in which they are going to live and gives them the skills necessary to live in it. Any curriculum which fails to provide this balance and is overweighted in any particular direction, whether vocational, technical or academic, is to be seriously questioned. Any measures which restrict the access of all pupils to a wide-ranging curriculum or which focus too narrowly on specific skills are in direct conflict with the entitlement curriculum envisaged here.

The HMI approach to curriculum planning also involved the rejection of traditional subject boundaries, in favour of a model that saw the school curriculum in terms of 'areas of experience'. Red Book One, published at the end of 1977, put forward a checklist of eight 'areas of experience', to be used as the basis of curriculum construction or of reshaping and redefining existing curricula: the aesthetic and creative; the ethical; the linguistic; the mathematical; the physical; the scientific; the social and political; and the spiritual. In a later HMI document, *The Curriculum from*

5 to 16, published in March 1985, the ethical became the moral; the linguistic became the linguistic and literary; the social and political became (significantly) the human and social; and a ninth area was added: the technological. What was common to these documents was a belief that all the main areas of learning and experience must be adequately represented in any 'entitlement curriculum' worthy of the name.

The DES National Curriculum Consultation Document, published in July 1987, showed little sign of being influenced by the strongly liberal-humanist views of HMI and was severely criticised by many teachers and educationists for its narrow, *subject-based* instrumental approach to curriculum planning. Yet it talked in terms of ensuring that 'all pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects throughout their compulsory schooling and do not drop too early studies which may stand them in good stead later', and argued that 'pupils should be *entitled* to the same opportunities wherever they go to school'. Kenneth Baker himself was determined to resist Mrs Thatcher's contention that the National Curriculum should be restricted to the 3Rs.

The noble aims of the National Curriculum have been steadily modified over the past ten years; and New Labour is now busily engaged in dismantling an already unstable structure. We were told in January last year that pupils under the age of 11 would no longer be required to stick to the detailed national syllabuses in history, geography, design and technology, art, music and PE. At Key Stage Four, English, maths and science still remain compulsory; but of the original seven 'foundation' subjects, only a modern foreign language, technology and PE are still there – as part of a programme that also has to include information technology, sex education, information about careers and RE. New regulations permit the wider use of work-related learning beyond Key Stage Three; and secondary schools that participate in the new 'Education Action Zones' project can 'ditch' parts of the National Curriculum in favour, it seems, of courses that are more 'vocational' and 'work-oriented'. All this will clearly limit the horizons of many thousands of older pupils.

As we approach the new millennium, we may still have a set of syllabuses for certain pupils at certain ages; but we do not have a national entitlement curriculum in any meaningful sense. At the same time, attempts to burden

what we do have with new subjects, new themes and new responsibilities would seem to be rather like adding new rooms to a building already in danger of collapse.

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The 1988 Education Act prescribed a national curriculum of 10 subjects. In effect, it was a peg on which to hang a system of national assessment at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16, providing the basis on which to judge the relative performance of schools. The result was school league tables.

Since parents choose schools they perceive will be 'good' for their children, and since money follows pupils, it was important for schools to be seen to be doing well in the national assessments. Schools began to focus their efforts on the subjects of the National Curriculum – in particular on the core subjects of English, maths and science.

Soon, however, concern was expressed about the activities which would be omitted from such a subject-based and nationally assessed system. Where was health education, citizenship, economic awareness, personal and social development? The answer was to 'glue' together the otherwise fragmented curriculum with cross-curricular themes and skills. And, in secondary schools, there would most likely be a pastoral and personal tutor system to take care of the personal and social.

However, this has been found to be inadequate. Much that teachers value has had to be abandoned in the relentless drive to raise grades in the core subjects of English, maths and science. Schools collect 'brownie points' for producing good mathematicians and scientists, not good citizens.

This has been a cause of concern for the Government. No educational plan, no aim to improve schools, can ignore the central importance of promoting values, developing 'the whole person', and respecting the social and personal skills which are essential for a fulfilled personal life and a contribution to the wider society.

How, then, might such aims be reconciled with a very demanding national curriculum? First, legislation requires schools to provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils, while preparing such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Second, an advisory group was recently established to see how, at a time when the National Curriculum was to be reviewed, there might be a place for PHSE. And that advisory committee was itself advised by Passport – a project commissioned with support from the DfEE – whose membership bears a striking resemblance to the Government's own advisory group.

Third, a quite separate advisory group, under Professor Bernard Crick, has advised on citizenship education, asking for a place on an already overcrowded timetable.

What, then, does all this add up to? It could mean anything between two extremes. At one extreme, PSHE could simply be a reassertion of sound educational principles, the development of pupils through the acquisition of certain values and virtues (for example, a concern for the truth, a respect for other people, self-esteem, the capacity to reason and reflect, the ability to engage in discussion and to consider alternative views, the social skills to stick to what is thought right). PSHE, in other words, would be the careful nurturing of certain virtues and dispositions throughout the curriculum, supplemented, where necessary, with specific knowledge and understanding.

At the other extreme, one might create long lists of competencies and objectives to be met, in addition to those already prescribed in the National Curriculum. Such would seem to be the aim of Passport. But that would be to miss the point, PSHE should and could take place through the curriculum as it is – through the proper study of literature, the engagement with issues of personal significance in drama, the exposure to social and political issues in history, and so on.

The current proposals for PSHE demonstrate a failure to see that its aims are the aims of all education where the growth of each person is paramount. In the new proposals, little attention is given to the central role, say, of the humanities in the achievement of PSHE – or of the ethos of the school in personal and social development.

What a pity, for we need to be spared an eleventh subject on the National Curriculum.

Richard Pring
Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford

April's Quote of the Month

'Schools will be held responsible for all society's ills unless we ... tackle inclusion from many standpoints.'

Judith Mullen during her presidential address at the Secretary Heads Association's annual conference

Beyond the Woodhead Myth

Paul Francis
Paul Francis taught in comprehensive schools for over 30 years. He is the author of *Beyond Control?* And *What's Wrong With the National Curriculum?*, as well as a number of articles for *The Guardian* and *The Times Educational Supplement*. His most recent publication is *Woodhead on the Black?*

As I write, Chris Woodhead is still in post. He could go at any time, but he's clinging on to power, as power clings to him. With any other leading figures, educational excellence – even it were genuine – would not be enough. If Margaret Hodge or Estelle Morris had urged the educative aspects of a teacher/pupils affair (let alone had one), they'd have been out of a job. Woodhead hangs on by his fingernails, and because he enjoys the personal patronage of Tony Blair.

In *Woodhead on the Block?*, I trace the cultivation of the myth of the 'solitary hero'. In this article, I want to look at why Blair sees Woodhead as indispensable, and what kind of educational future might follow from his departure. If he stays, the immediate outlook is bleak. Only a passionate careerist could see it as victory to retain the salary but lose respect, run the gauntlet of easy satire, suffer the alleged resentment of education ministers, and pontificate about an area where the vast majority of knowledgeable professionals doubt his integrity and question his expertise.

It was easy to see his value for the Tories. They were reclaiming education for the consumers, and away from the producers. The establishment would fight back, but it was handy to have a figurehead who had changed sides, someone who could speak the language, an ex-trendy English teacher, who had peddled the same relaxed delusions he was now pledged to fight.

There were brief, embarrassing moments when Woodhead drew on his teaching past – offering a press conference competitive 'spelling bees' as a possible route to raising standards of accuracy – but basically it was a PR job, providing educational cover for a political coup. As he gained in confidence, so the sweep of his comments widened, but their main drift was to support a right-wing agenda – teachers are incompetent, left-wing ideas need fighting, training is poor, class sizes don't matter, money makes no difference.

As he rose in influence, and secured his power base by moving above the Secretary of State to Downing Street, so it seemed unlikely that he could survive a change in government. Labour were pledged to reduce class sizes, but he was on record that this was wasteful, and he also contested their figures. They were committed to education for all, teachers as 'partners' not 'victims'. How could he stay in place?

It wasn't a communal decision. David Blunkett apparently had strong reservations, as did many Labour MPS, and the feeling in the profession (teachers, heads, unions, and education lecturers) was that a positive fresh start must also involve a new Chief Inspector. And yet he stayed.

This was partly Blair's obsession with the media. Getting the tabloids onside before the 1997 Election was a key to the political victory, so keeping their hero must be good for education. But it was also a sign of the extent to which the new Government was adopting the thinking and methods of Thatcherism.

They didn't just want a good education system. They wanted educational improvement for which they could take credit. That meant short-term, measurable progress, related to political initiatives. Headlines are vital, spin crucial and the involvement of teachers hardly counts at all. And you start from grievance – who's unhappy, frustrated, dissatisfied? They constitute the argument for change.

With Woodhead a key note is exasperation. The different kinds of schools, varieties of funding, the complexities of teaching methods and research – all this is very tedious, and it's a psychological release to cut through it, get away, look for something new. New Labour share this impatience, so the energy goes into fresh sources of funding, extra projects in the holidays, wonder schools with different timetables and torn up teacher contracts, rather than a serious look at what happens in ordinary schools with ordinary teachers and ordinary kids.

It's ironic, given the care with which Woodhead has defined OFSTED's role, how un-serious his own 'look' has become. In his model, schools have faults, which they are unable to see, but then recognise in the OFSTED report. They then solve these faults, without reference to OFSTED or anyone else, and we all improve.

That's a curious pattern, but it should ensure that the OFSTED process of appraisal is clear, professional and efficient. After all, that's all they do. But we end up with an expensive system which refuses to test its own consistency, or to adapt to the demands of professional experts in the field. How can that possibly be squared with the rhetoric about 'value for money' or 'zero tolerance of failure'?

It can't, because with Woodhead we're dealing with a myth. It's a powerful myth, with influential supporters and a lot of appeal, but it doesn't match the facts. In the recent frenzy, a close Government apologist told Libby Purves: 'Look, we can't afford to let something like this bring down Woodhead. He's the only hope for education in this country.' (*The Times*, 13 April 1999).

It's a fairyland. The hero with the magic sword faces the powers of darkness on his own, and if he falls, we are all doomed. By retaining Woodhead, Blair chose the myth, style over substance, soundbites over schools. And large numbers of teachers seeing that choice, knowing what it meant, approached their work with less enthusiasm, since Government had opted for a dream.

It's very simple according to the myth. There, the teachers are lazy, incompetent and resistant to change, happy to do a second-rate job and fail their pupils if they can. Only one man has the courage and insight to see through them, and secure improvement for the kids. 'The life-chances of

tens of thousands of children have been improved by his actions' according to John Clare (*The Daily Telegraph*, 13 April 1999); and even Polly Toynbee thinks he is 'set fair to halve the numbers of illiterate and enumerate primary school leaves' (*The Guardian*, 14 April 1999).

So, what happens? He makes a speech, and the teachers reluctantly mutter, 'Well, I was going to be crap, but I suppose if he's attacking me in *The Mail*, I might as well do a half-decent job', and this makes the kids improve? It's ludicrous. Measuring the value of OFSTED, or the impact of Woodhead, is notoriously difficult, but if you talk to teachers you won't find many who'll confirm this parable of inspiration. And if it were true, what happens when he retires, or if he falls under a bus? Do we all give up and go home?

The Times argues for retaining him on the grounds that there isn't an obvious replacement. They assume that we must have a separate, critical figurehead, who will regularly attack the system, and they're slightly surprised that Woodhead has not been grooming a successor. What he has been doing is providing an example. When his deputy Mike Tomlinson says 'We don't give a monkey's toss about the teachers' you can tell he's rehearsing soundbites, doing Woodhead poses in front of *The Mirror* – and *The Mail*.

Like much of the New Labour project, this is totally insulated – intense, unique and very 'now'. There isn't a backwards look at past models, or a sideways glance at other systems – has no other country found that a dramatised Chief Inspector, actively hostile to classroom teachers, is the way to raise standards in the schools?

There has to be a better way. The punitive version of OFSTED is unwieldy, inaccurate and very expensive. Schools need to build up their own self-evaluation process, and that needs some kind of external monitoring, both to make them 'accountable' and to enable us all to have an overview of our system of education. That positive, practical programme is entirely workable – once we have shed the trappings of the myth. For there are plenty of good schools, honest teachers, serious attempts to do the job better in a constructive, collaborative way, on which we can build. But first, we need the political will.

Blair clings obsessively to the Woodhead myth. It's popular with the press, probably wins some votes, and it saves a lot of work. Once it's shed, there are clearly a lot of difficult issues which need considering – structures, funding, management style, staff development, teacher supply. Looking at the real world is tough; it's more challenging and less exhilarating than the myth, which has become a habit, difficult to break.

The media, too, would need to shake it off. It's not hard, looking back over 15 years of denigration, to see how press attitudes have affected recruitment and morale. Nobody is asking for empty lies, but we should be able to envisage coverage that helps understanding, supports the cause of educating all children, rather than hunting scapegoats and placing blame.

But it's not just up to them. In the new world, life after Woodhead, education itself would also have to change. How did we let things get this bad? Carol Fitzgibbon asks, and it's an unsettling, necessary question. There are plenty

of good people, in teaching and administration, who look back at the changes that have overtaken education in the last 15 years and wonder, where did it go wrong? What else could we have done?

The climate hasn't helped. Fitzgibbon herself, for instance, has run a consistent, intelligent crusade against the intellectual shortcomings of OFSTED. Did anyone care? Were her questions picked up the media, discussed on television, raised by politicians? And even if they were, briefly, occasionally, was anyone listening? Is there any purpose to debate?

This is a key Thatcher legacy. All talk is biased, no expert is neutral, so let's get *our* experts in place, sack theirs, and do what we have to do. That's the cynical version, and it has some truth and enormous appeal.

In the process, it supplanted an alternative line, which said: 'Nobody knows all the answers. If I want the best possible solution, I ask others, to see if they can improve mine. I particularly ask those who will carry the solution out, because their ownership of it will increase and if they have helped define it, then it will be more likely to work.'

The Thatcher takeover was not complete. There are many areas where the gains of consultation, the logic of listening, have regained their grounds, and exposed 'macho imposition' as short-sighted and ineffective. But in educational decision-making, the Thatcher model remains dominant, and we shall not get better practice – let alone happier teachers, more teachers – until that can be changed.

That means talking honestly about alternatives, looking at evidence, and it also means licensing disagreement. In the history of recent change are many moments of silent betrayal, where experience and belief were stifled, in the interests of promotion or a quiet life, or because 'it simply isn't worth it'. We have to make it worth it, for ourselves and each other and for pupils, by establishing a more rational, professional atmosphere of discussion.

This needs to be explained. Woodhead's appeal has been potent, but it was not charm in a void. It was addressing the sense that teachers think they're different, superior, they talk a language all their own and they need to be sorted out. That't not a fair appraisal, but it has been a genuine feeling, among newspaper readers as well as among those who write for them.

So a healthier pattern involves giving the public a livelier, more positive picture of what goes on in schools. Set Woodhead against the average education spokesperson (whether from a union, LEA or school) and you can see why the media settle for interesting lies. The truth is more complicated, but it doesn't have to be dull, and we need to find ways of making it more appealing. A single union would help, and a good GTC, and realistic television drama. Teaching is important, challenging, intelligent work, and we have to make their clear.

Woodhead on the Block? is available from Paul Francis, Liberty Books, 7 Swan Meadow, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6JQ, (01952-727716). Price £1.00 (including P&P).

The Irresistible Rise of the UK National Curriculum: the phoenix rising from the ashes of the Berlin Wall

Mike Ollerton
Mike Ollerton taught in schools for 24 years, 22 of these in comprehensives teaching mathematics. For the past four years he has taught at St Martin's College, Lancaster, mainly on the secondary mathematics PGCE programmes. In his previous job he taught across the 11-16 age range in non-setted teaching groups without using textbooks. He gained his first degree with the Open University at age 42 in 1990 and last year successfully completed his MPhil.

The Kreator Project is a radical programme of educational reform aimed at the education system in Poland. The Programme is jointly funded by the Polish Ministry and the European Union. Kreator has grown in the past four years, against the backdrop of a country which was still under the totalitarian rule of Communism, only a decade ago. Since the elections in 1991 there has existed a desire by the Government to reform education and Kreator has been at the centre of this reform. They have carried out much school-based work and their influence is widening across Poland. The fundamental aims of Kreator are to develop 'key skills' within teaching and learning across all subject areas; these key skills are:

● organisation, planning and evaluating ones own learning;
● effective communication;
● problem solving;
● working effectively as a member of a group;
● using information technology.

In December 1998 Kreator held its first National Conference in Jachranka and I had the honour of being invited to take part and also to lead a session based upon teaching and learning mathematics using problem solving approaches, without recourse to any textbook. My involvement with Kreator in terms of the whole programme has been to play but a very small part. During my trip I did, however, have opportunities to teach in the Kolegium Nauczycielskim and in elementary school number 3 in Zgierz; each was an exhilarating and humbling experience. It was also stimulating to work with teachers whose standard of living is much less than that which exists in the UK. Of course, comparison are too easy to make and not necessarily relevant when contexts are taken into account. However, it is interesting to consider how those teachers in Poland, connected with Kreator (40 in the main group who, in turn, have worked with a further 1000 teachers) are developing a pedagogy, based upon the key skills, which are in sharp contrast to the principles underpinning the education system in the UK, manifested by national testing.

Were the UK National Curriculum primarily a framework for schools, identifying common, fundamental aims as an entitlement for every student, then this would be an honourable intention. However, the National Curriculum is built upon the edifice of school league tables, underpinned by testing. This in turn has a dramatic and counterproductive effect upon what happens in many classrooms, particularly in mathematics classrooms. The effect of teaching to the test, is to create the best possible scores to provide statistical information for the league tables. Sadly this information bears no resemblance to what children have learnt and whether they can use and apply their learning to situations beyond the narrowness of a test. A further outcome of teaching to the test is fragmentation of their received curriculum. The resultant effect, therefore, is that schools are being measured against narrow, decontextualised criteria which effectively undermine 'real' learning and fail to support effective teaching. The rationale underpinning an entitlement curriculum for all children is philosophically sound. However, if the assessment of children's achievement remains so firmly attached to a national testing regime, then the National Curriculum will be nothing more than national prescription. It will be totalitarian by nature and unable to nurture children's learning capacities. Now, this *state* of affairs bears a chillingly close resemblance, if not an identical one, to a form of prescription associated with communism. How strange that in 1989 our Westernised system based upon free-market forces saw the rise of the National Curriculum, whilst, simultaneously, we witnessed the demise of the icon of communist idealism, the Berlin Wall.

To disentangle testing from learning, to move away from a misconception that end-of-key stage tests, (including GCSE examinations) can tell us anything about what students know and can do, it will be necessary to change the culture of our approaches to assessment. Assessment, in the form of 'finding the measure of someone', or 'weighing up a situation' occurs continuously, we assess all the time, it is a natural thing to do. Therefore, summative, moderated teacher assessment must be given a higher profile and greater credibility. The key issue is how we harness formative teacher and student self-assessment in order to inform students about their current achievement and likely future *targets*.

Unfortunately teacher assessment has been marginalised, firstly because of an attempt to provide consistency of information and, secondly, because so-called 'weak' teachers cannot be trusted to make robust assessments. However, we must be careful not to continue with an assessment methodology which means we adopt a lowest common denominator mentality; neither should we continue a pursuit of information gathering, often used, debilitatingly, to separate students into 'ability' groups, based upon a narrow dogma akin to the type of thinking which separated East from West.
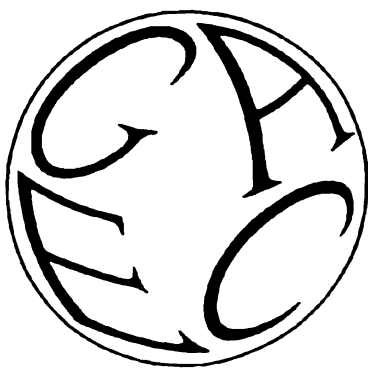
GOLDSMITHS' ASSOCIATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Goldsmiths' Association for Early Childhood (GAEC) was formed by staff of Goldsmiths' College, University of London, in 1990 and launched at the October day Conference that year. It was formed at a time of great uncertainty and disruption in early education. An increasing anxiety about what might happen to quality provision for under-8s led many teachers who were working in the vicinity of Goldsmiths' to contact the College to ask if a forum could be established to promote the study of, and the exchange of ideas about, good professional practice in the early years.

During what has proved to be a troubled decade for early years education, the Association has become well-established and supported by early years professionals. Most members work in London and South East England, but the Association has an increasing overseas network. It has also extended its membership to all who are involved in the care and education of young children.

The Aims of GAEC

The Association aims

- To provide a network of support and communication for teachers and other early years professionals, especially in the South East and London area.
- To promote an understanding of the particular characteristics of high quality care and education of children up to the age of 8 years.
- To disseminate current research findings, issues and educational thinking about the developmental needs of young children and how these can be supported by early years professionals.

The Activities of GAEC include

- An annual conference in the Autumn
- Seminars and workshops
- The circulation of a newsletter about the Association's activities
- The publication of a directory of members and their particular interests within the early years field, to encourage the formation of networks and research groups among members.

How to Join GAEC

Application forms can be obtained from The Membership Secretary, Goldsmiths' Association of Early Childhood, Department of Educational Studies, Goldsmiths' College, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW. Annual subscription is currently £10.00 (full), £5.00 (student).

High Parental Demand and Academic Performance in a Separate School: some possible contributory factors

Suzanne Jessel
In her capacity as a teacher for the multicultural Support Team in the London borough of Croydon, Suzanne Jessel writes about one of the first separate schools to be given state funding.

Introduction

In 1998 the Labour Government gave 'grant-maintained' status to three schools that have been termed 'separate schools' (Swann Report, 1985; Chevannes & Reeves, 1987). These are religious schools with an admissions policy for pupils which gives priority to those whose families profess to be of that religion. Two were Muslim and one was Seventh Day Adventist. In this article, I examine one of these separate schools: the Seventh Day Adventist John Loughborough School in Tottenham, London. John Loughborough became officially grant-maintained in September 1998. There are many well-established grant-maintained religious schools in the UK. These include 21 Jewish schools, 4,936 Church of England schools 2,245 Roman Catholic schools and 31 Methodist schools. Why should the three latest religious grant-maintained schools be seen as separate schools? The John Loughborough School has pupils of mainly African Caribbean origin. The admissions policy does not stipulate this, but members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in much of London do tend to be of African Caribbean origin (Homan, 1986). The school itself does not classify itself as 'black' or 'African Caribbean', but rather as a religious school and as an alternative to the existing mainstream system. I will discuss John Loughborough's academic performance and parental demand and some of the factors that could contribute to these. I visited the school and have made informal observations which I will refer to. I interviewed staff and the head teacher in order to elicit their views about the change to grant-maintained status.

Markers of Success

Gaining grant-maintained status has meant that the John Loughborough School is now 'free' – and no longer a fee-paying independent school. Parents unable to afford to send their child previously are now in a position to apply. Waiting lists prior to the beginning of the current academic year suggest a high parental demand for the school. John Loughborough had 420 applications for the 92 places available in September 1998. Why might parental demand for such a school be so high? Homan (1989) writes about the views held by parents of the Seventh Day Adventist community in the late 70's; 'First, it is said that state schools provide an uncongenial or unwholesome moral environment; and, second, members are sensitive that teacher expectations are low and these in turn affect academic achievement' (p. 173).

In order to see if there is a marked difference in the academic achievement of this separate school compared to other Local Authority funded mainstream schools in the area I will compare GCSE results. If we look at Figure 1 we can see the exam results for the John Loughborough

School and The Langham, a school very close to John Loughborough, given as a typical comparison. In 1997 all pupils at John Loughborough passed at least one GCSE exam as opposed to 85% of pupils at The Langham. Ninety-four per cent of pupils at John Loughborough obtained five GCSEs as opposed to only 47% at The Langham and 41% got a grade between A* and C in five of their GCSEs compared to only 7% at The Langham. On the basis of these crude figures, pupils at the John Loughborough School 'out-performed' those at the neighbouring school.

	Total Pupils (all ages)	Total with statements	Pupils aged 15	% obtaining equivalent of GRADES			GCSE Results 1994 - 6					
							5 + A* - C Grades			1 + A* - G Grades		
				1 + A* - G	5 + A* - G	5 + A* - C	1996	1995	1994	1996	1995	1994
John Loughborough	142	3	17	100	94	41	13	25	22	100	85	70
The Langham	900	10	159	85	47	7	12	9	9	85	72	82

Figure 1. League Tables 1997 (*Times Educational Supplement*, 21st November, 1997)

In terms of examination results and parental demand the school can be regarded as relatively successful and in view of this I wanted to look at possible contributory factors.

What Factors Could Contribute to the Apparent Success of this School?

Might the apparent success be due to the type of pupil admitted into the school through a tight admissions policy? Does the religious ethos of the school have a bearing on its success? Are parents more supportive and involved because the school is an extension of their religious community? Are the pupils better able to develop a sense of their identity? Might the fact that the head and the staff are from the same religious and cultural background give the pupils a positive role model? Are the teaching methods different from mainstream schools? Is the curriculum better adapted to suit the pupils in the school? Does the fact that this school is relatively small with a higher pupil/teacher ratio than the local mainstream school, make it more manageable (John Loughborough had 142 pupils in 1997 as opposed to The Langham which had 900, as seen in Figure 1)? Although all the above factors could be attributed to the success of the John Loughborough School, I will examine three factors which, I will argue, could be crucially important: the admissions policy, the effect of the head and the staff and the curriculum.

Admissions Policy

The more successful John Loughborough has been, the more selective it has been able to be. In the school's early years it enjoyed a period a relative success. The introduction of 'open enrolment' in state schools in 1987, meant that many of the 'brighter' pupils were able to apply for state schools outside their Borough and John Loughborough experienced a down-turn in numbers and was not able to recruit fully with members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Children from different Christian sects were accepted as well as those who did not appear to be regular church goers. At the time the school received grant-maintained status, the interest of parents in sending their children to the school increased. The new admissions policy now requires that 'parents or guardians are practising members of the church...' (John Loughborough School Newsletter, 1998, p. 3).

The school's admissions policy also states that 'Admission depends on performance and conduct in previous school...'. Since the school is able to be more selective due to the increased demand for places, it does not have to accept pupils with behavioural problems or statements unless it chooses to and therefore this alleviates some of the problems that mainstream schools are faced with. However, since 1993 four pupils who had been excluded from another school were admitted, but only because they were Seventh Day Adventists. Under grant-maintained status, the school is now obliged to accept any pupil who has been excluded from two other schools, if there is a vacancy. As yet demand for places has not allowed any such vacancy. In 1997, there were also three pupils with statements at John Loughborough compared to 10 at The Langham (Table 1).

Under the present policy, admission to the school depends on an interview with the parents and the child. It is at such interviews at many selective schools where certain families will be found 'acceptable', and others will not. The previous fee-paying status attracted those able and willing to pay for their child's education; this would in itself exclude many average families. Unlike a Local Authority funded mainstream school, the John Loughborough School does not accept *all* applicants within a given catchment area. The type of pupil therefore found in this school would depend on religious affiliation, pupil behaviour and the family interview. The pupil intake is, therefore, different from those found in a Local Authority funded mainstream school, and this could have a bearing on its success.

Teachers and the Head

Nearly all of the teachers and the head come from a similar religious and cultural background as the pupils. According to some educationalists and psychologists, this could be a big factor in making a separate school such as John Loughborough successful (Cheyannes & Reeves, 1987; Maxime, 1993). In effect the pupils have positive role models before them with whom they can identify. Jocelyn Maxime, a black psychologist, describes the importance of black teachers and how she felt she needed to be one in order to help some black teenagers caught up in mainstream education who were suffering from poor self-image, lack of zeal, and what she describes as 'self-hatred'. Her own educational experience in Trinidad led her to realise 'the importance of interaction between one's perception of self and that of the environment and how each influenced and shaped each other' (Maxime, 1993, p. 10).

Cross (1971) developed a five-stage model of what he called 'Nigrescence'. This describes the stages some people might go through toward a secure and confident black identity. I will relate these stages to pupils in the mainstream school system and demonstrate the importance of having positive black role models, such as black teachers, and the guidance and support they can offer to enable pupils to become confident in their black identity.

The Pre-Encounter Stage is when, for example, a child's view is 'white-orientated' and they might deny that they are black. This might happen to very young children who are perhaps unaware of their skin colour. This stage might occur in the reception class when a child starts school.

The Encounter Stage is when racism is experienced or observed. The person is confronted with their black identity. In Figure 2 we can see the result of a child or teenager going through this stage without adequate support and positive role models. They can lose confidence in themselves, suffer a loss of self-esteem and feel hurt. This in turn creates negative energy which can either go outwards in the form of anger and hostility, or go inwards and cause withdrawal and non-involvement.
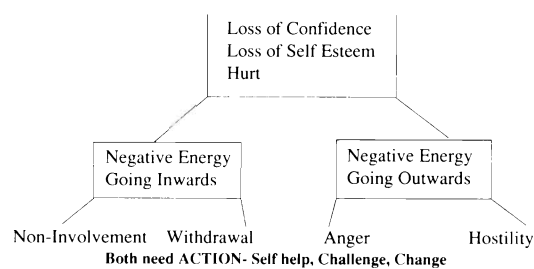
Figure 2. What happens to a person who experiences oppression and discrimination (Gill Howe, 1996).

The Immersion-emersion Stage is when the child's blackness becomes all important, sometimes resulting in a disposal of white peers, teachers, parents and carers. This is often the stage reached by teenagers in mainstream secondary schools like the one described by lecturer in education and journalist, Tony Sewell, in his case study of Dulwich School of Boys. The boys here were under strong peer group pressure to behave in a macho way which they called 'Raggu' a corruption of the word 'Raggamuffin' (Sewell, 1997, p. 103). This image is linked with the music scene led by DJs or 'toasters'. 'Slackness' is the theme of the music which is based on sex and violence and is a revolt against law and order and standards of decency (Sewell, 1997, p. 151). They also had a fear of acting 'white' and were often rude about white pupils. One pupil said, 'The white boys are just pussies, they haven't got the balls like a black man, most of them go on as if they are batty men' (homosexuals) (Sewell, 1997, p. xii). These boys had become 'stagnated' in the stage (Maxime, 1997, p. 108), i.e. they did not appear to be moving beyond this stage perhaps because they did not have the positive role models such as the black male teachers that boys at the John Loughborough School had.

The Internalisation Stage is when a person manages to separate their original Eurocentric identity from their new black identity and become more positive about themselves and others. They are perhaps 'exploring race, its impact, its influence and how it relates to him or her' (Maxime, 1993, p. 107). The John Loughborough School teaches some race related topics which might help teenagers through this

phase. Many mainstream secondary schools no longer include antiracist material within the curriculum because it is not a requirement of the National Curriculum. This is a worry to many in the black community (Blair & Arnot, 1993). The effect of the curriculum will be examined in more detail later.

The Interalisation-Commitment Stage is when there is no longer a fear of joining black groups and they feel 'comfortable' with being black. They have resolved their identity crisis and are willing to confront racism in a mature way. Bell hooks, a black feminist, describes how she reached this stage. She says that 'black teachers of my girlhood who saw themselves as having a liberatory mission to educate us in a manner that would prepare us to effectively resist racism and white supremacy, that has had a profound impact on my thinking...' (hooks, 1993, p. 150). How many teenagers have this kind of support in mainstream schools?

The pupils that I observed at John Loughborough exuded a certain mature confidence and did not appear to display the negative energy identified in Figure 1. The Cross five-stage model is based on a black/white perspective. There are, however, other researchers who would argue that there is no 'essential black subject' and that the unity suggested by the word identity is imaginary (Hall, 1996). Hall emphasises a multiplicity of identity-based on class, gender, age and culture. Gilroy (1990) also writes about the fluid nature of cultural groups and that groups we know as races are never 'fixed, finished or final'. The very nature of a separate school does, however, group together pupils who have perhaps a very similar identity in terms of religion, culture and age and although this might be ever changing, they remain a fairly homogenous group.

Gilroy (1993) describes the necessity of black pupils to have a 'double consciousness' when they are in mainstream schools. That is, an awareness of what they are at the moment due to low teacher expectations or the inadequacies of the school system and also hold before themselves what they could achieve, in other words their unfulfilled potential. It is, perhaps, the hope of many parents who send their children to John Loughborough School that they will not need a 'double consciousness' because there will be no obstacles placed in their children's way and they should be able to achieve their full potential.

Low expectations of black pupils by teachers in mainstream schools are often cited by researchers as a reason for low achievement (Coard, 1971; Chevannes & Reeves, 1987; Wright, 1987). Bernard Coard, a black teacher wrote in the 1970s that many black pupils were being labelled 'educationally subnormal' and being put into special schools. To this day there is a disproportionate number of black pupils in lower sets and streams in mainstream schools. Wright (1987) writes about the antagonistic treatment of teachers towards African Caribbean pupils who are 'denied educational opportunities as a consequence of the adverse relationship between them (pupils) and teachers' (p. 123). Streaming and setting are often based on behaviour not cognitive ability (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Gilborn, 1990; Mirza, 1992). In contrast, the John Loughborough School has only black pupils and the aims of the school mention the high expectation of the teachers. Pupils are not streamed because classes are very small. 'The school constitutes a black environment, insulating, protecting, and supporting the individual against the unpredictability of white behaviour and the constant difficulty of interpreting outcomes in a

context of widespread white prejudice and discrimination' (Chevannes & Reeves, 1987, p. 151).

Most of the teachers at the John Loughborough School have been working there since its establishment, 18 years ago. With regard to staffing, the school is a more stable environment than many schools in Tottenham where teacher turnover is higher. The majority of the staff are African-Caribbean and Seventh Day Adventists. The role of the teachers and head in the apparent success of this school is, I would argue, fairly important, because of their role in developing a sense of identity within African Caribbean pupils, their high expectations and their sense of commitment because of their religious beliefs.

Curriculum

The curriculum at John Loughborough was not markedly geared towards the black pupils in the school. Tony Sewell remarked on this in his newspaper article in the *Voice*. He says 'we know it can be described as 'black' in terms of staff and students, but its main commitment is a religious framework rather than making its graduates into the British version of Bobby Seale. Put bluntly, this is no black school where black studies is at the core of the curriculum. It is framed not by the ethos of Afrocentricity but Christianity' (Sewell, 1998, p. 11). I, too, was surprised by the lack of any kind of black ethos, particularly since the pictures on the walls also depicted mainly white people.

Apart from a unit on 'Peoples of the Americas and Caribbean' presently taught in Year 9, which looks at such issues as the slave trade and migration to the West, there is little overt attention given to black issues. As mentioned earlier, a sense of identity and the progression from 'The Immersion-Emersion Stage' to 'The Internalisation Stage' and finally to 'The Internalisation-Commitment Stage' requires positive support and not a 'colour blind' attitude. Sewell suggests that 'black parents should demand from a black school more than just a safe environment that teaches the 3Rs. Black schools should offer something more radical, more imaginative, than just a black version of a white independent or grammar school' (Sewell, 1998, p. 11).

There has been, however, a change in black consciousness from the interest in a return to African roots as seen in the 1970s instigated by the Pan-African leader, Marcus Garvey to a redefinition of being 'British' and the present popular youth street culture. Many black young people no longer *want to be identified with Africa, a country of famine and war.* I interviewed a journalist from the *Voice* newspaper, Paul Macey who said that a GCSE qualification in Black History was not useful in getting a job. This was why he saw the John Loughborough School as being so successful. They concentrated on basic skills and the acquisition of acceptable qualifications to go on to further education and ultimately get employment. This is what he felt parents of black children wanted these days. Experiments had been done in the 1980s in offering Black History courses at the expense of black pupils.

If John Loughborough is successful, then it appears that this is not because of an adaptation of the curriculum. Other researchers who have visited the school have referred to a basic curriculum taught by black teachers; '...an expression of pride in being black will emerge in the classroom even *where a teacher is apparently entirely committed to a* no-nonsense basic skills curriculum' (Chevannes & Reeves, 1987, p. 153).

Conclusion

I have argued that the John Loughborough School appears to be successful in addressing the needs of their pupils. They are outperforming pupils at neighbouring schools in public examinations and have a calm, confident manner. I have used Cross's stage model to provide an explanatory framework for these observations. Many black pupils in mainstream schools are displaying signs of not progressing through these stages, leading to disaffection and exclusion. Such pupil are not fulfilling their potential and require a 'double consciousness' if they are later to succeed. The role of black teachers and to a lesser extent the curriculum at John Loughborough seem to be succeeding in helping pupils to move through the stages outlined by Cross.

Apart from a black head and staff, another crucial factor that may lie behind the success of John Loughborough is its admissions policy. The school has an unfair advantage over Local Authority funded mainstream schools in that it can be selective. The school appears to be meeting the needs of the pupils it selects and admits in to the school, but what about the average or underachieving, black males reported by Sewell in a school like Dulwich Boys. Will there be separate schools established with the needs of these pupils in mind?

The Labour Party has supported the application of three separate schools to become grant-maintained. What if more separate schools were set up and given state funding? The Swann Report was concerned about such a development and what effect it would have on the average state school (Swann, 1985). Inevitably, The Langham and other local schools will lose some of their 'more able' pupils to John Loughborough now that it is no longer fee-paying. Increasingly mainstream schools are growing less 'comprehensive' as other schools become more selective.

Separate schools in Northern Ireland have helped to produce a divided society. Are separate schools able to prepare pupils to function in our multicultural society? Are pupils at the John Loughborough School being given the chance of a 'better education' at the expense of other black pupils? More research needs to be done to find the answers to these questions but until the mainstream schools are able to fully address the needs of *all* their pupils and are given the resources and opportunities to do so, separate schools like John Loughborough are likely to continue to be a success.

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BLAIR PEACH LIVES!
A Conference on Antiracist Education

We publish below two personal and moving accounts of an extremely successful conference on antiracist education held at Goldsmiths College in February this year. The first is by **Chris Searle**, an ex-East London teacher and friend of Blair Peach, who is currently a lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths College and played a prominent role in organising the Conference. The second is by **David Clinch**, who has been a teacher of physical education since 1980 and currently works at Crofton Secondary School in Lewisham. The third article arising from the conference is the complete text of a speech delivered by **Colin Prescod**, Chair of the Institute of Race Relations.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the murder of the East London teacher, Blair Peach. It was 23rd April 1979 when Peach was truncheoned to death by members of the Special Patrol Group of the Metropolitan Police in a Southall side street. He had been a part of the antiracist demonstration against the National Front, who were allowed by the police to parade through Southall to celebrate St George's Day. The police had cordoned off the centre of Southall and made it a virtual no-go area to anyone who was not a racist or a fascist sympathiser. A witness, Mr Parminder Atwal, described what he saw happening to Peach in these words:

> As the police rushed past him, one of them hit him on the head with the stick. I was in my garden and saw this quite clearly. When they rushed past, he was left sitting against the wall. He tried to get up, but he was shivering and looked very strange. He couldn't stand. Then the police came back and they told him like this: 'Move, Come on, move!'. They were very rough with him and I was shocked because it was quite clear he was seriously hurt.

Peach was a New Zealander and a teacher in Phoenix School in Bow. He was known as a fine teacher and passionate antiracist who had been targeted by fascist organisations in Tower Hamlets, and also by the police. He had been attacked by members of the National Front, who had also invaded his home.

As an active member of the National Union of Teachers, Blair Peach at the time of his death was President of the East London Teachers' Association. He had been a dedicated trade unionist and active in local antiracist groups such as the Anti-Nazi League for many years. As a teacher, he had worked many extra hours in literacy classes, and was much respected by his students and their parents.

The 20th anniversary of Blair's death will be commemorated by a series of events designed to re-launch a national movement of antiracist education among Britain's teachers. The imposition of a heavily prescribed and culturally narrow National Curriculum and the continuous surveillance of teachers' work through OFSTED have meant that curriculum initiatives against racism have been under intense attack.

These events were signalled on 6th February at a conference on antiracist education called *Blair Peach Lives!* at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Goldsmiths is sited in Deptford, South East London, within a deeply internationalist community, yet also close to some of the most horrific events of racial violence during the last two decades – including the 1981 New Cross fire and the 1994 racist murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence at an

Eltham bus stop. In 1998, local black primary teacher Alison Moore was attacked and badly beaten outside her primary school in Catford.

The Conference raises these echoes. It began with the Chair, Professor Clyde Chitty of Goldsmiths' Department of Educational Studies, recalling his own childhood surrounded by a racist police culture which invaded his own young consciousness from as early as he could remember. Chris Searle, an ex-East London teacher and trade union colleague of Blair Peach, offered a tribute, remembering what one of Blair's own students had written about him after his death:

> He was a man of high ideals, but ideals are no good if they are not put into practice. He always practised what he preached. I know I will never forget him and he will always be remembered as a friend of the people.

Bernard Regan, National Union of Teachers' executive member (who had taught alongside Blair at Phoenix School in Bow), read a message of support from the Union's General Secretary Doug McAvoy, and added some of his own reminiscences.

There followed a series of testimonies from family campaigns seeking justice following the racist deaths of their brothers or sons. Suresh Grover – who had helped organise the 1979 demonstration in Southall against the National Front – spoke for the Stephen Lawrence campaign, making the crucial links between the deaths of Blair and Stephen. Kwesi Menson told the harrowing story of his brother Michael's murder by fire on an Edmonton street, and Sukhdev Reel spoke movingly of the death of her son Ricky and the police's attempts to portray it as a drunken drowning and to deny its racist causation. Janet Alder had travelled 200 miles to tell the Conference of her brother Christopher's death in police custody in Hull. These most grotesque stories were narrated with a huge courage and dignity, and a tenacity for justice which characterised each campaign and each family's burning determination to find the killers of their beloved son or brother.

Such contributions were difficult to follow, but Alison Moore spoke eloquently about how important it was for teachers not to be daunted by the racism at the heart of British society and by her own example affirmed it. Colin Prescod, Chair of the Institute of Race Relations, referred to the Institute's long commitment in supporting community campaigns against racism in education, taking the Conference back to the 1970s movement of black parents against the schools for the so-called 'Educationally Sub-normal' (ESN) and how the benefits and changes secured by black struggle affect all young people suffering

from institutional abuses, white and black. He spoke of current campaigning against the hugely disproportionate exclusion from state schools of black students, and the importance of teachers not being fearful of taking the leadership of struggles against racism in the school curriculum, or anywhere else in school life.

The workshops followed. A list of them will show how varied and inclusive they were in tackling the many dimensions of racism, and presenting antiracist solutions to the prevailing issues affecting schools in all phases.

Refugee children in schools, led by Richard Williams of the Refugee Council.

The recruitment of black teachers, led by Dilly McDermott and Alison Moore.

Student initiatives against racism, led by Youth Against Racism in Europe.

Community language and bilingualism, led by Jim Anderson and Chris Kearney.

Antiracist curriculum for the early years, led by Babette Brown of the Early Years Trainers Antiracist Network.

School council: empowering future citizens, led by Jill Harris.

Antiracism and IT 'Homebeats', led by Arun Kundani and the Institute of Race Relations.

Antiracist policies and practices, led by Shaun Doherty.

Black exclusions, led by Michael Vance.

Internationalism, led by Denis Goldberg of 'Community Heart' for South Africa, and an activist from the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign.

Anti-deportation campaigns, led by Luke Rooney and Abdul Onibiyo.

Fighting racism in Europe, led by Theresa Bennett of the Anti-Nazi League.

Science and antiracism, led by Brian Matthews.

Racial harassment in schools, led by Samidha Garg of the National Union of Teachers.

National Curriculum and black history, led by Marika Sherwood.

The final hour-long plenary session, chaired by Sheila Amrouche of the Lewisham Teachers' Association, whose members played such a vital role in organising the Conference, combined analysis with cultural energy. Caroline Benn spoke first, looking back over many years of the struggle for comprehensive education and for an antiracist foundation for all state schooling, and Tony Benn added a sharp and witty contribution with a parliamentary perspective which went back over five decades. Benjamin Zephaniah combined a good-humoured presentation with the passion and acerbic satire of the many manifestations of British racism which characterise his poems, which led directly to poems read by pupils from Blair Peach School in Southall, and from Phoenix School in Bow. The session continued with notice of upcoming events from the Secretary of the East London Teachers' Association and the Blair Peach 20th Anniversary Committee, Alex Kenny, and Secretary of the Lewisham Teachers' Association, Martin Powell-Davies. The Conference listened to two dramatic songs by Mike Carver – *The SPG Song* and *The Murder of Blair Peach*, which has been issued on an extended play record in 1979, and joined in with a spirited rendition of *The Internationale*, to commemorate in particular Blair's own commitment to a socialist vision of education and human society.

It was a stirring ending to a very full and inspiring day, and all those present looked forward to following through its success with a wide and vibrant celebration of 'Blair Peach Day' (as very distinct from 'St George's Day') in their schools on April 23rd, and a huge turnout for the mass demonstration in Southall on the following day. The Conference had been enhanced by the beautiful banners made by Ed. Hall which flanked the speakers in the plenary sessions, and the bookstalls which supported the content of the Conference. It was resolved that the work started at the Conference would continue, both locally and nationally, with the suggestion of an annual conference on a dimension of antiracist education to be held at Goldsmiths College.

Chris Searle

'There is a terrible symmetry between the death of Blair Peach on 23rd April 1979 and that of Stephen Lawrence 14 years later, on 22nd April 1993'. With these haunting words, Chris Searle, a friend of Blair, opened his remarks at the introductory session of the Anti-racist Conference, organised jointly by the Lewisham NUT and Goldsmiths College and called in the context of the continuing fight to defeat racism.

Of the Macpherson Report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, released two weeks after the Conference (24th February 1999) Doreen Lawrence said, 'It has only scratched the surface. It has not gone to the heart of the problem'. Whilst it is clear that even a judge like Macpherson was shocked by the racism of the police towards black people, he did not offer any insight into how racism has grown in Britain. For example, as Bennett & Reece have pointed out, 'he doesn't describe the influence of fascist organisations in South East London where Stephen was killed; nor does he look at the role that trade unionists and anti-racists have played in challenging racism'.[1]

On 23rd April 1979 in Southall there was a huge protest organised against the National Front. The police attacked the demonstration making hundreds of arrests. Blair Peach, a teacher from New Zealand, a white Socialist Worker Party and Anti-Nazi League member, was murdered by the police on that day. His killer remains free even though the Special Patrol Group of which he was part was identified as being from Barnes Police Station. There was evidence in the toilets in the police station of racist graffiti and also in the locker room of non-standard truncheons resembling baseball bats. Both areas were accessible only to police officers.

During the 1980s black and white anti-racists gained much more confidence to challenge and confront the police in Brixton, St Pauls and Toxteth following the defeat of the National Front at Lewisham in 1977 and the huge support for events like 'Rock Against Racism' for example. The march through London after the New Cross fire showed that black people were not accepting rejection by white society either.

In the 1990s, however, there was an increase in the activities of fascists in South East London, resulting in the murders of Rolan Adams, Rohit Duggal, Stephen Lawrence and Ruhallah Aramesh. There was a huge increase in the number of racist attacks being reported to the 'Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks'. The reason the fascists had such confidence was the presence of the BNP headquarters in Welling. The Nazis were trying to build

an organisation similar to that of Le Pen in France after the election of Derek Beackon in the Isle of Dogs in 1993. He was thrown out because of active campaigning and opposition by anti-fascists culminating in the huge 60,000 plus Unity March in October 1993 at Welling.

Along with the coachload of teachers from my school, for example, there were thousands of other trade unionists and workers who showed that racism can be challenged from within institutions. This was compelling evidence of black and white unity in attacking racist attitudes in society.

The police, however, clearly demonstrated that their role was to defend the BNP headquarters, thus allowing the Nazis to continue to spread their vile doctrines. They refused the request of Leon Greenman, a survivor of the Holocaust, to allow the protestors past the Nazis' headquarters.

The 'Blair Peach Lives' Conference was held because there is a great need to bring to the front of our educational practice the notion of anti-racist teaching. For years, certainly since the introduction of Local Management of Schools, and the advent of the National Curriculum, itself rooted in a narrow Eurocentric perspective, the necessity of anti-racist teaching has been obscured by the pressures imposed by successive governments bent on reducing knowledge to mechanical ideas that are evident in such arrangements as the 'Literacy Hour'.

Their emphasis is on individualism not collaboration. Testing, testing and more testing from Key Stage 1 through Key Stage 4 and beyond. Not content with SATs, schools feel obliged to have 'mock SATs' to hopefully 'hike up' their results and therefore to rise above neighbouring schools in the league tables. The self-esteem of many students is severely dented by the fear of failure throughout their school lives. Teachers recognise the consequences of this competition. The 'New Labour' Government attacks the profession via OFSTED and through its attempt to introduce performance related pay. Teachers are not isolated individuals. By its very nature teaching is about sharing knowledge and finding successful ways for students to learn. That is why there is growing resistance which is leading to industrial action.

The anniversary of the murder of Blair Peach is a potent reminder of the task we must undertake. In the introductory session, the Chair, Professor Clyde Chitty, a lifelong Socialist, described the struggle he faced from his own background, with a racist father occupying a powerful position in the hierarchy of the Metropolitan Police, in challenging the inequalities and oppression of this society.

The deep-rooted racism that led to the deaths of both Blair Peach and Stephen Lawrence can be challenged in any context in which it arises. Bernard Regan, an old friend and comrade of Blair, spoke of how he had stood in the tradition of being for the workers, for ordinary people. He was a 'doer'. He would not settle for the passing of a resolution at an NUT meeting. He would say, 'words are not enough; how can we act upon this?' That is why he was so prominent in the struggle against racism. His murder by the police was a consequence of his commitment. Chris Searle revealed to the Conference a policeman's remark to Blair in response to the picket of an East End pub, organised by Blair three years before his death, where the landlord refused to apologise for racist remarks he had made: 'We'll get you for this Peach.' His killer(s) like those of Stephen Lawrence still remain free.

Martin Powell-Davies, Secretary of Lewisham NUT helped to chair the session in the morning attended by over

250 people. Sukhdev Reel spoke movingly of how she has fought for justice for her son 'Ricky' who died almost certainly as result of being chased by racists. The police showed little interest but Mrs Reel has been persistent and courageous in seeking out the truth. Suresh Grover addressed the Conference, giving some of the experiences of the Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign in the long haul against the legal establishment and the police to seek justice for the death of Stephen. Janet Adler from Hull related to the Conference the story of how her brother Christopher died in police custody. Kwesi Menson spoke of the terrible lack of care or interest by the police when his brother Michael was doused in petrol and set alight in Edmonton, North London. Alison Moore, so savagely beaten up by racists in early 1998 in the grounds of her primary school, urged the Conference to carry the anti-racist message into our schools and also to support the campaigns seeking justice for their loved ones. She also made it clear that there was no choice but to confront racism in all its forms.

Colin Prescod from the Institute of Race Relations had the difficult task of following such a profoundly sad opening session. He drew our attention to the issues facing educators and put them into the context of the Tory and New Labour obsession with 'market forces'.

The workshops were a key element of the day. The intention was to produce practical ideas for anti-racist teachers. The feedback was positive. During the day it was estimated that over 300 people had attended the Conference. The workshop on black exclusions, for example, was very well attended. The issues raised could have only limited time for discussion. The information from all the workshops will be gathered and hopefully produced in a pack or a booklet. A database has been set up with the names and addresses of all those who signed up. That a Saturday conference was so well attended spoke volumes for the need for 'more time' for teachers and educators to discuss ideas and share good practice in anti-racist teaching.

Note

[1] Bennett, W. & Reece, B. Power and prejudice, *Social Worker Review*, 1999.

David Clinch

Anti-racism: a state of emergency

This is the text of Colin Prescod's Address to the Blair Peach Lives Conference on antiracist education, Goldsmiths College, 6 February 1993. Colin is Chair of the Institute of Race Relations.

These are very serious times to be meeting with educational activists. These are times in which we have begun to live with the consequences of the fact that our educational system, our state educational system, has been undergoing a process of being broken up and driven into the market. We are beginning to experience the really disturbing results of market-led educational policy – and things are getting out of hand. These are times in which teachers who care about their children, all their children, but especially those children who don't have wealthy back-ups to help them recover from the horrors of market-led educational policy, teachers who care, must make a stand, must become leading activists against the devastation of our educational system.

Anti-racism is part and parcel of this stand and this activism. I am interested in generating a political mood of unrest in these times – a mood of activism, to change things.

Education, as we have known it, is under attack, for everyone. New Labour has now declared its hand on the 'privatisation' of our educational system – delivering the death blow to local authority control of schools. The introduction of 'opt-out' legislation, alongside what we've come to call 'league tables' has set up our schools to be in market competition with each other. The imposition of business takeovers for what are deemed 'failing' schools, simply serves to remove any remaining doubt about the direction of our government. And now 'performance related pay' schemes are to be introduced – setting up teachers to be in competition with each other. These are all dangerous and bad developments for education.

Now although this slide into the market is popularly identified with arguments and policy initiated by Thatcherism and latterly picked up by New Labour – really observant analysts argue that it began with the old Labour Government of the 1970s. They remind us that it was then that, specifically, Prime Minister James Callaghan in 1976 made the statement which would 'shift the focus of education away from the child and her or his individual needs and move towards the demands of the economy'.[1] So, we've been involved with this struggle for some time.

Given that backdrop, the first stand that caring teachers are obliged to make is a stand to save or to retain a vital, dynamic state educational system – as against surrendering it to big business. The second stand that caring teachers must make is to reinstate the democratic principle of accountability to our educational system – where the community, rather than what is called individual choice, has the whip hand in determining a decent education for all of its children. The third stand that caring educationalists must make is for the liberation of teachers – to return responsibility and respect to teachers. And as part and parcel of these stands, of these struggles, as caring activist educationalists, we will have to fight for improvements in the quality of the education that is available for all – the quality of the pupils experience and the quality of what counts as good education.

It is within that very political and politicised context, against that backdrop, that we focus on the havoc that racism creates in our educational system and the necessity to regroup, reorient and recommit if we are to do better than we've done so far in combating and eradicating racism.

The anti-racist movement, generally and in education specifically, is in a state of considerable disarray. Let us be plain – notwithstanding the recent public awareness successes of the Stephen Lawrence Campaign, we've not been winning. We've not been winning because since the heady days of busy, mass anti-racist activity in the 1970s, Thatcherism has struck back and now New Labour tails after. We've not been winning because our political culture has been more and more infected with a consumerist individualism. And that individualism has been working in tandem with the fragmentation of the old black community, within which black resistance was conducted up until the 1980s. Then, black was a political colour opposed to injustice and indignity, rather than a mere skin colour. And with the replacement of that old sense of political community by ethnic identity opportunism and competition, divided we have fallen. We've not been winning, then,

because of the losses and failures of the old black community and of the old radical politics.

For what began to be called anti-racist education, the consequence of powerful reactionary attacks and degenerative infections and losses in our political culture, is marked by a shift from what might be called a race and class anti-racism to a celebratory multiculturalism. And arguably this multiculturalism hardly deserves to be joined up with that movement in education in the 1970s and the early 1980s which took its lead from black working class protests and campaigns and which linked these campaigns to the broader demand for improving education for all.

You will all know about the black politics and campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s, but it is worth recalling them for our purposes here. You will recall that black parents and their communities of support made loud protest at what was happening to their children in the mainstream of education – epitomised by the uncovering of the racist insult of 'educationally sub-normal' (ESN) schools which were set up for 'underachieving' West Indian children, just as, for Asian children there was the 'bussing' of them, so that their 'backwardness' would not contaminate their white classmates. Well we won that one (didn't we?), in a manner of speaking, and so, there was a shift to integrating what came to be called 'educational special needs', children in the mainstream. But we may want to reflect on how effective or lasting that 'victory' was – since the scandal of massive 'exclusions' is with us now. And 'exclusions' can be read as another version of that same old 'insult-and-injury' by rejection – where black pupils are disproportionately represented amongst the victims. Although, of course, it is as well to register that white pupils will constitute the vast majority of expanding numbers in 'exclusions'.

You will recall that back in the 1970s and 1980s, black parents and their communities of support objected to the chauvinist narrowness of the curriculum content in the mainstream of schooling, which alienated children with Third World, that is to say majority world, backgrounds. There have been changes here too. Since that time, we've had a national curriculum imposed and as teachers you will know better than I of the reasons for which it has been dubbed a 'nationalist curriculum'.

You will also remember that back then in the 1970s and 1980s, out of choicelessness, concerned black parents and their communities of support set up their own supplementary schools, to attempt to fill in for what was lacking in the mainstream. This was not to replace but to supplement mainstream education.

Anti-racism in education was given a name and a purpose, in the 1970s and 1980s, when those teachers with a heart, those who could still hope in the face of already well advanced attacks on education, generally, and on their own working conditions, specifically (and there were lots of them) – those teachers, responded to the campaigning movement of black parents and their communities of support by attempting to adopt the lessons of the campaigns into the mainstream.

And then came the early 1980s explosion of militant protest, from within urban working-class communities and throughout the land, characterised by Sivanandan as a movement from resistance to rebellion.[2] This provided an extra impetus for anti-racism in education (as in other areas like the media and social work). The authorities were so gob-smacked by these urban uprisings that they opened their ears, just a bit, and opened some doors, briefly –

admitting just a little of the protest and a few of the protesters. We might have thought that we were on a roll, but the authorities soon recovered – acknowledging, but reinterpreting, the evidence of the protestations, selecting the soft issues that they would take up, carefully sifting and ruling out the really hard demand and the really telling critiques.

It was then too that Thatcherism began to pedal 'market-oriented' welfare programmes in partnership with big business, of the sort that New Labour is now institutionalising – adopted and adapted. And meanwhile, anti-racist education has suffered a number of embarrassments – among them the case of Mrs Goldrick in Brent (a teacher sadly and ironically denied a fair hearing by the loud voices clamouring for equal justice), and the racialised parental choice fiasco of Dewsbury (where white parents were stirred to withdrawing their kids from schools with majority Asian pupils).[3]

What we seen, then, is that since that heyday of high profile anti-racist education, things have become worse. They are not the same. They are not better. They are worse. We've gone from the scandal of ESN to the disaster of 'exclusions'. In the wider arena, the success of the Stephen Lawrence Campaign is that it has managed to return 'institutional racism' to the social agenda, when Scarman and others in the 1980s thought that they had managed to keep it off – but, the fact is that lynchings, that is to say unlawful street mob killings of blacks by whites, have increased alarmingly in Britain down the years, as have the cases of police non-accountability.[4] We need to declare a state of emergency against racism in our culture.

These are not the days of Blair Peach, these are worse days. Racism is tougher and resistance is weaker. Communities of youth are more under attack, but also more corrupted. Black communities are much clearer about the nature of the racist beast, but more caught up themselves with racialised identity responses to their social predicament – with racism and racialism treated as 'facts of life'. We've never been more in need of the spirit of the insurgent teacher and educationalist, but never have we had teachers as exhausted and demoralised.

So teachers who would be anti-racists must become leaders on a new front line – leaders of a movement that has been in some disarray. They must be key participants of a movement that can be built, at one level, around the campaigns on 'exclusions' and, at another, the campaign to turn back the privatisation of our educational system.

Of course, this is not an easy call to make, because teachers are already doing a demanding and difficult job. But the only way to get off the slippery slope to working in more and more oppressive conditions, with more and more alienated pupils, is to fight back harder. Blair Peach is dead – long live the spirit of Blair Peach.

Notes

[1] See Lee Bridges, Exclusions: how did we get here?, in J. Bourne, L. Bridges & C. Searle *Outcast England: how schools exclude black children*. London Institute of Race Relations, 1994, pp. 1-16.
[2] See A. Sivanandon *A Different Hunger*. London: Pluto Press, 1982; A. Sivanandon *Communities of Resistance*. London: Verso, 1990.
[3] See *Outcast England*, 1994.
[4] See Marika Sherwood Lunching in Britain, *History Today*, March 1999.

Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 2 April 1999

Don't Bite the Bullet in the Early Years!

Naima Browne
In this article Naima Browne, a lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education at Goldsmiths College, University of London, provides a personal critique of the proposals resulting from the first stage of the review of the Desirable Learning Outcomes.

Introduction

Those involved in the education and care of young children have watched in dismay as an identifiable stage, previously described as the 'early years' which covered the first seven or eight years of young children's lives, has been systematically eroded with disastrous consequences for all children. From 1994 the official line was that 'early years' referred to 'under fives' or 'pre-school'. This distinction still left room for independence from the National Curriculum and a degree of explicit continuity for children in the 0-5 age range. The introduction of nursery vouchers for four-year-olds did much to damage the cause of early years education. The scramble for four-year-olds' vouchers and the Government's desire to be seen to be honouring its promise led to the increase in the number of four-year-olds who now experience so-called 'nursery' or 'early years' education in reception classes of primary schools. The provision in reception classes can rarely be equated with that of nurseries for a range of reasons. Many reception class teachers are not trained nursery specialists and this combined with pressures due to inadequate resourcing (physical and human) and the annexation of reception classes to the primary school in terms of whole school planning and policies has made it increasingly difficult for the needs of four-year-olds to be adequately provided for (OFSTED, 1993; Blenkin & Kelly, 1997). The situation has been further exacerbated by initiatives such as the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies which include key objectives for the Reception Year through Year Six. The reception class teacher's job has become extremely difficult in that different sets of expectations apply to those of statutory school age and those children who are still below this age. Theoretically, reception class teachers have to ensure that their teaching is compliant with the requirements of the National Curriculum (for the older or more able children) whilst simultaneously ensuring that, for the younger children, they keep in mind the Desirable Learning Outcomes (SCAA, 1996). If there was a high degree of continuity between the Desirable Learning Outcomes and the National Curriculum requirements at Key Stage 1 this ought not to be an unmanageable situation but, with the 'slimming down' of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 1 to provide additional emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy, areas of learning such as creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development are being squeezed out of the Key Stage 1 timetable. Furthermore, the baseline assessments and end of Key Stage 1 SATs do little to protect the breadth and appropriateness of the curriculum for three- and four-year-olds since many of the baseline assessment schemes focus on the minimum (Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Personal and Social Development) and some headteachers, colleagues and parents exert pressure on nursery and reception class teachers to provide a more formal curriculum in the mistaken belief that this will enhance children's performance (e.g. DES, 1990; Pascal, 1990; OFSTED, 1993; Sharp & Hutchinson, 1997; McQuillan, 1998).

Changes are certainly long overdue if we are to ensure that our youngest children receive an education appropriate to their development stage. Currently, both the National Curriculum and Desirable Learning Outcomes are under review. So far there have been two stages to the review of the Desirable Learning Outcomes. The first involved eight Early Years Curriculum conferences during the Summer of 1998. The second stage consisted of a formal consultation with early years providers and other interested parties, on proposals arising from the first stage of the review. Three main items were on the agenda for both of these review stages. Firstly, identification of the aims and priorities for children aged three to five. Secondly, whether or not a distinct curriculum stage for children aged from three to the end of the reception year should be established with the National Curriculum programmes of study starting for all children at the beginning of Year One. Thirdly, whether or not curriculum guidelines for this new 'foundation' stage of education would prove helpful. An agenda such as this could have resulted in proposals with the potential to radically improve the education of our youngest children but, disappointingly, in March 1999 the Consultation Paper set out proposals which, if approved, are liable to increase the likelihood that children as young as three will feel the chill wind of the National Curriculum.

The proposals prompt two important questions. Firstly, what vision of early years education informs the proposals outlined in the consultation document, *The Review of the Desirable Learning Outcomes* (QCA, 199b)? Secondly, to what extent will the proposed changes be based on the needs of young children rather than needs arising from the demands of the National Curriculum and the government's commitment to raising achievement through the implementation of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies?

Do We Know Where We Are Going?

So, how is it possible that we have reached the point where the vitality, diversity, richness, complexity and sheer breadth

and depth of young children's learning is to be reduced to 63 'early learning goals' the majority of which have little to do with approaches to, and processes of, learning?

Although it is proposed that a foundation stage be established which sets out the curriculum entitlement for children aged from three to the end of the reception year any sense of relief about the introduction of such a stage is short-lived when one proceeds to read that the term 'desirable learning outcomes' is to be replaced with the term 'early learning goals'. Changes in terminology are rarely inconsequential. Note, for example, how the provision for a four-year-old is no longer labelled as 'nursery schooling' but is now referred to as 'a free, part-time early years education place' (Browne, 1996; QCA, 199b, p. 2), a change that not only reflects reality but also, perhaps, serves to further distance four-year-olds from nursery provision. The move from 'desirable learning outcomes' to 'early learning goals' is also significant despite the suggestion in the Consultation Paper that the main motive for the change was simple to introduce a 'more understandable term'. One important consequence of the change in terminology is that is legitimises a content or objectives-led model of the early years curriculum with the 'early learning goals' establishing expectations of attainment at the end of the foundation stage' in the same way that the level descriptions do for the key stages of the National Curriculum' (QCA, 199b, para 13, p. 6). Such a model does not co-exist comfortably with the notion of a developmentally appropriate curriculum. In Scotland the early years curriculum is conceived of in more developmental terms with the emphasis on the range of learning 'to which all young children should be entitled' and on the provision of opportunities for young children to 'participate in and enjoy the full range of learning experiences' (SOEID, 1997, p. 5).

The 63 'early learning goals' proposed in the QCA document may be supplemented, in the areas of mathematics and language and literacy, with extension statements which encapsulate an additional eight goals for the 'older or more able children'. Furthermore, it is proposed that the achievement of the older and more able children can be described using the descriptions for levels one and two of the National Curriculum. This last proposal has been made despite the fact that delegates at the curriculum conferences suggested that the needs of more able children could be best met through 'enriching' the curriculum for three- to five-year-olds rather than accelerating their learning onto the National Curriculum programmes of study. There is surely a danger that setting out early learning goals as bullet points, with additional goals for older or more able children, may encourage a fragmentary approach to planning for young children's learning which does not take sufficient account of young children's needs and learning characteristics and which may additionally lead to a tick-list approach to the assessment of children's learning. Furthermore, although the 'early learning goals' establish expectations for the *end* of the reception year, it is feasible to suggest that these goals may have a trickle-down effect and thus influence the focus and nature of activities in nurseries. The first 'early learning goals' for writing requires children to 'hold a pencil effectively, and form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed' (QCA, 1999b, para 26, p. 9) and it is not difficult to visualise scenes of three-year-olds in nurseries toiling over meaningless worksheets designed to develop fine motor control,

especially in settings where the early years staff are inexperienced or lacking in confidence.

There appears to be somewhat muddled thinking regarding the achievement of the early learning goals by the 'majority of children' by the end of their reception year. On the one hand, it is acknowledged that young children's development and rates of progress are determined by a matrix of factors including their maturity, chronological age, type and quality of early childhood care and education, but on the other hand, it is confidently stated that the goals will 'establish expectations for the *majority* of children by the end of their reception year' (QCA, 1999b, para 16, p. 7, *my emphasis*). It would seem that there is an erroneous belief that despite the children's very different starting points on entry to reception class, a minimum of two terms spent in full-time education in the reception class will ensure that there will be little difference in the attainment of the 'majority' of children, in this instance that the 'majority' will achieve the early learning goals (Sharp & Hutchinson, 1997). Changing the terminology from desirable learning outcomes to early learning goals and shifting the baseline assessment from the start of the reception year to the end of the year will not change the fact that at any given point in time the chronological ages of children in a reception class could span a whole year (e.g. at the start of July children could be aged from 4.10 to 5.10) with obvious consequences for possible levels of achievement. Assessing children at the end of the reception year will be a summative exercise and increase the pressure placed on young children to 'perform'. Assessments at the end of the foundation stage may result in teachers 'teaching to the test' rather than viewing the reception year as a time for developing and consolidating positive approaches to learning which, research has shown, are essential for achievement in the long term (e.g. Schwienhart & Weikart, 1994).

It is clear that the proposals are not founded on a coherent philosophy of early childhood education. Without a clearly articulated philosophy of early childhood education from which it is possible to draw a set of principles, the early years curriculum is doomed to consist of a patchwork of disparate elements and be vulnerable to external pressures. A cursory analysis of the stated purpose of the proposed foundation stage illustrates the point. The proposals state that it is envisaged that the Foundation Stage will provide 'secure foundations for all future learning'. A worthy aim except that 'all future learning' is mainly conceived of in relation to the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. That this is the case is evident from the way in which the 'early learning goals', particularly those in language and literacy and maths, map directly onto the key objectives set out in the frameworks for the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategies. This represents an uncritical acceptance of the appropriateness of the key literacy and numeracy objectives, not only for children aged five and above, but also for those aged from three to five. With four-year-olds having been absorbed by stealth into the English primary school system the QCA proposals would now seem to be suggesting that, although three-year-olds are not to be taught in reception classes, the primary school curriculum should be dictating the form and content of the school experiences of three-year-olds.

Furthermore, in classes where reception class children are taught alongside older children, it is emphasised that 'care would need to be taken that the 'foundation stage' curriculum merged effectively into the Key Stage 1

curriculum'. This comment implies that the Key Stage 1 curriculum is sacrosanct and therefore it is the *foundation* stage curriculum that will have to change to ensure a smooth transition between the key stages. This proposals would seem to run counter to the advice of delegates at the curriculum conferences who stated clearly that the curriculum ought to be a 'bottom up approach with Key Stage 1 programmes of study building on the under-fives curriculum' (QCA, 1999b, para 14, p. 4). Is not this yet another example of the needs of the youngest children being compromised in order to minimise disruption to the delivery of the National Curriculum to older children?

Many practitioners, and indeed many delegates at the review conferences, have argued that a distinct phase of education three- to five-year-olds would be a positive move in re-establishing the early years as a vital stage *in its own right*, and would provide the opportunity for children to broaden their experiences and develop as creative, curious, confident learners through involvement in appropriate learning opportunities. Furthermore, such a stage could help ensure young children are not forced into the Key Stage 1 programmes of study too early (QCA, 1999a, para 22, p. 5). Thus, the identification of a stage of education that straddles statutory and non-statutory schooling could have provided an ideal opportunity to stem the seemingly inexorable downward flow of the National Curriculum. Many delegates agreed that the aim of this stage of education should be to provide:

> a developmentally appropriate, flexible and exciting curriculum which lays the foundations for children's later learning, but also gives due regard to their present individual needs and the principles of equality and inclusivity. (QCA, 1999a, para 13, p. 3)

The proposals do not take account of these views not least in that there is clearly a top-down approach to the shaping of this foundation stage with the demands of the Key Stage 1 curriculum influencing the early learning goals. Furthermore, a curriculum which is based on 'early learning goals' is unlikely to take sufficient account of the importance of the *processes* of learning and the importance of learning through spontaneous or child-initiated investigations and play.

It Is Not How They Learn But What They Learn That Is Important – or is it?

Early years teachers (i.e. those working in nurseries and reception classes) are reminded on a daily basis of the disjuncture that exists between what they know about how young children learn best and the requirements detailed in documents such as National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998), the Desirable Learning Outcomes (SCAA, 1996) and Baseline Assessment (QCA, 1998). The Consultation Document makes only passing references to what the majority of early years practitioners would argue is a key issue, that of how young children learn. We are told that children:

> ...progress at different rates from their different starting points. Individual levels of maturity, attainment and development will vary. However, before the age of three most will have already gained a wide range of competencies. (QCA, 1999b, para 9, p. 4)

The document also acknowledges that settings should build on children's 'previous experiences and competencies, meet their disposition to find out about the world, and lay the foundation for all future learning' (QCA, 1999b, para 10,

p. 4), but very little more is said about what young children's competencies might be and what is meant by 'disposition' to learning and how this may be nurtured and encouraged.

This document stands in stark contrast to the Scottish Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5 (SCCC, 1999). On the first page the document states unequivocally that the:

> ...vital contribution of pre-school education lies in developing and broadening the range of children's experiences, to leave them confident, eager and enthusiastic learners who are looking forward to school. Such an educational experience should be based on the best interests of the children, the central importance of relationships, the need for all children to feel included and an understanding of the ways in which children learn. (SCCC, 1999, para 3, p. 2)

Play is accorded high status in the Scottish document and the Framework is strewn with comments such as 'Play makes a powerful contribution to children's learning' (p. 4). And, in relation to young children 'Play is, of course, a crucial part of learning at this stage' (p. 4). Emphasis is placed on the need for children to freely choose play opportunities from a broad range of activities and experiences and on adults' need to be sensitive to ways in which they can extend the children's learning through play (p. 42). This animated, child-friendly approach to planning learning opportunities contrasts sharply with the QCA proposals:

> Examples of effective learning activities...will set out how the practitioner identifies the intended learning, then plans and implements the activities, and assesses whether the learning intentions have been met...the [guidance] material will illustrate a range of adult planned and led activities with small, large and whole class groups, and will show how well planned play can contribute to children's learning. (QCA, 1999b, para 43, p. 14)

Whereas the Scottish early years curriculum appears to be underpinned by a clear conception of theories of young children's learning, what constitutes 'play' and the importance of considering equal opportunities issues, the QCA Consultation Document appears to be espousing a far more instrumentalist approach to the early years curriculum. The QCA proposals to include occasional acknowledgements of important issue such as the contribution of play, the importance of recognising how personal, social and emotional development affects children's achievements, the need to be aware that children develop at different rates and the needs of children learning English in addition to the home language(s) etc. but, possibly because there is no solid philosophy underpinning the proposals these comments lack conviction and the document is lacking in courage when it comes to the issue of play. The proposals neither deny the value of play nor emphasise the importance of play and other forms of child-initiated learning.

Early Years Practitioners' Responses

In these days of tests, league tables and targets it is probably logical that attempts are made to ensure that children 'perform', but this performance comes at a cost. Schooling of the very young is in danger of becoming an experience in which National Curriculum-led learning goals, targets and tests stifle imagination and creativity. Currently, the steady stream of changes introduced into schools constantly

undermines teachers' professionalism. Changes to the content of the curriculum and centrally imposed methods of delivering the elements of curriculum leave teachers feeling deskilled and seemingly resistant to change. In many cases this resistance is not to change *per se*, but to initiatives that many experienced teachers feel have not been thought through properly. Despite the decreasing opportunities teachers have to draw on their professional knowledge and expertise to inform their teaching many teachers remain committed to the concept of the reflective, developing teachers and, therefore, whilst being compelled to adopt certain teaching approaches or curtail the content of the curriculum, they remain critical professionals who ask questions about the validity of new initiatives. Thankfully, not all teachers share the Chief Inspector of Schools' antipathy towards research. Indeed, many teachers, when given the opportunity, are willing to seriously consider the appropriateness of new initiatives and reflect on their own practice provided it is clear that projected changes in curriculum and teaching will have positive outcomes for the children they teach. The findings of well-conducted, informative, relevant and child-sensitive research prompts such teachers to reflect critically on their practice and the provision made for children they are teaching. Teachers' day-to-day experience of children provides them with a wealth of knowledge about the diverse and wide-ranging needs of children and research findings broaden and contextualise this knowledge. This process of informed, critical, professional reflection can lead to major shifts in practitioners' thinking (e.g. consider for example, how in the 1990s, young children's knowledge and understanding about maths and literacy for example, are recognised and built on in a way that the majority of nursery teachers did not do in the 1970s and 1980s. On reading the proposals arising from the review of the Desirable Learning Outcomes for example, teachers would be justified in asking whether research findings exist which demonstrate, or even suggest, that young children's learning is enhanced through experience of content-orientated curriculum with an emphasis on teacher-directed activities and end products. As with other major initiatives (e.g. the National Literacy Strategy) I would contend that there is a body of research which emphasises the importance of play, exploration and opportunities for multiple forms of representations but no such body of research exists to support the introduction of a curriculum for young children which focuses on relatively easily measurable goals (e.g. Hall & Martello, 1996; Kress, 1997; Pahl, 1999).

Into the Future

Regardless of the end results of the review of the Desirable Learning Outcomes it is essential that early years practitioners remain open-minded, but constructively critical of proposed changes to the educational experiences of the youngest children in the schools. Provided early years practice is underpinned by a coherent philosophy which is well-grounded in theory and informed and up-dated by both research and professional reflection (e.g. sensitive child observations and assessment and evaluations of the nature and quality of young children's learning), there is little doubt that many of the 'early learning goals' will be within the reach of most children by the end of their reception year. When one takes a cool look at the 'early learning goals' it soon becomes apparent that what is important is

what is *missing*. In the case of language and literacy for example, the first 'learning goal' on the list for reasoning is 'most children should be able to hear and say initial and final sounds in words, and short vowel sounds within words' (QCA, 1999b, para 25, p. 9). In the Scottish Curriculum document the equivalent area of learning is revealingly entitled Communication and recognising familiar words and letters, e.g. the initial letter in their own name is *last* on a list of a 17 learning entitlements within this area of learning, the first priority being that 'children learn to have fun with language and making stories' (SCCC, 1999, p. 16). Teachers in England would do well to take a leaf out of the SCCC's book and add fun and enjoyment to each of the lists of 'early learning goals' as this will be a useful strategy for minimising the slide into a utilitarian approach to early education and should help ensure that the foundation stage remains child-focused and enable teachers to sustain and build on young children's thirst for learning.

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Semi-independent Learning: an approach to mixed-ability grouping – a case study

Franc Kaminski
This article describes a case study involving Key Stage 4 German option groups undertaken at a small Lincolnshire secondary modern school. It is based on an unpublished University of Hull MPhil. thesis.

Introduction

This article is concerned with learning and teaching. It describes the basic structure and main findings of a piece of action research into developing an alternative pedagogical approach to didactic, whole-class teaching in German to pupils at Key Stage 4 – as a means of solving some of the difficulties engendered by having groups containing pupils with a wide range of cognitive ability. Its findings could usefully be applied to many educational settings and many aspects of the curriculum.

In any field of academic study, or the practice derived from it, it is unhealthy if one aspect or theory becomes the orthodoxy. This has happened in Government circles and elsewhere in the UK over the past decade or more with regard to pedagogy. The hegemony of whole-class teaching with the concomitant streaming and/or setting seems unassailable. Wragg (1998), writing in *The Times Educational Supplement*, bemoans the myopia of the present official attitude, which impugns teachers' professionalism. Budge (1997) reports the interim findings of Alexander's comparative research, which indicate that whole-class teaching does not lead ineluctably to educational success. Budge reviews other research which questions further the present widespread attitude: 'the Government should promote research into mixed-ability teaching rather than discourage its use' (1998). The research underlying this article takes a fresh look at some of the issues involved and challenges (in the spirit of professional cooperation and academic endeavour) the prevailing conventional wisdom. I hope that, whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the stance taken here, this article will encourage him/her critically to review existing policy and practice.

The enterprise was essentially an exercise in problem solving. I was dissatisfied with the delivery of German generally, but especially at Key Stage 4. It took the form of a case-study involving German option groups at a small Lincolnshire secondary modern school.[1] The main groups in question were Group GCSE '93 (22 pupils) and Group GCSE '94 (23 pupils).

Background

When I took up my appointment as Head of Modern Languages in 1985, German was the only foreign language studied at the school. The German option groups in Key Stage 4 had a restricted ability range. All pupils studied German in Year 7, but in Year 8 and Year 9 only one of the two forms continued studying German. After a short period all pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 studied German and consequently the German option became genuinely available to all the pupils. The potential range increased to 100% of the ability range in the school, which corresponds to at least 70% of the full ability range.

The increased range of ability exposed weaknesses in the traditional, whole-class teaching methods I had used. There was a certain comfort and security, both for the teacher and for the pupils, in using methods to which both were accustomed. Also real change is not easy to effect and is often time-consuming and demanding, at least initially. I readily admit that this was the case in this instance. However, my dissatisfaction with the *status quo* reached the point where I decided that something had to be done.

The Quest for a Solution

Theoretically, it might have been possible to try to restrict the range of ability in the German option groups, but there were grave doubts about the practicability and even the desirability of this. Because of the size of the school, there could be only one German option group per year and there is a strong *prima facie* case against restricting access to it on the grounds of ability. Furthermore, it can be argued (Kelly, 1974; Bailey & Bridges, 1983) that, far from being a necessary evil which small schools have to put up with, mixed-ability groups are philosophically justifiable and operate to the benefit of the whole school. Many schools state explicitly or at least have a strong implicit commitment to promote the intrinsic worth of the individual pupil. In order for this aim to be fulfilled, pupils should be treated equally. As far as pupil grouping is concerned, all pupils should be in a group which is as mixed in terms of abilities, etc. as any other group he/she could be in. If this is accepted, then it is not mixed-ability grouping which needs justifying, but deviations from it. Streaming and setting may cause pupils to feel valued (or not) for specific attributes or abilities and as such may detract from the valuing of pupils as persons. A similar outcome is possible if one relies heavily on a whole-class teaching methodology, with pupils being treated as a group and not as individuals.

It is appreciated by most teachers that pupils with special educational needs benefit greatly from individual attention. I would argue that all pupils are different individuals and would benefit from such an approach. The National Curriculum Council's (1989) booklet, *Curriculum Guidance 2: a curriculum for all*, suggests that what is

good practice in relation to special educational needs is good practice for all.

Clearly a mixed-ability group cannot be taught as a whole for much of the time. To have ability groups within the mixed-ability group may be antithetical. Focusing on the needs of the individual pupils seems much more likely to accord with the initial rationale for mixed-ability grouping and as such is an acceptable approach.

Some people (including, it seems, the present Secretary of State for Education and Employment and also his recent predecessors) are of the opinion that the above approach is intrinsically inferior to formal teaching methods. Support for this view is so widespread currently that it is unnecessary for me to rehearse the case for it explicitly. The proposed approach to the problem in question, however, is not so well supported and does require some justification. This may give this section of this paper a lop-sided appearance which I hope the reader will understand. I hope to support a semi-independent, individualised approach, but it would be wrong necessarily to infer censure of different approaches here.

It is not necessarily the case that traditional, didactic or formal teaching methods are intrinsically superior. Tomlinson & Kilner (1991) define teaching as 'purposeful interaction intended to bring about learning'. Learning has, therefore, a logical priority in relation to teaching, and one should not identify teaching with any one of its many forms and styles.

When one looks at how children learn, it is clear from the many psychological theories and models available that it takes place at the level of the individual pupil. This point is emphasised by Tumber (1991) and is given clear support at the beginning of *The Plowden Report*. One of the most important factors in this process is the previous learning, aptitude, attitude, etc. which the individual pupil brings to the new learning situation. This lends further justification to an individual approach to teaching.

In spite of this, some would argue that modern languages is a special case, since foreign languages need to be learned/acquired sequentially. A moment's thought, however, makes one realise that this applies to the individual pupil and not to the teaching group as a whole.

There are many theories of foreign language learning. In my opinion, the two which enjoy the most widespread currency are Krashen's *Monitor Theory* and *Cognitive Theory* (see: Krashen, 1988; Gregg, 1983). Both give support for treating pupils as individuals. In the former, it is seen as imperative that pupils receive comprehensible input at their own individual level; in the latter, pupils will need help along their individual routes of automatisation and restructuring towards linguistic competence.

The importance of individual development is made even clearer when one considers the Piagetian view of the pupil being directly involved in and the agent of his/her own learning. It is salutary for teachers to realise that the individual pupil is the only one that can bring about learning and that they are in the role of facilitator.

From the brief discussion above, it is clear that there is theoretical support for an individualised approach as a solution to the problem of mixed-ability grouping. However, despite the arguments above, this approach is not very widespread, especially in the secondary sector. This is probably due to the practical difficulties involved (HMI, 1978; Lafayette, 1980; Reid et al, 1981). The *Banbury Enquiry into Ability Grouping* (Newbold, 1977;

Postelthwaite & Denton, 1978) suggests that much of the additional strain is transitory. If it were so difficult to cope with mixed-ability groups, it would be irresponsible to sacrifice part of the formal educational opportunities of even a small number of children on the altar of theory or dogma. The *Banbury Enquiry*, which claims that it can 'go some way towards freeing discussions on the topic of mixed-ability teaching from the limiting effects of personal bias and unsubstantiated opinion' (p. 86), concludes that mixed-ability grouping in secondary schools is a viable option.

The 1988 Education 'Reform' Act calls for the school curriculum to be broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated to meet the needs of individual pupils. A methodology which treats pupils as individuals is more likely to be successful here than one which does not.

Production of the System

An important practical consideration is the ease with which pupils can use the system independently.

For any teaching system to be successfully, it is necessary for there to be sufficient learning materials available to cater for all the members of the group. From the outset, I decided to rely largely on existing, commercially produced materials, because I knew that I would not have time to produce many home-made resources. The existing materials were designed predominantly for GCSE preparation and I felt happy that they would cater at least adequately for the pupils' needs. Increasingly, commercially produced materials are catering for the needs of pupils working independently. This eases the workload for the teacher considerably.

The resources were organised using the rather simple KEY database computer program. I set up 31 fields and 187 subfields. These informed on where the work was located, the grammar and topic(s) it dealt with, and gave other information.

In order to find suitable materials, the teacher or the pupil can instigate a search on the database. This will usually be a complex search which involves more than one variable. The procedure is rather complicated and takes at least four minutes, even for the initiated. This had the unwelcome consequence of being virtually unusable by the pupils; I had to do almost all the searching. A more sophisticated program might alter this unsatisfactory aspect. However, the database remained an invaluable organisational tool. A search generates a number of records, the numbers of which coincide with the numbers of cards, which indicate where the material is to be found. They may also give advice on how to tackle the material or may even adapt it.

The system also works in reverse. If a pupil has a favourite textbook, etc., he/she can find out which card can help with a particular exercise, etc. by referring to a list of all the records, e.g. a pupil wanting to work on an exercise on page 31 in *Alles Gute* will discover that relevant information/help is on Card 158.

Some tasks might require the pupils to work in pairs or in a small group. Otherwise they can choose to work individually, in pairs or in groups.

After completing the task, the pupil is advised by the card to see the teacher or to refer to the answer sheet. All the instructions on the cards are in English. This was done to allow all the pupils to access the information, which would not have been the case if I had used the target language throughout. Even though the case for maximum use of the

target language (as suggested in the Statutory Orders) is far less than convincing, I had nevertheless intended to produce a set of the cards written entirely in German for those who chose to use them and would benefit from them. The answer sheets also contain transcripts of any hand-written material.

Apart from textbooks, the available materials include audio and video cassettes, posters, computer software, and worksheets. Increasingly material is being designed for independent pupil use (e.g. *Hilfe*) which is easily accessible and which has a teacher's/answer book. Such material need not be added to the database and cards system.

In summary the procedure for using the system is as follows:

(a) Choose which topic/skill/aspect of morphology or syntax/etc. you wish to study.

(b) Use the computer to generate the relevant record (card) numbers.

(c) Refer to the card(s) indicated.

(d) Carry out the tasks.

(e) Refer to the answer sheet and/or the teacher.

Evolution of the System

Most teachers modify their approach in the light of experience and I am no exception. The alterations which were made were intended to give the pupils additional support and choice.

At the beginning of their course, Group GCSE '93 was exposed to the most independent and unsupported form of learning in the whole of this research. They were merely given the card numbers which were relevant to the topic: Describing People. The rationale for this was that the pupils would have to face up to any difficulties posed by the new approach and solve them themselves. This would then lead to ever more refined and improved learning on the part of the pupil. In most cases, this would, in my opinion, happen eventually, but it might take a long time. Since time is decidedly finite on a GCSE course, I decided to give the pupils more structure and support.

The 'hardline' approach persisted into the second topic: House, Home and Local Area, but, for the third topic, Education, I offered more help and support. I generated a total of 72 precise learning targets. For many of these precise learning targets, pupils were given specific information about where information could be found.

These learning targets were based only loosely on the Midland Examining Group (MEG) German syllabus; they were arrived at after discussion with the group. This was a weakness and subsequently topics were subdivided with reference to the MEG Defined Content Document. The information was organised so that each specific language task could be referred to by a short code, e.g. BH6. 'B' refers to Topic B: House and Home; 'H' refers to Higher Level Tasks: '6' refers to item 6 on the list in question.

For Group GCSE '95 the breakdown of all the topics refers specifically to the Defined Content Document. The pupils are given a list of relevant language tasks on a sheet, on which they can also record progress.

I also used pupil diaries to monitor the progress of individual pupils. Pupils were given advice on how to make useful diary entries. Generally the pupils were not very skilful at making diary entries but they did serve as a starting point for the periodic individual discussions between the pupil and the teacher. These generally took place during assembly time. Diaries were also used to book popular items, e.g. computer, scarce textbook, audio tape, video cassette, and generally to communicate with the teacher. Early on in the research I asked the pupils to record the suggested diary information on A4 one centimetre squared paper. This gave the information at a glance and it was easier to see patterns emerging.

It transpired from the diaries and from general observation that listening was a relatively neglected skill. Practical steps were taken to remedy this.

A general principle evolved for both the cards and the answer sheets that the more information they contained the easier it was for the pupils to use them independently. It is very tempting to give just the minimum when preparing the materials but this is false economy because it is sure to cost a lot of teacher time subsequently in explanation and marking. Thorough initial preparation of the materials pays handsome dividends.

The three topics mentioned above had a time allocation of about one term each and were followed by assessments in all four language skills. The pupils commented on their results on a separate, formative evaluation sheet, which was then discussed individually with the teacher.

After the three named topics the pupils spent one term working on tasks not yet covered; the Defined Content Document proved an extremely useful aid here. They then went on to study past GCSE papers.

It would be erroneous to imagine that the pupils always worked independently. From the outset, I had attended sessions when the group worked together. One such case was to introduce a topic. I had to be careful not to make the initial exposition too protracted, since that would have been antithetical to the rationale of the research as a whole. Occasionally, it became clear that many in the group were experiencing similar difficulties. It seemed most efficient to deal with the problem with the group as a whole. The medium can also make whole-group work advantageous. Videos can be disruptive as can listening exercises. This ensured at least some listening practice by the whole group. I also used 'fun' whole-group activities, e.g. quiz, song, to consolidate the 'esprit de corps' of the group. We also had occasional sessions to compare notes on progress, etc. communally.

Introductory sessions with the teacher and whole-group listening activities also helped the pupils to achieve good pronunciation of new items of vocabulary. Towards the end of the research I borrowed a Language Master machine for use in the lower school, which proved very useful for, especially weaker, pupils to practise new vocabulary and pronunciation. It seems likely that it could also be used with advantage at Key Stage 4. Generally pupils did not experience much difficulty with the pronunciation of new items. This must be, at least partially, because German is a phonetic language.

Pupil Attitudes and their Ability to Use the System

It would have been interesting and informative to make comparisons between the previous, whole-group approach and the new methodology, but for practical reasons this is impossible for affective matters and operational skill.

It is extremely difficult to establish accurately the affective outcomes of an educational programme. It is not sufficient to ask pupils to write an account about how they feel about the matter; this is to fall into the methodological trap of assessing affective outcomes by cognitive means. Ideally one should assess pupil behaviour as evidence of

attitudes. A questionnaire was used to elicit information. I am aware that there are dangers when relying on self-assessment; nevertheless I am satisfied with the validity of the results.

Perhaps the most crucial item in the questionnaire asked if the pupils would prefer a return to the previous traditional methodology. There was an approximate balance between the alternatives in Group GCSE '93, which gave way to a significant majority in favour of semi-independent methods in Group GCSE ''4.

The overall picture presented is one where the great majority knows how to operate the system. Any difficulties cannot be explained by teacher inaction. The pupils did not feel that smaller groups were either necessary or desirable. To have any valid claim to general applicability, it is important that semi-independent learning is not dependent on small groups for any measure of success. The pupils generally felt that they were working quite hard and making fairly good progress. They were willing to use the target language and were happy with the teacher's use of it. The system allows differentiated use of the target language by the teacher. Of those who understand the system some find it difficult to use because it puts pressure on the individual to be organised and self-motivated. Pupils do not always check their work either with the teacher or by using the answer cards.

There is nothing to suggest that semi-independent learning methods are not a valid, responsible and viable methodology.

Pupil Learning Outcomes

One can measure the cognitive outcomes by looking at the GCSE results. It is therefore possible to make comparisons between the new (1993-1994) and former (1988-1992) methodologies.

I received assurances from the Board (Midland Examining Group, 1996) that standards were maintained during the whole of this period, so any differences found in the GCSE results within the school are not due to outside influences at the Midland Examining Group.

I compared the results in a number of ways:

A. The numbers of pupils achieving each grade are as follows:

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
1988	–	0	0	2	1	7	6	0	0
1989	–	0	0	3	6	2	4	0	0
1990	–	0	0	3	5	5	0	0	0
1991	–	0	0	2	3	3	2	0	0
1992	–	0	1	2	6	5	3	0	0
1993	–	0	2	5	10	4	0	1	0
1994	1	0	2	4	7	7	2	0	0

Semi-independent learning methods seem to be more successful at achieving higher grades.

B. When one converts the above information into percentages, it becomes more valid since the actual numbers of grades achieved are dependent on the size of the group to some extent. After this analysis the results for the two latest groups do not look so good because they were the two largest groups, but they still appear to be better.

C. Various averages were looked at. In order to do so the grades have been converted into numerical values: A* = 8, A = 7, ... G = 1. The data presented by the GCSE results are, strictly speaking, ordinal and as such should be restricted to rank order statistics. However, Cohen (1976, pp.315-316) suggests the researcher gains little by restricting

himself/herself thus and perhaps loses a great deal by not using more powerful statistical methods. The data under consideration approximate interval equality tolerably well, so one is justified in following the majority of researchers in the field of education by not adhering to the above-mentioned restriction.

The mode for all seven years shows little fluctuation. It is either 3.0 and 4.0, 3.0 or 4.0.

Between 1988 and 1993 the median is similarly in a restricted range (3.5 or 4.0) but for 1994 it is a full grade higher (5.0) because one pupil achieved an A* grade.

The mean shows wider variation. The mean of the mean for the traditional, whole-class methodology years is 3.46, whereas the figure for the two latest years is 4.05. The mean for each of the two latest years is higher than the mean for any of the preceding years.

D. All the information in sections A, B and C may be unreliable if the groups in different years are of differing abilities. It is therefore useful to compare a pupil's GCSE German result with his/her other GCSE results. The general trend is for German to be the bottom grade more often than it is the top grade. In years 1988-1992 it is the top grade for an average of 2 pupils and the bottom grade for an average of 3.2 pupils. The respective figures for the two latest years are 2 pupils and 13 pupils. One must bear in mind that these years had the two largest groups, but is clear that the approximate balance of the earlier groups is not evident in 1993 and 1994.

When one aggregates the extent to which the German grade was distant from a pupil's top and bottom grades one can calculate a net balance. The average net balance for the earlier years is +1, and for the later years it is -18.5.

E. One can also compare a pupil's German grade with the mean for his/her other GCSE results. This can also be done for a whole group and a figure can be generated which shows the variation between the German mean and the mean for the other subjects. The mean of this figure for the years 1988-1992 is -0.07 and for the years 1993-1994 it is -0.41.

If I had used only the methods of comparison which are used to calculate the 'league tables', I could have 'demonstrated' that the new methodology is superior. On closer scrutiny, the improvement is seen to be a result of the 93 and 94 groups being generally more 'able'. When one takes this into account, one comes to the conclusion that the GCSE results for the two latest years are slightly inferior.

However, is it necessarily the case that this tiny deterioration is due to the new methods of learning? When one compares the German mean in relation to the mean of the other subjects with the size of the group, one is struck by the correlation coefficient (-0.85). This is high enough to be significant at the 0.01 or 1% level for a sample of this size. This figure does not necessarily demonstrate causality; more research is needed before a causal relationship can be determined.

The success of this system is all the more remarkable when one bears in mind the additional challenge for the pupils due to the extreme novelty of the approach in the school.

Other Outcomes

There may be other outcomes which have not been considered which would cause one to commend or reject semi-independent learning. One aspect which has been

mentioned *passim* but which has not been measured scientifically is seen as very important by Kelly (1974, p. 13): 'A corollary of this insistence on individualising education is that the pupil is being asked to take an increased and ever-increasing responsibility for his (sic) own learning. This is as it should be, since if we are concerned to educate, then part of what it means to be educated is to be autonomous, to be self-propelled. If our pupils learn everything under duress and compulsion, they may in the end be very knowledgeable but they will never be educated. Furthermore ... the changing nature of society makes autonomy a vital economic aim of education, since a changing society needs autonomous citizens. Thus practical necessity is here the ally of our educational ideals. If education is our concern, then one of our objectives must be the autonomy of the learner. From the beginning we must try to create a situation in which our pupils' learning is increasingly self-directed and self-propelled, until eventually that education can go on without us; we become superfluous.' Little (in Page (Ed.), 1992, p. 72) sees pupil independence as leading to an enhanced form of learning: 'Effective and worthwhile learning may actually ... depend on the extent to which learners achieve autonomy.'

The effects on pupil self-image and on social attitudes resulting from putting into practice the aim of promoting the intrinsic worth of the individual and also other longer-term outcomes may prove to be extremely important but are beyond the scope of this research.

General Applicability

The pedagogical approach taken here is neither 'cavalier' nor irresponsible and might appeal to many teachers. The system used is flexible and the teacher remains in control. He/she can position the safety net where he/she wants by using professional judgement to gauge the amount of support and direction needed by each pupil. The teacher can be confident that the system is practical since it was devised, implemented and evaluated from *tabula rasa* in the course of full-time teaching with absolutely no concessions in terms of time or resources made to it. If not adopted wholesale, parts of the system could be utilised or it could be used periodically.

This research does not claim universal applicability; the nature of the project excludes this. However it certainly achieves reliability and, probably, also generalisability.

Looking Ahead

I hope that this research has made a contribution towards the understanding and application of autonomous learning methods. I further hope that its contents will be developed further; I envisage this being done by a consortium sponsored by the Government, an LEA, an educational charity, or a commercial company. The task would be made easier by improved computer technology and software and would have to reflect the Statutory Orders. An integrated, multi-media system would have much to offer.

Conclusion

Grouping pupils in mixed-ability groups is philosophically, socially, morally and educationally justifiable. An individualised approach to learning in such groups is theoretically valid and in practical terms there are no major obstacles which would debar it from being a useful alternative to any other methodology.

Note

[1] There are still grammar schools in this part of Lincolnshire. They tend to take approximately the top 30% of the ability range. Pupils who are not 'selected' to go to a grammar school attend a secondary modern school. The selection procedure is not very accurate, so the ability range at the school usually comprises at least 70% of the full ability range.

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Learning a Musical Instrument: who has a choice?

Philip Sawyers

Based upon interview data collected from four sample areas, this article examines how a variety of factors contribute to an understanding of equal opportunities in instrumental learning. The results suggest that opportunity is not just to do with funding and that current argument about music provision in schools is far from settled.

Introduction

As a violinist and peripatetic teacher I have often thought of how lucky I have been in being given the opportunities that have led to an orchestral performance career of over 25 years. Looking back I can see how, at many different times in my childhood, this career might never have taken place. That I was prepared to fight for what I felt was the only thing I really wanted to do, got me over those moments when my ambitions seemed about to be thwarted. What of all those children who hadn't my determination? What of all those children who hadn't the sort of parental support I had? What of all those children who did not display such obvious aptitude? If playing a musical instrument at any level is such a rewarding thing to do, why do only a limited number of children have the opportunity to do so? All these questions prompted this small-scale investigation into instrumental learning and equal opportunity. This involved the questioning of staff and pupils in four different sample areas. To achieve a balance, half the sample was from affluent middle class areas, and the other from less 'well off' working class areas. I have tried to find out what opportunities, or lack of them, existed in each sample area.

I was able to ask questions and interview pupils and staff in four different settings. This was fortunate as it provided a broad balance of factors that would otherwise have made this investigation difficult to realise. It gave me access to a wide band of interviewees from differing social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The three schools involved were Kidbrooke, Deptford Green and Dulwich Hamlet Junior. My fourth sample came from the Kent County Youth Orchestra (KCYO) with whom I have worked for many years as a violin tutor. Both Kidbrooke and Deptford Green are mixed comprehensives in South London and are in mainly working-class catchment areas. The former has a predominantly white intake, whilst the latter has pupils from many different ethnic backgrounds. Dulwich, again in South London, is in a predominantly white, affluent, middle-class area. The Kent sample was made up of pupils from various schools and areas. Of the 14 interviewed, ten were at grammar schools, three at independent, and one at a comprehensive school.

I took the opportunity of interviewing players from the KCYO during a recent Easter holiday orchestral course. They were selected at random, apart from choosing an equal number of each gender and restricting selection to those still being at school. At Kidbrooke I interviewed eight pupils having instrumental tuition at school. I also questioned pupils in the classroom at random and in the school choir. At Dulwich Hamlet Junior School my main interviewee was the music co-ordinator. I also questioned some of the Year 3 pupils I taught who had tuition at school. At Deptford Green I was able to interview several pupils having lessons at school and the Head of Music.

I tried to plan my questioning to cover, where possible and relevant, gender and sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic factors, peer pressure and media influence as these affected equal opportunities in relation to learning an instrument. I wanted to find out if and how each of these factors contributed, either directly or indirectly, to equality of opportunity in instrumental learning.

My first experiences of investigation at Kidbrooke were, in retrospect, not quite extensive enough. I formulated a questionnaire for KCYO, which seemed adequate for the task. The main problem was the difficulty in identifying pupils who wanted to learn an instrument, but were denied the opportunity to do so. Having learnt from my experiences at Kidbrooke and KCYO, I was able to address this particular problem when carrying out further investigation at Deptford Green. I explore this aspect in a section devoted to finding out how pupils are selected, what criteria are involved, and whether this ensures equal access or not. For this section, for obvious reasons, only staff were interviewed.

Gender and Sexuality

In this section I hoped to find out to what extent, if any, pupils were denied the opportunity to learn instruments of their choice because of their gender or attitudes towards sexual orientation. Questions were aimed at determining if certain instruments were perceived as only suitable for either girls or boys. I also wished to find out if certain perceived 'un-male' or 'un-female' instruments put their players at risk of name calling of a sexually intolerant nature. From a purely numerical viewpoint I was interested to see how the sexes compared. The underachievement of boys was one issue I wanted to examine to see if the educational generality applied to this particular investigation.

At Kidbrooke School the numbers of girls and boys taking instrumental lessons were 22 girls to 8 boys.[1] the instruments played by the boys were brass (trumpet, trombone, baritone), drum kit and electric guitar. The girls played piano, flute and clarinet. This numerical imbalance was also reflected in the school choir, which was

predominantly female, some 45 in number with only four boys. The questioning in this area resulted in the notion of 'boys' instruments and 'girls' instruments. Boys questioned in the classroom, where my piano playing aroused considerable interest, liked the idea of being able to play, but thought the effect involved was not worth it. Most boys thought it was 'poncy' or 'poofy' to play instruments like the flute or violin as these were perceived as 'girls' instruments and felt that boys who did learn these instruments would be called these sort of names and be accused of being 'queer'. It was also felt that it would be difficult to find a teacher who did not make you play things you thought were 'trashy', 'rubbish' or 'boring'. The girls learning flute, clarinet and piano shared some of the boys' views about what music they might have to play, but did not see this as a drawback or discouraging. When questioned about the possible gender bias of their instruments, both boys and girls felt they were learning instruments that were associated with their gender.

In KCYO only 2 out of 14 perceived any gender bias. One female trombonist saw a male bias to her instrument, but was not too concerned as her sister played the tuba. One male violinist thought the violin was not seen as a 'male' one to play. Interestingly, a male bassoonist felt gender not to be an issue for him, as pictures of bassoonists he had seen, were always male, as were his teachers. At no time was there any suggestion, either in interviews, or in casual conversation with students, that sexuality was an issue. It was never mentioned. The total number of players was 93, 35 boys and 63 girls.[2]

At Dulwich Hamlet Junior School the Year 3 class I taught briefly had the following instrumentalists: Girls: trumpet, horn, violin, piano, recorder; Boys: cello, baritone, piano, recorder. None felt it mattered if you were a girl or a boy. If you liked an instrument and wanted to learn it, you did. In the whole school, the gender breakdown of all those having lessons was 65% girls to 35% boys. In general the girls opted for stringed instrumented and recorders, whilst the boys mainly chose brass. In the string section, more boys learnt the cello than did girls. It was suggested by the music co-ordinator that this was quite typical and was due to the physical size of the instrument, the bigger the better![3]

The results at Deptford Green suggested that gender was not an issue. As well as the interviews with pupils confirming this, the interview with the Head of Music revealed that a deliberate policy of encouraging pupils to play any instrument on offer, despite its gender connotation, was in operation.[4] An illustration of this was found when looking at those learning the drums. Out of 31 having lessons, 9 were girls. Although interviewees were aware of the traditional association of certain instruments with certain genders, all felt this was an outdated concept and had no relevance to them. The Head of Music did feel that this was an issue. In five years only one boy had asked about learning the violin. She also felt that pupils' attitudes had been responsible for the range of instruments that were currently on offer. If no one wanted to learn the flute, then there was no longer a flute teacher. Woodwind were now 'out' with the exception of the saxophone.

It would appear that boys at Kidbrooke showed far more bias in this area than from the other samples. The main point seems to be that fear of homophobia was a very real determining factor when considering what instrument to choose. The boys felt that they had to conform to a stereotypical 'macho' image. From the other samples, even where gender bias of the chosen instrument was perceived, as in the KCYO sample, this did not and was not expected to arouse any such antagonism. The results from Kidbrooke also show that the amount of work needed to play an instrument well was generally not felt to be in keeping with the accepted male image. These findings are given further emphasis when looking at the numbers of boys and girls learning an instrument and the particular instrument involved and the numbers of each sex in the school choir. It cannot be assumed from this that these attitudes would be found in all inner city comprehensives. These attitudes did not pertain at Deptford Green.

Ethnicity

As with gender and sexuality, I wished to find out if certain instruments were perceived as having an ethnic bias and if so, what effect did this have on choice and opportunity. In the KCYO sample and in the orchestra as a whole, all students were white. From the sample, one student was of German parentage: his grandfather had come to England between the two World Wars.

At Kidbrooke the one black student from the sample felt that ethnic background was irrelevant. The same view was also found at Deptford Green.

What did emerge was the type and amount of instrument study available in predominantly white middle-class areas, compared with inner-city multi-racial ones. The former had greater opportunity and a wider range of instruments to choose from than the latter. Broadly speaking, the former showed a traditional European classical bias, whilst the latter showed a more contemporary populist approach. Both these different areas were generally at the exclusion of the other.

Socio-economic Factors

This section was aimed at finding out what differences of opportunity, if any, were to be found amongst groups from differing social and economic backgrounds. This included trying to assess what bias, if any, each group brought with it and the effect this bias had on equality of opportunity.

In the KCYO sample lessons were paid for in the following ways: parents pay the entire cost – 10, some financial assistance – 2, on scholarship – 2. On a rough division into three, the perceived financial position of their respective families was as follows: affluent – 1, comfortable – 10, modest – 3. As regards choice of instrument seven had parents who were either music teachers or who played an instrument themselves. The three at independent schools were simply instructed to choose from a range of instruments when at preparatory school. Four chose instruments after being taken to concerts.

At Kidbrooke lessons were subsidised from the school budget. Each pupil had to pay £1 per lesson. Most pupils came from nearby council estates. One indicator of this as a relatively poor area was the fact that 58% of pupils received free school meals. Another indicator was a survey of books in the home the school carried out. The results of this showed that fewer than half the respondents had ten or more books at home of any sort and a small proportion (12%) claimed not to have any. Whether this was due to financial circumstances or social factors was not made known. In each case, choice of instrument was nothing to do with parental interests and interviewees said that the choice was their own.

At Deptford Green lessons were free and funded at the Headteacher's discretion from the school budget. Three pupils interviewed had lessons at school and lessons in another instrument privately that their parents paid for. One third of the sample said their parents would not be able to pay if school lessons were not free. One Afro-Caribbean interviewee had lessons at school on one instrument, and her parents paid £20 per hour for lessons on another instrument outside school.

At Dulwich Hamlet a charge of £42 for a minimum of ten lessons per term was made. There was provision for financial support in cases of need, and lessons could be completely free if necessary. The school had a large number of instruments which were loaned to pupils. The borrower, as well as being generally responsible, was expected to pay the insurance premium on the instrument borrowed. The funding for these lessons came from the school budget, as did the cost of repairs and replacements. The PTA took a very active part in funding for new instruments and had just begun a new initiative to begin woodwind lessons. At the time of interviewing the music co-ordinator, only string, brass and recorder lessons were available. Instrument choices were very much seen as being made under parental influence. Many parents themselves played an instrument, some of whom were professional performers. It was the views and wishes of parents and governors that shaped the attitudes towards, and had a direct and practical effect on, the state of the provision for instrumental learning. Resources did not seem to be much of an issue, and the proposed expansion into woodwind provision was to be financed directly by the PTA.

Peer Pressure

Interviewees were asked if they felt that the attitudes of their friends and classmates had any positive or negative effect on their learning an instrument, or if it made no difference to them. At KCYO there seemed to be little real evidence of this. Six said it was not an issue and six said there was a positive attitude from their friends. Of the two who reported adverse peer pressure, this had occurred only at primary school and was not an issue at secondary school. All said that being in the KCYO was something their friends admired and saw as an exciting thing to be doing. Frequent concert appearances, foreign tours and the making of CDs were all cited as factors which contributed to a positive attitude from others.

At Kidbrooke all students interviewed said peer pressure was not an issue. They did suggest that it was a big reason why so few people learnt an instrument at school. Although it did not matter to them, they felt most people would not want to be seen as 'different' or 'odd' or 'studious'. The school productions were cited as events which contributed to a positive attitude towards learning an instrument. At both Deptford Green and Dulwich Hamlet, peer pressure was not seen as an issue.

Media Influence

The KCYO sample claimed not to be influenced at all by the media. All gave more or less the same answer as to why they thought this. This was simply that if they were influenced by the media they would not be in the orchestra or playing an orchestral instrument. The media was variously perceived as being a 'dumbing down', 'commercially driven', 'cynically exploitative', 'not representative of real life'. Those interviewed felt it was not aimed at them but

at the 'gullible', 'stupid', 'those unable to think for themselves'. The media was also felt to be very anti any 'worthwhile art'. This view was felt to be across the entire range of the arts, not just music.

Kidbrooke was much more 'media driven'. Being seen to be 'cool' was of great importance. Some liked the idea of learning bowed string instruments as they had seen them on television performing with acceptable bands. Despite liking the idea of playing a violin or a 'cell, all said someone else would have to do it first. No one interviewed had ever watched a classical concert or an opera on television as these were thought to be 'boring'. At Deptford Green this was not seen as an issue.

Strong parental influence was evident at Dulwich Hamlet. Although none of the pupils was questioned about media influence, it was the perception of the music co-ordinator that parental influence was much stronger with this age range in this particular school.

Selection of Pupils

At Kidbrooke pupils approached the Head of Music to ask about the possibility of learning an instrument. If there was a place available, this would be offered at his discretion. The factors which were taken into account were the seriousness of the intentions of the pupils, their behaviour in music lessons and in general, and whether they possessed some aptitude for music and would be likely to benefit from such lessons.

At Deptford Green all pupils are asked in class music lessons if they wish to learn any of the instruments currently on offer. There are waiting lists where there is no immediate opportunity, and pupils may be on more than one waiting list at a time. Once lessons are begun, a period of monitoring is in operation. Should pupils not show an appropriate attitude and response towards their lessons, lateness, turning up infrequently or changing instruments after a short time, then they are no longer allowed the privilege of carrying on with their lessons or going on a waiting list. Because of resources, the limited number of places available are restricted from Year 10 onwards to those who are taking music at GCSE. In the KCYO places are filled by competitive audition.

At Dulwich Hamlet all Year 3 pupils receive a letter inviting them to select an instrument and to be placed on a waiting list if necessary. Selection is made by a series of tests administered jointly by the music co-ordinator and an instrumental teacher. These tests try and establish a pupil's aural ability and also their physical suitability for the instrument they have chosen.

Conclusions

The striking differences between Kent and Dulwich on the one hand, and Kidbrooke and Deptford on the other, seem to be more easily understood in relation to issues of class than they do to any other single factor. In each of the four samples were found exceptions to the economic grading of the sample as whole. However, these exceptions in terms of money did not prove exceptions in terms of social status. Thus the usual linkage of 'socio' with 'economic' did not seem appropriate in all cases. What the polarisation of these two broad groups has revealed is the lack of significant opportunity in the range of music and instruments that each group is subject to. Where were the steel pans and electric guitars in Dulwich? Where were the orchestras in Kidbrooke and Deptford Green? This is also related in terms of

catchment area. Two areas were perceived as affluent and middle-class, and two perceived as poor and working-class. However, these differences seemed to have no effect on achievement. Deptford's steel pans were in just as much demand as Kent's Youth Orchestra. Both were in demand for the same reason – excellence of performance.

Instrumental lessons, even where they take place during curriculum time, are categorised as extra-curricula. Thus they do not have any of the legal rights attached to the main curriculum. Again socio-economic factors are evident. At Dulwich parents are highly articulate and organised and have high expectations of their children. Their own involvement with instrumental lessons has ensured a high profile for such activities. The School's brass band would be the envy of most secondary schools, such is the high standard that has been attained. That the presence of a highly articulate, organised and motivated PTA is needed in the absence of any legal requirement, the implications for equal opportunities in schools without such a body are obvious.

In the section on gender and sexuality, I said that I was interested to see if boys' underachievement was relevant to this investigation. In each of the four samples the girls did not qualitatively out-perform the boys, but they did significantly outnumber them. Taking all four samples together, the numbers of girls to boys is 65% to 35%. Working-class boys were also more likely than those boys from higher social grades to exhibit blatant homophobia. This directly influenced the perceived opportunity to learn an instrument. They were also more likely to have a poor attitude towards work, another factor that dissuaded many from learning an instrument. Image was also seen as crucially important, again another factor which affected equal opportunity. Thus the general perception of boys' underachievement is also borne out in this investigation.

Although peer pressure and media influence were evident in some of the samples, what mitigated against a negative influence in each sample was the existence of public performance opportunities which raised the self-esteem of those performers taking part.

Given the finite resources of each sample, which of its very nature restricts opportunity, the method of selection and thus the access to these limited resources was different in all cases. Again this fell into two fairly clear groups. Kent and Dulwich used the more traditional method of quite rigorous tests or auditions. Kidbrooke and Deptford Green tended to offer opportunity to those who filled slightly different and broader criteria and were not as prescriptive in strictly musical considerations.

Notes

[1] Information from Mr A. Stoddard, Head of Music and Performing Arts, Kidbrooke School.
[2] Information from KCYO administration, Kent Music School, Maidstone, Kent.
[3] Interview with the Music Co-ordinator, Dulwich Hamlet School, 8th May 1998.
[4] Interview with Ms. Ange D'Abbraccio, Head of Music, Deptford Green School, 11th June 1998.

Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement,* 15 January 1999

Improving Schools, Improving Colleges

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Introduction

Within the past 6 or 7 years post-compulsory education in the UK has been given a quite unprecedented degree of prominence, if this is to be measured by the number of official reports, policy initiatives and actual pieces of legislation there have been over the period. Merely to illustrate this they include, of course, the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, the Dearing Review of Qualifications for 16-19-Year-Olds of 1996, the Kennedy Report on Widening Participation in Further Education ('Learning Works') of 1997 and 'Qualifying for Success', the extremely important Consultation Paper, also published in 1997. All this has led to a much greater public awareness of the FE sector, which now contains, for example, more 16- and 17-year-olds studying full-time than do our schools.

Clearly, the 'welcome attention paid to the further education sector has ... brought its substantial responsibilities under the spotlight' (Further Education Funding Council, 1998, p. 1). Because of the sheer numbers of young people and adult returners now studying within the sector on a full-time or part-time basis (approximately four million students, DfEE, 1998), it is hard to find at all contentious the notion that the most important of its responsibilities 'is a duty to provide service of the highest quality to students and to the wider public' (ibid.). Speaking at the Annual Conference of the Association of Colleges in November 1998, the Education Secretary David Blunkett articulated the view that 'Further education is too important to our economy and society for us to tolerate poor standards or a lack of accountability' (*The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 27 November, 1998).

Yet we ought at the same time to acknowledge that there are currently certain concerns being expressed about some aspects of the way some colleges are possibly less than effectively responding to the challenges posed by a hugely expanded – and far more diverse – cohort than has ever been witnessed. 'Too many students drop out, and too many fail to get their qualifications' (ibid.). Leaving us in no doubt whatsoever as to where he would lay the blame for this state of affairs, David Blunkett went on to say in this important speech that '[The Government] will be as tough on failing colleges as [it] has been on failing schools' (ibid.).

It seems also appropriate to remark at this point on the existence of a Charter for Further Education which promises prospective and current students in the colleges that they will receive 'high quality teaching and effective management of [their] learning' (DFE, 1993, p. 15). Individual colleges are, in addition, required to produce and work within their own charters, which typically spell out the rights of the student body to good teaching, supportive tutoring, constructive formative assessment, etc. College prospectuses are rarely hesitant about drawing attention to their students' successes, nor about quoting (often, as might be expected, highly selectively) from inspection report; the market for intending students has become an extremely competitive one. All colleges try very hard to see themselves as places where students will get a 'good deal' – they will be well taught and well looked after.

The reports of the Further Education Funding Council, and its Chief Inspector's Annual Report, do, however, indicate that the quality of provision within the sector is highly variable. Some colleges, too, acknowledge this (and some exploit the evidence for this variation for their own recruitment ends: to quote from that part of the current prospectus of one inner city college citing its exam pass rates, 'Compare them with the other Colleges!' (sic)). The more 'self-aware' colleges have quite readily responded to the challenges posed by low levels of retention and achievement, and are already deploying a range of strategies designed to effect improvements. These may not be needed across the board, but perhaps within one or more department or programme area. Certain areas of provision have displayed, incidentally, more of a propensity to cause concerns than others; basic education is a good example of this state of affairs, within the sector during 1997/98 only 56% of basic education lessons being rated good or outstanding by inspectors (FEFC, op cit, p. 3). (Commendably the Inspectorate were quick to concede that this area is, though, 'one of the most complex and challenging aspects of further education'. (ibid.).)

Some Current Approaches to College Improvement

My main aim in this article is to propose a number of ways in which institutions in the post-compulsory sector could learn from the theory and the practice developed within the school effectiveness and improvement movement. I intend indicating, for example, which of the strategies found to work in the schools could transfer, with modification, to colleges. However, before embarking on this, it is of interest to briefly examine a selection of approaches to raising standards in the colleges that have been adopted at various times. What follows is in no way presented as a comprehensive review, but can serve as some illustration of the dominant strategic initiatives seen in colleges where either external inspection has raised issues about one or more areas of provision, or a college's management has decided that 'all is not well' with an aspect (or aspects) of

its arrangements for delivering the curriculum. I will focus quite explicitly on the quality of teaching and learning, rather than on any of the other possible areas which are evaluated internally or externally. The reasons for my doing so will, I hope, become clear.

The title of the Circular which first set out in detail the criteria against which colleges' organisation and educational provision would be measured was, very appropriately, 'Assessing Achievement' (Further Education Funding Council Circular 93/28). This very fact sent a clear message to all within the sector that, in an important sense, its very existence needed to be clearly justified by the extent to which it enabled the young people and adults entering it to *achieve*. The major emphasis in the inspection framework that was established was to be, therefore, on how effectively colleges were doing this, and the specific aspects of the evidence which were to be taken into account were summed up in the Circular's section on 'Teaching and the promotion of learning'. Clearly this could not be considered in a vacuum, and other important dimensions of a college's organisation and activities were to be scrutinised – these included its financial management, its relationship with local communities, etc. But the section referred to above, and a number of related ones such as that dealing with student guidance and support, did communicate quite unambiguously the fact that the students' experience of the college, and their ability to benefit from this in clear, quantifiable ways, was going to be of absolutely crucial importance; more than anything else it was to be the 'theme' of inspection in the sector.

What were the immediate results of this? There were a range of developments which began to be seen in colleges. Most of these placed a clear emphasis on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, paralleled by the introduction of new mechanisms and procedures designed to monitor that such enhancements were in fact taking place. Some were specifically concerned with the sharing of good practice, colleges such as Lewisham and Tower Hamlets, for example establishing 'teaching and learning forums' in which staff could meet regularly to discuss teaching ideas and materials which had proved successful in engaging learners, and to share concerns regarding specific aspects of their work with their groups. These kinds of forums have since the early days of 'incorporation' become considerably more widespread, although there is in the minds of many observers the lingering suspicion that the voluntary principle which informs their nature and scope means that they are possibly often *not* attended by teachers who might stand to gain special benefits from doing so.

On a fairly extensive scale, colleges began to increasingly use the services of external consultants to advise them, and improve their 'inspection readiness'. The new General National Vocational Qualifications, for example (introduced from 1992) explicitly required of colleges intending offering them that modes of classroom organisation and of the management of learning generally be revisited and refined. Teachers would need to broaden what in some cases was a relatively limited repertoire of classroom strategies to integrate the kinds of small group collaborative working, student presentations, etc. which the design of GNVQs called for. (See, for example, Lucas, 1996, for a discussion of the pedagogical issues arising from the introduction of the new qualifications.) Where college staff had had no direct experience of them, the sensible thing to do seemed to be

to bring in practitioners or consultants from elsewhere who had.

Regular internal course monitoring and review frameworks were set up where, quite simply, such things had not existed in any organised sense. As extraordinarily as it may read for those in the school sector, it was only in the 'post-incorporation' era that college teachers began to be asked in any kind of a systematic and routine way, for the purposes of such reviews, for schemes of work, records of their students' marks, or progression data. At a somewhat later stage, a trend began to be seen for the appointment of managers with a brief including overseeing these kinds of 'quality' developments, or of adding such responsibilities to the job descriptions of existing senior postholders.

Such individuals were not infrequently the staff development managers of colleges. They were well placed to incorporate this kind of role into a set of responsibilities which commonly included (and often still does) activities such as pursuing applications for the award of the various quality 'kitemarks' and the 'Investors in People' award. They were also able to use their knowledge of available professional development opportunities to advertise and promote the various INSET courses focusing on improving teaching and learning, or preparing for inspection; as may be imagined offering such events became and continues to be a veritable industry.

Moving Forward: by learning from school effectiveness and school improvement?

Although some of the strands in the foregoing account may appear familiar to researchers and practitioners in the school effectiveness and improvement movement, it would have to be acknowledged that any similarities are, in the main, coincidental ones. In other words, yes, there are quite probably things going on in colleges which mirror some of the developments which have been witnessed in schools, but this would not appear to be the result of any conscious decisions having been made to replicate these. It is, however, my contention that by now explicitly devoting some attention to the strategies, guiding principles and achievements of the movement, the post-compulsory education sector in general, and certain colleges in particular, could start to move yet further forward in striving to become more effective at enabling successful student learning.

In a number of fairly obvious ways, post-16 provision certainly has to contend with the same kinds of stresses and strains as does the school sector. Colleges are competing institutions (witness the number of senior postholders, for example, with a specific brief for college marketing), they are responsible for managing their own budgets under local management arrangements, they are highly accountable to an Inspectorate, and their results are published in league tables. A perhaps surprisingly high proportion of post-16 provision is affected by an intake which in one way or another presents challenges to teachers: a recently produced manual entitled 'Ain't Misbehavin', managing disruptive behaviour' (FEDA, 1998) has been in some demand, aiming to support colleges' staff in coping with difficulties in this area. As the Kennedy Report highlighted, while the college sector is often fulfilling a 'second chance' function for young people who have not, for a range of possible reasons, realised their potential at school, those 'who entered college with low levels of achievement tend to have higher drop-out rates and lower levels of achievement when leaving college

than other students' (Kennedy, 1997, p. 21). As practitioners in inner-city schools will be fully aware, the difficulties faced by learners experiencing economic and social deprivation, or whose mother tongue is not English, can present serious barriers to their being able to succeed. For the majority of young people falling into these categories (and, of course, they so often fall into both) the issues will not be left behind them if they decide – frequently against the odds – to stay on in education.

In the light of this kind of commonality, there could well therefore be grounds for suggesting that those practical strategies which have proved, on the evidence, to have been efficacious in schools might well 'travel' and be profitably deployed in colleges. What might such strategies be?

Firstly, it seems evident that there is a major dearth of *research* into variation in achievement levels between colleges. Some kind of an impetus has now started to build up towards rectifying this state of affairs, most notably in the shape of the FEDA – funded project Improving College Effectiveness (FEDA, 1998), but there is simply no comparison yet possible with the volume and quantity of data which the vast number of school-based studies have generated. Our first strategy must therefore be deploying our research expertise to ascertain the dimensions of ineffectiveness and effectiveness, having first, of course, agreed upon the specific measures of these characteristics which would hold most relevance for the sector. Staff to be involved in such research need to be acquainted with key aspects of the school-based research, in my view. This kind of induction could only be beneficial.

Certain of the generally accepted findings from work in school effectiveness and improvement need to be given a high degree of prominence, and acted on within college contexts. I would select from such findings the following four specific points, all of which could be claimed to have some applicability to the post-16 context for teaching and learning. (Probably the best comprehensive review of the findings from a very wide range of school-based studies remains Sammons, P., Hillman, J. & Mortimore (1994).)

Institution-wide strategies focusing on enhancing students' literacy and numeracy skills are of crucial importance as they can positively influence achievement levels across the whole curriculum.

At the very highest levels of institutional management, individuals have a clear 'classroom perceiving perspective' (MacGilchrist et al, cited in Stoll & Mortimore, 1995). (Quite how this observation would be interpreted by those college governing bodies occasionally agreeing the appointment of senior managers for whom 'some awareness of, or experience in, education' would be sufficient – according to at least a few post descriptions – is an interesting question!)

Placing studying classroom variation at the heart of any endeavours to raise attainments levels is vital. Time and time again we find our attention drawn to this facet of learners' experiences. No matter how disadvantaged a background a young person comes from, what takes place in well organised classrooms, and in a context of high teacher expectations and a shared clarity of purpose can mitigate against underachievement in ways which are simply not evident in less conducive classroom environments.
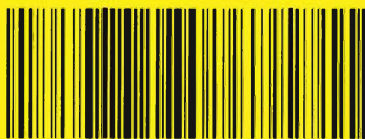
We need to recognise that change and improvement needs to be viewed as a sustained process. The initial drive behind policies and innovations must be embedded within the culture of the institution, and become part of its 'natural behaviour' (Huberman, M. & Miles, M., cited in Hillman & Stoll, 1994). Fullan has put this particularly forcefully in stating that '*Persistence* is a critical attribute of successful change' (Fullan, M., 1991, cited in ibid, emphasis added).

Conclusions

I would have very few reservations indeed about concurring with the view that 'the [effectiveness and improvement] concepts relate to *all* academic institutions, including nurseries, post-16 colleges, universities and, indeed institutes catering for adult continuing learners' (Stoll & Mortimore, 1995, p. 5, *emphasis in the original*). If we accept the validity of such a statement then it seems clear that practitioners and managers in post-compulsory education ought to be treating as a matter of some urgency looking at ways in which the concepts, and findings, emanating from work in the 5-16 sector can be usefully exploited. For the 30% of young people starting A-level courses and ending without one A-level pass after two years, or the 60% of Advanced GNVQ students failing to complete their courses at all within two years, the necessity to make colleges more effective is beyond question.

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