

FORUM

for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education

**Volume 42
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A Crisis of Identity

If we are to believe Sir Paddy Ashdown and the 'revelations' in his recently-published Diaries, both he and Tony Blair were secretly and bitterly disappointed by the enormous and largely unexpected size of the Labour victory in the May 1997 General Election because it marked the end of their dream of transforming the political landscape by forming a grand New Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition. Apparently, Mr Blair believed that a narrow Labour victory, or, better still, a 'hung parliament' would necessitate a Whitehall partnership with the Liberals which would inevitably evolve into the amalgamation of the two parties and the creation of a Christian Democrat Alliance capable of dominating British politics in the 21st Century. All of which would fit in with the commonly-held view that the Prime Minister has a marked dislike for the Party he leads – and for the 'tribalists' who stand in the way of the realisation of the Blair Project.

The precise nature of that Project is, of course, very difficult to pin down. We learn from a front-page article in *The Guardian* which appeared on 5 August this year that scholars working on *The New Penguin English Dictionary* had taken an unprecedented *two* months to arrive at a meaningful and acceptable definition of the noun Blairism. Apparently, the first 16 words of the definition posed very few difficulties: 'Blairism, *noun*: the policies associated with Tony Blair, British Labour Leader and Prime Minister from 1997 ...'; but almost every word and phrase suggested for the rest of the sentence proved to be problematic and controversial. Early drafts included: '... especially regarded as a highly modified or modernised form of traditional Socialist thinking intended to appeal to a wider electorate'; '... characterised by the absence of a fundamental underlying ideology and a close attention to prevailing public opinion'; and '... characterised by a modified and inclusive form of traditional Socialism'. All were discarded as being likely to cause offence to at least one faction of the Party. 'Modernised' in the first draft was weeded out as a matter of 'spin' rather than fact; the whole of the second draft was voted out as being 'rather nastier than a dictionary definition should be'; and 'inclusive' in the third attempt was felt to be 'a matter of opinion'. The final version of the second half of the sentence – consisting of just nine words – had the essential virtues of being both bland and relatively unexceptional: '... especially regarded as a modified form of traditional Socialism'.

Many would argue that New Labour has *had* to be vague – or, perhaps, all-encompassing – about its underlying philosophy in order to make a real success of what is often referred to as 'big-tent politics'. And it is for that reason that it is so difficult to be precise about what Blairism stands for on a wide range of issues. We are led to believe that the Prime Minister's thinking owes much to

the concept of 'the Third Way' propounded by Anthony Giddens (discussed in earlier numbers of this journal by David Halpin and Glenn Rikowski); but that concept has itself been criticised for lacking precision and real content. Those close to the Prime Minister might well claim that it was New Labour's 'lightness of ideological being' that enabled it to come to power with such a huge majority in 1997; but over three years later, a perceived lack of commitment to traditional party values can probably be blamed for widespread grass-roots disillusionment with all the trappings of the Blair Project.

In a recent illuminating and thought-provoking article in *New Left Review* (Second Series, No. 3, May/June 2000), Professor David Marquand has argued that Tony Blair's marked disdain for 'party' – and, on a deeper level, for all the differences of ideology and interest which have sustained the concept of party in Britain and other European democracies – is almost palpable. According to Marquand:

Blair dreams of a united and homogeneous people, undifferentiated by class or locality, with which he, as leader, can communicate directly, without benefit of intermediaries. In his vision of it, at least, New Labour's vocation is to mobilise the suburbs as well as the inner cities; rich as well as poor; old as well as young; Christians as well as unbelievers; hunters as well as animal-rights activists; believers in family values as well as opponents of Clause 28. Its warm embrace covers all men and women of goodwill, provided only that they are prepared to enlist in the relentless, never-ending crusade for modernisation which he and his colleagues have set in motion.

In the field of educational policy, this lack of ideological or party commitment leaves us with a programme that is multi-dimensional, difficult to define and essentially incoherent.

In a curious way, the problems besetting Tony Blair in the weeks before the recent Labour Party Conference in Brighton forced him to accept (perhaps for the first time) that he is, after all, the Leader of the *Labour* Party. In the Leader's own keynote Speech delivered on the 26 September – and in many other orations from the Platform – there was a new emphasis on the traditional values of the Labour Party, with a concomitant and welcome reluctance to play up the virtues of the modernising New Labour Project.

Sadly, the one area where there was precious little sign of a new enlightenment concerned education policy in general and the future of secondary schooling in particular.

The main assumption of the Prime Minister's ill-conceived comments on education appeared to be that there were far too many shortcomings in the nation's comprehensive schools. Education policy to be outlined in the next Labour Manifesto would be directed at transforming the secondary system in order to create 'first-

class secondary schools' to match 'the already excellent primary schools'.

These comments had, in fact, been foreshadowed by an extraordinary attack on 'one size fits all' comprehensives in a speech delivered by Mr Blair to a group of modernising New Labour activists known as 'Progress' on the 8 September. This Speech is subjected to a close analysis by *FORUM*'s co-founder Brian Simon in a passionate critique which constitutes the first article in this number. And it is small wonder that Brian should have approached his task with 'a feeling of disgust'; for the Prime Minister's main premise appears to be that the Left is generally 'hostile to high achievement' and that too many comprehensives have been 'holding back their gifted pupils'. From now on 'comprehensives should be as dedicated as any private school or old grammar school to high achievement for the most able'.

The *real* problem New Labour has signally failed to address centres on the increasingly hierarchical nature of the secondary school system and the growing gap between 'successful' and 'struggling' state schools. All of Mr Blunkett's many gimmicks and initiatives designed to create more choice and diversity within the system have served merely to exacerbate the problem.

In a recent article in *The Guardian* entitled 'Despair in the Classroom' (2 November), timed to coincide with the publication, in book form, of his brilliant series of *Guardian* articles on the state of our education system, Nick Davies summarises the findings of his extensive research in a few damning sentences:

You cannot make sense of why some schools fail

and some schools succeed without taking account of the corrosive impact of child poverty, which has soared in this country in the past 20 years.

Combine that with the effects of the Conservative education reforms of the late 1980s, and you have a design for educational failure . . . You can look at any area of our schooling system . . . and you cannot explain what is happening unless you take primary account of child poverty and Kenneth Baker's educational reforms. There are other factors in there as well; but those two are essential. The reality is that unless Mr Blunkett acknowledges this and until he finds the political courage to scrap almost all of the market-driven reforms of the late 1980s, none of the dinky little schemes which he has launched will save our schools from crisis.

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Just as this number of *FORUM* goes to press, there is, of course, one cause for genuine celebration: the departure of Chris Woodhead as Chief Inspector of Schools in England. As an editorial in *The Observer* points out (5 November), the right question to ask about this wonderful news is not why Chris Woodhead has now gone, but why it has taken so long to dispose of him.

Clyde Chitty

Blair on Education

Brian Simon

In this keynote article, *FORUM*'s co-founder expresses his profound dismay at the current direction of New Labour's education policy.

I approached writing this article with a feeling of disgust. It was motivated by a full front page report in the *Guardian* early in September (9 September 2000) headlined 'Blair Plans Schools Revolution'. This was just before the fuel crisis and other discontents led to a substantial drop in Labour's poll support; but *after* a rise for Labour in the polls. The party, Mr Blair is reported as saying, had never had more confidence in its values and ideas.

But what light did Blair's speech on education throw on these 'values and ideas'? Reported as addressing 'a group of modernising Labour activists in Bedfordshire' (known, apparently, as 'Progress'), Blair used this opportunity to level an all-out, indeed vicious, attack on comprehensive education. This, indeed, is the essence of his speech and must have been designed deliberately to shock. The *Guardian*'s chief political correspondent, Patrick Wintour, stressed that Blair showed his determination 'to break up the failing model of comprehensive schools in England and Wales', demanding 'greater help for the most gifted pupils in the state sector'. The term 'failing model' applies here presumably to comprehensive schools in general throughout both countries (England and Wales) – or this is how it reads.

Not content with this level of abuse, Blair went on to make further wild, generalised charges. Too often, he said, 'comprehensives adopted a one-size-fits-all mentality – no setting, uniform provision for all, hostility to the notion of specialisation and centres of excellence within areas of the curriculum'. Repeating the right-wing criticisms of the past, Blair rammed this point home. Comprehensives should 'cease meaning the same for all'. The 'Old Left' had played into the hands of the Right by failing to recognise that 'children do have different abilities and aptitudes' and that schools should provide for these. Mounting his clearest indictment yet of the comprehensive principles of the 1960s and 1970s the *Guardian* report goes on, Blair came to the pith of his message:

We expect every secondary school to do its best for high ability pupils through first rate teaching and facilities, rigorous setting and personalised provision. Comprehensives should be as dedicated as any private school or old grammar school to high achievement for the most able.

Tony Blair is leader of the *Labour* party and prime minister. But this sort of assessment takes us right back to the abuse comprehensive education suffered under Margaret Thatcher and John Major – the blanket charge of uniformity, that schools are all the same, talent unrecognised, that generally the whole exercise has been a failure. Caroline Benn & Clyde Chitty's massive study *Thirty Years On* gave the lie to these assertions, or, better, myths, promulgated by those fundamentally opposed to the whole project of comprehensive secondary education.

Further, these charges are historically uninformed, indeed ignorant. Comprehensive education swept the country because the mass of popular opinion was no longer prepared to tolerate the divisive system inherited from the past. They wanted a changeover to the single secondary school capable of opening up opportunities for all. This they achieved (if partially). The schools, so brought into being, had to find their own way in the new circumstances. Thanks especially to the devoted work of the teachers, they did this successfully. In spite of the trauma of reorganisation, examination results, in O level and CSE and then later in GCSE and at A level, improved steadily year by year. This is a brilliant success story and should be celebrated as such, and not only by Labour as very many others were closely involved.

The present Labour government could have built on this; many, including this author, expected them to complete the comprehensive revolution, to eradicate weaknesses, and deliberately to take things further in a planned and rational manner. But what happened? Comprehensive schools never received a word of support from either Blunkett or Blair. The latter did not hesitate to describe our system as 'rotten' before an international audience. Every effort was made to distance the leadership from the comprehensive reform. Insurmountable barriers were erected against local populations wishing to finalise reorganisation. Trusting people were deliberately misled by ministers (e.g. 'read my lips', Blunkett). And now the prime minister himself launches a deliberate, populist assault on all that has been achieved. It is almost unbelievable.

Blair's concept of a successful comprehensive school appears to be a cross between Eton, Winchester and the Manchester Grammar School. But this, of course, is ludicrous. 'Personalised' education is certainly desirable (and provided), but to do this effectively means doubling the staff. 'Private schools' with their endowments, may be able to afford this, but not state schools – at least not under the present dispensation. To pretend, or argue otherwise, is pure hypocrisy.

Looking back, one has to admit that the Labour party has always had an ambiguous relationship to comprehensive education. I have a particular interest in all this since, as assistant secretary to the newly constituted Education Advisory Committee in 1938/39 I was present at two or three intensive discussions culminating in the decision to recommend a transition to comprehensive (then 'multilateral') schools, as soon as the opportunity was there. This committee included Chuter Ede, R.H. Tawney, Lionel Elvin and several Labour MPs (e.g. Cove), and the decision was accepted by the executive committee (it was my job to keep the minutes of these meetings and I still have them). However when opportunity did present itself through the post-war Attlee government, Ellen

Wilkinson, appointed minister, instead followed the Board of Education's line, energetically establishing the tripartite (selective) system of secondary education. Attitudes changed in the 1950s and 1960s with the growing popular revolt against the 11+ and now at last the party strongly reiterated its support for comprehensive schools while Tory governments continued to reinforce selection.

The 1964 election, reinstating a Labour government after 13 years, provided another opportunity. But now again the party eschewed legislation – Circular 10/65 merely 'requested' local authorities to present plans for the transition. The bulk did so, but not all. There were later missed opportunities also. The net outcome has been that we do not yet have an effective and cohesive system of comprehensive secondary education. And just now, when the opportunity is certainly there again, the Labour leadership finds it necessary to launch a vicious attack on the whole project as at present conceived. That, at least, is how Blair's speech reads, even if it does not propose the actual demolition of the system – rather its 'modernisation' according to criteria established by the government.

Thus Blair lauds the so-called 'Excellence in Cities' project designed we are told, 'to help gifted children in urban schools' with which more than 1000 'specialist' schools are to be involved. Also (big deal) there are to be 6 'specialist city academies' based on the failed model of the Tory city technology colleges.

How was Blair's 'Progress' speech received? Two days after its delivery the *Guardian* published a sample of more or less furious letters from comprehensive supporters. One had put his five children successfully through comprehensive schools and protested strongly at the new divisions within such schools presaged by Blair, who 'is going to have many successful, comprehensively educated, parents opposing him'. 'They don't want their kids consigned to the dustbin'. Another, governor of 'an excellent comprehensive school and Labour party member' was 'doubly mortified' by Blair's comment, angrily rebutting his 'one size for all' claim. Other letters denied the charge of 'failure' which, it was suggested, was better directed at aspects of the government's policy. Not a single letter supported Blair.

The only comment the *Guardian* printed with its initial report of Blair's speech was that of John Dunford, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association which unites most comprehensive school heads in the country. He also 'reacted angrily' to Blair's assessment of comprehensive schools. 'I think it is scandalous that the prime minister should be caricaturing the state educational system with a description which is not based on reality'. 'Personal provision' as demanded by the prime minister, 'requires ... doubling the amount of money that state schools receive'.

The most consistent publicist promoting comprehensive education within the Labour party is Roy Hattersley who has been closely involved with the campaign for many years. At the recent Labour Conference in late September he expounded his views following Blair's intervention. 'Comprehensive education', he is reported as saying, has proved a remarkable success. Yet comprehensive schools 'are continually denigrated by the prime minister – often in language which suggests that he has no idea how selective schools are organised and run' (*Guardian*, 26 September

2000). During the 18 years of Tory government, he goes on, 'we could console ourselves that once Labour was elected things would get better. But the hard truth is that as far as comprehensive education is concerned they have got worse. Despite David Blunkett's promise – 'no selection by examination or interview' – there is more selection now than there was on the day he became secretary of state for education. In another article at this time (*Guardian* 25 September 2000) Hattersley claimed that 'Labour has done more to damage comprehensive education, diminish civil liberties and stigmatise asylum seekers than John Major's Conservatives ever did'. Over the last three years 'the political spectrum has moved to the Right'. Hattersley is not given to wild statements. These are his considered views.

What is to be done? Opposition to Blair's policies on secondary education has been mounting. In April this year Martin Johnson, incoming President of the NAS/UWT, who has taught in some of London's most challenging schools and is author of an acclaimed book *Failing Schools, Failing City*, launched what the *Guardian* called 'a blistering attack' on Tony Blair, claiming that he was systematically 'dismantling the comprehensive schools system' by building on 'elitist education policies introduced by the Tories' (*Guardian*, 25 April 2000). The 'so-called specialist and beacon schools' (Blair's main 'modernising' ploy), funded more generously than others were creating a new hierarchical structure – indeed 'threatened to undermine the whole comprehensive secondary school structure and, a system', he concluded, 'now being dismantled'. The gap between good and poor state schools 'was being widened under Labour', a point very tellingly made by Nick Davies in his brilliant series of *Guardian* articles earlier in the year. Johnson's union opposed the expansion of a structure of differentiated secondary schools 'as inequitable and damaging to teachers and pupils alike'. To this a DfEE spokesman weakly replied 'we want all schools to be centres of excellence'. That is why 'we give beacon schools and specialist schools extra help so they can spread their expertise to other local schools' (*ibid.*). But who has determined on this policy? What consultations have there been? After all, it is taxpayers' money which is at stake.

The whole situation is profoundly unsatisfactory. But it appears that some people's patience is becoming exhausted. Supporters of the Labour government are naturally muted, or inhibited in their criticism – who wants to rock the boat? Nevertheless profound dissatisfaction with the Labour leadership's policies on secondary education erupted at the annual conference of the Socialist Education Association in the summer (2000). A vigorous discussion on comprehensive education was the first item on the agenda, the resolution calling on the government to end selection at 11 and (significantly) opposing the expansion of specialist schools. The SEA is the direct successor of the National Association of Labour Teachers which pioneered the campaign for comprehensive education in the 1920s. Its membership includes many MPs and it is in a good position to influence policy. At its summer conference this year the Association drafted a fine education manifesto for the next election, strongly supportive of comprehensive education, announced a fringe meeting at the Labour party conference in September under the heading 'Building on the Success of

Comprehensive Education' with Roy Hattersley as the main speaker, and an all-day conference on comprehensive education to be held in early February 2001. A set of fine speeches by delegates to the SEA conference was reprinted in their journal *Education Politics* which also includes all conference resolutions.

All this took place, of course, before the delivery of Blair's provocative speech to the Bedfordshire 'Progress' group in early September. The petrol crisis, with its threat to the government's authority swamped reaction to these comments, but it is no doubt they will have a long-term effect. They have alerted comprehensive enthusiasts (and they are many) to the real, till now, muted, attitude of some of the leadership, including, and very specifically, the prime minister. These need to be convinced that an 'inclusionary' society *requires* the single secondary school as *the* key condition for its achievement, as also that 'rigorous setting' and other forms of differentiation within the schools are not the best way of achieving the unified school which values all equally. Manchester Grammar School and Winchester cannot realistically be accepted as models for *comprehensive* schools. The central objective of comprehensive education was to open new opportunities for *all*, not just the few and so generally to

raise the standards of all. Concentration specifically on 'the most able', rigid differentiation within comprehensive schools, the development of new forms of specialised schools, measures such as these will not reinforce this project – rather the opposite.

The long struggle for comprehensive secondary education, therefore, now enters a new phase. The enemy (if that is the right word) is not the traditional, or the wild, Tory Right. It is the Labour leadership itself which has the power to make desirable changes but appears to be acting in the opposite direction, actually giving new currency to, and repeating, the arguments of the discredited Tory Right. Clearly it would be best to win over the leadership to a fuller understanding of what the comprehensive reform is all about. Failing that, an all-out struggle may well be necessary to win, once more, the political clout necessary to make the change. In the course of this it will be necessary to clarify the constitutional position: *who* makes policy? And how? Major initiatives now 'emerge' (e.g. specialist schools) which could transform the structure of the system as a whole. Such an outcome of the years of struggle that have taken place on this issue is totally unacceptable.



Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 1 September 2000

Fire Blankets or Depth Charges: choices in education for citizenship

Annabelle Dixon

This article appeared earlier this year in the University of Cambridge School of Education's *Newsletter*, No. 6.

The Crick Report and the subsequent new requirement for schools in Britain to teach citizenship can hardly be said to be a response to lively grass roots enthusiasm amongst teachers, but its emergence might have been foreseen. For it seems that despite the seemingly arbitrary nature of the events that spur the nation into constantly re-considering citizenship education from time to time, there have been regular intervals between such spurts of public interest and concern. On examination, to take the Bulger case for example, it can be seen as less a knee-jerk response to immediate events, but more the overflow of the latent magma of political agendas. Over time these have included lessening public welfare provision and the subsequent need for more voluntary work, decreasing political activity and interest amongst young people, multiracial problems, and so on. Such developments allow us to outline a neat model of peaks and troughs of public interest and bouts of activity, followed by a slide into apparent inertia, only arrested by the creation of the next 'peak'.

Peaks and Troughs

Thus in recent years we have seen the emergence of the Swann Report *Education for All* (1985), the National Curriculum Council guidance paper on *Education for Citizenship* (1990), the Commission on Citizenship (1990) and, in between, numerous papers, and reports by a variety of organisations culminating most recently in the Crick Report of 1999. This report, besides other reasons for its existence, could also be seen as an embarrassed response to the realisation that Britain was the only country in Europe without any official citizenship education in its schools whatsoever.

Several questions about the current situation present themselves: does 1999–2000 demonstrate just such another peak or does it possess different characteristics or potential which might prevent the same apparently inevitable descent into another ten-year period of quietude and inactivity? Secondly, could there be ways to alter this rather disheartening chronological profile? For example, could new interpretations of pedagogy radically alter how we consider education for citizenship, yet still fulfil its aims? Or might we see a retreat into 'safer', more familiar pedagogies which also claim to cover these aims; aims which in the words of the new National Curriculum include learning '... about fairness, social justice, respect for democracy and diversity ... and through taking part in community activities'.

To return to the cyclical pattern of public concern about citizenship, are we already at the top of a crest and '... does the shadowed vale await?' Or is the present day offering critical differences? The first step might be to look again at this pattern of public concern, and consider whether it also conceals other patterns that run alongside, about which the world of education is not necessarily aware but which, even so, have been of influence in the shaping of the new curriculum. For example, peace and feminist studies, conflict resolution and sustainable development have a certain familiarity but actual citizenship as such has not merited so much attention. The question of access to the status of British citizenship has not, on the whole, been, or had to be, of particular concern to educationalists, but behind the scenes it has always been of considerable concern to successive generations of politicians and civil servants. The 1982 British Nationality Act was a significant event and entry into Europe and the notion of 'European citizenship' could be said to be almost equally significant. Dr Dhooleka Raj, an anthropologist working at Cambridge University, considers that the numbers of articles, books and television programmes which are dedicated to an examination of what it actually means to *be* a British citizen (for example Andrew Marr's recent publication, *The Day Britain Died*) point to attempts to establish a new identity, to understand what it might mean to be British now that fifty years have elapsed since Britain has ceased to be a major colonial power. Possibly being mindful of recent history, patriotism and a sense of civic identity are avoided in the citizenship orders, despite the personal enthusiasm of the recent head of QCA, Nick Tate, who saw these attributes as helping to unify what he perceived as an increasingly fragmented society.

Surveying samples of British residents, Crewe et al. (1997) found that the notion of British citizenship as such counted for little in comparison with their respondents' 'sense of Britishness', although they seemed to be vague about what this might mean. Still casting around for their sense of difference though, of reclaiming a previous superiority, it is only too evident that for many, an appeal to xenophobia is of immediate attraction, i.e. those that are not British are 'suspect'. Fuelled by irresponsible tabloids, it is not difficult to share the unease of those who notice an increasing hostility to those who are 'different'. Neil Ascherson writing in *Black Sea* supports Edna Hall's contention that this sense of different = inferior, can be traced as far back as Herodotus (*Inventing the Barbarian*,

Oxford, 1989). In an interesting argument, she suggests how 'difference' became historically established as a matter of political advantage to the Greeks. At one time other races were simply viewed by them as potential friends or enemies, but once all other races became construed as 'barbarians' and therefore inferior, there was a moral edge and justification to their wars that had not existed before. Hall makes a telling case for evidence of the perpetuation of this attitude throughout European history, and one could suggest that its most recent manifestation could well be the present rise in far right and xenophobic political parties as in Austria.

Recent Emerging Patterns

The emphasis in the Crick Report that pupils should be taught about 'the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding' can now begin to be seen as having an urgent message rather than just being another item on a wish-list of worthy aims. Here it is only too apparent that we need citizenship education. I return below to the question of how this message might or might not be successfully conveyed.

A separate emerging pattern, yet related in its implications, is the trend amongst younger generations to profess little or no interest in politics, as evidenced in their increasing disinclination to vote. More disturbingly, a recent survey by the National Centre for Social Research indicated that this attitude is no longer the province of the young: amongst 3,000 all-age interviewees, 34% pronounced they had no interest at all in politics (a rise in 7 percentage points since a previous exercise in 1954) and 37% said they did not identify with any political party or its ideals or policies.

Britain has resisted the move towards compulsory voting which Australia has adopted but it has publicly recognised a dilemma which seems to be closely related to a third and even less visible pattern: it might be expected for instance that the 'troughs and peaks' of exhortation towards citizenship education have had their reflections in commensurate activity by schools. However, evidence from my own research and that of David Buckingham, together with David Kerr's 1997 survey, all point to the existence of a rather different underlying picture. This displays not so much the dramatic highs and lows of public and Governmental interest but the bumpy, if not virtually horizontal one of actual school involvement in citizenship education. On the whole, the 'bumps' have reflected individual schools' occasional concern with citizenship issues, especially, in multi-ethnic areas, when these issues become matters of urgent reality. Some bumps do seem to have represented short term responses to the various 'peaks' but it seems as though the most interest shown in citizenship education has been from the public and private schools and prestigious grammar schools that have possibly seen themselves as being the source of those future citizens who will eventually be influential in their country's governance. The overall picture though, as David Kerr's survey indicates very clearly, is a notable pattern of sporadic activity and lack of interest, and shows that until 1999 there had been an almost total lack of related research into the area. Until then few knew what the present, or indeed the past, state of citizenship education in England looked like in terms of actual

practice. The much publicised appeal to 'active citizenship' in the 1990s produced some bolt-on citizenship activities such as community involvement and environmental programmes, but laudable though many of these programmes have been, it was noticeable that they were not tied in to any overall programme or wider notion of citizenship education or political literacy. Even so, Micha de Winter, Professor of Child Care in the Netherlands, considers such experiences to have more value than they are sometimes credited with, supporting the idea that any introduction to one's community can carry a multiplicity of generally positive messages.

So, what could lead us to think the pattern might alter? Teachers have shown a marked reluctance to become very involved with the subject over the past, despite the public 'peaks' and changes in the culture. There is a significant new factor however, a change that of itself is supposed to bring about change. For the first time in British educational history the subject has now become mandatory in all secondary schools. There may not, as yet, be a public form of assessment or examination but it is a 'subject' on which all schools, including primary schools, will be inspected. Details about the content have recently been published and, not unexpectedly, at secondary level they cover the acquisition of certain information about the electoral and criminal justice system, local government and legal and human rights and responsibilities. Young people should also be seen to develop the skills of enquiry and communication, participation and responsible action. At primary level, at KS1, they are expected to '... learn how to share, take turns, play, help others, resolve simple (sic) arguments and resist bullying ...' At KS2, pupils are also expected to make more confident and informed choices about their health and environment and to take more responsibility for their own learning, both as individuals and members of a group. As part of their citizenship/PSHE curriculum they should also learn to be aware of their own and others' feelings and the needs, views and rights of others.

Problems of Status

At the moment such a curriculum presents certain problems, albeit its status as a subject legally required to be taught does not take effect until 2002. As the only new subject to be added to the National Curriculum it not unsurprisingly requires funds for considerable and comprehensive in-service training, guidance materials and resources. At the time of writing (March 2000) there is no indication of the former, although further information about assessment and guidance booklets has been promised. One reason for the seeming lack of urgency might be that it is considered to be something of a 'self-evident' subject, one that can be treated in a cross-curricular fashion, yet the ideas and principles underlying citizenship education are not as simple as might be supposed. Attempts to teach it, even in schools committed to the subject, can run into the sand only too quickly, as John Crace in the *Education Guardian* (February 15th 2000) rather ruefully observed after a visit to such a school. It is a subject beset by complications unless appropriate in-service training becomes available. Don Rowe, senior executive at the Citizenship Foundation, has, for instance, identified and detailed eight 'models' of citizenship, each calling for a different kind of pedagogy.

To take another example, in order to make any kind of sense, the 'facts' surrounding parliament and the electoral system would have to be embedded in the social and political history of Britain which presupposes a knowledge of this by the teachers who take on this particular task; how should they 'teach' justice? or Local Agenda 21?

The lack of any present or promised funding has, unfortunately, left a vacuum into which the commercial world is poised to jump with alacrity—and publishers and charities alike are already preparing materials. Charities have their own particular agenda however, while publishers take advice from those more, and sometimes less, informed about the subject. They all have their own understanding or 'models' of citizenship, and the abundance and variety of forthcoming titles is enough to alert one to the fact that citizenship, and education for citizenship, do not lack for protagonists who claim priority for their particular view of it. ICT is already playing its part and offers experiences (for example of international networking between schools and children), which undoubtedly enlarge their horizons but in their glamour it may be overlooked that they rarely engage students in anything more than an exchange of information. While it has genuine democratic potential, such as the Jubilee 2000 campaign to establish an e-mail pressure group, it is likely to end up creating the 'virtual child world citizen' who will then consequently acquire a spurious reality.

The situation is also exacerbated because many schools, while conceding that it is shortly to become a compulsory subject, admit (as before) that it has a very low status amongst both staff and pupils. They are prepared to make a few gestures in the ways described rather crisply by Roger Hart writing for UNICEF as 'token citizenship' and the parallel to some 'religious' assemblies is self-evident. There are not a few though who take the honourable position that there is a moral objection to extolling the virtues of democracy while having to devote considerable and, in their view, misplaced, energies to maintaining their school's place in the world of competitive league tables. Others could be said to want to avoid any ideological conflict, thereby upsetting the status quo, and thus play down the subject. In other words, the path looks as though it could well continue to be the same horizontal and bumpy one as before, despite citizenship education now having legal status.

As in previous years, the 'bumps' represent the exceptions and while it might be a contradiction in terms to describe a bump as having a leading edge, there are, nonetheless, encouraging signs of the take up of more general initiatives. For instance, although circle times, pupil mediation and schools councils were not necessarily set up in order to promote citizenship education it has, fortuitously, meant the groundwork may have been prepared for its establishment. Discussion and debate about citizenship issues can take place in such contexts, which are among the chief means recommended by the Crick Report for children and students to become engaged with such issues. Other initiatives might be considered even more radical, such as those taken by a number of teachers who offer their students opportunities for genuine negotiation and decision-making on social, intellectual and practical aspects of classroom life.

Issues of Pedagogy

Discussion of such practices now leads to a consideration of the second question: what kinds of pedagogy seem to hold out the promise of a way forward? An inspection of the (non-mandatory) recommendations of how to achieve the aims of the National Curriculum reveal that by KS4, pupils could be expected to 'study, think about and discuss topical, political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues ... with a growing emphasis on critical awareness and evaluation'. This reveals the subject's potential for equipping students to question, if not actually challenge, aspects of the status quo and could lead some schools to adopt a defensive attitude by avoiding these non-mandatory recommendations and simply adopting the obligatory curriculum. Taking, in other words, a 'fire blanket' approach and looking for those methodologies that would not be considered as having a potential for volatile reaction. Thus citizenship education could be achieved by the familiar information transmission model, with the addition, at best, of some highly visible but non-threatening activities in the name of 'community involvement'.

There will also, by contrast, be those that recognise a different kind of potential in these recommendations. These educationalists will be looking for teaching approaches that best equip students to become skilled at questioning, debating and recognising issues such as justice, fairness and democracy, especially as they relate to their own lives. Such approaches might be termed 'depth charge' models in that their effects could go considerably deeper and result in real but not always predictable change. Their proponents would argue that only such models which genuinely engage pupils' minds and feelings could act to defend the very system of democracy that the proposed citizenship curriculum sets out to support.

My own investigation revealed that pre-1999 those already involved in teaching some form of citizenship education, mostly charities, used an extensive range of approaches, from the predictable information transmission model to painting, story telling, board games, music, drawing cartoons and school visits. The impression was that the eclectic mix which presented itself by way of methodology was based on the understandably pragmatic principle that the children's attention was caught by one or other approach and there was no need for theoretical justifications. Nor did there seem to be any assessment of effectiveness. Fire blankets in abundance, especially as, with some notable exceptions, few seem to be particularly thought-provoking or challenging.

The 'Public Discourse' Model

Bearing in mind the number of possible citizenship models as suggested by Rowe, it is hardly surprising that the potential for confusion is only too apparent. Nonetheless, Rowe himself points to one model that he considers has real possibility and promise. It is also a model with a theoretically argued base and has already been the subject of assessment. The 'public discourse' model as he terms it, seems to offer a way of approaching citizenship education in a manner which not only engages students and children intellectually but also socially and at the level of their own lives and circumstances. It avoids clashing with the children's 'primary' or family origins but engages them in their 'secondary' or public life, i.e. that of their school and

wider community. As he sees it, young people, and importantly he considers this to mean children from the very start of their schooling, should be helped to discern moral issues from non-moral ones, especially those embedded in their 'public lives'. The objective is that they should, at their own level, be able to engage in a process of shared enquiry '... recognising important commonalities and developing respectful ways of engaging with each other'.

The pedagogy that Don Rowe utilises, and indeed has trialled quite extensively with colleagues and a number of practising classroom teachers, looks, at superficial glance, to be akin to a course on thinking skills and moral philosophy but there are important distinctions. Although based on debate and discourse, it recognises that by themselves these may not lead anywhere. Instead it presupposes that children will have been 'introduced systematically to the concepts and vocabulary that characterise this form of discourse' such as 'right and wrong'; 'good and bad'; 'rights', 'respect' and 'responsibilities'. The essential principle is that it is the students themselves who, by debate and discussion of their own concerns, stories, drama and role play, arrive at a meaning and significance of these words and how they apply them to their own worlds and moral dilemmas. Simply learning 'moral vocabulary' lists and 'telling' by the teachers are self-evidently excluded as appropriate methodologies. Engagement not exhortation is the pedagogic model. It may mean the teacher stepping down from the declamatory and information dispensing role but there is evidence at both primary and senior level that democratic and philosophical discussions can actually reduce attitudes of intolerance and aggressivity amongst class members (Lake, 1988; Vari-Szilagyi, 1995; de Vries, 1996).

The downside for some teachers and schools, and indeed it might be said for society, is that despite the rhetoric of the desirability of politically aware young citizens, once these questioning and reflective skills have been acquired, it is very unlikely that they will cease to be exercised or contained: a 'depth charge' model in other words. 'Token citizenship', with its shallow structure but often high public profile (for example, the carrying of demonstration placards, and 'safe community action', such as environmental clean-ups), may be seen by many as a more acceptable approach, and less threatening to the immediate if not the future social fabric: a recognisable 'fire-blanket' approach. Even so, being able to perceive the moral dimensions in public life, while it could prove awkward in the short term, could in the long run also prove essential to the preservation of a democracy based on a genuine concern for social justice.

Perhaps a look at innovative practice in the States will further widen our notions of the possible. If, as Derry Hannan of the Open University maintains, 'central to the democratic school is the democratic curriculum', then the pioneering attempts of teachers described in *Democratic Schools: lessons from the chalkface* (Apple & Beane (Eds), 2000) should point the way. Creativity and meaning-making, which often entail 'collaborative governance for class management and co-operative learning' are central to all the teachers' work in the schools described in the book. Parents and the local communities are also closely involved in the exercise of mutual

negotiation. Quite recognisably another depth-charge model, but the fact the book has sold over a quarter of a million copies in the US in less than a year indicates that there such models are not necessarily seen as threatening by everyone.

Nearer home, a not dissimilar model is suggested by Jacquie Turnbull and Elizabeth Muir of the University of Glamorgan who make a considered and persuasive bid for 'mainstreaming' citizenship in secondary schools. In practice this would mean not just a high profile for the subject as such, nor a shallow dip into each curriculum area, but citizenship education being seen as an organising principle. This, they maintain, could happen at its best in schools that have turned themselves round to become 'learning organisations' in which collaboration is recognised as the essential engine for continuous learning.

Findings from America

Might there be other pedagogies that could have a demonstrable effect on the fulfilment of certain generally accepted long-term aims of citizenship education? These aims include people taking an active and purposeful role in their local communities, being prepared to vote at local and national level, being amicable neighbours, avoiding anti-social behaviour, holding down jobs, gaining more education and maintaining personal relationships. Research findings from America (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997) now indicate that such aims have been achieved, somewhat unexpectedly, not by recourse to any specific citizenship education programme or curriculum, but by an approach to children's learning that has, or at least had, a certain familiarity in this country.

The research methodology was nothing remarkable in that it involved the random allocation of children to one of three groups. At the start of the 20 year study there was little to suggest what might be the outcome in adult life of having been placed for up to three years, from three to six years old, in one of three education programmes. The children were matched for age, sex and intelligence.

As those taking part came from a struggling socio-economic background it was not surprising then, and would not be surprising today, that one of the programmes was a fast-track 'compensatory' one, with an emphasis on formal detailed tasks and objectives that included the early acquisition of certain desk-top skills. A second programme entailed the provision of a wide range of educational resources but little or no adult intervention and was referred to as 'laissez-faire'. The third programme named 'High/Scope' was also well resourced and allowed for much self-directed, intellectual, social and physical activity, in which the emphasis was on language, self-mastery and social interaction with adults and other children. The fast track 'compensatory' programme was constructed with care and attention to detail and with laudable objectives, in that they wished to offer what they perceived as value-added education to children they felt might otherwise be held back. Despite this, the children who attended this programme, were, by the time they were 27, three times more likely to go to prison, be excluded from senior school, be perceived as less 'neighbourly' and three times less likely to vote and hold down steady relationships or jobs, in direct contrast to the statistical results from children who were involved in the High/Scope programme, for whom the long term results

were notably positive (the children from the laissez-faire programme had results that came about midway).

The findings are similar to another recent survey carried out in Portugal by Maria Nabuco and Kathy Sylva (1996) and it may be that such surveys cannot help but have considerable policy implications for citizenship education. They are in themselves depth-charges lobbed into the current neo-conservative policies and orthodoxies. An emphasis on early education programmes that encourage play and the kind of self-directed activities that involve independent learning about social relationships may prove to pay much greater dividends to society than the current pressures for a formal education at an inappropriately early age. Evidence is also emerging from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research that such a misplaced emphasis may be one of the reasons why English children, at primary stages and beyond, lag behind in international comparisons (other countries devoting the early years to children's social development). Thus, the argument goes, we will eventually become less competitive and ultimately a democracy that, in social justice terms, can afford less in the way of provision for its disadvantaged members.

Politically then, it might be quite an astute move for any government to begin to listen with more attention to the early years lobby that has been campaigning for less interference, less formality and an abandonment of the demands for the precocious acquisition of secretarial skills. Prison, unemployment and unstable relationships eventually cost governments large amounts of money that could be spent elsewhere. The add-on extra of having citizens who play a greater part in community life and are prepared to vote must also surely hold out considerable attraction. It might be as well to remember too, that despite the rhetoric to the contrary, a recognisably formal programme is already in place for young children in Britain, its increasing rigidity having much to do with schools' fear of league table positions. Also, despite government attempts to arrest the problem by ordering bigger and better locks on the stable door, the country now has nearly 12,000 permanently excluded pupils, plus 15,000 on fixed term exclusions at any one time. Statistics already reveal that the excluded are more likely to be disaffected, involved in crime, become unemployed adults and have fewer qualifications.

Sounds familiar?

So is the concentration on the social development of young children the depth charge that is needed before any other kind of citizenship education? The Crick Report recognised the importance of citizenship education as having its foundation in the first years of school. Although it can be argued that citizenship education has its own distinctive characteristics even at this stage, the case for concentration on the PSHE dimensions of young children's lives seems to be an increasingly strong one, if the aim is not just a knowledgeable but also a tolerant, active and responsible citizenry.

Conclusion

In her book *The Beginnings of Social Understanding* Judy Dunn emphasises the irreducible links between social growth and cognitive and emotional development. It is significant though, that she chooses to use the term 'social

understanding'. She is not referring to social training, the comfort blanket that could be said to precede the fire blanket: the cosy surface structure of skills that are sometimes the content of PSHE 'programmes'. These undeniably ease community life along but are no guarantee of genuine social development. Indeed the misleading social charms of those with darker intents, who have long featured in numerous plays, novels and poems over the centuries, should serve as a continual reminder of this perennial truth.

Social understanding, by contrast, represents the deep structure of a child's social self and its relationships with and understanding of, its fellow human beings. Concentration on the kinds of real and often unplanned experiences that promote this growth could maybe result in greater gains for society than a variety of citizenship programmes in later school life, however well intentioned. With no explicit thought-out provision for these experiences to take place there will only be one area where growth in social understanding will happen: where, according to Mary Jane Drummond, a lecturer in the School of Education, children have always learnt their own implicit version of citizenship – the playground. It is here that the depth charges of loyalty, generosity, and fairness are only too often laid down beside those of their unpleasant and stronger siblings, bullying, rejection, harassment and racism. Depth charges that may take to adulthood for their ultimate detonation.

Perhaps this particular depth charge, that of paying attention to young children's real social needs, should not be dismissed as having little to do with citizenship education and being a small scale device with indiscriminate and unknown effects, but recognised as more akin to the depth charges that had the objective of removing the huge rocks out of the Yangtze River in order that the water could run more freely to its ultimate destination.

Suggested Reading

Ascherson, Neil (1996) *Black Sea* (London, Vintage).

Deservedly winner of the 1995 Saltire Award, this most readable, erudite book is not only informative about the Black Sea as a significant area in European history but is also enlightening about contemporary understandings of citizenship, exile and nationalism.

Dunn, Judy (1988) *The Beginnings of Social Understanding* (Oxford, Blackwell). A key text. Judy Dunn's careful record of young children's developing powers of social understanding in the context of their family lives, makes for one of the most interesting and significant books on the subject.

Dunn, Judy (1996) Emmanuel Miller Memorial Lecture (1995) Children's relationships: bridging the divide between cognitive and social development, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 37(5). Also very well worth reading, offering even more extensive insights on those experiences that seem to support young children's growth in social understanding and its relationship to cognitive development.

Hart, Ron (1992) Children's participation from tokenism to citizenship, *Innocenti Essays* No. 4 (Florence, UNICEF). Takes a clear-eyed and honest look at children's participation in citizenship programmes around the world, balancing optimism with a certain scepticism but applauding the infrequently recognised but worthwhile attempt at genuine involvement with children. A valuable

resource book in terms of information and reference, despite only being 44 pages long.

- Rowe, Don (1998) The education of good citizens: the role of moral education, *Forum* 40(1), pp. 15–17. A very clear, unambiguous examination of the role of moral education in citizenship education.
- de Vries, Rheta (1996) *Moral Classrooms, Moral Children* (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press). A misleading title in some respects as it is not so much prescriptive as descriptive. An interesting and encouraging account of democratic practices and their outcomes as applied to the classrooms of younger children.
- de Winter, Micha (1997) *Children as Fellow Citizens* (Oxford, Radcliffe Medical Press). Translated from the Dutch, this book is well worth tracking down. Straightforward, readable and convincing, de Winter, a Professor in Child Care, recognises the anomalies and contradictions in citizenship education. His observations about the Netherlands would seem to apply equally well to Great Britain.
- Kerr, David (1999) *Re-examining Citizenship Education* (Slough, NFER). An overview of contemporary citizenship education in England which is thorough, readable and succinct. Although only 34 pages, it is a valuable source of reference.

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‘Doing Reggio’? No, ‘Doing Difference’ in Co-operative Learning!

Hillevi Lenz Taguchi

The author is a well-known lecturer in Scandinavia in relation to social constructionist theories of learning and documentational practices inspired by the pre-school practices of the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia.

Educational discourse shifts. Today teaching somebody something is off the agenda. On the agenda is learning how to learn, and what Thomas Popkewitz (1998) has called ‘the new constructivist participatory and interactive teacher’. This is a teacher who is ultimately flexible in her/his ability to be ‘response-able’ as well as ‘response-ready’ in relation to each individual child, the group and the surrounding world (Fendler, 2000). It is expected by some that this teacher will be able to produce the flexible and responsive children the postmodern state of advanced capitalism is supposed to require. These discursive shifts that contextualise current debates about teaching and learning have evoked concerns about the possibilities and enabling limits of usual practice in early education. Integral to this current state of play within early education is an increased desire and demand for parent and community participation. In the search for ways of producing ‘best practice’ within this new and complex environment, educators have looked outside their immediate context for models and guides and ‘discovered’ Reggio Emilia. This discovery has been met variously with surprise, inspiration, colonisation and critique. Richard Johnson (1998) has critically and importantly reflected upon the Reggio Emilia approach as a ‘cargo cult’. Each year thousands of teachers and researchers from all over the world visit the community childcare and pre-schools of the city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. I have been one of these, and it was with amazement that I witnessed a practice that seemed to make imaginable that which had as yet only resided in theory. But it also did *something else* that seemed to displace and/or transgress the meanings I had made of western neo-liberal educational discourse. It was something that I had found no educational discourse had yet been able to formulate. What I immediately understood as a practice in a process of continuous change, rather than a model or method, had been going on as a carefully documented practice since 1945. It is not just that the documented processes of the co-operative learning of children, teachers, parents and community citizens are interesting *per se*. It is rather *how* the documentation has been used to challenge, not just the children’s learning-processes, but also the dominant theories of child-development, psychology, theories of learning and even philosophy and thereby pedagogical practice.

In this article I will focus on what I myself, together with my colleagues and hundreds of teachers and practitioners in Sweden, have tried to do with inspiration

from Reggio Emilia during the last ten years. By using observational and documentational practices, we have been trying to get into co-operative learning processes together with children and colleagues. Our work officially started with a project, which has been named internationally as ‘the Stockholm Project’. This Project has been led by Professor Gunilla Dahlberg at the Stockholm Institute of Education together with the Swedish Reggio Emilia Institute, and in close co-operation with ‘Reggio Children’ (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). The project was funded by the Swedish government for three years, from 1993, and is continuing in the form of local projects led by teachers and practitioners, as well as co-operative research-projects.

What especially distinguishes Reggio Emilia inspired work in Sweden is the highly political aspect of building it into all parts of the community structure. I understand this as a pledge for democratic inter-dependence and co-operative learning between the different actors and organisational levels, i.e. politicians, community-officials, administrators, citizens, parents, children and teachers/practitioners. The communitarian character is in fact the only aspect of the educational practices of Reggio Emilia that teachers and politicians in Sweden actually seek to in a sense ‘copy’, even though this, due to the vast differences in regulations on the labour-market etc., is an impossible project. It is curious that once offered the possibility, many Swedish teachers and practitioners encompass a very strong desire to build negotiable and renegotiable organisational structures on mutual dependence and co-operative learning. Perhaps this is due to a tradition where strong co-operative popular movements interacted with the political community in building what has been conceptualised as The Peoples Home (Dahlberg, 1999; Hultqvist, 1997). Such co-operative and negotiable structures makes a difficult task in times of strong dominant neo-liberal notions of economic rationalism, new managerialism and quality control systems, which produce structures that can be understood as arguably at odds with the philosophical and historico-political foundation of the Reggio Emilia approach.

Lessons Learned from Reggio Emilia

In my view, there are two basic tenets and one critical tool from Reggio Emilia that have been used in the Stockholm Project. The first tenet is the idea that all children are ‘intelligent’ and, as ‘knowledge producing subjects’, are

equal to adults as co-constructors of our common culture and knowledge. This rather radical political and philosophical idea was formulated by Professor Loris Malaguzzi and the women who literally brick-by-brick built some of the community toddler centres and pre-schools in Reggio Emilia during post-war Italy. The second tenet is the recognition of problems and possibilities associated with relocating a pedagogical practice that has grown out of historically and culturally specific circumstances, into a different culture. Both understanding the child as an equal and intelligent being and recognition of the possibilities and problems of cultural relocation, are embedded in the critically significant tool of pedagogical documentation. The significance of this tool is embedded in the idea that it is possible to engage in practices of learning as well as of change only if one first makes visible and tries to understand the prevailing/existing practices and how these have been produced and maintained. This practice of pedagogical documentation enables us to know where we are at. As the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1976) has stated, it is important to 'begin *wherever we are...* in the text where we already believe ourselves to be' (p.162).

Derrida makes this statement in relation to the processes of poststructuralist deconstruction, which, theoretically as well as practically, has been an important source of inspiration and understanding in the work with pedagogical documentation. By documenting ongoing practice in situations of children's co-operative exploration/investigation of a negotiated problem or phenomena, the intention is to make visible the strategies and learning-processes of the children, as well as the strategies and practices of the teachers interacting with, listening to, and observing the children. Attempts to make sense of what we see in any piece of documented practice, whether it be a piece of written observation, a video, photos, the children's sketches, drawings, construction's, play, conversations or whatever, we need to account for what notions, beliefs, values, ideas and practices inform the children in their investigations, as well as what informs the teachers in 'doing pedagogy'. This process, aided by pedagogical documentation, of visualising 'where we are', enables the possibility of formulating *other possible ways* of understanding and practising 'teaching'. The opening up of these possibilities is strongly connected to my understanding of Derridean deconstruction. Deconstruction is 'the strategy of using the only available language while not subscribing to its premises, or operating according to the vocabulary of the very thing that one delimits', writes Derrida's translator Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1976, p. xviii). Deconstruction is about disruptions, destabilisations, undermining 'taken-for-granted notions', values, practices, and practice-as-usual. It opens up possibilities for multiple ways of understanding, thinking and practising. As the Australian feminist educational researcher Bronwyn Davies has stated: 'any reading against the grain implies a detailed knowledge of the grain itself' (2000, p.114). Although deconstruction is often understood as a negative project, I have theorised on, tried out and co-operatively investigated deconstructional processes in the work with pedagogical documentation within pre-school practice as an ethics of resistance. It is an ethics that, as Elisabeth Adams St. Pierre writes, 'explodes anew in every

circumstance, demands a specific re-inscription, and hounds praxis unmercifully' (1997, p.176). Deconstruction as a *responsible* reading of practice and, as an ethics of resistance, is a serious intent to uncover and reveal dilemmas, injustices, power-relations and problems built into any human practice. It is about 'making a difference' for learning and living together in a community of 'co-constructors' of culture and knowledge, with an awareness that there can never be a formulated end-state to be achieved, but rather a constant process of re-negotiation of being and meaning/practice and discourse. I have found that this kind of work produces positive and 'liberating' results for children, teachers and parents, especially in relation to the refusal to take children's learning and development for granted.

An important pre-condition, though, for this kind of work is that it needs a planned and organised space. A certain kind of networking was therefore started in 1993, by the project leader Harold Göthson. Each community has since organised their own network structures. I remember well the first time when, after about a year of monthly networking, there was a collective sense of simultaneous trust and daring in the conversation amongst us. The teachers, heads of schools and researchers who were present felt enjoyment in critical rigour aiming at displacing and reformulating/renegotiating one's own as well as the collective notions of taken-for-grantedness that appeared in the conversation. The pre-school teacher Hans Dahlqvist presented a video of two four year old boys attempting to build a bridge in soft dirt-clay. He stopped the video-tape numerous times and pointed at situations he thought difficult in relation to his intervention in the boy's construction-building. He also pointed out the strategies and comments of the boys in their work. He turned to the network of 25 people gathered for us to make additional readings of the situations of interest. We were all amazed with the openness, trust and eagerness in Hans and ourselves to make multiple understandings of the situation and imagine other possible scenarios, both on behalf of the boy's learning-process, and in relation to Hans' questions, techniques and the materials he offered the boys.

Conclusion

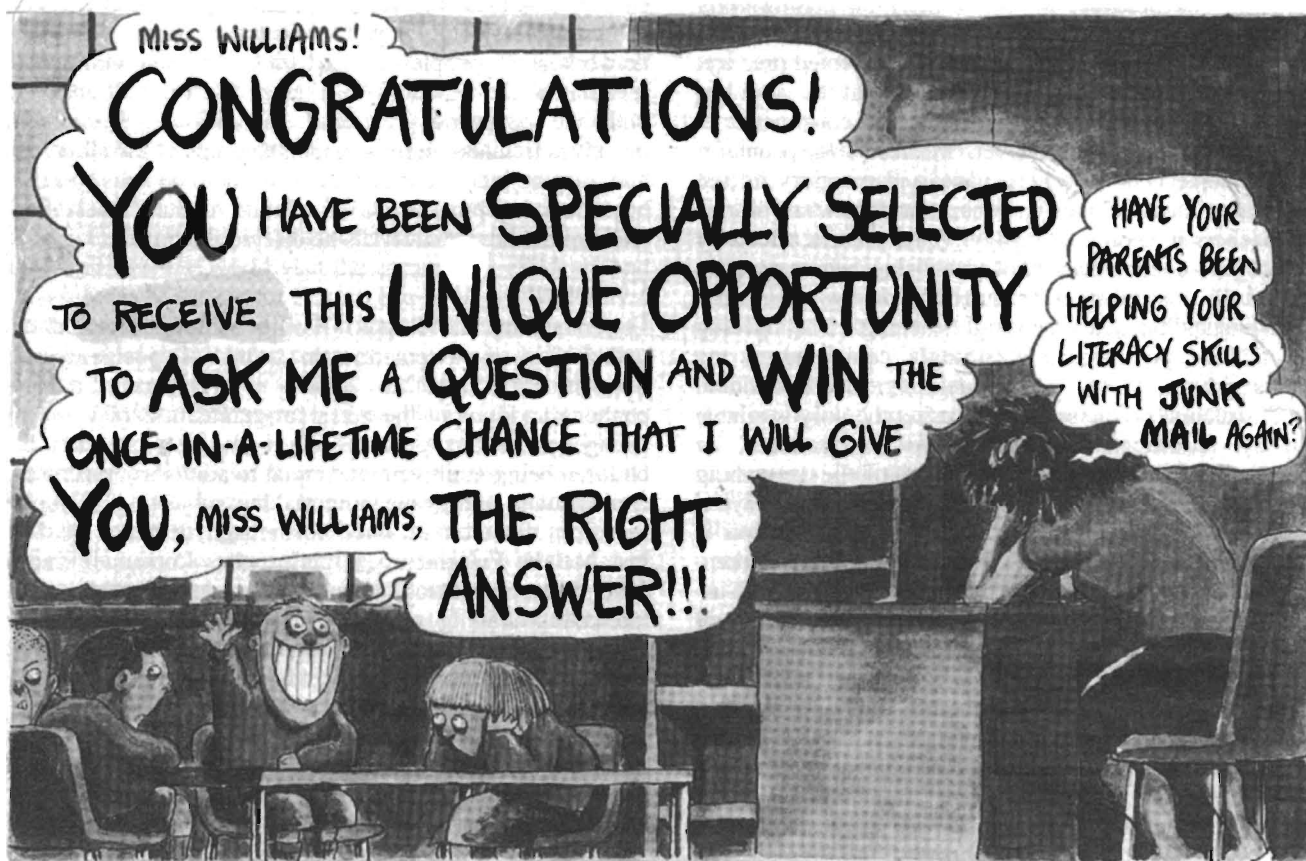
Understanding the Reggio Emilia inspired practice of pedagogical documentation in terms of poststructural deconstruction and an ethics of resistance, means challenging some of the taken-for-grantedness of western pedagogy. As this practice relates to the first tenet of children being intelligent and equal to adults as citizens of a community and as meaning-making subjects, it disrupts the firm dichotomies once formulated in texts by for instance the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant. Jane Flax, professor of political science, makes an interesting reading on the consequences for justice in relation to how western thought is based on Kantian dichotomies such as: adult – child; tutelage – autonomy; guardian – independence; individual – community; domestic – public; family – autonomy (Flax, 1993). These dichotomies, as structures of thinking in modern western thought, produce relations of power in children, women and other groups of people who have not been seen as equal subjects of meaning-making in society. A majority of teachers, at least for younger children, are women. Teachers for younger children and pre-school children

have lower status than do teachers in higher education. Practices of pedagogical documentation, as they have been practised in the Stockholm Project, involve disrupting usual relations of power between adults within the education profession. To comprehend yourself as a meaning-making subject, theorising children's learning, your own learning, and pedagogy in an ongoing co-operative learning-process, is perceived as a more empowered kind of identity as a teacher. Undoubtedly these aspects of the work of the Stockholm Project have also severely disrupted the taken-for-granted power-relations and positionings between the participating researchers and the practitioners. Hence researchers in the Stockholm Project are not perceived, and do not perceive themselves, as either objective data-collectors or action researchers, but as participating documenters and co-constructors of knowledge. A very important aspect for the researchers job in this kind of project, though, is to make themselves as well as the participating teachers, aware of how they, even in these kind of continuous processes of deconstruction and change, are taking an active and sometimes powerful part in formulating new and/or reproducing dominant educational discourse. 'Doing difference' in co-operative learning entails a large amount of self-reflecting distance from a practice that gets 'closer up' than any other.

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Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 15 September 2000

Issues in the Provision of Deaf Education

Laura Simon

The author is currently studying for a PhD at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and will shortly be contributing to the teaching of an MA course in the language and politics of disability.

In this article I will give a brief description of the educational provision for deaf children in the UK and then give a more personal view on the issues that have emerged from my research. I write from the perspective of a trained teacher who has been at least partially deaf all of her life. I have had a positive education experience overall. However, I believe that what worked for me may not work for another, and we shall see that in considering alternatives for deaf children, each case must be considered as unique but not inferior to another.

The Debate Over Provision

Throughout the UK today the provision of education for deaf children varies. The provision is broadly divided into *three* types: (1) complete integration or 'mainstreaming'; (2) separate schools for the deaf; and (3) partially hearing units (PHUs) attached to the mainstream setting. Influencing this provision has been a debate which is ongoing: 'the arguments for and against residential schools for deaf children are the subject of much conflict. The advantages of the maintenance and development of deaf language and culture must be balanced against the possible disconnection of deaf children from their home surroundings' (Taylor, 1991, p. 240). The 'home surroundings' Taylor is speaking of here refers to the hearing family of the deaf child, which is the situation in a majority of cases (Webster & Wood, 1989).

Deaf adults looking back on their education have different views in this debate. For example, here are the views of two who are in favour of segregation:

I do not agree with 'integration' for deaf children. I believe that all deaf children should attend special schools for the deaf, and a range of communication methods should be available according to the child's needs and preference. No single method will work for everyone, but to exclude British Sign Language (BSL) is unfair to deaf children and damaging to the deaf community. (Craddock, 1991, p. 101).

Although I was so unhappy in the beginning, when I look back now I'm glad I went to a deaf school. I think it's a much more helpful and positive environment for deaf people when they are growing up. The school community builds strength and confidence, especially through the shared communication of sign language. (Monery & Jones, 1991, p. 83)

Both of these examples highlight the importance of clear communication through means other than the spoken word. However, one deaf mother is in favour of a partially hearing unit for her oldest child:

For Darren I went along to the school for the deaf. It was depressing. I looked at the work the children were doing; it all seemed so basic. Darren knew all of that already; I taught him to read at home. I felt it was completely the wrong place. Then I went to visit a Partially Hearing Unit. Once I saw it, I knew it was just right for him. (Sally, quoted in McCracken & Sutherland, 1991, p. 160)

Having a deaf mother and siblings, Darren was unusual in that he could have a sense of community and communication in his own home.

The Warnock Report (1978) and the Education Acts of 1981 and 1989 in the UK have generally upheld the principle that every child has the right to be educated according to his or her individual needs. This recommendation has been interpreted by some to mean that whenever possible, a deaf child should be educated in a mainstream school (McCracken & Sutherland, 1991). The result has been a number of schools for the deaf closing throughout the country.

It is interesting to note the reduction in the number of schools (for the deaf) from 75 in 1980 to 40 in 1989. This probably arises from changes in policy following the Warnock Report whereby more children with special needs are being catered for in the state school classrooms or units attached to their schools. (Child, 1991)

Looking at the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)'s own 1995 list of facilities, we can count even fewer than 40 schools for the deaf.

Mainstreaming

One advantage of mainstreaming deaf children which has been advanced is that they are more exposed to the hearing world, and vice versa. Mabel Davis, just after she was appointed Headteacher of Heathlands School for the Deaf, St Albans, stressed this point in a newspaper interview (Davis, in Croall, 1992). She observed that the hearing children are learning sign language at the mainstream school linked with Heathlands. The Heathlands philosophy is that deaf children should sometimes be integrated with their hearing contemporaries. However, Davis herself paints a dismal picture if deaf children are not integrated appropriately:

We get children coming at 7 or 11 who have failed abysmally in an integrated mainstream unit. They're in a dreadful state, they can't read, they can't write, their behaviour is dreadful. But that's to be expected: if only they had been allowed to sign from the beginning.

'Allowed to sign' – in other words, that prelingually deaf children have access to their native language: sign language. Rieser & Mason (1990) are also among the growing number of professionals who favour a bilingual approach to educating deaf children in the mainstream sector: using British Sign Language (BSL) as well as English as the teaching medium. The argument for mainstreaming deaf children therefore stresses the importance of the following two criteria in determining whether a deaf child should be wholly mainstreamed: (1) the mainstreaming process must be done properly, with BSL being an option; and (2) whether the child to be mainstreamed is prelingually deaf or deafened after acquiring a language must be established.

The second factor mentioned is one reason why one child may cope well in mainstream and another not. Wright (1969), for example, had already learned English before becoming deaf. He notices, however, the struggle of a born-deaf girl answering questions in English who had not been given a language early enough. She had to be taught everything and made to speak, which Wright had learned naturally. We can assume that her communication experience was not very positive. Ladd (1991) shows that the communication barrier causes insecurity and awkwardness for the deaf child:

He can't pick up whispers and nudges and, worse still, he can't use them. He tries to pick topics, and drop them into conversation, but they all turn out by definition to be 'serious' ones because these are easier paced. Humorous chat is too fast for him, and so he is seen as over-earnest, and boring.

(Ladd, 1991, p. 91)

This example is from an article in which Ladd describes 'Nigel' as a deaf boy in the mainstream setting. Through examples like these, Ladd argues that the deaf boy cannot realise his true identity in such an environment. He reminds us that to argue that a deaf child must be mainstreamed to be part of society without considering the emotional and social costs to that child can result in damage and bitterness, not to mention the more obvious communication problems.

One of the major communication problems is the likelihood that the deaf child's acquisition and use of spoken and written English will not be on the same level as his/her hearing peers. The majority of deaf children's literacy in English is worse than that of their hearing peers (Conrad, 1979). It is important to note the difficulties in enabling deaf children to reach their reading potential in a mainstream classroom. On a practical level, the teacher may be unable to give the necessary help in English to a deaf child in a typical class of thirty hearing pupils. English as a subject is only one example – other subjects may prove difficult for the deaf child in comparison to his/her hearing classmates. Therefore a third criterion in whether a child should be mainstreamed is that the support and facilities for the deaf child must be available within the mainstream setting.

Exclusively Deaf Schools

Although mainstreaming is on the rise, schools for the deaf still exist. It has been argued that a major advantage of this provision is that the deaf child is able to learn with other deaf children on an equal level (for example, Monery &

James, 1991; Craddock, 1991). This equality goes beyond education in the classroom. The deaf child from a hearing family may especially need a place where he/she 1) has exposure to the easiest – learned, or native, visual language (sign) and 2) enjoys fellowship and fluency in communication (Jones, in Kyle, 1994). The deaf child is with others sharing the same identity. Even if the school is oral, the culture and experiences will be common to most of the children. For some, the discovery of sign language, whether openly or in secret, will bring new confidence and understanding, even a whole world opening up which was previously inaccessible. Wright (1969) and Mason (1991) share their wonder at the exposure to sign language at schools for the deaf. For Mason, his school experience also led to contact with deaf adults with whom he could communicate, broadening his horizons. In a school with like-minded individuals, the deaf child is likely to learn not only acceptance but pride in his/her deafness. Some may feel that the identification and pride can be taken too far (for example, Wright, 1969) in that deaf children become too much like one another.

Nevertheless, one mother of a deaf child put the case favouring a school for the deaf very well. Her particular Local Education Authority (LEA) refused to pay for her daughter to attend Mary Hare, the grammar school for the deaf. She lists five reasons why her child should attend this particular school:

(1) for her to mix with people like herself, and not to feel different;

(2) the local school has no teacher for deaf children;

(3) she would not be able to cope at some stages in a mainstream school and would fall behind;

(4) she hated the idea of having a special needs assistant to write notes for another five years;

(5) she sat through some lessons not knowing what the teacher was saying and felt ostracised.

This mother also stresses the importance of her daughter's fulfilling her potential: 'We do not feel (she) will in a mainstream school, even though she is a very able child.' (Padden, in *British Deaf News*, 1996)

However, three possible disadvantages of schools for the deaf must be remembered when considering this provision. The first is distance between home and the school. If the school for the deaf is a residential one at considerable distance away, then the deaf child concerned may not want to be apart from his/her family. Even if the child 'recovers' from the trauma of being left at a strange school against his/her own wishes or without really understanding what is going on, the rejection felt can have lifelong effects (for example, Goodwill, 1991). The distance of the school for the deaf from the home can be a disadvantage for day pupils too. The parents will find it difficult to be involved with the school if a long trip is necessary. Long daily journeys are exhausting for children as well. Additionally, and related to the physical proximity of the school for the deaf, is the economic cost of commuting to or boarding at that school. The financial commitment can be a major disadvantage if the school for the deaf is more expensive than the mainstream school. For some families, the mainstream school's accessibility and lower expenses will prevail even if the school for the

deaf may be more appropriate educationally for the deaf child concerned. Finally, the last disadvantage, arguably the most difficult to determine, is that residential schools for the deaf result in slower *social* maturity in deaf children. For example, Meadow (1980) suggests that 'residential living with the absence of family contact and the close supervision leading to few opportunities for independence' hinders deaf children's social development (Meadow, 1980, p. 76). However, she admits that parents' attitudes and child-rearing practices may also be a cause.

Partially Hearing Units (PHUs)

The PHUs, the units attached to a mainstream school, constitute the third educational option for the deaf child. He/she is with a few other children like himself/herself, yet is able to be taught in the mainstream as far as possible. The units can be good for partially deaf children who have language and need the advantage of a more secluded unit with less background noise. Another advantage of the PHU is the increased likelihood of individualised attention and tuition. The reality depends on the unit and even more so, the child involved. As we see by briefly considering three examples (all quoted in McCracken & Sutherland 1991), the parents deciding about the PHU may arrive at different conclusions. One parent feels that even a unit would be a struggle for his profoundly deaf son Justin:

I think in a unit, even if there was signing, he would still find it difficult to get involved with 90% of the school. I could envisage him being at the back, struggling along, whereas in a school for the deaf he's in an environment where he's happy.

(McCracken & Sutherland, 1991, p. 146)

Another parent sees her child's placement in a PHU as a crucial turning point in her child's learning:

We all talked and (the Head) felt it was obvious Ann had a serious hearing loss, and so arrangements were made to transfer her to the Partially Hearing Unit – Ann was seven and still talking rubbish. Within six months she was talking and learning at last. (McCracken & Sutherland, 1991, p. 153)

As with the mainstream and school for the deaf, the distance involved can also influence or not a decision of whether to put a child in a unit:

The nearest unit is fifteen miles away and has not been recommended as being particularly suitable for Victoria's needs, especially as it is so far away. (McCracken & Sutherland, 1991, p. 166)

Other Influences on Educational Provision

At this point we must draw attention to a fourth criterion in determining the deaf child's educational provision: the family's role and what it involves. Several factors arise which have been alluded to already: (1) the family's emotional closeness to the deaf child; (2) the financial situation of the family, and (3) the distance of the educational provision from the family. Another element which must be taken into account is whether the parents of the deaf child are deaf or hearing. Ideally all parents should see communication with their child as being a priority. The deaf children of deaf parents are likely to have a normal language development with BSL being the language at home. Such children, coming up to school age,

are in similar positions as other children coming from a non-native English home. The parents may choose then to have them continue in their native language environment in a signing school for the deaf. Or the parents may decide that they need to be in a hearing environment to learn English and how to function in society early on. The hearing parents may share this perspective. However, as we have seen from Justin's case above, hearing parents may also choose to place their child in a school for the deaf.

Having briefly considered the three types of educational provision available, we will now suggest other criteria involved in narrowing down a type for a particular child. We cannot underestimate the importance of a fifth criterion: the parents' choice in the matter of their deaf child's education. Sadly, however, parents may not automatically be able to exercise that responsibility. As recently as June 1996 the National Deaf Children's Society published 'a new charter for parents' partnership in education' because:

thousands of parents of deaf children are still being denied the right to say which school they would like their children to attend. (British Deaf News)

Hopefully the charter will increase the parents' say in the matter.

Beyond the politics, another influencing factor is that of population distribution. If we plot all the educational facilities for deaf children on a UK map, we see that more is available in the densely populated areas, particularly urban areas. In the remote areas of the UK, including the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, parents do not have much choice of where to send their deaf child (British Deaf News, March 1995). Such parents may opt to obtain a *statement*, or notice of formal procedures to place the child in education outside the area.

Some clarification of the statementing procedure is helpful at this point. Whether all deaf children need statements depends on the LEA:

The key point to emphasise is that the severity of a child's learning difficulties must be considered in relation to resources normally available to ordinary schools in the area. As a general rule, all children in special units or approved independent schools should be statemented. In LEAs where teachers of the deaf, for example, are available to visit all schools, the child in mainstream who would benefit from some additional specialist support will not require a statement. Similarly, if help is provided from within the school's own resources, then statements are not required.

(Webster, 1990, p. 47)

The population factor can affect another criterion: the money or resources available to a particular LEA, and vice versa. Fewer deaf children in an area may not be sufficient to warrant the resources set aside for their provision. On the other hand, the deaf children can be sent to a borough which has gone beyond the limits of its provision because too many children are in need.

We see even from this brief analysis that ensuring the right provision for each deaf child can be complicated. We will review the important criteria that should be considered in the decision. Firstly, mainstream provision must show careful thought as to these steps: the process must be appropriate; prelingual or postlingual deafness must be

established beforehand; and the material and staff resources must be already in place in the setting. Regardless of the type of provision, these factors are fundamental and must be taken into account: the family's role, the parents' choice, how the particular LEA responds, and the availability of finances and resources in the LEA concerned possibly influenced by population distribution. Hopefully, armed with these considerations, we can make a more informed decision reached with the love and knowledge of a particular deaf child involved.

Conclusion

I would like to add a bit of my own personal history as relevant for this article. My parents were fully hearing and I attended the local state schools. Because I had enough hearing to understand speech, I was never given the option of sign language as a child. My mother was able to give me a lot of one-to-one tuition in my early years. Nevertheless I had much speech therapy and the help of hearing aids once I reached secondary school. I certainly did not find school easy from a social point of view, with continual background noise and the concentration required to lip-read conversations. In my ongoing study of pupils being mainstreamed and part of a partially hearing unit, I see the tiredness that I share. I have called this tiredness 'concentration fatigue' which is the exhaustion caused by extra concentration to listen and understand speech which fully hearing people do not experience. How well a child copes with this sort of fatigue and the implications for educational provision are two key areas I am exploring. I have always been aware that I grow more tired from listening than do my fully hearing friends. I cope with this fatigue but not everyone may choose to in the same way.

One could argue that if I had learned sign language, communication would be easier. As an adult, I have tried, and found sign language very difficult to learn. Because of this difficulty I empathise with those hearing parents who have a deaf child and may find learning sign language hard.

As I write, a major march is about to take place in London advocating British Sign Language to be given the same recognition as any other minority language. As implied elsewhere in this article, I support this view, but the provision of those who can teach and communicate in this language is necessary for the recognition to become reality. I find the introduction of BSL as a first language to enable a deaf child to have a means of communication as quickly as possible, and to assist in the later learning of English, highly desirable. Nevertheless fluent users of BSL may not be available in every area of the UK.

One must also consider that not everyone may choose to learn sign language – learning it must result in some sort of gain for the person involved. In my current research the pupils indicated to me that they preferred mixing with hearing children and being part of the majority which included their family and friends. As I grow older my hearing is worsening, yet in terms of language, culture and environment, I am a hearing person, and to become anything else would now mean a huge loss. My forays into

deaf language and culture have given me a tremendous awareness and respect for deaf people. Nevertheless as a professional in hearing education, I am an 'outsider' to the inside world of the deaf. In recognising this identity, I am not saying one world is superior to another, but establishing that deaf and hearing educational perspectives are different and have equally valuable contributions to make.

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We print below copies of two letters that will be of interest to *FORUM* readers

Mr David Blunkett
House of Commons
Westminster
London W1

13 June 2000

Dear Mr Blunkett

I am very surprised to find that you believe a BEd course to be a 'sub-degree undergraduate course' (Hansard, 16 May 2000). At Goldsmiths we run a BA(Ed) course and a PGCE course, but I am very familiar with the BEd courses which are run at other institutions and would certainly take issue with your description. I am sure you will be aware of the rigorous accreditation procedures which are in place in Institutions of Higher Education and which serve to ensure that academic standards are maintained. In addition there is a comprehensive system of External Examiners which ensures parity between institutions. As most BEd courses include the award of QTS you will find that students are required to achieve much more than is the case for a regular undergraduate degree outside education.

Given the serious problem of under-recruitment to the teaching profession I feel that such comments as those which you made in the House of Commons are most unfortunate and very unhelpful. Students who choose to come into teaching via the undergraduate routes are generally very committed to teaching and recognise the complexity of the job. (That is why they choose to study for a degree which is directly relevant to their chosen profession). Your comments can serve only to dissuade them, and to make them realise just how undervalued teachers are.

Finally, let me mention that the undergraduate route is one which has more appeal to students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. It provides a tough, but accessible, route into the teaching profession for mature students, and students who have taken additional time to study in the FE sector in order to gain access to their chosen profession. I would suggest that for all of the students presently studying for undergraduate ITT courses and for those deciding to do so in the future your comments will be interpreted as a 'slap in the face'. I hope you will make every effort to make public your revised understanding of the subject.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Jones
Senior Lecturer in Education and
Head of the Primary Programmes,
Goldsmiths College

Reply from the DfEE

Ms Lesley Jones
Goldsmiths College
University of London
Lewisham Way
New Cross
London SE14 6NW

4 July 2000

Dear Ms Jones

Thank you for your letter of 13 June to the Secretary of State, about comments made during the Opposition Day Debate on the future of the teaching profession on 16 May.

I can assure you that it was not the Secretary of State's intention when speaking in the House to demean undergraduate teacher training courses or those who take them. In responding (without notes) to an interruption from Ian Bruce MP, the Secretary of State attempted to draw a distinction between postgraduate teacher training, for which the new training salaries will be available, and undergraduate training, for which they will not, but which will continue to attract the same support as other sorts of undergraduate courses. When the Secretary of State inadvertently described the BEd courses as 'sub-degree' rather than 'undergraduate', the *Official Report* shows that he immediately corrected himself. (In quoting the relevant passage in your letter, you omit the vital comma).

As I was in the House of Commons officials' box during the debate, I can confirm that this was what took place, and that the House clearly recognised as much at the time.

I hope that this explanation sets your mind at rest.

Yours sincerely

Jim Cutshall
Department for Education and Employment
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London SW1P 3BT

General Teaching Council: whose voice will be heard?

Pip Marples & Tyrell Burgess

Pip Marples, an experienced primary school head, and Tyrell Burgess, who has been involved with the General Teaching Council from its beginning, examine here both its structure and purpose. They suggest there are inherent problems built into the nature of its representation and also misplaced expectations which, as they see it, could undermine its genuine potential to be a supportive and innovative organisation.

This year, for the first time, the necessary institutions will be in place to make teaching a recognizable profession. The requirements for such a thing are threefold: first, the defence of members' individual and collective interests; second, arrangements for professional self-regulation; third, a learned society and professional institution to develop individual and general capability. Arrangements for all three have long been in place in, for example, medicine, where the British Medical Association (BMA) has defended members' interests, the General Medical Council (GMC) has been the vehicle for self-regulation and the Royal Colleges, of surgeons, physicians, general practitioners and so on, have been the repositories of professional art and science. In education only the first of these has hitherto been represented, by the teachers' unions. Last year, a professional institution emerged, as the College of Teachers, and this September a General Teaching Council (GTC) will undertake the work of professional regulation until now in the hands of the Secretary of State. The purpose of this article is to distinguish the functions of these three bodies and to discuss in more detail the problems facing the new GTC.

Historically the teachers' unions have aspired to a professional as well as a defensive function. If they have not entirely succeeded it is partly because the two functions are not compatible, either in principle or in practice, and partly because there has not been one union, like the BMA, but several. The picture of disarray that this has presented has not impressed the Government, the public or teachers themselves, and the consequent weakness of the unions has led them in the past to resort to the sometimes self-destructive weapon of the strike. A strike may work where the opponent is clearly a vile employer and the damage done is to his unjustified profits: it lacks credibility when those damaged are children and their parents. The only lasting result of some recent strike action has thus been the deprofessionalising contracts imposed by a Government bent on control and given occasion for it by irresponsibility. Then and since, the unions seem to have chosen to fight the wrong battle at the wrong time and by the wrong methods. Demoralised, they failed to mount any reasoned challenge to appraisal and performance related pay, both dumped on education after they had been discredited elsewhere. The new institutional arrangements offer an opportunity for the unions to regroup, to collaborate if not unite and to defend teachers' interests by methods more apt to their circumstances.

The Role of the GTC

The College of Teachers is the kind of institution which is least familiar to teachers themselves, though elements of its work have been in place for a long time. The College was formed on the basis of the College of Preceptors, a 150-year-old body with a Royal Charter, that College itself being in collaboration with some visionary individuals and a number of subject, phase and specialist associations. It has yet to establish itself in the lively consciousness of teachers, but it is clear what its functions must be. Overall it will promote the teaching profession in all its phases and recognise achievement in it. It will develop the profession through its activities as a learned society, through its journal and other publications, technical proceedings, conferences, library, awards and research, thus gaining recognition as a prime source of authoritative information and advice on the art and science of teaching. On this basis it will be in a position to advise Government and its agencies on professional issues, including curriculum and assessment and on appropriate methods of inspection and accountability, and advise the GTC and any other appropriate bodies on the grounds and procedures for approving courses of initial and in-service training. It will provide its own members with a network of professional support and the public with the security of an ethically based profession with the highest standards of probity, performance and capability. What it will not do is negotiate the terms and conditions of teachers' employment nor will it defend their personal or collective interests. Neither will it seek to regulate the profession itself, though it will advise on the processes of regulation. These are functions for the unions and the GTC respectively. Here again, the opportunities are great.

This leaves the third essential attribute of a profession: self-regulation. The GTC is a huge step forward for teaching, removing as it does responsibility for regulation from the tyrannical hand of the Secretary of State and placing it where it more properly belongs. The medical model has clearly been influential in its establishment. Its function is 'to raise the status and public standing of teachers by acting as a self-regulatory body to represent the professional interests of teachers and supporting teachers through its activities' (DfEE, January 2000). It will seek to guarantee high professional standards through its register of teachers, code of conduct and advice on entry to the profession, and it will deal with all matters concerning conduct, competence and deregistration. Its advice will be taken on future recruitment strategy, and it will be a single source of information on entry, qualification, qualified

teacher status, induction and equal opportunities. These tasks are critical, but it is already clear that the GTC's capacity to perform them is under threat from three sources. These are the Government, the unions and itself.

Potential Threats

The first danger is latent. The Government has established the GTC and has given it a degree of independence unthinkable even three years ago. Few people in education believed that the DfEE would ever advise the Secretary of State to give up control over entry and discipline or that a Secretary of State would accept the advice if given. It would not, however, do to be complacent. The Secretary of State appoints both the chairman of the GTC and its chief executive as well as thirteen of its members. He also appoints seventeen on the advice of interested bodies. Clearly he retains a heavy influence which yet stops short of control. The question for the future is what the reaction of a Secretary of State might be to a GTC's promotion of a profession in ways inimical to political and bureaucratic prejudice. It is too soon to be suspicious but not too soon to be vigilant.

The second danger comes from the unions who have been fighting the wrong battles. Nine members of the GTC are nominated by the unions. This in itself is a mistake, because it compromises both the ability of the unions to defend their members and the integrity of the GTC itself. To take the latter first, the GTC has been established just at a time when the concept of self-regulation of professions is being widely and severely questioned. Faced by recent events in the law and medicine, for example, self-regulation is being seen as an evil rather than a protection, and it will take much effort to rebuild public confidence in it. What undermines that confidence is the conviction that self-regulation is a ramp behind which professions close ranks to protect those of their members who are incompetent or worse. It should have been the first task of a GTC to allay these misgivings, and this is not helped by the statutory presence of nominated members of teachers' 'protection societies'. The unions too are compromised. One of their functions is to support individual members should the GTC have to consider striking them off the register. They cannot, without awkwardness, be a member of such a body, and any threatened teachers may reasonably feel that the union's efforts on their behalf must be less than wholehearted. You do not put advocates on a jury. Unhappily the unions have made matters worse in both respects by putting up 'slates' of candidates for the places for teachers elected by the profession as a whole. No doubt this was in part an expression of their own rivalries, but the impression it gave was of a new profession slipping effortlessly into the objectionable ways of the old ones.

Perhaps the greatest danger to the success of a GTC, however, comes from within the organization itself. It is natural that the enthusiasm engendered by the body's very existence and excitement at its potential should lead to exuberance and extravagance. Moderation and modesty would be better guides. There is no point in the GTC's

imagining that it can be or do anything and everything. Already there are signs that it will feel justified in commenting on any educational matter that arises, from the funding of schools to performance-related pay, and that in this it will 'speak for the profession'. There are those who wish it to take over the Teacher Training Agency. All of these attempts would undermine its central task, which is to regulate the profession so as to gain the confidence of the public. Self-regulation has fallen into disrepute because it has been interpreted by the professions and thus perceived by the public as being for the benefit of the professions, whereas its purpose is to be the most satisfactory means of protecting the public. In short, teachers have been given the means by which they can take corporate responsibility for their own probity and capability, not for their own benefit but for everybody else's. If the GTC starts 'speaking for the profession' it will fatally undermine that task. Instead, its job is to show the public that teachers know how to care for the public interest.

Boundaries

Not that it can reasonably 'speak' for teachers. It is a mixed body, with many lay members, and the teacher members are only partly representative. If the GTC goes further on subjects outside its chief remit than well-honed platitudes, it will lose all legitimacy and become just another teachers' organization that nags with the rest. Above all it should learn to keep away from those subjects that are more properly the business of others. Performance-related pay is a matter for the unions, in so far as it concerns pay and conditions, and a matter for the College of Teachers in so far as it affects the educational capacity of schools. Members of the GTC may wish as individuals to speak about any subject they choose, though they would be wise not to talk about the GTC itself, but as a body the GTC should confine its utterances to matters which centrally and directly concern it. One can imagine the hours that might be wasted trying to get a consensus on the funding of schools or the proper way to train a teacher in a body so variously composed and with such different purposes. The cobbler should stick to his last.

What has to be stitched together though is of vital importance: a means of securing acceptable entrants to a register, a procedure for dealing with complaints against teachers, the development of grounds on which teachers might be struck off and the process by which this might justly be done. The bald fact is that there are at present no satisfactory models for any of this, and models developed by other professions no longer command the confidence of the public. The GTC has a momentous opportunity. Where the law and medicine are having to reform discredited institutions, teaching has the chance to think things out from scratch. Teachers can educate their fellow professionals, but they will do so only if the GTC concentrates on the matter in hand. Anything else would be a tragi-comic distraction and ultimately self-destructive.

Learning and Testing: debates and dilemmas

Trevor Kerry

The author is Professor and Vice President of the College of Teachers and Visiting Professor in the International Educational Leadership Centre at the University of Lincolnshire & Humberside. The following is the text of a lecture given at the launch conference of Young Fabians North at the University of Leeds on the theme 'Education in the C21st: delivering on lifelong learning' on Saturday 10 June 2000.

Introduction

In this short session I have been asked to cover three topics of modest dimensions: child-centred learning, the future development of education, and the role of testing, and to put them all into a future context.

With just eight minutes on each, I feel rather like the students who turned up early for their Theology finals and were given a spoof exam paper with one question on it. It said: Write all you know about God in 30 seconds. The first one passed, by the way: He wrote 'Everything' and walked out. The next student who turned up wrote 'Nothing' and walked out – he failed. The third one wrote: 'I know about him and that Archangel Gabriel'. He was thrown out of college but went on to become a Chief Whip.

You can tell from the calibre of my political jokes that I am a political naïve – so let's turn to something I do know about: education, and specifically child-centred education.

Child-centred education

- The debate about child-centred education has spanned the last four decades, yet it is something of a red herring.
- The insight that you might have more success in facilitating children's learning if you begin from where they are (what they know, what they are interested in, what they are ready for, what their age/stage equips them intellectually and emotionally for) has a respectable pedigree and embraces some famous names (Rousseau the philosopher, Dewey the pragmatist, Piaget the psychologist).
- In the late '60s the Plowden Report drew together all that was best in educational knowledge from the fields of philosophy, sociology, psychology and practical pedagogy and synthesised it, turning it into a blue-print for the development of primary education, a blue-print that emphasised the importance of beginning from the learner (not from the teacher or from the material to be taught).
- At the time Plowden was hailed as far-sighted, thorough, insightful, even prophetic. It was.
- But a 2-volume report (the first has over 500 pages) is too much for the press, teachers and even politicians to absorb; and so there followed a period of 'interpretation of Plowden that inevitably meant distortion. It was used eclectically, it was misunderstood, one principle from it was emphasised at the expense of another and so on. We're all familiar with the process – the same process that can turn a

pacifist religion like Christianity into the guiding principles adopted by two warring factions and justify their mutual atrocities.

- So in the '70s we moved into an era where teaching was labelled. Plowdenesque teaching with its child-centred principles became 'informal' teaching; while chalk-and-talk-whack-it-in-your-face-data-based-sit-the-class-in-rows teaching was labelled 'formal' teaching.
- Inevitably, researchers began to compare the two. The Neville Bennett study (*Teaching styles and pupil progress*) was a classic of flawed research (it had over 100 critiques written of it). Yet people lined up to champion formal education (which meant 'let's not think about change conservatism') or informal (called child-centred, but often ill-understood and sloppily applied).
- A fundamental problem of all this research, then and since, is that there has never been one consistent, water-tight, generally-accepted definition of 'informal' teaching on the one hand or 'formal' teaching on the other.
- So the debate about formal and informal, child-centred and non-child-centred is a false debate based on flawed and ill-articulated principles.
- The simple heart of the matter is this: Every learning situation (for children or adults) MUST – in order to be effective – begin from where the learner is. In other words ALL effective learning is learner-centred. It is a waste of time trying to learn how to put your lecture text into double columns on the word-processor until you know how to turn the laptop on. Effective learning depends on scaffolding understanding from where one is now.

So, the first proposition I want to put to you is that

ALL LEARNING IS LEARNER-CENTRED, in school or out of it, whether the learner is three months old or a hundred and three years old.

The second proposition follows on from it, and it's this:

The organisation mechanisms through which we learn – ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

To explore this proposition I want to speculate a bit about schooling in the future, and to spot some trends in the world of education that give us clues about:

The Future of Learning

- I am not convinced that schooling will still be delivered universally by schools in 2020. If it is, then

those schools will be utterly different from what we understand now:

- They will be more flexible (with year round learning not the traditional three terms) with learning (not teaching) at their centre and learning taking place free of the constraints of time, place and narrow organisational detail using technology, even technology as yet uninvented.
- A wider range of people will support the learning: specialist instructors, highly skilled ancillaries, inventive technicians
- The 'teacher' will give way to the learning manager
- Pupils' progress will be paced to fit better with their abilities and aptitudes rather than their age
- Curriculum will have to be more realistically designed to match with the circumstances that prevail outside the school
- Boundaries between learning and employment will be blurred for older pupils and adults
- Education funding will be targeted to provide learning not buildings or personnel

The Laptop Revolution

One on-line journal has already trumpeted that 'Microsoft has launched its Anywhere Anytime Learning (AAL) initiative with the aim of providing every school child in the UK with a notebook PC'.

But with hardware in place, will there be a technological utopia or a technological fix? The jury is out on this debate, but

- The Internet exists
- Information is available globally now
- More and more schools are employing appropriate staff and setting up their own Intranet facilities
- Tutorial support is available on-line.

Developments such as video-conferencing and use of computers allow an unprecedented set of opportunities for learners:

- The very best lessons on a given topic from any source, anywhere can be made available for access at any time
- Access to learning no longer requires attendance at a given place or at a given time
- The role of the teacher becomes a more 'on demand' affair, and the delivery of the expertise may itself be at a distance, for example by e-mail.

These changes affect the very fabric of what we understand by schooling.

Here are just a few of the other revolutions that such a use of ICT has the power to deliver:

- A breed of super-teachers producing the best lessons for global transmission
- The demise of the school building
- The end of the traditional years of schooling – because learning can be life-long in the most genuine sense
- Learning as a self-paced activity
- Learning that can be assessed at any time the student chooses, sweeping away the constraints of annual examinations and the controlling power and inflexibility of the Examination Boards
- Choices for learners – about how, when, what and why they learn

- Unprecedented change in the nature of the profession of teaching and its associated structures such as the Local Education Authorities and even Ofsted itself.

The Future Context of Learning

Our future economy will be a learning economy – what we sell will be our expertise. If we are to survive the learning future and capitalise on it, perhaps one way to survive is to identify our directions and agendas (our vision for education) and to steer towards them. But the context of this vision is located in a changing world, and so the direction we envision must be tinged with some uncertainties. I can give you only my personal vision of future change, and encourage each of you to debate your own. For me the vision must be reached through an agenda that deals with at least these key issues:

- The end of galloping governmental reform that rides roughshod over the views of teachers or tries, however subtly, to talk teachers down in the eyes of the public
- The assumption by teachers themselves of a more proactive professionalism and ownership in matters of pedagogy and curriculum planning, which are at the heart of the educational process
- The abandonment by some teacher unions of the naive belief that the answer to every educational problem is money and (in some cases) that C19th industrial responses will solve the issues of the future
- Research into school leadership and management that is characterised by a greater degree of sensitivity
- Abandonment of the simplistic political views that appear to claim that the socio-economic background of schools and students is irrelevant
- Adoption of social policies that strike at the heart of disadvantage, and that recognise that disadvantage is as real for rural as urban children, for the inadequately educated able as for the inadequately educated less able.

Then perhaps we could get on to deliver schools that are:

- More flexible in organisation and more responsive to change
- Capable of delivering a more varied educational menu of options to students and their communities
- Characterised by effective working relations between teachers, students, and all the paraprofessionals and others who work in them
- More efficient in their use of learning time
- Capable of accepting the challenges of technology to enhance learning
- Able to retain the human and social dimensions in an age of technological learning
- Productive of more creative thinkers
- Led by managers who are driven by enthusiastic visions for continuous improvement.

If I am right in my propositions – that all learning is learner-centred, and that learning will change in the ways I have described – then that leads me to my third proposition:

We Test Too Much and the Purposes and Targets of that Testing are Inadequate For the purpose.

What place will testing have in the new learning of the 21st C?

The Place of Testing in Learning

This is an area where, if your organisation has any influence at all over policy, you can make a real difference. Because the problem with our obsession with measuring and testing is that, over the last few years, it has been done to death, not only in education but also in society. Whether they are right or wrong, this is how most people see it:

- Wait for a hospital appointment in the over-stretched NHS? So the government sets targets for shorter lists. Complain about your elderly sick relative's death in hospital? So the government league-tables the death rates.
- Want to lower costs for policing? Demand crime statistics and performance graphs, and end up removing officers in just the places they're needed most.
- Want to earn some Brownie points with parents? So the government measures performance data in classrooms.

The trouble is, society is being tested to death, and most people are cynical enough to realise that instead of going on an NHS waiting list they now go on a pre-waiting list to get on the waiting list, so the waiting list gets shorter and meets the targets. The wait, however, is just the same, maybe worse. The same kind of comments apply to education too.

Let's take stock of some FACTS (and I emphasise that word) about testing. There are ten of them in my selection:

- Teachers have always tested children.
- Tests can be normative or summative – they may inform future teaching and learning, or assess the extent of that learning. They may even be diagnostic, as in the case of a child with suspected dyslexia, when they form the backdrop to an informed remedial programme. There is nothing evil about testing. The public debate, couched in simple black and white terms, is erroneous.
- When testing is married to secondary judgements about the child (an assessment of improved performance, or a view about future educational provision) it is inevitable that a degree of neurosis sets in among all the stakeholders: parents – who want their children to do well, children – who want to do well, and teachers – who want to satisfy their clientele. League tables lead to cramming, not education.
- If testing is married to secondary judgements about the teacher, then the neurosis is less with the clients and more with the teachers themselves. Performance related pay is such a system. The spur for teachers to maximum students' performance is now no longer focused on the student's learning but purely on the outcomes in terms of test scores. Learning is no longer learner-centred: it is replaced by teaching to pre-determined outcomes.
- Indeed, testing implies a mechanistic outcome model of education; students are empty jam jars, teachers are nozzles of jam on a production line trying to fill the jars.

- Testing results in a straight-jacket model of curriculum, bounded by data rather than ideas. Recent research I carried out showed that teachers believed testing and National Curriculum had suppressed the learning of the most able students. Indeed, when National Curriculum was invented, we lost the opportunity for a 'national minimum entitlement' for children and replaced it with an agenda of received political wisdom that rules teachers' professionalism very largely out of the picture.
- Testing to distraction carried a political agenda, not an educational one. Detached researchers who review the multiplicity of studies of testing find that there is little evidence to support commonly held assumptions, e.g. that standards of education overall have dropped; that the relative performance of boys compared with girls has fallen (it was always thus in reality), or that Britain is out-performed in education in a world context.
- Those who take comfort that there are still some bastions of quality in the form of grammar schools are disappointed too. Longitudinal research on KS2 and KS4 progress by Professor David Jesson demonstrates that relative progress is better generally in comprehensive schools than in grammar schools (i.e. there is more value added in the comprehensive system).
- What we can be sure of is that children of today probably know a lot more than children of the past – but they know different things because they live in a different world. In practical terms I am not persuaded by the need for children to be able to recite tables when they can use a calculator fluently to find correct answers; this smacks to me of saying that in order to drive a car you must be able to steer a horse and cart.
- The emphasis on testing, and the deep political desire to punish poor performers and those responsible for poor performance, has blinkered the policy-makers to the true issue, which is about operationalising social equality. Deprivation is a real issue in our society – not only in cities (and I know about the Excellence in Cities initiative) but in rural areas and in areas north of the Thames. Deprivation goes hand-in-hand with under-performance. That is the real issue that bedevils 'failing schools'.

Testing of the future may well be continuous assessment rather than summative performance-based, it may be on-line, and integral with distance learning material accessed by students in a school or anywhere they can carry their lap-top.

Conclusion

So going back to where we came in: I hope you know more, and more useful, information after this brief excursion than our theologians did after three years of study. While you may not feel intimate with all the issues, perhaps you will at least be ready to deny some of the more simplistic of media reporting on the issue.

Too Much Too Young

Annabelle Dixon

Are young children suffering from the current emphasis on formal skills? Annabelle Dixon makes a plea for a more appropriate curriculum for the under-fives. This article first appeared in *Report*, the magazine of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, in April 2000.

Michael, aged just five, has written his 'threes' the wrong way round. Again. In fact this is not so surprising; many children lack the eye-brain maturity to write numbers correctly until they are six or seven. For some, a simple reminder may be enough, but for others the task is a physical impossibility.

This has very little to do with intelligence and virtually nothing to do with how well the pupils are learning and understanding basic mathematical concepts. Yet we are placing considerable emphasis on this skill. We are also placing importance on whether children as young as four can recognise the difference between an upper and a lower-case letter, and whether they can put this knowledge to use. Are we right to ask very young children to achieve these tasks? Certainly they will spend a substantial part of the school day labouring to do so – and it will be considerably harder for them at this age than it would be a couple of years later.

Parents notice that their children are restless and generally out of sorts when they get home – full of unspent energy. But the emphasis is on teaching nowadays, rather than on how children learn. There was a long period when student teachers were not encouraged to debate the issue. In the UK, unlike other European countries, psychology and child development was not a routine part of their training. So who decides what is an appropriate education for young children, and what is this based upon?

The Lessons from Abroad

In Italy, Switzerland, Scandinavia and many parts of Asia, formal skills are left until the children are six or more, yet they seem to do as well, if not better, than their English counterparts in international comparisons. The Italian region of Reggio Emilia is renowned for its progressive

curriculum for three-to-six-year-olds. Here, children's needs are considered very seriously in terms of the kind of learning experiences they are offered and these are continuously monitored and assessed. Their physical and mental development is encouraged through drama, music, art and practical science. It may be no coincidence that the region has fewer disaffected low achievers than Britain.

In New Zealand, academics, community leaders, parents and teachers began to feel uneasy about the aridity of the curriculum for young children, and all agreed upon a radical new approach to young children's learning. *Te Whariki*, as it is known, was officially adopted by the New Zealand Ministry of Education in 1993.

The New Zealand approach was influential in the thinking behind *Quality and Diversity in Early Learning*, published in 1998 by the largest-ever coalition of early-years organisations, the Early Childhood Education Forum. The book describes how assessing what children are *actually* doing when they are learning can help us to devise a more appropriate curriculum for this age group. It suggests five interlocking areas of learning, each with a relevant goal. For example, 'thinking, imagining and understanding' encompasses making sense of the world, learning to think with empathy about the experiences of others, and testing out ideas. 'Subjects' are seen as inappropriate for this age group and basic skills are seen as a part, rather than the contrived centre, of the curriculum.

In short, such a curriculum takes account of the fact that young children are developing human beings and should not be judged on a narrow range of skills acquired at an inappropriate age. Parents realised this was happening in New Zealand and stopped themselves in time. Should we, in this country, also begin to reassess what we really care about in our children's education?

Tony Blair Should Be Proud to Send His Children to Hounslow Manor. So Why Does it Face Closure?

Judith Judd

We reproduce here a most revealing article which first appeared in *The Independent* on 22 July 2000.

Take two comprehensive schools. One is the London Oratory, attended by the Prime Minister's sons, the high-flying haunt of the middle-classes where 93 per cent of the pupils achieve five good grades at GCSE. The other is Hounslow Manor in West London, where just 17 per cent of the pupils achieve five good grades, where more than one-third are poor enough to qualify for free school meals, and which, if the Prime Minister has his way, could be under threat of closure in the next few years.

Yet, inspectors from Ofsted, the education standards watchdog, have just revealed some startling facts. When they visited the Oratory they judged that 17 per cent of the teaching they saw was very good. None of it was excellent. When they visited Hounslow Manor they decided that 23 per cent of the teaching was very good and 2 per cent was excellent.

Under a new policy announced earlier this year by David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, schools must ensure that 15 per cent of pupils achieve five or more GCSE grades at A* to C over the next three years, irrespective of the pupils' background – or they will face closure and a 'Fresh Start' under new management.

Roger Shortt, Hounslow Manor's head, says that his school is in danger. Because the turnover of pupils is so high and so many of them speak English as a second language, he fears that this year's GCSE results will slip below the magic 15 per cent figure. Last year, they went down from 21 per cent to 17 per cent.

If Hounslow Manor were to close, the inspection report makes clear, a school which is just as good as the one attended by the Prime Minister's sons would disappear.

The same team of inspectors went to both the Oratory and Hounslow Manor. They pronounced both good, and the comments in both reports on teaching, learning and leadership are remarkably similar. At both, inspectors say teaching is 'consistently good' – at Hounslow Manor, nearly two-thirds of lessons were thought good or better; at the Oratory, it was just over two-thirds. At the former, there is a 'team of dedicated, flexible and innovative teachers'; at the latter, 'teachers know their pupils well and are always willing to help individuals'.

Mr Shortt provides 'very good leadership'; the Oratory's head, John McIntosh, gives 'decisive and effective leadership'.

For the rest, the inspectors say, both schools have their

weaknesses. Hounslow needs to improve performance at A-level; the Oratory must do better in its relationship with parents. The former should improve its personal, social and health education; the latter is not complying with national curriculum requirements for design and technology.

So What is the Difference?

Why do so many pupils at the Oratory achieve well at GCSE while so few do so at Hounslow Manor? The answer is in the first paragraph of the reports – the pupils. Pupils at the Oratory usually stay there throughout their school career. Those at Hounslow Manor come and go with bewildering speed: two-thirds of the 16-year-olds have joined the school after the age of 11. 'Approximately, half the pupils have English as an additional language, but 150 pupils, a very high number, are at the early stages of learning English.' At the Oratory, only nine pupils are in the early stages of learning English. Only 7.9 per cent of pupils at the Oratory are eligible for free school meals – the indicator commonly used as a measure of social deprivation – compared with 35 per cent at Hounslow.

Pupils' attainment when they enter the Oratory is well above the national average. At Hounslow, it is well below and nearly one-third of pupils have special educational needs.

Mr Shortt said the insistence that all schools should be asked to get 15 per cent of pupils through five good grades was nonsense. 'We have an Ofsted report which proves it. If a qualified Ofsted team comes and says a school is doing a good job, that should be it. People need to go to a school and experience its quality rather than making judgements on the basis of statistics.'

He also questioned the role of exam league tables which offer only raw results, do not take into account pupils' backgrounds and fail to measure the progress pupils have made.

'The local community see us as a place with a lot of refugees and they look at the league tables and say that is not the place for my child. But we have a very rich and absolutely wonderful school.'

The Government's announcement this week that pupils from overseas whose first language is not English who have arrived during the 21 months before GCSE exams will not be counted in the league tables will help a little.

Mr Shortt said: 'Of course, we are pleased, but it doesn't take into account other pupils who arrive in the school less than two years before GCSE. It also assumes that younger pupils who join us with no English are not at a disadvantage.'

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: 'This illustrates the irrelevance of league tables and the inappropriateness of nationally dictated targets. The achievement of those targets is inevitably much more difficult in one school than in another where circumstances are dramatically different. Failure to achieve those targets is not a reflection of poor teaching.'

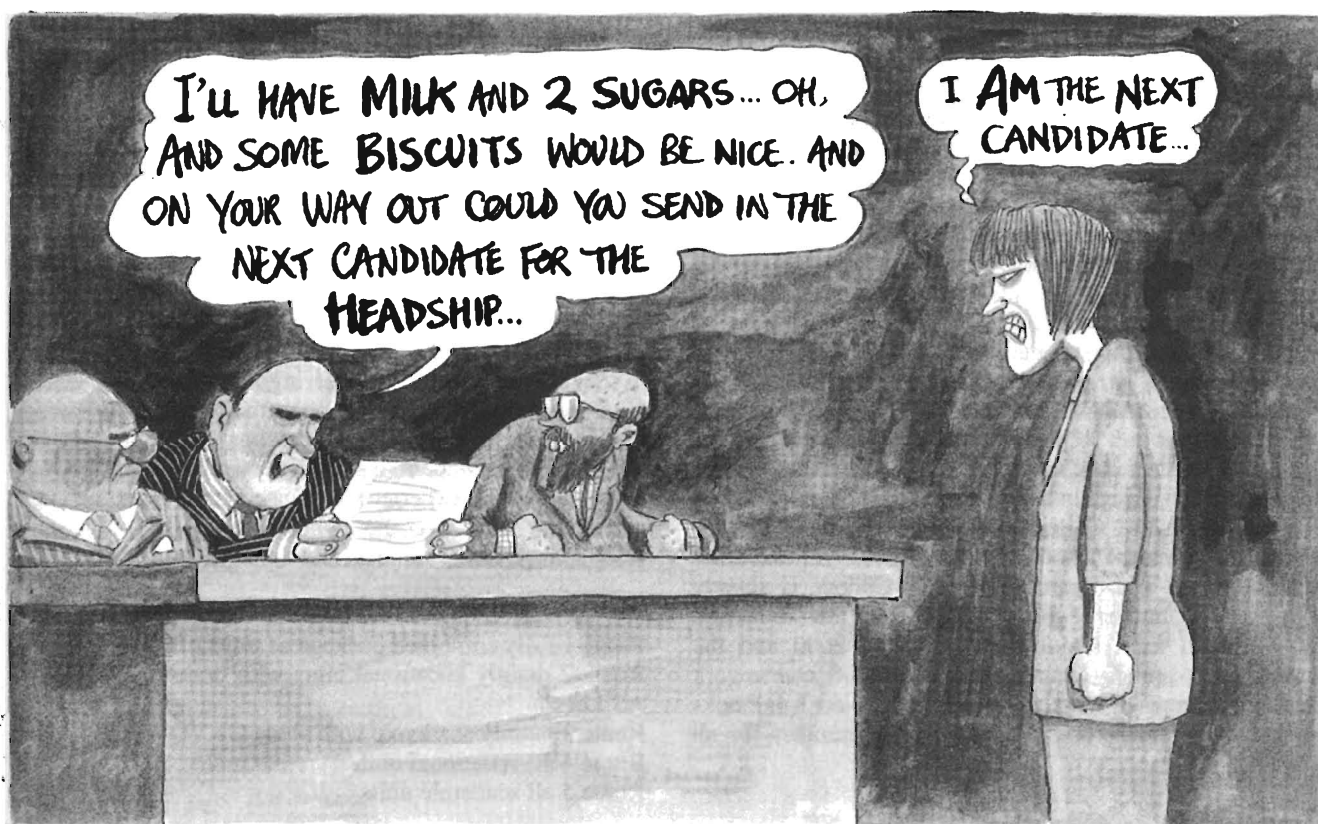
Mr Blunkett promised before the last election that Labour would introduce 'value-added' league tables which

will show the progress pupils have made.

Head teachers recently attacked the Department for Education and Employment for its delay in producing performance tables which would give a fairer picture of schools. Officials said the process was complicated and they were determined to get it right. They promised improved tables within the next few years.

John Dunford, general secretary of the Secondary Heads Association, said: 'The comparison between the two inspection reports illustrates that the Government's policy requiring schools to get a least 15 per cent of good grades is a nonsense. It also reveals how that policy threatens to undermine Ofsted's judgements.'

Mr McIntosh was not available for comment.



Martin Rowson, *The Times Educational Supplement*, 13 October 2000

Up for a New Curriculum

Ian Duckett

Ian Duckett teaches at East Berkshire College. Here he describes the College's response to recent new initiatives in the 14+ and 16 to 19 curricula.

Advanced level GCE available in both the traditional linear and modular forms; a revised three unit Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualification; revised Advanced GNVQs, including new six and three-unit qualifications and the piloting of a new Key Skills qualification, are some of the key elements of East Berkshire College's Curriculum 2000 offering, to meet the need for broader and more flexible 14+ and 16–19 curricula.

Following *Qualifying for Success* and other Dearing and post-Dearing publications and developments, the curriculum offer 14+ needs to include new vocational options; 16+ needs to include a variety of possible AS and GNVQ options and increasing opportunities for distance learning and use of the internet, while the 16–19 curriculum of the future needs to be unitised and demonstrate breadth and flexibility. All of these requirements put pressure on educational institutions to develop local progression packages and compacts,

Ken Spours, one of the chief architects of the new curriculum said, at an INSET Conference held at East Berkshire College on 8 December 1999, that *Qualifying for Success* is a 'response to the narrowness of the advanced level curriculum'. East Berkshire College aims to meet this challenge in a number of ways.

East Berkshire College recognises the need for co-operation with local schools, LEAs, TECs, CfBT and other local agencies and organisations. The College is already discussing a number of joint ventures from the production of a Slough LEA Guide to Curriculum 2000 and the introduction and systematic production of coursework leaflets, schemes of work and the use of subject handbooks and learning guides across advanced programmes for all students.

Areas for future co-operation might include:

- Production of a Slough LEA Guide to Curriculum 2000;
- The systematic production of course leaflets, schemes of work, and the use of subject handbooks and learning guides across Advanced (A2, AS and GNVQ) Programmes for all students in the LEA schools and East Berkshire College;
- The management, monitoring and overseeing of a number of curriculum development projects which will be unit- and subject-specific and available as units of study across the whole Post-19 provision;
- An innovative approach with the A Level and GNVQ schemes of work and the production of a supporting cross-college staff development package;
- The provision of new units of study;
- Revisiting issues relating to modularisation and unitisation;
- Exploring the Open University, National Extension College, Open College Network and other unitised

provision in collaboration with East Berkshire College's own Diverse Learning Team in order to gain a clearer insight into how large-scale modular programmes work in practice;

- A progression route through East Berkshire College's own HE programmes and the linked HE programmes;
- Establishing LEA wide teams of flexible learning advisers to enable independent learners to build a meaningful and unitised programme of study.

East Berkshire College Developments: a flexible curriculum

Curriculum 2000 provides for the first time an opportunity for students to choose to study between four and five units, comprising 'A/S' units and some units from particular Advanced GNVQ areas of study. All of these new Advanced GCE and GNVQ units are a part of a new and exciting era for learning within programmes for study and complement new ideas and thinking within the *Qualifying for Success* and other Post-Dearing initiatives.

In response to these new opportunities, East Berkshire College offers individualised learning programmes where the individual student can enjoy negotiating a learning programme with experienced advisers and tutors. The new curriculum will give the opportunity of selecting units from a range of AS subjects and the new style GNVQs.

Five Routes to a chosen qualifications package

Route 1 fully combined package of units of study

Route 2 mainly vocational units with one A Level or two AS Levels

Route 3 mainly academic with some GNVQ units

Route 4 all vocational units

Route 5 all academic units

An Entitlement Curriculum

- High standards at a Centre of Excellence
- Maximum choice
- Independence
- Flexibility of learning programme
- An Entitlement Curriculum and the right to study
- A meaningful academic and vocational mix of units of study
- Key Skills
- Tutorial Programme
- Higher Education advice
- Careers advice

Most of all, meaningful guidance will be required to enable students to find their way through the new curriculum and to gain an appropriate qualification for their higher education and employment needs.

Post Compulsory Education in the New Millennium

DAVID E GRAY & COLIN GRIFFIN (Eds), 2000
London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (Higher Education
Policy Series 54) ISBN 1 85 302 774X, 288pp £16.99

In the introduction, the editors clearly nail their colours to the mast: the book aims to show 'how intended outcomes have often been eroded or even distorted by the interaction between policy intention and resistance from various agents and stakeholders in the sector' (p15). Some might feel that this resistance could have been stronger, with advantage for all sectors of education over the last thirty years, but in the context of *Learning to Succeed*, the volume is concerned with further and, to a certain extent, higher education.

The contributors (including *FORUM*'s own Clyde Chitty) are clearly of the Honest Interest and a well balanced succession of chapters demonstrate not only the state we're in but the state we might be in if the full intentions of government policy come to pass.

The first section – Issues in Vocational Education and Training – includes a clear summary of post-16 vocational provision (by Chitty), a characteristically acute and accurate critique of New Labour thinking on education by Patrick Ainley and Bill Bailey and an equally characteristically elegant account of lifelong learning as a late-modern phenomenon by Peter Jarvis. The second section, highlighting the new qualifications, develops a

splendid critique of NVQs and demonstrates the anti-democratic nature of these, particularly at lower levels.

Management and funding issues are the concern of the third section, including a case study on the management of teaching in FE, an account of sixth form colleges, their genesis and ethos, and an interesting discussion of the mass market in higher education by Gareth Williams. Two contributions on initial teacher education and a comparative international perspective round off the book.

Exigencies of space prevent more than the briefest of recommendations but I would unreservedly commend its reading to scholars of, and participants in, Post Compulsory Education. It serves to demonstrate that, if we do not hang together, we shall assuredly hang separately, in both intellectual and institutional terms, and it would be an interesting context by which to approach the world of the Learning and Skills Councils (and, I suspect, a future world in which LEAs will fade into obsolescence).

I have one cavil: on page 8, the editors tell us that the distinction between education and training is 'increasingly problematic'. This in itself seems to beg many questions and is, I think, mistaken. The debate, though, could stimulate another volume – sadly the publishers are ceasing to commission volumes in this excellent series.

Malcolm Barry, *Goldsmiths College,
University of London*

BOOK REVIEW

An Education in Education: Penguin Education (and Penguin Education Specials)

I wasn't interested in education when I started teaching. The chronic teacher shortages of the late sixties meant that jobs were easily come by. No teacher training was required. No one bothered much if your degree was not in the subject you had been hired to teach. It was a way to make a living until something else came along. Only it didn't, and by the early 1970's I was teaching a small class of 'remedial' pupils – 3Z in Hut nought. Then as now classroom disruption and disaffection were a cause for media concern. The pupils of 3Z exemplified this concern. I too was concerned, and finally beginning to question why school did not seem to be working for these young people.

It was at this point that a friend suggested I read *Deschooling Society* by Ivan Illych, a catholic priest working in South America. This short book challenged my entire existing perception of the institution school and its role in society. In so doing it began to throw light on the reasons why school was failing the young people I was teaching. The book is in the form of a series of essays with titles such as 'The Failure to Improve the Education of the Poor in Advanced Societies' and is erudite but approachable. In it Illych develops the idea of the 'learning web', pre-figuring the use of the internet in knowledge exchange.

This book was one of the first published by Penguin Education – a new series under the aegis of Penguin Books – and was a Penguin Education Special. It is hard now to convey the excitement generated by this iconoclastic series. Each new publication added to the rich stew of radical ideas which I devoured voraciously.

Many of the titles came from America and dealt with the institution of schooling itself. *School is Dead* by Everett Reimer which examines alternatives in and to formal education, and *Compulsory Miseducation* by Paul Goodman, a swingeing critique of the institution of schooling in capitalist societies, are examples. In their highly polemical book *Schooling as a Subversive Activity* Neil Postgate & Charles Weinergarten state 'We are not 'against' bureaucracies any more than we are 'for' them. They are like electric plugs. They will probably not go away, but they do need to be controlled if the prerogatives of a democratic society are to remain visible and usable. This is why we ask that schools be 'subversive', that they serve as a kind of anti-bureaucracy bureaucracy, providing the young with a 'What is it good for?' perspective on its own society. Certainly, it is unrealistic to expect those who control the media to perform that function. Nor the

generals and the politicians. Nor is it reasonable to expect the 'intellectuals' to do it, for they do not have access to the majority of youth. But schoolteachers do, and so the primary responsibility rests with them.' Heady stuff indeed!

Then there were the books about children – the micro level – looking at ways of working with the disadvantaged and disillusioned in a variety of settings from the slums of New York's East side in *The Lives of Children* by George Dennison to the school of Barbiana in the mountains outside Florence where eight Italian boys put together *Letter to a Teacher*. Here a devastating indictment of the Italian education system was accompanied by the pupils' own suggestions as to how to reform it. (They ended up running the school themselves.)

This series flashed like a comet across the educational firmament in the early nineteen seventies, chiming in with the post 1968 radicalism that was developing in other spheres of activity. Many of the books were written from a Marxist perspective. They were unashamedly polemical and shared a common theme concerning the empowerment of the under-privileged and the dispossessed. The titles began to appear on reading lists drawn up by progressive educators in universities and teacher training establishments. Later, the British perspective was incorporated into the series. Here the failure of the institution of schooling to recognise and meet the needs of working class children was the common thread. *Tinker, tailor... the myth of cultural deprivation* edited by Nell Keddie, and *Education for Democracy* edited by David Rubenstein & Colin Stoneman, serve as examples here.

It is almost impossible to imagine such a series being produced in today's educational climate. Instead of the liberation of teaching and learning so passionately advocated in these texts we have ended up with a system with a rigidity which stifles creative pedagogy and relevant content. In the West, working class children continue to underachieve and to be disadvantaged and disaffected. In the third world, written about so movingly by Paulo Friere in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, oppression and crushing poverty still define life for the vast majority.

I went on to do a Master's degree in the sociology of education where I encountered many more books which influenced my thought and practice, but nothing that was quite as exciting, inspiring and revelatory as the imprints from the late, and much lamented, Penguin Education.

Jenny Thewlis

REVIEW ARTICLE

Love and Chalkdust

PAUL FRANCIS, 2000

Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6JQ: Liberty Books
256pp, £8.00 (paperback), ISBN 0 9520568 1 X

J.L. Carr's book, *The Harpole Report*, was first published in 1972. Frank Muir described it as 'the funniest and perhaps the truest story about running a school that I ever have read.' I was reminded of it as I read *Love and Chalkdust* by Paul Francis. Like *Harpole*, it follows a year in the life of a school, documenting the inter-personal tensions, the institutional crises and the bureaucratic nonsense with which schools and teachers are bombarded, now on a daily basis. Like *Harpole*, too, it does so with great humour and humanity. There are differences, though. *Harpole* is a report on the work of the temporary head of a village primary school and takes the form of extracts from his journal of the year, together with various other documents, including memos from staff members and comments by an older head.

Love and Chalkdust is a novel set in the Rab Butler Secondary School. Terry O'Mara, a young teacher who has just spent a term at a neighbouring school, the rival (and rather up-market) King Edwards's, now has a temporary post at Rab Butler. Will he be successful? Will he obtain a permanent post at the end of the year? Will he want a permanent post at the end of it?

Rab Butler's Senior Management Team consists of Head Teacher Colin Parnaby (who spends most of the year trying to decide whether to retire), and his deputies Rod Spencer and Chris Macdonald. Rod's priorities are school security and marketing, having a dig at Chris and trying to make sure he's in with a chance if Parnaby *does* decide to go. Chris Macdonald is more interested in education and equal opportunities, having a dig at Rod and trying to make sure she's in with a chance if Parnaby *does* decide to go. The row about Rod Spencer's new school gates (which Chris Macdonald had known nothing about until they appeared) and the hilariously detailed arguments about how they are to be kept locked, will strike a chord with anyone who has ever worked in a school. This is just one example of the problems the two deputies cause Colin Parnaby. His usual strategy seems to be to interview them alternately – and agree with both of them!

One of Chris's responsibilities is personal and social education. In the light of government diktats on the subject, she views her aim as being 'to put the children off sex and drugs without admitting the existence of homosexual attraction, extra-marital sex or pleasant sensations from drugs'. All this, 'without offering an opinion of any kind, other than a blind, passionate faith in the unique perfection of the married state, a faith which for Chris was not borne out by experience; neither by her own,

nor by the parents of pupils with whom she came into contact. Still, that was the politics of education: never mind reality, feed the myth'.

The book is full of many other delicious comments about the state of education today. A teacher reads 'another glossy account of the government's latest triumph in education policy'. An Ofsted inspector says of the lay inspector's role, 'you had to have at least one inspector who didn't know anything'. Terry tells a student who can't attend his lesson because he's got to help Rod Spencer with his video marketing the school, 'Ah, marketing! Well I can see how that must take precedence over anything so peripheral as lessons'. And of one of Rod's memos, about the National Curriculum, a teacher comments, 'Rod's paper is a circular from the planet Zarg'.

Terry plans a special drama lesson, only to find that the hall is being used to paint scenery for the play and that a PE class has to come in because it's pouring with rain outside. There's an argument about the new traveller children Rod Spencer has recruited. Chris Macdonald wants them thrown out but Rod insists they keep them on the roll until after Form 7, then 'ditch them if you must'. Dale and Muptaz, two Year 11 students, start up a business selling fake burglar alarms and drum up custom by organising some local house-breaking, thus demonstrating a level of entrepreneurialism of which Thatcher could have been proud.

And so the year rolls on. 'July began with a heatwave. Second half of summer term, no year elevens in school, exams almost over and holidays in sight. A few year tens strutted their stuff, practising for next year, but noone was very impressed. There were clear skies, bright sunshine and a warming glow, as assignments gave way to assignations and the serious work of tanning got under way. By tacit agreement, the demands of school shrivelled in the heat, homework became a rarity, and a sense of exhausted well-being spread almost everywhere.'

Love and Chalkdust is a brilliant portrayal of the life of just about any school, as funny and true as *Harpole* was in its day. And it has some serious messages about the nature of education, without every becoming preachy. The characters are well-observed and the dialogue – and it's almost all dialogue – is well written. It would make a great TV drama.

I won't spoil the ending by telling you whether Colin Parnaby finally decides to retire, nor whether Terry O'Mara decides to stay in teaching and is offered a permanent post. Read *Love and Chalkdust* and find out for yourself!

Derek Gillard

The Plowden Report

When it was suggested at a recent *FORUM* editorial meeting that each member of the board should write 1000 words on a book which has meant much to them during their teaching career, my thoughts turned immediately to The Plowden Report.

Plowden and my teaching career began life at the same time. Indeed, the school where I did my final teaching practice – Brampton CE Primary School in Oxfordshire – was one of those visited by the members of the Plowden Committee. The report was being written as I took up my first post in the autumn of 1966 and was published the following year.

It was a wonderful time to be starting out in the profession. The eleven-plus was being abolished, freeing primary schools from the constraints imposed by the need to ‘get good results’. Streaming was being abandoned. Sybil Marshall was writing about the creativity of primary pupils in *An Experiment in Education*. Comprehensive schools and middle schools were being established. Teacher-led curriculum innovation was being actively encouraged. Plowden, the first thorough review of primary education since Sir Henry Hadow’s Report of 1931, was very much a product of its time, full of enthusiasm and optimism.

The essence of Plowden was summed up at the start of Chapter 2: ‘At the heart of the educational process lies the child’. And not just the child, but the *individual* child. ‘Individual differences between children of the same age are so great that any class, however homogeneous it seems, must always be treated as a body of children needing individual and different attention.’

In addition to the curriculum, the Committee was clear. ‘One of the main educational tasks of the primary school is to build on and strengthen children’s intrinsic interest in learning and lead them to learn for themselves rather than from fear of disapproval or desire for praise.’

The report’s recurring themes were individual learning, flexibility in the curriculum, the use of the environment, learning by discovery, and the importance of the evaluation of children’s progress – teachers should ‘not assume that only what is measurable is valuable’.

The history of Plowden has been chequered, so say the least. From Callaghan’s Ruskin speech of 1976, political forces began to shape curriculum thinking and development. Notions of core, common and national curriculum all seemed to have at their root the idea that, somehow, the child was to be fitted for the service of the state, or at least to fill his or her allotted role in society. ‘Since school education prepares the child for adult life, the way in which the school helps him to develop his potential must also be related to his subsequent needs and responsibilities as an active member of our society.’ (*The School Curriculum*, DES, 1981) As Kathy Sylva commented, ‘Education is about nurturing the moral, aesthetic and creative aspects in children’s development, not about ‘getting the country somewhere’.’ (Kathy Sylva, Plowden: history and prospect, *Oxford Review of Education*, 13(1), 1987)

The writers of the ‘Black Papers’ and their followers criticised much of what the primary schools were doing and blamed the Plowden Report for what they saw as ‘educational decline’. Their arguments did not stand up to critical scrutiny. Indeed, all the evidence was that standards, especially of literacy and numeracy, had risen steadily since the end of the second world war. The popular press notion that education was now to be all play and no work was mischievous. The William Tyndale affair, however, gave critics a field day. A careful reading of the Report on the affair shows clearly that it was a case of mismanagement. It was nonsense to suggest, as some did, that this was the inevitable outcome of Plowden-inspired progressive education policies. It was the outcome of incompetence.

In fact, government publications of the eighties tended to criticise schools because they had *not* taken on board the lessons of Plowden rather than the reverse. ‘In a majority of schools, over-concentration on the practice of basic literacy and numeracy unrelated to the context in which they are needed means that these skills are insufficiently extended or applied’, and ‘Pupils are given insufficient responsibility for pursuing their own enquiries and how to tackle their work’ (*Better Schools*, DES, 1985).

In 1987, Benford & Ingham wrote in *The Times Educational Supplement* (6 March) about the findings of a House of Commons Select Committee Report, *Achievement in Primary Schools*. In their article *Another Leap Forward*, they suggested that it was a pity that more schools had not acted upon Plowden’s suggestions in a thorough and well-prepared way and concluded that ‘Inaction by [the teaching] profession necessitated the translation of Hadow (1931) into Plowden (1967). Each was welcomed in its own time. Each was subsequently neglected where it mattered most: in the classroom’.

On the twentieth anniversary of the publication of The Plowden Report, a leader in *The Times Educational Supplement* (6 March 1987) summed up the situation well. ‘The Plowden Report has been misquoted, misunderstood, over-simplified, torn to shreds by academics and used by a few schools to justify some fairly mindless practice.’

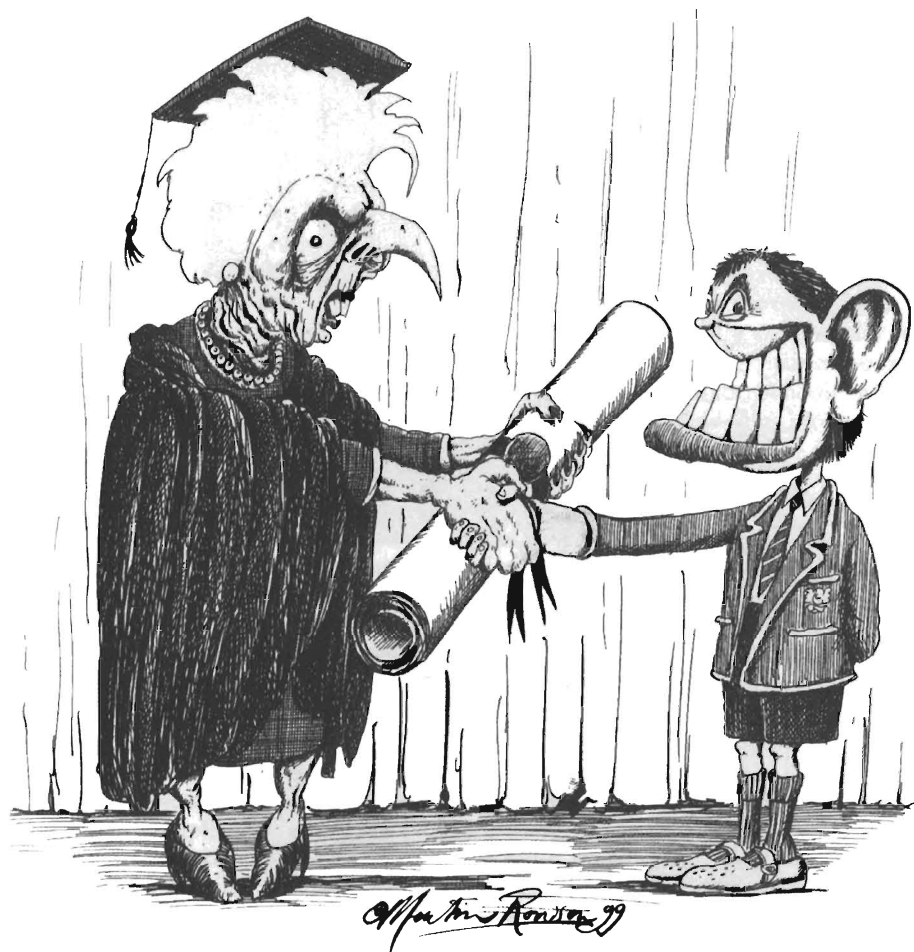
All this is history, of course. I retired from full-time teaching three years ago. Plowden’s philosophy – and mine – played no part in Thatcher’s educational agenda and I was disillusioned and fed up with having to implement policies of which I profoundly disapproved.

But one day, when DfEE officials realise that what is measurable is not all that is valuable, when teachers begin to notice that children learn nothing by being tested, when parents are sick of their young children suffering from exam-induced stress, when the public begins to realise that the results of national tests can always be manipulated to achieve politicians’ targets, and when decent people decide to stand up against the name-and-shame culture of failure, then perhaps someone, somewhere, is going to remember that ‘at the heart of the educational process lies the child’.

Derek Gillard

State Schools

New Labour and the Conservative Legacy



Editors:
CLYDE CHITTY and JOHN DUNFORD

CAN SELECTION END UNDER NEW LABOUR?

Selection labels children as failures at 11 years old. It should not be part of the education landscape under a Labour Government.

The School Standards and Framework Act introduced legislation to allow parental ballots to end selection.



The Campaign for State Education (CASE) campaigns for the best for all children. CASE membership is open to all who care about state education. Members pay £10 (£5 unwaged) a year, receive the CASE magazine *Parents and Schools* five times a year and have voting rights and representation on the National Executive Committee, which decides CASE policy. Support CASE by becoming a member, send your cheque with your name and address to:

CASE

Campaign for State Education,
158 Durham Road, London SW20 0DG
Tel / Fax 020 8944 8206

George Freeland

Brian Simon

George Freeland, a founder member of the *FORUM* Editorial Board, died aged 88 early last year. He played a crucial role in the launch of *FORUM* in 1958, achieving a national reputation as a pioneer of non-streaming within the junior school. His firm conviction, after 20 years experience as a class teacher in streamed schools in Leicester, that this practice was educationally highly deleterious, led him to the then revolutionary conclusion that such rigid divisions within the primary school must be abolished and the whole school developed as a unity with equal (high) aspirations for all.

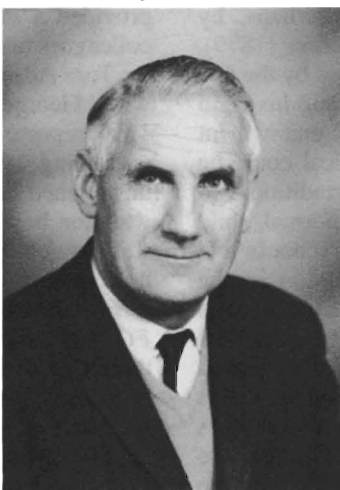
In 1952 George was appointed to his first headship, at Taylor School in a slum area in Leicester. This is when I first got to know him, having been appointed at the University College there in 1950. The previous head had, in 1951, deliberately unstreamed his top class, believing streaming to be both socially and educationally deleterious. George carried on the process with the full support of his staff and parents. An early critic of the doctrines of mental testing, then widely accepted in the teaching profession and elsewhere, George believed in the essential educability of the normal child, if offered an appropriate content of education and methodology.

It is impossible today to reconstruct the hegemony of mental testing (IQ's etc.) and the consequent practice of streaming in the 1950s. Brian Jackson's brilliant research, *Streaming, an Educational System in Miniature*, published in 1963, clearly showed its tight grip on the system and all those concerned. 85% of his sample of teachers supported streaming. 'Not to stream in a large junior school', wrote a Lincoln headteacher, 'would be the height of professional irresponsibility'. Such was the commonly accepted view when George and his predecessor took the action they held necessary on pedagogical and educational grounds. The very few questioning the practice were then regarded as red revolutionaries. When I was invited by a local NUT association to talk on the subject the meeting first dealt with routine business. That completed, the president and secretary ostentatiously left the room leaving me to cope as best I could. Feelings were running high – this was by no means an unusual experience.

George's involvement first hit the headlines (literally) with the publication of an article in a symposium, *New Trends in English Education*, published in 1957. Entitled 'Purpose and Method in the Unstreamed Junior School', this was a very well-written, sober statement based on George's experience at Taylor School over the last few years. It set out very clearly both the reasons why the change was made and its outcome, expressing George's firm conviction of the advantages of what George called 'the unified school'. Other articles in this book dealt with new developments in the secondary field, but George's article was picked up and given wide publicity by the popular *Liberal News Chronicle* (since defunct), thus ensuring a wide readership.

Nor was this all. George's article was reprinted in the

FORUM publication *Non-Streaming in the Junior School* (1964) which also contained our written 'Evidence' to the Plowden Committee then enquiring into primary education. Here George reached out to teachers generally in a big way. We were astonished at the reception of this



little book. A first printing of 2,000 was sold out before publication, brought to teachers' notice only through *FORUM*. Several schools ordered a dozen copies or more. There was a second, then a third printing. *FORUM*'s 'Evidence' was reproduced in the journal. I reckon that well over 10,000 copies of this flooded into the schools in 1964–65. Maybe this partly accounts for the extraordinary rapid swing against the practice of streaming in junior schools which took place in the mid-late 1960s. By 1970 it was hardly possible to find a streamed junior school anywhere in the country. George certainly played an important part in encouraging this highly unusual but almost unanimous

swing of opinion.

It is well known that, in 1967, the Plowden Committee came out against streaming, and this was, perhaps, decisive. *FORUM* played its part here too, submitting a lengthy and closely reasoned memorandum presenting the case for non-streaming, citing all the recent relevant research. This was compiled with George's help. It impressed the committee sufficiently for them to invite us to present our case orally and submit to questioning.

Our delegation consisted of George, Eric Linfield (also head of an unstreamed junior school) and myself. After dealing with the theoretical issues, George and Eric presented their actual experience with their schools. The committee was clearly impressed, but we were then submitted to a sharp and acute interrogation by Professor A. J. Ayer, member of the Committee and then the Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford University. This we survived, and George's confidence and wide experience of teaching were crucial. Finally Ayer expressed himself satisfied, notwithstanding a brush with the Chair (Molly Brearley) who felt his intervention was too lengthy. In any case not a single member of the committee dissented from the recommendation to abolish streaming.

Through the mid-1960s and 1970s *FORUM* continued to press the case for non-streaming, discussing the pedagogical and educational issues involved in many articles. Successful conferences were also run from 1962

attended by large numbers of teachers and addressed by George and other pioneers who now joined George on the Editorial Board, bringing their experience to our general discussions. So, primary education took its place as a centre of our concern, alongside our related campaign for comprehensive secondary education. These were the two prongs of our critique at that time, George playing a central part in the primary field.

When Robin Pedley resigned his membership of the partnership running *FORUM* (PSW Educational Publications) in 1963 (on moving to Exeter), George took his place as a partner with Jack Walton and myself, retaining this responsibility for very many years. He was a superb colleague, always supportive. *FORUM* owes a great deal to his work on our behalf.

Thinking back on George's life experiences, I have come to see him as representative of all that was best in the elementary school tradition. He embodied the 'pedagogical optimism' which suffused the system in the 1880s and especially the 1890s, sparked, perhaps, by Bain's seminal publication *Education as a Science* (1879). It was this tradition that was trampled underfoot by the rise of mental testing, personified by Cyril Burt and his rigid mechanistic doctrines which held that genetic endowment determined development so that nothing radical could be achieved by education and teaching. But the tradition, and outlook, concerning the educability of the normal child continued, if in a sub-fuse way, within the schools and among teachers to find a quite new expression in the 1960s. After all, a prime objective of the teacher's job is precisely to encourage mental development. In a fine and wide-ranging article published in *FORUM*'s second number (1959) George set out his objectives. Many of his ideas there are highly relevant even today, some 40 years later. This indicates that George totally rejected the determinist ideology that underlay mental testing, and the streaming and selection derived from it, as well as the low expectations as to children's potential achievement, also a product of the ideology of mental testing.

Born in 1911, George was the son of a Leicester family, his father working in a chemists undertaking in Kibworth, a village just south of the city. Passing the eleven plus in 1921 he attended the local grammar school, staying on into the sixth form. Already determined on teaching as a career he gained a place at the College of St Mark and St John where he studied for three years qualifying himself as a teacher and concurrently studying for a London University external degree in English Literature. On leaving the college in 1932, aged 21, George was appointed to Medway Street Junior School, a primary school in the City of Leicester, teaching there for eight years until called up for the army in September 1940. Medway Street was then defined, of course, as an elementary school. Already politically, as well as educationally involved, George joined the local Communist Party at about this time, seeing it as a main bastion against fascism, as many others then did. He later joined the Labour Party.

George spent the bulk of his five years in the army manning search lights, often on remote sites, having also

some involvement with army education. On demobilisation in September 1945 he immediately took up his old job at Medway Street School. Promotion was rapid. Appointed deputy head of Overton Road Junior School, Leicester 1946, then head of Abbey Junior School, George was then appointed head of Taylor Street School. Already at this time (1952), increasingly critical of the received set-up, George determined on abolishing rigid forms of streaming in his school. He was soon joined by others. Through the mid-late 50s and early 60s three other leading heads in Leicester took the same road (Jack Pike, Vivian Payne, Eva Date, later Tom Adams), so now the City of Leicester became closely associated with the main thrust of this reform. All four were colleagues and heads and co-operated together well. Further, the opportunity then existed for individual heads to restructure their schools if they wished. In this case the local authority made no objection to these moves, the local primary inspector (Thomas Goddard) proving supportive. So Leicester provided a stable basis for innovation – George and his colleagues taking full advantage of that freedom.

Tom Adams, who took over as head of Taylor School when George moved to a larger school (Mowmacre) in 1959, reports one teacher's remark at that time: 'I will say one thing: this is a happy school'. Eva Date, who unstreamed her school shortly after also reported that this was 'the best thing ever done in her career ... the school was much happier'. This was a bye-product of unstreaming – in George's view the main objective was to raise standards right across the board, as he argued in the *FORUM* article referred to earlier. To achieve this, hard thinking and a continuous close analysis of procedure were necessary. It was this that George (and others) set out to provide.

The swing to non-streaming in the primary school happened with quite extraordinary rapidity in the mid-late 1960s. The transformation proved stable, teachers powerfully resisting various (sometimes quite brutal) top-down attempts under the Thatcher/Major governments to reverse the trend and re-impose the practice.

The pioneers of the 1960s did their work well and effectively – among them George will be remembered by many in Leicester and others more widely for his crucial part in the process, bringing about a permanent change in the structure (and theory) of primary education. It is for those coming after to build anew on the gains then made.

George married a primary teacher, Grace, in May 1940. Their second child, Rosalind, died tragically at the age of five after contracting a tumour of the spine. John, their first child now aged 54 works very successfully in computing. A grandchild gained a good degree in History at Leicester University last year (2000). George himself completed a full professional life at Leicester, finally retiring aged 65 in 1976 as head of the Alderman Richard Hallam School. His was a full life for education – an outstanding example of professional commitment and creativity for all who follow. *FORUM* owes him a great debt of gratitude.

Note. I owe warm thanks to Grace Freeland and Tom Adams for assistance with this memoir.

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