

# FORUM

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## *Problems of Non-Streaming*

### **The Case for Non-Streaming**

*FORUM'S Evidence to the Plowden Committee*

### **At Arm's Length**

*Michael Marland*

### **Discussion**

*W. E. Booth, E. Edwards, M. F. Oddy, M. J. Baker*

### **Non-Streaming in the Secondary School**

*Report of FORUM conference*

*Edward Blishen*

### **Newsom and the Raising of the School Leaving Age**

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### **The Local Authority and the Probationary Year**

*E. L. Edmonds*

### **Grading and Conditioning**

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### **Visit to the German Democratic Republic**

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### **Educational Psychology and Progressive Teaching**

*E. A. Lunzer*

FOR THE  
DISCUSSION  
OF NEW  
TRENDS IN  
EDUCATION



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# FORUM

## Index to Volume 7

	Page
Academic Potential, New Sources of: G. S. Brosan	52
C.S.E., Teething Troubles with the: B. F. Hobby	99
Chips, Mr., in Winter-time: Julian Ennis	43
Comprehensive Education, The Swing to—Lancashire:	
Joan Simon	62
Comprehensive Education, The Swing to—Staffordshire:	
Joan Simon	90
Comprehensive Further Education: C. A. Thompson	40
Day Release: W. Hatton	59
Discussion	
Colleges of Education in Search of an Identity	96
Harlow Goes Comprehensive	94
Junior College, The	94
Parent-School Relation	18
Parent's View, A	19
Personal Development and Further Education	95
Primary Education, A Principal of	56
Second Child, The	18
Unstreamed Schools, What can be taught in?	19
Educational Psychology and Progressive Teaching: E. A. Lunzer	32
German Democratic Republic, FORUM Visits the: Edward Blishen	68
German Democratic Republic, Visit to the: H. Raymond King	31
Grading and Conditioning: C. Godden	29
Hesitant Partners, The: J. Longden	56
Intelligence, Some Thoughts on the Nature of: Joyce Hutton	106
Junior College, The: M. E. Mumford	44
Local Authorities and Educational Reorganisation—A Summary	61
Local Authority, The, and the Probationary Year: E. L. Edmonds	27
Marriage Guidance: J. R. Willetts	97
Newsom and the Raising of the School Leaving Age: Peter Shuttlewood	25
Non-Streaming in the Secondary School: Edward Blishen	21
Non-Streaming, The Case for (Evidence to Plowden Committee)	3
Notes by the Way: B. F. Hobby	55
Parents and Schools, A View of the Relationship Between, at Arm's Length: Michael Marland	15
Personal Development and Further Education: Roy Prideaux	49
Streaming and Non-Streaming: S. G. Rees	80
Unstreamed Comprehensive School, Towards an: D. Thompson	82
Youth Service Debate: Bernard Davies	103

## AUTHORS

	Page
Blishen, Edward: Non-Streaming in the Secondary School	21
Blishen, Edward: FORUM visits the German Democratic Republic	68
Brosan, G. S.: New Sources of Academic Potential	52
Davies, Bernard: Youth Service Debate	103
Edmonds, E. L.: The Local Authority and the Probationary Year	27
Ennis, Julian: Mr. Chips in Winter-time	43
Godden, C.: Grading and Conditioning	29
Hatton, W.: Day Release	59
Hobby, B. F.: Notes by the Way	55
Hobby, B. F.: Teething Troubles with the C.S.E.	99
Hutton, Joyce: Some Thoughts on the Nature of Intelligence	106
King, H. Raymond: Visit to the German Democratic Republic	31
Longden, J.: The Hesitant Partners	56
Lunzer, E. A.: Educational Psychology and Progressive Teaching	32
Marland, Michael: A View of the Relationship Between Parents and Schools	15
Mumford, M. E.: The Junior College	44
Prideaux, Roy: Personal Development and Further Education	49
Rees, S. G.: Streaming and Non-Streaming	80
Shuttlewood, Peter: Newsom and the Raising of the School Leaving Age	25
Simon, Joan: The Swing to Comprehensive Education—Lancashire	62
Simon, Joan: The Swing to Comprehensive Education—Staffordshire	90
Thompson, C. A.: Comprehensive Further Education	40
Thompson, D.: Towards an Unstreamed Comprehensive School	82
Willetts, J. R.: Marriage Guidance	97

## Index to Volume 8

American Schools, Some Aspects of: David Rubinstein	19
Binary System, The: F. C. A. Cammaerts	42
Comprehensive Education, The Concept of: Brian Simon	39
Comprehensive Education, The Content of: G. Price	62
Comprehensive Reorganisation in Bristol: Robin Keen	22
Comprehensive Schools Committee, The: David Grugeon	59
Counselling and Personal and Social Welfare: A. W. Rowe	99
Discussion	
Non-Streamed, English for the	91
Non-Streaming in a Comprehensive School	90
Review Criticism	92
Schools and the Consumer	18
Team Teaching	92
Team Teaching: A Plea for Experiment	18
Education, National Policy in	75
Flexible School, The: Peter Mauger	60
French, Some Notes on Teaching: Roy Palmer	28
Graduate Training, A Two Year Experiment in: J. P. Tuck	57
Junior School, The—Approaches to Non-Streaming: John Coe	76
Junior School, The—Anatomy of the Non-Streamed Classroom: FORUM Observer	79
Local Authority, The, and the Probationer: L. G. W. Sealey	55
Parents and Teachers: Lewis Spolton	27
Probationers Talking	
The Leicester Conference: George Kitson	46
New Education Fellowship Group: Caroline Nicholson	48
Probationary Problems: E. Benton	51
Challenge and Response: Sheila Hicking	52
School Television, FORUM looks at: C. Warren and P. M. Lewis	9
School, The, and Social Change: Charity James	3
Secondary School, The—Unstreamed Methods in the 'Middle School': C. J. Hetherington	86
Secondary School, The—Inter-Disciplinary Enquiry: Peter Mauger	93
Secondary School, The—Experiments in 'Theme' Teaching: Beryl Jones and Margaret Horne	96
Staff Room, In the: Julian Ennis	99
Team Teaching: D. P. Church, H. I. Garrity and G. James	6
Wasted Year, A?: B. J. Mawby	53

## AUTHORS

Benton, E.: Probationary Problems	51
Cammaerts, F. C. A.: The Binary System in Higher Education	42
Church, D. P.; Garrity, H. I.; James, G.: Team Teaching	6
Coe, John: Approaches to Non-Streaming	76
Ennis, Julian: In the Staff Room	99
FORUM Observer: Anatomy of the Non-Streamed Classroom	79
Grugeon, David: The Comprehensive Schools Committee	59
Hetherington, C. J.: Unstreamed Methods in the 'Middle School'	86
Hicking, Sheila: Challenge and Response	52
James, Charity: The School and Social Change	3
Jones, Beryl; Horne, Margaret: Experiments in 'Theme' Teaching	96
Keen, Robin: Comprehensive Reorganisation in Bristol	22
Kitson, George: The Leicester Conference	46
Mawby, B. J.: A Wasted Year?	53
Mauger, Peter: The Flexible School	60
Mauger, Peter: Inter-Disciplinary Enquiry	93
Nicholson, Caroline: New Education Fellowship Group	48
Palmer, Roy: Some Notes on Teaching French	28
Price, G.: The Content of Comprehensive Education	62
Rowe, A. W.: Counselling and Personal and Social Welfare	99
Rubinstein, David: Some Aspects of American Schools	19
Sealey, L. G. W.: The Local Authority and the Probationer	55
Simon, Brian: The Concept of Comprehensive Education	39
Spolton, Lewis: Parents and Teachers	27
Tuck, J. P.: A Two Year Experiment in Graduate Training	57
Warren, C.; Lewis, P. M.: FORUM looks at School Television	9



# NON-STREAMING

There is a growing interest, and a growing literature, on the whole question of streaming in primary and secondary schools. It is evident that the movement towards non-streaming, which is gathering way, is closely linked up with the parallel movement towards the reorganisation of secondary education on the lines of the comprehensive school. Both derive from a new approach to the potentialities of children, one which places the major emphasis on the educability of the normal child.

FORUM has played some part in the discussion of these new tendencies. It was because the editorial board held a specific attitude to the question of streaming in junior schools, that it decided to concentrate its Evidence to the Plowden Committee on this issue. The FORUM evidence is published in full in this number. It contains a detailed statement of the case for non-streaming.

It is to be hoped that this document will not be regarded by secondary school and other teachers

as irrelevant to their own concerns. If the case made in the Evidence is accepted, it has very definite implications for secondary education, not only in terms of its overall reorganisation on comprehensive lines, but also in terms of the inner organisation of the secondary school, whatever the type.

In April, FORUM organised a conference—the first of its kind—which dealt with the question of non-streaming not only at the primary, but also at the secondary stage. The report of the session on the secondary school is also published in this number.

Other articles are concerned with the relation of parents and teachers, and with the problems involved in the raising of the school leaving age. Developments in educational psychology which underlie the new approach to children's learning, discussed by Dr. Lunzer, are also particularly relevant to problems of the inner organisation of the school.

## Evidence submitted by the Editorial Board of FORUM to the Plowden Committee

### I. Introduction

1. The Editorial Board of FORUM welcomes the decision of the Minister of Education to institute an enquiry into primary education through the Central Advisory Council for England. The terms of reference—'to consider primary education in all its aspects and the transition from primary to secondary education'—should allow for a comprehensive investigation into a field which, since it concerns the years of early childhood, is of key importance to the educational system as a whole.

2. We would like to make it clear from the start that, in our view, primary education is of equal importance to secondary education, that it is time that this was officially recognised and its full implications worked out and implemented. Acceptance of this policy would involve the reduction of the size of classes to 30 pupils, equal capitation allowances with secondary schools, the removal of salary differentials based on the points system, and such other changes as are required to bring about a full equality of treatment both of the children and of teachers with those in the secondary field.

3. An encouraging feature of English education over the last decade has been the growth of a new flexibility of organisation reflecting new trends in educational theory and practice. The establishment of comprehensive secondary schools, which are taking a variety of forms, finds its educational justification in a more positive assessment of the nature of children and of their capacity for learning than was held in the 1920's and 30's. The movement to break down rigidities in the primary school by the abolition of streaming is, in our view, another significant new tendency, based on a similar outlook, and having very wide educational connotations. Since this question of school organisation underlies all others, we propose to concentrate on it in this document.<sup>1</sup>

4. It may be as well briefly to indicate the credentials of the FORUM Editorial Board to give evidence on this question. The Board contains four experienced Junior School headmasters (one is now a Training College lecturer) all of whom unstreamed their schools during the last ten years since each was convinced, as a result of his experience in running a streamed school, that this form of organisation was educationally deleterious. Two of these have outlined the reasons for unstreaming in published articles.<sup>2</sup> Other members of the Board questioned the educational justification of junior school streaming in published works up to twelve years ago.<sup>3</sup> The Board also contains the headmaster of one of the first secondary modern schools to be organised on a non-streamed basis. In 1962 FORUM organised a conference on non-streaming in the junior school attended by about 200 teachers;<sup>4</sup> a conference on non-streaming in primary and secondary schools has also just been carried through.<sup>5</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> The concept of flexibility of school and classroom organisation has, of course, been widely accepted, in particular by infant school teachers, over a much longer period than the last decade. The work and writings of such pioneers as Robert Owen, Pestalozzi and Froebel all pointed in this direction.

<sup>2</sup> G. Freeland, 'Purpose and Method in the Unstreamed Junior School', *New Trends in English Education* (1957) ed. B. Simon. E. Harvey, 'Unstreaming a Junior School', FORUM, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring, 1960. See also 'Streaming in Schools', *The Guardian*, 28th January, 1963 and *Times Educational Supplement*, 4th January 1963, for a description of the school of which N. T. Morris is head, and 'An Experiment in Non-Streaming', FORUM, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 1962, for a description of the school of which E. Linfield was then deputy head.

<sup>3</sup> B. Simon, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* (1953); E. Blishen, *Minus Eleven Plus*.

<sup>4</sup> This is fully reported in FORUM, Vol. 5, No. 2, Spring, 1963.

<sup>5</sup> Reported in this issue of FORUM.

addition FORUM has consistently carried articles on the implications of non-streaming during the six years of its existence. The movement towards non-streaming was, in fact, one of the 'New Trends in Education' which brought the Editorial Board together in the first place, and which led to the decision to publish a journal devoted to the discussion of these trends. Because our experience is confined to junior schools, our evidence will not include a discussion of the problem of class organisation in infant schools.

5. We hold that the decision whether or not to 'stream' is of crucial importance, involving all the main issues as to the nature and direction of junior school education. It is no accident that streaming developed with official encouragement in the 1930's as the pressure of the 11+ (the 'scholarship') became increasingly dominant. This posed what has become a key question: is the chief function of the junior school to be—as in fact it has become—an essential part of the whole selective process, its pupils, at the age of seven or eight, divided into A, B, or C 'streams' only one of which normally provides the opportunity for acquiring the skills necessary to pass the selection examination? Or is the school to be organised to allow the realisation of strictly educational aims comprehending all the pupils? This is the question at issue. Inevitably it raises fundamental problems concerning both the form and content of junior school education.

6. What, then, are the educational aims for children of primary school age? Schools which were first designed to teach children to read, write and cipher must now broaden their aims 'to teach children how to live', it was said in the Consultative Committee's Report on the Primary School (1931). Today these schools are, to a greater extent than in the past, neighbourhood schools taking in the vast majority of children from the age of five. And the best primary schools see it as their task to provide the means to all-round development in a social setting, the school community. The children learn to live together, to work and play together, because in so doing not only are qualities of character and outlook formed but learning itself takes place most effectively, notably the use and enrichment of language which is fundamental to all education. Within this framework the basic skills are taught not as an end in themselves but as a means to the end of extending activities and fostering self-expression in the fullest meaning of the term. There is emphasis on creative activity, on mental and physical development, encouragement of initiative and self-reliance. But there is also systematic teaching of a kind designed

to form essential abilities and skills. There is concern for the children's health, for the amendment of defects, and co-operation with parents in all these matters. Above all, the best junior schools today are not so much concerned with the memorisation of information and the learning of certain limited skills as with promoting the child's curiosity and independence, encouraging his own inner development, bringing to him a widely ranging experience—in short, with encouraging the growth of all those aspects of the child's personality which will enable him not only to live happily in the present as a child, but also to continue to develop as an individual with many-sided interests and skills when he finally passes to the secondary school.

7. How far have these aims been achieved? The 1931 Report, as is well known, recommended that the primary curriculum should be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored. There can be no doubt that this precept has done much to revolutionise life in the primary schools—here the junior schools have drawn successfully on the experience of infant schools, and, to a considerable extent, have broken through the old pattern of rote learning inherited from earlier days. But in another section of the same report ideas were crystallised and recommended to the schools which, although put forward with good intentions, operated in a diametrically opposite direction. These were the proposals concerning 'streaming'.

8. It was the 1931 Report which first proposed that children should be classified in junior schools according to 'their natural gifts and abilities', and suggested that, where possible, there should be a 'triple-track' or 'streamed' system of organisation comprising A, B and C streams.<sup>1</sup> This proposal arose from the evidence given by the psychological witnesses to the committee who, at that time, held firmly to the view that 'intelligence' was not only a largely innate characteristic, but that it could be accurately measured by means of a group verbal intelligence test. It was also held that intelligence testing 'revealed the wide range of individual differences and its steady expansion from year to year'. On these grounds it was stated that while 'younger children can be grouped together without much regard to their different degrees of mental endowment', an unstreamed class of eight- or nine-year-olds would be 'extremely heterogenous'. 'By the age of 12,' Sir Cyril Burt, the chief psychological witness, added in his evidence, 'the range has become so wide that a still more radical classification is imperative. Before this age is reached children need to be grouped according

to their capacity, not merely in separate classes or standards, but in separate types of school.'<sup>2</sup>

9. Streaming, therefore, as well as the provision of different types of secondary school, was originally justified on the grounds that children are born with a fixed and largely unchangeable mental endowment. It is interesting to note that, at that stage, this concept was hardly challenged; and that junior schools, which came into being as separate entities as Hadow 'reorganisation' proceeded, adopted this method of organisation where possible. This was due, not only to widespread acceptance of contemporary theories as to the nature of 'intelligence', but also to the growing pressure of 11+ selection on the schools, and the consequent desirability, in the eyes of head-teachers, of separating out those children who, it was felt, had some opportunity of gaining a place in a selective secondary school and preparing them, sometimes very intensively, for this examination. Nevertheless, it can now be seen that the 1931 Report proposed two fundamentally contradictory aims. On the one hand it saw children as essentially educable, able to profit and develop intellectually from 'experience and activity'—on the other hand it proposed a form of school organisation which reflected the view that a child's intellectual development is predetermined by his genetic endowment, and which has led to a formality of teaching method and a rigidity of organisation not only quite contrary to its general proposals, but against which it specifically warned.

10. The problem today, therefore, is to find the way of breaking out of this situation. This, in our view, involves discontinuing the practice of organising the junior school as if it were a selective instrument, and reconsidering the whole problem of school organisation in terms of the comprehensive aims set out in paragraph 6. What is necessary, from a strictly educational point of view, is to adapt the organisation of the school so that it can develop the kind of

<sup>1</sup> 'The break at eleven has rendered possible a more thorough classification of children', reports the committee. 'It is important that this opportunity should be turned to fullest account. One great advantage of the self-contained primary school is that the teachers have special opportunities for making a suitable classification of the children according to their natural gifts and abilities . . . In general we agree with our psychological witnesses in thinking that in very large primary schools there might, wherever possible, be a "triple-track" system of organisation, viz.: a series of "A" classes for the bright children, and a series of smaller "C" classes or groups to include retarded children, both series being parallel to the ordinary series of "B" classes or groups for the average children.' *The Primary School* (1931), 77-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Appendix III, 258.

teaching, activities, and general ethos needed to achieve these aims.

11. Before coming on to this question it will be as well to define the scope of primary school education. A proposal for raising the compulsory school entry age to six has been mooted. In our view this would be an extremely retrograde measure. In general it may be said that the earlier organised education begins, the better. Research is increasingly bringing out the crucial importance of the early years to child development as a whole. Certainly by the age of five, as Miss Gardner (head of the Department of Child Development at the University of London Institute of Education) has recently reiterated, children show 'an intense zest for learning'.<sup>1</sup> The infant school teacher, building on this characteristic of the young child, can systematically help him to develop his grasp of speech and powers of expression, and 'plan an environment designed to encourage the child's learning'.<sup>2</sup> As a result of the researches of L. S. Vigotsky, A. R. Luria, Piaget, M. M. Lewis and other psychologists the close connection between language and mental development is now increasingly recognised.<sup>3</sup> The infant school can do an essential job in helping the more deprived children to overcome language difficulties which are environmentally determined, and so lay the basis for their further intellectual development. At the same time, the infant school helps the child develop in a social, co-operative atmosphere; supports his physical and aesthetic growth, widens his horizons. In particular a good infant school education can help the more

<sup>1</sup> D. E. M. Gardner, 'Threat to the Foundation of British Education', FORUM, Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Norah Gibbs, 'Children's Language Development', in *Studies in Education* (1963); M. M. Lewis, *Language, Thought and Personality* (1963); A. R. Luria, *Speech and the Development of Mental Processes in the Child* (1959); L. S. Vigotsky, *Thought and Language* (1962 ed).

<sup>4</sup> The tendency towards rigid organisation had already come under criticism in the 1930's and '40's from educationists such as Miss Nancy Catty, Miss Gardner and Miss Atkinson, who held that it did not provide the most effective environment for the child's social development. It is worth noting here that the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland, in its report on *Primary Education* published in 1946, also opposed streaming: 'We think that it is on the whole the sounder policy that a class should consist of pupils of the whole normal range of ability. The attempt to secure more homogeneous classes in a large school not only fails to secure its immediate object completely, but has undesirable repercussions on both pupils and teachers. While a class may well be taken as a whole for certain activities and divided in different ways for different activities, the final emphasis must be on the individual, who is the only real unit for learning and progress'. p.19.

deprived children reach the level of the more advanced, perhaps from more fortunate homes, so laying the basis for overcoming the kind of divisions between children which tend to be crystallised in the form of junior school streaming. For all these reasons, therefore, we recommend strongly that the compulsory school entry age should remain at five and that educational facilities should be provided for children below the age of five through the wide extension of nursery schools and classes. These should be available for all children whose parents desire them—and this may amount to some 50% of the age-groups concerned.

12. We do not propose to go into the further question of the age range primary schools should cover, nor into that of the division of the primary age-range into different schools. This, in our view, depends partly on local conditions and, more particularly, on proposals concerning the organisation of secondary education. There may well be advantages in thinking in terms of a first stage from five to nine and a second from nine to 13. But we leave this aside in order to concentrate on the broader educational issues relevant to the primary stage of education, however organised.

## II. The effect of streaming on junior school education

13. We have already pointed out that, after 1931, junior schools tended to become dominated by the theory that a child's future intellectual development is fatally determined by hereditary factors, and by the practice of rigid streaming that was its educational counterpart. In the early 1950's, this practice came under criticism on the grounds that the very process of dividing children into streams according to some assessment of their 'ability' created a situation which ensured that the original differences between children on entry to the school became exaggerated in the process of their education.<sup>4</sup> The point was made that if the more advanced children at seven are put together to form one class, and the more backward to form another, then the former are bound to pull ahead at a more rapid rate than the latter, so that early differences become enlarged. At the same time it was held that children from the more deprived homes tended to be put in the lower streams, since their early experiences would have the effect of retarding them as compared with those coming from normal homes. Streaming, in other words, would tend to reflect social (rather than congenitally intellectual) differences, and to accentuate them on the level of intellectual development. It was further pointed out that streaming broke up the unity of the school, led to divisions of prestige among the



staff, and powerfully influenced the attitude of teachers to the educability of their pupils, so affecting the child's response—relegation to a low stream, in particular, leading to feelings of rejection in the great majority of children. It was at this time, also, that the theory and practice of intelligence testing began to come under sharp criticism, which cast doubt on the claims made by psychologists in the 1920's and 1930's.<sup>1</sup>

14. Experimental work has tended to confirm these original criticisms. As is well known, the British Psychological Society set up a Working Party in 1955 to reassess the whole position as regards secondary school selection and the use of testing for this purpose. Their report (1957)<sup>2</sup> led to a significant modification of earlier theories as to the nature of 'intelligence', and it is significant that the section on streaming (entitled 'Stereotyping effects of streaming by ability') starts with the remark: 'Few nowadays would subscribe to the statement made in the Spens Report: "We are informed that, with few exceptions, it is possible at a very early age to predict with some degree of accuracy the ultimate level of a child's intellectual powers"'. The dangers of streaming, it is added, 'are obvious'. Children 'who are relegated to a low stream, to suit their present level of ability, are likely to be taught at a slower pace; whereas the brighter streams, often under the better teachers, are encouraged to proceed more rapidly. Thus initial differences become exacerbated, and those duller children who happen to improve later fall too far behind the higher streams in attainments to be able to catch up, and lose the chance to show their true merits'.<sup>3</sup> At that time a small-scale investigation (Khan, 1955) showed that 'such early streaming reflects social class much more than it does real ability, since those quicker to read mostly come from middle-class homes'.<sup>4</sup> The report concluded that streaming should 'in general be avoided in favour of grouping by age, and should be kept as flexible as possible till a fairly late stage'.<sup>5</sup>

15. Since the publication of this report, further investigations have been carried through which have tended to confirm these findings. Thus Blandford's research (1957) confirmed that streaming tends to accentuate initial differences of attainment.<sup>6</sup> In 1959 J. C. Daniels' research, which involved comparison of two unstreamed and two streamed schools over a period of four years, was completed; this suggested that the non-streamed school provides a more effective educational environment than the streamed school. Non-streaming was shown to raise the average level of attainment of the children concerned, as compared with those in the streamed schools.<sup>7</sup> During this period a large-scale experiment

on this question with official support was carried out in Sweden under the auspices of Husen and Svenson.<sup>8</sup> This has indicated not only that the more backward children suffer from the process of streaming, but that the more advanced are not hampered intellectually in the non-streamed situation. So conclusive have the results of this experimental work been, that no differentiation of children is now permitted in the lower and middle classes of Swedish comprehensive schools. It may be as well here to point out that streaming is almost unknown on the Continent, or until recently in the U.S.A.,<sup>9</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Heim, *The Appraisal of Intelligence* (1954); B. Simon, *op. cit.* (1953).

<sup>2</sup> *Secondary School Selection*, ed. P. E. Vernon (1957).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 43. The reference is to an unpublished thesis entitled 'A study of the Emotional and Environmental Factors associated with "Backwardness" in a seven- to eight-year-old group of children', University of London, 1955. Khan concluded that 'the effects of streaming and in particular the allocation to a "backward" stream, are far-reaching and cumulative'. *FORUM*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 82.

<sup>5</sup> *Secondary School Selection*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> 'Standardised tests in junior schools with special reference to the effects of streaming on the constancy of results', J. S. Blandford, unpublished thesis, University of London, 1957.

<sup>7</sup> J. C. Daniels, 'The effects of educational segregation', unpublished thesis, University of Nottingham, 1959, summarised in *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 31, Part I, February 1961, Part II, June 1961. Summarising his conclusions, Daniels writes: 'There appears to be fairly definite evidence that the policy of non-streaming, as compared with streaming, significantly increases the average I.Q. of children in the junior school by about three points of I.Q. . . . (that it) significantly increases the mean scores of junior school pupils in reading and English tests . . . (that it) increases the level of arithmetic attainment of junior school pupils'.

<sup>8</sup> Nils-Eric Svenson, *Ability Grouping and Scholastic Achievement* (Uppsala, 1962), report on a five-year follow-up study in Stockholm. See also Torsten Husen and Nils-Eric Svenson, 'Pedagogic Milieu and Development of Intellectual Skills', *The School Review* (University of Chicago), 1960. It should be emphasised that this research was based on the effect of streaming over the age of 11; there is no streaming in junior schools in Scandinavia.

<sup>9</sup> There has, of course, been a good deal of discussion recently in the United States on the whole question of grouping by ability (streaming), as well as a certain tendency to introduce the practice. A considerable amount of research was done on this question in the United States in the 1920's and 1930's and again recently. A recent review of this research, however, concludes that 'grouping as a process has seldom been advocated on the basis of "research". One reason for this is simply that the empirical studies do not clearly evidence a strong position either way. Individual academic progress in the ability group setting (stream-

basic school in the Soviet Union, taking children from seven to 15, is entirely unstreamed on principle. Soviet experience generally indicates that non-streaming can be accompanied by systematic learning in the general schools.

16. During this period parallel investigations have shown a further, long unsuspected, effect of streaming—the fact that the process militates against the interests of the ‘younger’ children within a twelve month age-range, i.e., those whose birthdays fall in the spring or early summer. This point was first raised by Clarke who showed that the ‘older’ children (with birthdays from September to December) had a one in two chance of being placed in an A class, whereas the ‘younger’ children’s chances were one in three or four. The latter have, of course, had sometimes one and sometimes two terms less infant school education than the former. It seems probable, therefore, that their comparatively short infant school experience puts them at a disadvantage as compared to other children when entering the junior school—their attainments and general characteristics have had less time to develop under the guidance of the teacher in an educative environment. Some young children are, in fact, virtually one year less mature than others—that is, in terms of actual physical growth. In this sense, therefore, streaming is often based on an extraneous factor rather than on the children’s potential capacity.<sup>1</sup>

ing) does not appear to be any greater than in a heterogeneous group’. The authors suggest that non-streaming provides a more positive environment for social and emotional development. A. A. Atwell and T. E. Linton, ‘Problems inherent in ability grouping’, *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. X, No. 1, March 1964, 39–45. This assessment is similar to that made by Daniels, *FORUM*, Vol. 4, No. 3.

<sup>1</sup> H. Clarke, ‘The effect of a candidate’s age . . .’, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. XXVI, Part III, 207 ff. November 1956. See also G. V. Pape, ‘Accident of Birth’, *Education*, 16th November, 1956. An investigation carried out by the Durham Education Committee revealed that children born between September and December formed 39 per cent of junior school A streams, while those born between May and August made up only 23 per cent. In the C and D streams the position was reversed. *Education Today*, ed. Edward Blishen (1963), 27–8.

<sup>2</sup> C. J. Willig ‘Social Implications of Streaming in Junior Schools’, unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, summarised in *Educational Research*, Vol. V, No. 2, 151–4.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. B. Douglas, *The Home and School* (1964), 118.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Daniels found that teachers ‘over-estimated the degree of transfer by about 400 per cent’, ‘Research on streaming in the Primary School’, *FORUM*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer, 1962. Douglas found that ‘it was rare for children to change streams’—the annual rate of transfer in his sample was 2·3 per cent. Douglas, *op. cit.*, 113.

17. During the last two or three years the whole question of junior school organisation has been much discussed and a number of investigations are under way. Chief among these is that being conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research for which the Ministry of Education has given a grant of £60,000. Evidence as to the deleterious character of streaming, however, continues to accumulate. Reference may be made to the research by Willig (1961),<sup>2</sup> which evaluated streaming from the angle of the child’s social development, and indicated that the non-streamed school provides a more effective environment for the development of positive social qualities among children. More recently the results of research by a Medical Research Council Unit into the long-term development of children conducted by J. W. B. Douglas has come to hand. This also confirms earlier prognostications. Summarising his conclusions, Douglas claims that ‘streaming by ability reinforces the process of social selection . . . Children who come from well-kept homes and who are themselves clean, well-clothed and shod, stand a greater chance of being put in the upper streams than their measured ability would seem to justify. Once there they are likely to stay and to improve in performance in succeeding years. This is in striking contrast to the deterioration noticed in those children of similar measured ability who are placed in the lower streams. In this way the validity of the initial selection appears to be confirmed by the subsequent performance of the children, and an element of rigidity is introduced early into the primary school system’.<sup>3</sup>

18. Streaming, in fact, as Douglas points out, has been shown to be a self-validating process; the so-called ‘correctness’ of the initial classification is held to be ‘proved’ since, at the end of four years’ schooling, wide differences are revealed between the level of attainment of high and low streams. The process of streaming itself must, however, ensure this result in the case of the vast majority of children. Investigations have shown that streaming tends to be rigid—transfer between streams takes place at a much lower level than teachers in the schools themselves seem to believe.<sup>4</sup> The process is in itself divisive—the school, instead of being a unity, is divided internally into two or more different ‘schools within a school’, each with its own programme. It leads also to rigidity in teaching method—the aim being to get a homogeneous ‘class’ which can be taught as a class, whereas the modern tendency is to rely more on group and individual work allied with class teaching. In spite of the fact that streaming is justified on the grounds of allowing for ‘individual differences’ it deliberately creates a situation where children can

the more easily (in theory) be dealt with in the mass. The system tends also towards a certain fatalism—not much is expected from low streams, since the process of streaming reflects and crystallises the theory that these children lack ‘intelligence’. Although much extremely good work goes on among low streams, the overall effect of this situation is to lower teachers’ expectations, whereas, according to some recent research, the child’s response is, at least in part, determined by the nature of these expectations. Finally, streaming, by separating out the more advanced children, creates a situation where low standards of intellectual and personality development among the majority of children are regarded as acceptable.

19. The basic rationale of streaming is no longer held by leading educationists; today stress is put on the need to ensure for every child the conditions in which he can ‘acquire intelligence’. Without entering into a discussion of the validity or usefulness of the concept of ‘intelligence’ itself, we may refer to the Newsom Committee’s conclusion on this topic: ‘the kind of intelligence which is measured by tests so far applied is largely an acquired characteristic . . . Intellectual talent is not a fixed quantity with which we have to work but a variable that can be modified by social policy and educational approaches’.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, the urgent need is to develop an educative environment for all children ensuring their fullest development—not to create one which hinders it and even permits deterioration. Streaming militates against the aims we defined earlier, just as it militates against the urgent need of providing a genuine education for the children as a whole.

### III. The experience of non-streamed schools

20. Some fifteen years ago, practising teachers in charge of streamed schools began to discover these things for themselves and to act accordingly. Increasingly conscious of the social and educational disadvantages of streaming, these pioneer teachers deliberately unstreamed their schools. Thus the headmaster of Taylor Junior school, Leicester (a three-stream school in a slum area), appointed in 1950, spent his time largely with the lower streams. As his successor reports, he ‘reached the conclusion that the educational and social problems the school presented were closely related’, and that their solution ‘could only be found in terms of a fundamental educational reorganisation’. In 1952 he first unstreamed the third-year classes. His successor, Mr. Freeland, who had taught in streamed junior schools for over 20 years, but who was now convinced of

its deleterious effect, completed the process of unstreaming over the next two years, being convinced of its educational advantages. ‘As a result of the experience of the last three years,’ he wrote in 1957, ‘there are no doubts in my mind as to the desirability of non-streaming.’<sup>2</sup>

21. From this time non-streaming began to develop among junior schools, though even today these schools remain a small minority. In the West Riding Mr. Harvey, appointed head of a large junior school (320 children) in 1953, after being head of a single stream school, was able to compare the two methods. ‘After two years’ experience of streaming,’ he writes, ‘I began to notice trends which I felt were undesirable and met with certain difficulties—affecting the children, the staff and the parents’. These are described in the article previously referred to. ‘The school’, he writes, ‘was rapidly becoming two schools under one roof. There were two standards of work, of behaviour, of table manners. Most regrettable of all, there was a tendency for members of staff to look on their colleagues as either “A” or “B” teachers’. He therefore reallocated the children on an age basis, with a range of six months in each class. ‘The results have been most gratifying. After four years without streaming I have a happy and enthusiastic staff, all of whom prefer the present organisation, the standard of work has improved, and relations with parents are excellent’. The flexibility of the unstreamed school, he adds, is of great help when putting new ideas into practice.<sup>3</sup>

22. Another case which may be quoted is that of a school in a New Town which opened in 1958 and which was non-streamed, on principle, from the start. ‘Socially,’ writes the headmaster, summarising his experience, ‘non-streaming has been a complete success . . . each child feels the value of his own contribution to the school’s activities . . . the less able child gains immeasurably from this new atmosphere in the classroom; he has no loss of confidence. The more able child gains socially, in that he learns to work in friendly co-operation with the less able’. ‘One of the most pleasant results of the atmosphere is our unstreamed school,’ he concludes, ‘is that there are no “academically slum areas” in our midst. Each group is as lively and intelligent in approach as any other and such a feeling throughout the school must be of immense value in helping

<sup>1</sup> *Half Our Future*, Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), 1963, 6.

<sup>2</sup> G. Freeland, *op. cit.*, 32.

<sup>3</sup> E. Harvey, *loc. cit.* 47-9. Allocation to classes on an age basis is, of course, only one of several possible methods of dividing children into non-streamed parallel classes.

to form the liberal view of education.<sup>1</sup> 'After many years as a teacher in various types of school and a few years as educational psychologist to a local education authority', writes another headmaster (in 1959), 'I became head of one of their new junior schools. This is our fifth year. The school has two classes of unstreamed children in each age group—right through.' It has proved a most successful venture, he adds, 'grammar school results are more than double the average for the authority' since 'a considerable number of children, who would have been B or C in other schools, are given full opportunity here to develop under the stimulus and get to selective schools. As for the bright children—I say that their work is better than if they had been in an A stream. The idea that non-streaming "inhibits" bright children is nonsense. But I am more pleased with the results of the less able children. Living and working in a free population, the better children seem to lift the slower members of the class'.<sup>2</sup> This headmaster is now head of a very large junior school in a housing estate area in the same city. His school (five parallel classes in each year) is unstreamed throughout.

23. The act of unstreaming, as these and other heads have found, opens up quite new perspectives for junior school education; it becomes possible to think in terms of providing an education—or educational experiences—suited to the needs of all the children in the school.<sup>3</sup> Once the facile approach of simply dividing children up according to their supposed inherent 'ability' and giving each block of children an 'appropriate', but still a different, education as a class, is discarded, new and genuinely educational problems arise. Above all the process of non-streaming challenges practices which arose partially as a result of the contradictory advice given in the 1931 report in its references to the junior school: first, the tendency for it to act as part of the selective process, and second the tendency to accept 'activity', often 'free' and undirected, especially for the lower streams, as in itself a desirable educational aim. In

the non-streamed situation the educational issues that arise are of another order altogether.

24. The non-streamed school, as the headmasters have pointed out, is a unity, in which children can be treated alike as children, not as units driven by an engine of a particular and unalterable horsepower. The school's activities can be directed towards social aims, instead of becoming the means of creating divisions among both children and staff. The school is now seen as a unit in which groups of children participate in learning activities under the guidance and direction of the teachers. No child is labelled, nor are any staff. Each child can now be treated as a unique personality, an individual, capable of learning, whose potential, though unknown, is to a considerable extent a function of his experience in the school itself. This implies a fundamental change in the attitude of teachers and therefore in their expectations of the children.

25. Education is now seen as a social process, and the child's activities can be so organised as to permit the fullest use of different techniques of stimulating learning. The non-streamed class can be taught as a class, in groups, or as individuals; the usual approach is to use a combination of these three approaches which can allow both for bringing the class on together when learning new techniques in a particular area, and for group and individual initiative in the non-streamed situation. Class teachers of such classes are convinced that this flexibility of approach can be so ordered that the more advanced children have considerable freedom to develop at their own pace in subjects—or areas—where they are in advance of the class as a whole, while also allowing for attention and appropriate activities for the more backward. At the same time, while group and individual work is used, the class remains a class, is sometimes taught as a class, undertakes certain activities as a class, so that the stimulation of the more advanced, or the more imaginative and creative, is felt over the class as a whole. In this situation there can be concern for the achievement of each child contributing according to his effort. These advantages are extraordinarily difficult to assess in any objective way—they show themselves in terms not only of intellectual development (which can be tested) but also in terms of social development and the general ethos—'atmosphere, happiness'—of the class as a whole. To grasp this atmosphere, this 'feel', it is necessary to visit unstreamed classes in schools where the approach has been carefully thought out. As one class teacher has put it, summing up his experiences: 'non-streaming requires the teacher to look at his children as individuals and yet also as members of a community; to find out where their interests and

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Coram, 'An Experiment in Non-Streaming', *FORUM*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 1962, 104.

<sup>2</sup> *FORUM*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring, 1958, 56-7.

<sup>3</sup> We recognise that there are some children with mental or physical handicaps too severe to allow them to be educated fully with the majority of children. Many of these children can best be provided for in special classes which are not segregated in separate schools, but are based on a particular school or campus site in such a way as to enable them to share in many of the activities of the normal school. We recognise that there are, of course, some children whose handicaps are too serious to allow any measure of integration along these lines.

abilities coincide and to group them accordingly; to be flexible in grouping and to replace fierce competition with a strong element of co-operation. It is in fact, the social element which is the dominant feature of this type of organisation'.<sup>1</sup> It is very much to be hoped that members of the Central Advisory Council will find it possible to visit non-streamed schools and see them in action.

26. One point needs to be made. Some schools, it appears, have changed to non-streaming without making the fundamental reassessment of aims and purpose that this requires. As Zoefitg has pointed out, such schools, 'in which non-streaming simply replaces streaming and little else; where the school proceeded as before with continuing dependence upon standards and incentives previously employed, have failed to understand and respond to the significant changes of principle involved'. The consequences, he adds, are unsatisfactory 'and could not in any case be fairly judged to assess or justify non-streaming as an educational and social practice in school. The fact is that non-streaming is just one aspect of a fundamentally different approach to the understanding of the needs of children and the satisfaction of these needs, with an integrated individual and social arrangement developed accordingly'.<sup>2</sup> These points are well made. For one thing, co-operation must replace competition in the non-streamed situation as the fundamental motivational technique, and this itself has immense implications. The act of non-streaming is not a simple organisational act. Its significance lies in the challenge it embodies to current preconceptions as to the nature of the child and of learning. If this method of organisation were 'imposed' on unwilling teachers, it could lead to failure. This point will be returned to later.

27. In the last few years, the process of non-streaming has gathered way and become a veritable movement, particularly in some parts of the country. Main centres of advance include the London area, the West Riding of Yorkshire and the cities of Leicester, Bristol and Nottingham, but the most widespread development is today taking place in those areas of the county of Leicestershire where the selection examination has been completely abolished as a result of the reorganisation of secondary education on comprehensive lines. In these areas the movement has been towards the abolition of streaming, and the setting of new aims in line with the new opportunities. 'The trend in the larger primary schools where numbers are sufficient to allow streaming has been to abolish it,' wrote the Director of Education three years ago. 'In one of the two areas it is disappearing altogether, and in the

other for the most part it only remains in the upper part of the junior school.' 'Usually teachers in charge of unstreamed classes find it at first an uphill task', he continues, 'but after they get used to it and say that they prefer it. Those who have no experience of this way of organising the work are apt to state categorically that it must retard the pace of the brightest children. Those who practice it assert that it advances them more quickly.' The increased flexibility which has resulted has led to experimental work in the teaching of science, the introduction of a second language, greater concern with creative writing, the arts, music and drama while 'the most striking change of all is taking place in the teaching of mathematics'. 'The ozone of enthusiasm and the tang of enquiry are in the air,' concludes the director, 'and one can't help breathing them in.'<sup>3</sup> If the actual abolition of the selection examination encourages such developments it should be pointed out that even where the examination persists junior schools have shown that non-streaming is both practicable and permits significant advances. A number of the schools which pioneered this practice, for instance, are in the city of Leicester which continues to select at 10+ for a strictly tripartite system of secondary education.

28. Non-streaming, as we have already indicated, makes it possible to substitute new aims and new attitudes for those which no longer meet the needs of the present situation nor with modern knowledge as to the nature of the child. When it was held that the child's abilities were largely innate the function of the school was necessarily restricted to ensuring that a child's potential ability was made actual. Teaching, in this sense, could hardly be described as essentially creative. The child's development was limited by factors quite outside the teacher's control—hence the justification of streaming which grouped children according to their supposed innate capacity. Today, however, some psychologists are tending more and more to adopt a dynamic approach to the development of abilities. These hold that, strictly speaking, no child can be said to be born with a given ability; he is born with what may be described as the anatomical-physiological prerequisites for the development of this or that ability (for instance mathematical or musical). These abilities can only be developed in practice—in the process of the

<sup>1</sup> P. D. Houghton, 'How I teach an unstreamed class', *FORUM*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Zoefitg, 'Some Questions concerning Non-Streaming', *FORUM*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Autumn, 1963, 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> S. C. Mason, *The Leicestershire Experiment and Plan* (1960), 29.

child's education. Abilities are, therefore, beginning to be seen as the resultant of a complex process of formation, often involving a series of stages, each of which is essential to the formation of the final ability (or mental operation). These are now seen as involving the formation of complex functional systems in the brain, which are formed in the course of life, and which underly qualitative changes in the mental processes. This standpoint has been well summarised by Luria as follows:

'It is now generally accepted that in the process of mental development there takes place a profound qualitative reorganisation of human mental activity, and that the basic characteristic of the reorganisation is that elementary, direct activity is replaced by complex functional systems, formed on the basis of the child's communication with adults in the process of learning. These functional systems are of complex construction and are developed with the close participation of language, which, as the basic means of communication with people is simultaneously one of the basic tools in the formation of human mental activity and in the regulation of behaviour. It is through these complex forms of mental activity . . . that new features are acquired which begin to develop according to laws which displace many of the laws which govern the formation of elementary conditioned reflexes in animals.'<sup>1</sup>

29. If this approach is correct, then the process of learning in the human being differs from that in animals; the old explanation of human development in terms of heredity and environment can no longer be considered as sufficient. While animals learn only through individual experience, on the basis of built-in patterns of behaviour, or instincts, the human child learns through joint practice and speech with other human beings; it is through the language he acquires, the tools he learns to handle and so on, that the achievements of the human species are embodied and handed on. Education, therefore, is of key importance as the means of ensuring that this social inheritance is mastered by the child; it has, therefore, a decisive influence on the child's mental development. Hence the extreme importance of regarding each child as potentially highly educable, of

providing each child with the widest opportunities for systematised activity as the means of developing abilities in the process of his education. The organisational correlation of this approach must be the non-streamed situation, not only because it allows for flexibility but also because it implies no pre-judgement as to the child's future development, and leaves all the doors open.

#### IV. Proposals for the future

30. We believe that it is of first importance that the movement towards non-streaming, and all that it implies, be encouraged; that the conception of the child as genuinely educable be fully recognised and that its implications as regards school organisation be rationally worked out and brought to the notice of all concerned with educational administration and the schools themselves. A considerable number of junior schools have now been unstreamed for several years and the teachers in these schools have by now accumulated a great deal of experience of teaching non-streamed classes. This experience should be systematically collected and analysed by some central body — perhaps the Department of Education and Science — so that it can be made widely available to teachers, advisers and local authorities. At the same time we wish to draw the attention of training colleges and university education departments to the need to familiarise students with the new approach to education involved in non-streaming, and to give specific training to students to enable them to work with maximum effect in the non-streamed situation.<sup>2</sup>

31. In the interests of the junior school child we also hold that it is of first importance that the Central Advisory Council give a strong lead in favour of the abolition of all forms of selection for secondary education, including the concealed forms used by certain local authorities while claiming that the practice has been abolished. The development of the common secondary school is the essential means of ensuring that the more dynamic approach of the non-streamed junior school is continued at the next stage of the educational process. The movement towards the abolition of selection and the establishment of forms of comprehensive secondary education is now gathering way, especially in London, the Midlands and the North. The setting up of comprehensive schools and the actual abolition of selection (as in the Leicestershire Plan areas) would also certainly ease the transition to non-streaming in the junior school.<sup>3</sup>

32. These developments would have another positive effect on a crucial educational problem, that of

<sup>1</sup> *Problems of Psychology*, 1962, No. 4 (U.S.S.R.); see also McV. Hunt, *Intelligence and Experience* (1963) for D. O. Hebb's neuro-physiological theories regarding the growth of intelligence.

<sup>2</sup> Useful proposals to this end may be found in T. Adams, 'Unstreamed schools and teacher training', *FORUM*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Spring, 1963, 94-9.

<sup>3</sup> See G. Freeland, 'The impact of comprehensive education on the primary school', *FORUM*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Autumn, 1962.

the transition from primary to secondary education. This transition will be rendered less abrupt than is often the case today. Where comprehensive secondary schools are established liaison between the secondary and the primary schools can take place more easily and more fruitfully since all junior schools in a particular area will tend to feed the same secondary school. Experience has already indicated that where this situation exists, an effective collaboration between the two stages of education can be developed more easily than in the case where the products of a particular junior school may feed as many as six or seven secondary schools of three main types each having different approaches and perspectives.<sup>1</sup>

33. We wish to draw attention, secondly, to the urgent need for research into the psychology of human learning and the methodology of teaching. One of the most disastrous implications of the old ideas about 'intelligence' was that the child's capacity for learning was a function of this quality, and that therefore nothing could be done to change it. The result was that for decades educational research in this country failed even to tackle crucial questions as to the nature of the learning process.

34. Now that it is beginning to be recognised that a child's abilities are formed in the process of education, research into the crucial questions of the psychology of learning must be undertaken. The whole field is wide open, since so far little advance has been made. We may point here to the need for research into the role of language in mental development, since preliminary results, and those from other countries, are tending to underline the important part language plays in the child's general as well as mental development — research which has certain definite practical implications as regards teaching and education. Another field where some advance is being made is in the teaching of mathematics—the methods used in this research (in the Leicestershire schools) and in its practical application are in some ways a model for future research of this kind. But work done so far only borders on the basic issues, and is in any case sparse: the psychology of learning science, a second language, and various others aspects of the child's learning activities have scarcely been so much as touched as yet. If the general approach as to the nature of learning outlined in this memorandum is accepted, then it follows that every aspect of learning—the formation of concepts, mental operations and abilities, from the most elementary to the most complex, can be subjected to scientific analysis and investigation. Such research must involve practising teachers as members of research teams, and should be conducted in

close touch with the schools and the actual classroom situation; it should result not only in a new understanding of methodology, of the use of various aids to teaching and so on, but results must be adapted to the needs of class teaching, group and individual work.

35. Research is also needed into the whole question of class organisation and teaching method. Investigation of the comparative effectiveness of class, group or individual learning situations should throw light on important aspects of the educational process. New teaching techniques, for instance the use of programmed material and teaching machines, open up new possibilities for the development of individual and group work in school, while team teaching may also have implications for the junior school—a technique which, by its nature, cuts across the streamed class teaching approach of the past.

36. In our view, the function of research should be to provide a scientific basis for classroom practice; it should be the function of the institutions where research is concentrated to ensure that results are disseminated both to serving teachers through joint classroom practice and in-service training, and to students in training as teachers. In essence what is needed is a new approach to educational research; research teams consisting of psychologists, method specialists and teachers need to be established working in close contact with the schools. Work of this type should be regarded as a major function of Schools of Education which would have the main responsibility for developing this work over a given area. The move away from rule of thumb teaching towards the systematisation of the educational process as a whole is an absolute necessity if we are to make the most of our children's potentialities and so to equip them to lead satisfying lives.

37. In concluding this section we wish to stress that it is research of this kind—into the psychology of learning and methodology of teaching—that is required, rather than research into whether streaming is needed or not. This latter question cannot, in any case, be determined purely on the basis of research results, since fundamentally it raises questions concerning aims and these must be largely a matter for subjective judgment. To devote research resources to this latter question is to look backward — not forward. The real educational challenge today is how best to educate the mass of the children—not a selected few. Hence for the first time general questions of the psychology of learning are forced to our attention and must have over-riding priority.

<sup>1</sup> See R. J. Williams, 'Co-operation with our Junior Partners', FORUM, Vol. 2, No. 1, Autumn, 1959; H. Morris, 'Co-operation with our High School Partners', FORUM, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring, 1960, 60-1.

38. The new trends in primary education are now clear—non-streaming is the means by which they can be given fullest scope. The ordinary child is now regarded as potentially educable to a far greater degree than in the past. The problem is to find the best way to assist every child's educational development. An increased flexibility of approach, a new conception of what may be involved in primary school education, the beginnings of systematic research and inquiry into learning, and the consequent systematisation of teaching and learning—all these form part of the new developments, together with a turn towards regarding learning as a social process, involving co-operative activities under the guidance and control of the teacher. All these developments focus around the question of non-streaming and the attitudes to children's potentialities which this conception embodies. The junior school must not be seen in isolation; the concept of the 'average and below average' child which formed the terms of reference of the Newsom committee might be seen in a different light if the junior schools took the road here indicated. 'Our Children' have experienced a rejection pattern from 7+. Are they not largely the products of rigidly streamed junior and secondary schools whose experiences in school since the age of five have driven home to them the idea that their

abilities are 'below average' — that they are poor material?

39. The positive approach to children's abilities adopted by the Crowther and Robbins reports stresses the need to find a new direction for primary education. The outlines of this new approach are charted in this document, which calls for a revolution in attitudes to and treatment of the 3,000,000 children in the junior schools. In conclusion we wish once more to stress the point made at the outset of this document—the need for official recognition of the equal importance of primary with secondary education. The junior schools need the conditions in which they can put the approach suggested here effectively into practice. This involves in particular the need for smaller classes, remedial and perhaps some specialist teachers, as well as more generous capitation allowances. In addition modern and more flexible buildings are required, specifically designed to allow a varied combination of individual and group work, as well as for class and inter-class activities. These things are essential and must be achieved. Even under the severe handicaps often borne at the present time, however, we believe that important advances can be made towards liberating the junior school from ideas and practices which have long outlived their relevance.

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# AT ARM'S LENGTH: a view of the relationship between parents and schools<sup>1</sup>

MICHAEL MARLAND

*Mr. Marland is head of the department of English at Crown Woods comprehensive school, London. He taught previously in Germany, at a grammar school in Canterbury, and at Abbey Wood comprehensive school, London. He is Chairman of his local Association for the Advancement of State Education.*

'My parents never talk about school unless something has gone wrong,' wrote a fourteen-year-old boy. Equally most teachers never talk about parents until 'something has gone wrong'. 'That's the third time he's been reported this term; we'd better get his parents up!' That odious phrase, plus the amateur pomp of a speech day designed to impress parents into speechlessness, is too often typical of the contact between teacher and parent.

In reviewing J. W. B. Douglas' recent book *The Home and the School*, Michael Young stressed 'how limited they (teachers) are in what they can do with children unless they have, or go out and secure, the co-operation of the whole family'. Yet what real efforts are made to help that essential continuity between home and school? There are infant schools that pin tatty notices on the school doors: 'Please do not help your children to read', junior schools that refuse interviews to parents of children who will be coming the following term, secondary schools that do not even write and tell parents when and why a pupil has moved class, and there are Head-teachers' studies with printed notices threatening penalties for refusing to leave the premises when asked or for using offensive language!

Before the first compulsory Education Act, Matthew Arnold insisted that for it to be effective the education offered must be 'of a kind that will evoke the appreciation of parents'. This remains true, and was emphasised by Newsom's strong plea for wide co-operation: 'Our report is not simply addressed to those who have the power to take administrative action. They need the support, perhaps sometimes the incitement, of an informed public opinion'.

There is a widespread ignorance of the organisation of education and the workings of schools. Even the infant/junior/secondary division is not always known, and 'sets' and 'streams', or R.S.A. and C.S.E. remain mystical jargon. Such ignorance is not surprising. The 1963 Campaign for Education improved press coverage, but it remains scanty and ill-balanced. The *Times* and the *Telegraph* concen-

trate on direct grant and public schools, and the popular papers spike important background information in favour of trivia, such as rows over wearing jewellery with school uniform. Even classifying this as 'educational', a survey in *Where? No. 11* (Advisory Centre for Education) showed that in October 1962 the *Guardian* had 980 column inches of educational news compared with 78 in the *Express* and 73 in the *Mirror*.

## Consumer self-consciousness

In contrast there is evidence of a wide potential interest in education. In a symposium on *The Family* (quoted in *The Family* by Ronald Fletcher, Penguin, 1962), Gordon Bessey has stressed the 'growing number of parents with a deep interest . . . in their children's education', and Sir Edward Boyle has spoken of 'the fourth partner who, if once asleep, has been aroused to a new awareness—the parents'. In an age of consumer self-consciousness the Advisory Centre for Education was only to have been expected, but more surprising is the rapid growth of the local Associations for the Advancement of State Education (now more than 80), that their members are not entirely drawn from the middle classes, and that their activities are often directed towards areas of education, such as E.S.N. schools, beyond the immediate welfare of their own children.

Of course there remain a large number who couldn't care less. 'No, I don't know where he'll be going after this school,' I heard a mother of a seven-year-old say. 'I expect they'll tell us.' Very often 'they' tell little, and certainly do nothing positive to *arouse* interest. Those early years are so important, yet there are infant schools which could be so welcoming and informal, but rigidly keep parents out of the playground before school. A

<sup>1</sup> The opinions expressed in this article are entirely personal, and do not necessarily represent the views of the London County Council.

mother who moved home during term was anxious to find out after a couple of weeks how her son was getting on at the new junior school. The class teacher was eventually and hesitantly spoken to. He was polite but baffled. What was the need to ask? The new boy was getting on quite normally, or they would have sent for her. This was a school proud of its termly parent evenings, yet no one had the imagination to realise that some immediate reassurance would be welcome, or that this was the time to step out and interest the parent. Contrast, for instance, a report booklet I have from an *Ecole Primaire* in Geneva. This was issued to a six-year-old and as well as the administrative details of the school gave a brief *weekly* report on the child's activities, interest, and behaviour.

### What can be done?

A more active lead must be taken by the Ministry. The booklet *The New Secondary Education* (H.M.S.O. 1947, since reprinted) remarks: 'Co-operation with the child's home in gradually—still too gradually in spite of pioneer work by many heads—being recognised as of great importance.' But there is no value in such a politely expressed lead if, seventeen years later, the Ministry can say: 'There is very little information in the Ministry concerning the relationship and communication between school and parents.' Similarly, the L.C.C. have described in a handbook for teachers a vivid view of the necessary relationship; 'Co-operation and goodwill,' they say 'should be as normal and necessary a part of the educational process as attendance at school'. But there is no force in these remarks. The Education Committee have given no directives, the Inspectorate have no specific instructions to look into this aspect of a school's life, the Authority have no knowledge of how many schools have any form of parents' associations, and they even have no knowledge of how many schools issue reports only twice a year, or how many junior schools issue no reports until the final year.

The Ministry and the L.E.A.s should investigate this 'close relationship': how it can be achieved, and how far it has been so far. Specific consideration should be given in the planning, equipping, and staffing of a school to the needs of real communication. For instance, there should be adequate reception space for visitors (not crammed in the main corridor or jammed next to the revolving duplicator), and sufficient secretarial help.

An official booklet, *Preparing Your Child for School*, states: 'Schools no longer wait until the school bell rings before calling parents in to talk over preparations for school entrance . . . The issue

of handbooks on this subject by many schools is especially significant.' Unfortunately it is the U.S. Department of Education and not our own authorities who have produced it. There are publications that would help, and I have seen parents eagerly buying them when they come across them, but very few are produced specifically for parents, and none are stocked by the schools. (Compare the range of leaflets on health education in a welfare clinic. Why are the education authorities so far behind the health authorities in this respect?) The school itself can issue termly or monthly newsheets giving details of school events and including a background article (e.g. 'Why we don't teach tables', 'What is done about bad speech?' etc.). At Abbey Wood we have issued a parents' supplement to our school magazine; Crown Woods comprehensive school issue a well developed termly *Bulletin*, and also a *Prospectus* which, unlike those concentrating mainly on contagious diseases, shows a remarkable grasp of parents' needs. It gives a detailed picture of school life and, as it points out, has clearly 'taken shape as a reply to questions which have actually been asked by parents'.

A close liaison with the local papers would be a natural extension. Many authorities discourage direct contact between school and press, but a large school might well issue to the local papers a regular 'press release', and there could be valuable interchange of skills: teachers contributing articles relating national decisions to local problems, and the paper's editorial expertise helping the school's publications to parents. I recently wrote an article on English teaching for the local paper, and the sub-editing found necessary for their readers (our parents, after all) was startling.

### The school report

The school report needs drastic re-thinking. The present routine jumble of tired unrevealing phrases is worse than useless. By masquerading as communication it stifles the need for real communication. There is not enough time or space available for real comment, too much emphasis on grades, positions, or percentages that are meaningless without explanation, and there are not enough opportunities for 'feedback'. I should prefer to see them staggered, so that the burden was less heavy, and they could be timed to coincide with particular exams or career discussion meetings.

The school should provide as many points of contact as possible, so that the pupil can see that school and home are as far as possible working in mutual confidence and in the same direction. It should ensure that the teacher has the full range of

personal information about the pupil, and that the parent receives, as of a right, the full range of information about the pupil's progress and the working of the school. A parent's responsibilities are more lasting and gripping than a teacher's—the end-of-lesson bell never rings for them. The family is a more realistic and important social unit than the highly artificial school class. It is important that these points of contact should help the teacher constantly to see the pupil as a member of a family. Talking to a mother and father, with the 4b chatter-box between them, one can see the pupil not as one of a class but far more vividly as one of a family—in some ways younger and less confident, but in other ways more sensible and more mature. This can be one of the most exhilarating experiences in a secondary school.

### The teacher's role

The teacher with primary responsibility for the group (form master, group tutor, or whatever) should have the main responsibility for establishing this relationship with the home. The Head is too busy and too remote for the basic contact. This would mean more time, more accessible records, additional clerical help — perhaps a dictating machine which could be used at any convenient time. A regular routine should be a meeting between this teacher and the new pupil and parents some months before admission. Other meetings would have to be thought out afresh. The annual evening (not that all schools even have them) is too rare and time too short (two hours for a class of forty in one junior school). Mr. Dalyell, M.P. for West Lothian, suggested in the Commons in 1963 that all teachers should hold a monthly 'clinic' at an advertised time, for which they should be paid a fee of £3. This is nearer the casualness and flexibility in meetings that is required.

The toughest problem is that 'the parents we most need to see never come'. This can be solved. I know of two teachers who from time to time visit parents in their homes; in East Germany it is, I believe, compulsory for teachers to visit each pupil's home once a year. Suitably-trained teachers could be appointed with a light timetable and the brief to visit homes. Pedley suggests it in his *Comprehensive Schools* (Penguin 1963), Professor Roger Wilson argues it forcefully in *Difficult Housing Estates* (Tavistock Publications, 1963), and it is recommended in paragraph 204 of the Newsom report.

### Overcoming suspicion

I think the various English traditions of education work against our building up the right attitude

as teachers to this communication: the public boarding school with its strong parental grip ('Boy', thundered a famous nineteenth century headmaster, 'the school is your father, the school is your mother'); the self-conscious status of the grammar school that need have no truck with parents; the tradition of the board school forcing education on to an unwilling populace. In addition there is often so little contact with parents that too many teachers only have memories of the 'difficult' ones, after all, it is only 'difficulties' that have been reasons for a meeting.

We should like to think that in the 110 years since Dickens' *Hard Times* we have outgrown Mr. Gradgrind's approach to the schoolroom ('Girl number twenty, define a horse!'). But as parents are time and again brushed out of the consciousness of the classroom, one cannot help remembering Mr. Gradgrind's interrogation of the class:

'Cecilia Jup. Let me see. What is your father?'  
'He belongs to the horseriding, if you please sir.'

Mr. Gradgrind frowned, and waved off this objectionable calling with his hand. 'We don't want to know about that here.'

Vulnerability is perhaps the main feeling. This was shown in June 1963 when a mother who had recently moved south wrote to *The Observer* about the difficulties of contacting teachers in the new junior school. Many teachers wrote back with a frightening fierceness, touched on a really sore point. Suspicion is probably inevitable, but it does no good to be touchy and try to withdraw. The only answer is for communication that starts earlier, is more vigorous, and more frank, so that worries, grumbles, and complaints ('Do you ever teach spelling in this school?') can be aired, rather than fester unventilated. Otherwise misconceptions grow: the teacher snorts at the illiterate absence note and pictures stupid, thoughtless parents, and that story about old so-and-so bashing children's heads circulates and grows with amazing speed.

On the one hand schools must be prepared for the increasing proportion of well-educated parents, and on the other hand teachers will have to be, as Michael Young pointed out, 'taught almost as much about ways of educating parents as they are now about teaching children'. Until we can become more efficient, humbler, and more sensitive, and establish a real communication, an intimate and continuing dialogue throughout school life, there will continue to be a tremendous and disappointing waste of educational effort, and something missing from the richness of school, family and community life.

## Discussion

### *The Second Child*

Psychologists tell us of the emotional difficulties of the second child. What of the 'second-creaming' child? In this comprehensive school the sixths are composed entirely of 11+ 'failures' (Betas). The selective children (Alphas) were injected in the first forms in 1961.

This is an opportunity for Betas to find out what they can do when they are leaders of a large community, setting precedents in a new school society.

There is no barrier to entering the sixth forms. Students join the lower sixth after one year in the fifth, with from zero to eight G.C.E. passes, together with a wide variety of R.S.A. subjects. A child who has been discouraged at 11+, possibly again at 13+, and yet again at 16 when the G.C.E. results come in, is able to stay with his age group. His social development is not retarded by being forced to repeat a fifth year. The examination results may be a disappointment, but self-confidence is not further destroyed by separation from more successful contemporaries.

The timetable is built round the students' needs, abilities, and anticipated perseverance, and is broadly academic, technical and commercial. Most students find themselves with personal timetables. 'English' is compulsory, but the non-examination work is liberally interpreted to cover wide discussion and speech training—summed up perhaps as 'practice in articulateness'. Technical drawing is important, giving confidence in achievement and assisting mathematics and physics.

These students depart to Training Colleges, Colleges of Advanced Technology, Colleges of Art, full-time technical courses, Student Apprenticeships and commercial work. The less successful include the boy who aims to become an Army P.T. Instructor because he will not pass English Language for entry to Training College. How much is his 'failure' due to past failure? How much to the arid speech of the district? Then there are the girls who would make first-rate infants' teachers, but who will not be admitted to a College which boasts two 'A' Levels for entry. Every effort must be made to raise the status and improve the expertise of our profession, but is this really the way to set about it?

Many schools include some elements of conscious social training, but in this 'fifth mark of a sixth form' (Crowther), we have been only partly successful. Every sixth former is a school prefect and many are officers in a flourishing house system, but a student who feels borderline, whose future depends on a few marks at 18+, whose family has for generations taught the 'casual' acceptance of failure, is so neurotic about the regurgitation of facts for examinations that he has little of his personality left over for others to share. The girls have a greater urge to give social service, and give up more easily in their academic work. Clubs and societies are weak because if asked to rely too much on their own powers of organisation, they fail to meet the challenge, not being conditioned to feel that they can lead in any walk of life.

They need to be led into experiences which will widen their horizons, such as weekends in London, or entertaining the staff to coffee. Another aspect of their expectation of inadequacy is their need for advice on careers. They have little idea of their capacities and prospects, and frequently respond to my carefully considered opinion as though I were talking of someone else. It is only recently, since some of them in fact have been very successful, that their successors are beginning to believe that it could happen to them.

Crowther did not know about our sixth form. It has so far no links with a University, its 'subject-mindedness' is largely a matter of working hard at those subjects in which a pass is possible, and the value of independent work is limited by the values of the district. The time when the 'boss' is not around is not traditionally used in a responsible manner. The 'fourth mark' of Crowther is there—the intimate relation between pupil and teacher—but it is less the sharing of an intellectual life, more the realisation that the teacher provides a view of life which the student can rarely find at home.

When the Alphas come through we shall prepare them for University. They will be the pride of the town. Relatives will recommend the school, teachers will feel satisfied. But what of the Betas? They will once more be 'second children'—near enough to being first rate to imagine what it feels like, far enough removed to be recognised as 'first children' by our meritocracy, no longer leaders but followers.

This is the way of the world, but I shall remember the 'Beta leaders' with nostalgia—their hesitation, their constant need for support, their chronic, soul-destroying self-doubts. Where did it all start? In the jungle?

W. E. BOOTH,

The High School, Wombwell, Yorks.

### *Parent-School Relation*

The outcome of a meeting convened for parents of the children at the school where I teach, concerning the future amalgamation of the school with another in the vicinity, raises the problems of how to improve parent/school relationships, and ensure that when any important educational issue is discussed, the parents are in a position to argue the matter in an informed way.

The subject was one which was bound to arouse strong feelings on the part of some parents, but few of the staff guessed just how hostile the atmosphere was to become—mainly through a feeling of frustration amongst the parents at not having the case presented to them 'warts and all'.

The trouble was that on the platform were a group of interested, experienced, well-informed people, united about proposals they were putting across to the audience. Below, were a large crowd of equally interested people who were lacking an authoritative spokesman, and who were pathetically *uninformed*. Both parties claimed to have the interests of the children at heart, but the platform presented a very one-sided case to the parents (as glossy as a political programme), completely omitting to mention other less favourable aspects of the plan (some of which had been forcibly

expressed by the staff some weeks prior to this meeting).

How can we hope to carry the judgment and receive the support of parents in any attempt at progressive re-organisation if we keep them at arm's length over educational policy? A sad case of failure to present the full facts of a matter to the public has led to bitterness, and suggestions of speedy retaliation.

I wonder how many other teachers have evidence of people in authority dealing with parents too slickly, despite the lip-service paid to the important contribution they can make to the improvement of our education service.

What an urgent need there is for parents' associations. Needless to say—no such association exists in our school, and this recent experience of mine is one unfortunate result.

ELVET EDWARDS, London.

## A Parent's View

The first thing that should be emphasised to the Plowden Committee is that primary education comes *first*. Skilled teaching in the early years is essential, and one of the earliest priorities should be the reduction in size of the primary school classes. I cannot understand why it has ever been acceptable for primary school classes to be larger than secondary ones. Joan Goldman's book *Selected at Six* gives all the reasons why—I think it should be compulsory reading for all the committee. One quotation alone gives an excellent example—'what so-called backward readers need is only a teacher with time to spare for them'.

I think a shorter day for the new admissions would be an excellent idea for at least some of the children—the first term my own son found very tiring indeed, although my daughter did not. Activity classes are very noisy places, and rather overwhelming after a quiet home and limited play with a few other children.

Activity and experience ideas should be brilliant, but in large classes frequently fail, as the children cannot apply themselves sufficiently without *more* expert supervision. This, in turn, leads to boredom and aimlessness, as *work* is not encouraged by many practitioners of this method. I feel a gradual insistence on work and achievement (within the individual's *best* capacity) should be encouraged—I believe some of the newer students are doing this, as some of the older teachers have always done, but a few years ago when a large number of teachers were trained, the idea was that the children should be left to develop (or stagnate, if they wished). In the case of my own children I found a lot of this method caused trouble at home, as they felt they *could do as they liked* at home too! It also led to a lot of 'What shall I do now?' and a '*couldn't care less*' attitude in their work. This causes trouble in later schooling, when careless work, bad spelling and poor handwriting begin to count.

The classes in which my children have been happiest and most agreeable to live with, have been with firm disciplinarians, who could make work *fun*.

Noise in the classroom should be discouraged by the time the children reach junior school. It is time they began to learn concentration and that is almost

impossible in a noisy classroom. It also seems to over-tire some children, and I should imagine it overtires some teachers too.

Being willing to help both my children with any project activities, I have been very disappointed in the final effect. My child (on some topics) starts full of enthusiasm—but no one else in the group bothers at all. In the case of the boy, who was never anxious for work, that was the end of his interest. In the case of the girl—she tries to do it all, as she is an enthusiastic worker if her interest is aroused. In any case, the time within which a project should be completed should not be too long as their interest flags after four or five weeks, even if the teacher feels they have not gone as far as possible.

M. F. ODDY, Manchester.

## What can be taught in Unstreamed Schools?

Accounts of work with unstreamed classes are of particular interest at present. Miss Whitbread (FORUM, Vol. 6, No 1) deals exclusively with teaching history in an unstreamed secondary school; but much of what she says confirms what has been stated in more general articles. She stresses that history with mixed-ability classes must be primarily a matter of projects and assignments, and she instances topics for study such as Life on a Medieval Manor, Life in a Georgian Coffee House, or the Castle, Town, or Monastery. The general method of work is research by the pupils, usually in small mixed-ability groups, with the teacher acting more as a guide than an instructor. It is evident that topics chosen for study in these classes should be such as have many and varied aspects, and in which differing levels of attainment by the pupils are acceptable. After a period of work by such methods, perhaps a few weeks, some pupils will have learnt much and some little. Some general discussion may follow and the class is then ready to begin a new topic. Again it must be one with many and varied aspects; but it cannot depend for its comprehension upon an understanding of all aspects of the previous study since this would only be possible for some members of the class.

If schoolchildren are guided rather than instructed in work of this kind, what form of knowledge are most of them likely to acquire? It will be mainly descriptive. Each child will be able to give a descriptive account of a topic varying in the number, type, and complexity of the aspects noted; and after the study of several topics the children will be able to give a series of such accounts, each being largely independent of the others.

Whatever such a course of work may be called, it can hardly warrant the name of history. The topics would indeed be extended in time; but they would no more constitute history than would the study of a similar series of present-day topics extended in space—Life in a Crowded City; Life in the Desert; etc.

Whatever else it may be, history is a study of development; and it is one which seeks the explanation of the changes which it notes in terms of the many conflicting causes which produce them. It records not simply events;

but more especially the efforts, discoveries, struggles, and rivalries of men and nations which mould and change the conditions and circumstances in which they live. History seeks to comprehend a situation in terms of the development which has produced it. Such understanding derives not simply from a descriptive account of outward appearances at any particular time, but from a comprehension of the connections and interdependence of a series of preceding and contemporary events. If left largely to study topics themselves, schoolchildren will seldom notice features of this kind. In such matters they need to be taught as much as guided. Historical explanations may be given at many levels of comprehension and generality; but at whatever level children are working, each step in a process needs to be understood by the whole class.

It is clear that it would be extremely difficult to teach this form of history to classes with a very wide range of ability, and the subject would have to be replaced by studies such as those instanced by Miss Whitbread. An interesting criticism of this kind of work is given by Mr. Rubinstein in the same issue of FORUM. He stresses the inefficiency in schools of what he refers to as study on a 'do-it-yourself basis'.

Many subjects, especially in secondary schools, pro-

ceed in a step by step manner in which one stage cannot satisfactorily be attempted until certain preceding stages have been mastered. In these studies children usually need to be taught as well as guided, and difficulties arise with classes with wide ranges of ability. But there are some school subjects which may be attempted at many levels in one class at the same time, and in which varying degrees of attainment are no barriers to further work. Arts and Crafts, Domestic Science, Physical Exercises and Games, Practical Subjects, Drama, etc., may all proceed well with mixed-ability classes.

In junior schools where much time is spent practising to acquire basic skills, a guide may be needed much more frequently than an instructor. Mixed-ability classes may often function quite well here; and if there are benefits to be gained by a reversion to unstreamed classes in junior education, the balance may be in favour of doing so. But in secondary schools any benefits to be gained from mixed-ability classes must be weighed carefully against losses in efficiency and standards of study which would occur in teaching many subjects; and it appears to be much more unlikely that the balance here would be in favour of a general unstreaming of classes.

M. J. BAKER,

Torells County Secondary School, Essex.

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# Non-Streaming in the Secondary School

EDWARD BLISHEN

*On April 25, 1964, FORUM arranged a full day's conference in London on 'Non-Streaming in Primary and Secondary Schools'. The morning session, entitled 'New Developments in Non-Streamed Junior Schools', was addressed by Mr. George Freeland, Mr. Edward Harvey and Mr. Norman Morris, all heads of non-streamed junior schools and members of the FORUM editorial board. Since the FORUM evidence to the Plowden Committee, published in this number, is concerned exclusively with the junior school, the report which follows is confined to the second session, on 'Non-Streaming at the Secondary Stage'.*

The afternoon session was opened by Mr. Peter Mauger, headmaster of the Nightingale County Secondary School, Wanstead, and member of the FORUM editorial board, who said that among the things that drove him to unstream was the observation that children segregated themselves according to their streams even in the playground. The staff's attitude towards the C stream was that 'you can't really teach them anything'. Significantly, there was exactly this attitude towards the lowest stream among the staff of a large and famous direct grant school, where in fact the children concerned were by definition among the brightest children in the population.

He himself began unstreaming with no strong theoretical foundation for his belief. Even if he had accepted the need for streaming, he could have found no criteria for separating the children. To do so on a basis of attainment would be to ignore the differences between junior schools attended and between children's homes. Some children, again, had had many changes of school, or had spent long periods in hospital. Twenty years ago one might have streamed on a basis of IQs, but not now. So it had to be mixed ability classes. At once there was a whole series of problems previously disguised because streamed classes were not in fact as homogeneous as they were made out to be. He had decided he would not have class positions: the first position was never competed for by more than four children, and what help was that to anyone? Instead, he used percentages to give parents some idea of how their children were getting on, relating these to the average percentage in the class. He had settled in maths from the start, though he wasn't sure this was justified: it wouldn't be nearly so apparently necessary if we had no streaming in the junior school or if the junior schools would get together and teach maths in the same way. He was not opposed to a limited amount of setting so long as there was a good deal of mixed ability grouping throughout the school day.

There had been an unquestionable social gain

from non-streaming—there was neither segregation among children nor rejection of children by others. 'I would say,' said Mr. Mauger, 'that our school is a happier school than if it had been streamed. You only get real learning through happiness, and you only get a happy adult if you've had a happy child.'

So far as academic results were concerned—and the argument was that mixed ability groups held the brighter child back—his brighter children did about the same as they would have done in a streamed school. He was not worried about them. In a three-form entry school, 59 children had gained 153 'O' level passes, and 16 more took 'O' level courses and got none. These 16 had put themselves in for the exam—under streaming they would have been nowhere near 'O' level, and rubbing shoulders with other 'O' level candidates had changed their whole attitude to work. They were going on now, in or out of school, to get their passes. The only way we could get children to stay on was to offer them the opportunity to sit for public exams. This was a carrot: but the situation would be unchanged so long as there were exams. The bright children also did a valuable leavening job in the school.

## The backward children

As for the very backward, there was a teacher with special training and children were withdrawn from ordinary classes for a varying number of periods a day for their special needs. Music, art and PE were not interfered with. This worked fairly well in most cases, and by the end of the year most were no longer going to remedial classes. He was not satisfied he had the full answer: but what was the alternative? It was to put these children into classes of 20: and it was a mistake to suppose you could give individual attention to 20 children all with different problems. And children in a C class knew they were inferior. 'Our answer,' said Mr. Mauger, 'is a lot better than segregating these children into streams of the rejected and saying we don't expect much of them.'

With the average child, he had no doubt there was a clear gain. It was difficult even to tell who they were.

In his view, there would be no question of streaming in secondary schools if there were no streaming in junior schools. But we had to tackle the techniques of teaching mixed ability classes.

### **Sociometric grouping**

Mr. K. R. Scott, headmaster of Imberhorne Secondary School, East Grinstead, asked whether it was enough to provide each pupil with any group of human beings of a similar age? He thought it was not. It was important to discover, discreetly, what children made impact on others: and this information could be sought through questionnaires, English essays and in other ways. When you had it, you built up a sociogram showing where isolation occurred and where relationships were unhealthy. You found out who were the popular ones, who were the isolates, who the isolates admired, who were admired by the non-isolates, where the power groups were in a class, and the bases for attraction. When one had this, one could begin to measure whether groups were healthy or not and whether one wanted them. He had evolved a five-point scale for measuring the health of groups. You asked: (a) Does leadership in the group change when its activities change; i.e., is it a totalitarian group? (b) Does each of the members of the group subscribe to the same code of conduct? (c) Do they help each other loyally? (d) Do they stand in general for good order and good manners? (e) Do members help each other materially and sympathetically?

When healthy groups existed, they should be nourished irrespective of intelligence. In a natural set-up children would not always be choosing their comrades from their own ability group.

Having unstreamed four schools (two primary and two secondary) he had found that in the initial stages teachers—even experienced ones—came somewhat reluctantly to the teaching of unstreamed classes. The teacher under non-streaming had different needs—he must have more books, pictures, films, film-strips, radio, means of duplication. He must be more like a tutor, helping children to report imaginative ideas as well as facts.

English, he believed, should be setted: this was important because the success of the English department was the basis of success for other teachers in other subjects. The effect of unstreaming on the English panel was salutary, for the head of the department found immediately that old methods were unsuitable. He had to put a stronger

emphasis on those aspects of English in which each child might express himself more or less without restriction. In the context of free writing the teacher of English could find out what a child's difficulties were. The great change under non-streaming was in the functions of pupil and teacher. The pupil became busier and soon found it impossible to keep up with the demands made on him by the whole staff. He went home tired, sometimes exhausted. The teacher, on the other hand, went home less tired because he had been stimulated and excited by his success, and because he could now teach his subject in depth.

Mr. L. A. Smith, head of the Mark House Secondary School, Walthamstow, said that he had unstreamed his school six and a half years ago. Class-teaching—he hoped, enlightened class-teaching—had a place in his school because so many of his teachers had been reared under the old system. He had not been able to visualise an absolute Daltonian scheme throughout the school. In looking for a way of grouping his children, he had tried Mr. Mauger's method but found that within a month it had become out-of-date. Grouping by friendship he had found to be one of the best methods. A child could come to him and say 'Please sir, may I change class?' An isolate was able to find the group where he would be least rejected. A pro-school attitude among the children had been one of the results of non-streaming. He tried to arrange the work so that a child was a member both of large and small groups. His was a dying school, due to disappear altogether in two years time, so he did not set: the sets would be too small.

### **The use of conversation**

Conversation formed the fundamental technique. The teacher had to be able to create in his room those conditions in which children were willing to talk to him and to one another. Most of the teaching was done in the small groups automatically created for crafts.

His area was working-class, and many of the children had little experience of communication with adults: the school had to make up for this. He took to task those who settled for English throughout the whole teaching of that subject. If a school worked by the rule of debate then there were always children in every class willing to talk, and encouragement could be given to those children who in a streamed school were the silent ones. He found drama very important—several periods a week were devoted to theatrecraft. It was the school's policy to train children to make their own



notes and to engage not only in secondary research—using books—but also in primary research where opportunities for it could be created.

Mr. Smith said he wanted to draw a distinction between de-streaming and non-streaming. If you tried to de-stream at one fell swoop, you got a weird conglomeration of children who had once been streamed: they remained divided into their old As, Bs and Cs. Moreover, those in second and third years had received no training in research techniques. Training in the new methods essential to non-streaming must begin the moment a child entered the school.

He had devised suites of teaching rooms and work areas so that he had a full range of practical activities creeping into the academic work of the children. All the pupils did homework, but there was an arrangement with parents that if a child had attempted his homework for thirty minutes and then seemed to be at sea, the parent could make a note in the exercise book: 'Has tried hard but needs help.'

He believed in integration of subjects, and had tried all the methods he knew to show children and teachers that school subjects formed a unity. He had vast exhibitions showing what was going on in the whole school. He had also invented sabbatical periods which enabled teachers to see what was going on in other rooms. He had developed what he called an 'orbital technique': under this system, a teacher was put outside the programme with powers to extract from within it children who were interested in some particular topic or activity. There were eighty children and four or five teachers 'in orbit' in the school at any particular time. This meant, among other things, that children could be 'in orbit' for remedial work without anyone being particularly aware of it. The danger that a child might be 'in orbit' for the same lesson week after week was avoided by never withdrawing a child at the same time each week.

### The discussion

In the discussion that followed these addresses, a teacher from a Coventry comprehensive said his school always had 20 or so children in every intake who could not read. At the other end of the scale they had a few pupils of 130 IQ or more, whose mathematical age at 11 was about 14, while those of others in the school was about 7. As they moved further along the school this difference in mental age became wider. None of those who had spoken from the platform had experience of dealing with an IQ range from 130 plus to 70. He would like to think

that non-streaming would be successful with such a wide range.

A teacher from Essex said he thought the case against streaming had been well made out: he was not so sure about the case for non-streaming. He was less worried about *how* you taught a class of wide ability than about *what* you taught them. In many subjects you needed to carry the whole class along with you at the same level, and to pass from stage to stage. Could more not be done to avoid the difficulties of streaming by having more setting?

Miss Ingram, formerly head of a comprehensive school, said she had grouped 1,000 children from over 40 different primary schools simply by looking at them. She had settled in English for a year, with interesting results, but wouldn't like to set regularly for this subject. There should be room for experiment as to whether to set or not.

### The need for flexibility

A teacher from Abbey Wood, a London comprehensive school, said that non-streaming should mean flexibility of approach. In a non-streamed school the point of having the brighter children side by side with those of lower ability was that the slower ones should be stimulated: in setting you couldn't achieve this.

At Abbey Wood they had two groups, one unstreamed, one streamed. Next year they hoped to have three: the first unstreamed, taught by flexible, group and individual methods: the second streamed but also taught by these methods: and the third streamed and taught by ordinary class methods. The sample would be a limited one (120 children), but the results of the experiment should be interesting.

A head of modern languages from a comprehensive school said that in his school the case for setting was unproven. All the thousand children in the school did French for three years. For two years they combined quite happily: but in the third year setting became essential, for now progress depended on an accumulation of knowledge and practice, and there was not by then a sufficient common basis. The problem was that the B and C sets hadn't enough knowledge of French to carry on for a third year, and they should be free to drop it: but alas, they couldn't do so, because in an unstreamed school the forms went on as they were, and one couldn't have part of a class dropping a subject and another part carrying on with it.

Another comprehensive teacher said he believed non-streaming to be logical and sane at the secondary stage. His own school was streamed, and it

seemed to him there were two concealed problems. The first was that the children talked about grammar school and secondary modern streams: the second was that school was too like the Army—if you were very good, or a great nuisance, you would receive all the attention in the world. There was a depressed area in the middle ability range. Under non-streaming, did concealed problems like these skulk into the class itself? Did the brighter ones gravitate together? Wasn't the teacher tempted to spend too much time with the very bright or the very backward, neglecting the middle range?

A teacher from Abbey Wood said there was an added problem in modern language teaching. Some children came into the school with no French at all: and it was therefore necessary to set. What would happen in this situation in a non-streamed school? She agreed that it was difficult to see how one could cope in French beyond the second year without setting, because it was a cumulative subject. She found herself not wanting streaming for any subject but her own.

#### Coarse streaming

Miss Miles, headmistress of Mayfield Comprehensive School, asked if there shouldn't be a distinction between streaming, which concerned people, and setting, which concerned skills. 'It's all a question of how finely or how coarsely you stream,' she said. 'At Mayfield we stream coarser and coarser.'

Another Abbey Wood teacher said he was struck by the fact that a great deal of what had been said that afternoon came from good teachers who were naturally inclined to be interested in new ideas, or from headmasters who would work their staffs hard and well under any system.

A plea for research came from a former primary teacher now working for ACE. There was very little to go on if you were in a back street in Cambridge trying to answer parents' very worried questions. It would be a great help if information were coming out of the secondary field as it already was from the primary field.

During a last round of comments from the main speakers, Mr. Scott said he wanted to make it clear that only in the first three years did he have socio-metric grouping. He believed grouping in those years should not be complicated in any way by reference to any sort of exam syllabus. In the secondary schools we had the job of helping children socially: and they did not automatically make friends. He violently disagreed with any system that involved multi-setting, so that fifty or sixty per cent of the time you were involved in shifting your groupings. At the end of the third

year, when, with normal maturation, interest in a career became more important than social relationships, you tailored a three-year course towards whatever exam you thought suitable for each pupil.

Mr. Mauger stressed that we were already teaching unstreamed groups, but the danger was that in the streamed situation this was not recognised. To feel that we must carry the whole class with us was the thin end of the wedge of domination by subject.

Were the depressed middle range neglected? Yes, they were—with poor, inexperienced and uninterested teachers. With good teachers, it didn't happen. He was not claiming that unstreamed schools were the answer to all problems. He was saying only that if children were not given fixed labels, then they had a much greater chance of overcoming difficulties. 'We have to teach children as children, not as abstractions. The old system has proved to be wrong and, I think, mentally cruel.'

Mr. Simon brought the conference to a close by saying that those in favour of non-streaming were now in the position of trying to get people to understand their point of view. The important thing—far more important than talk and description and argument—was to persuade people to come and see non-streaming in action. He hoped the conference would have given further impetus to discussion and experiment. Teachers in non-streamed schools should try out methods of research such as that being tried at Abbey Wood—and this should especially be done in schools large enough to have control groups, so that the experiments could be seen to be intellectually respectable.

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## FORUM

The next number of FORUM (January 1965) will be a **Special Number on Further Education**. It will include articles by **C. A. Thompson**, Principal of the Brooklyn Technical College, Birmingham; **M. E. Mumford**, Principal of the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology; **R. M. Prideaux**, Principal of the Barnet College of Further Education; **J. Longden**, Head of the Engineering Department of the Mid-Warwickshire College of Further Education, Leamington; **W. P. Evans**, of Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd.; **G. S. Brosan**, Principal of the Enfield College of Technology; **W. H. Hatton**, head of the Department of Building and Engineering of the Liverpool College of Building, and others.

The number will be concerned particularly with the age-group 15 to 18.

# Newsom and the Raising of the School Leaving Age

PETER SHUTTLEWOOD

*Mr. Shuttlewood is head of the department of extended courses at New Parks Boys School, Leicester. He is also a part-time teacher-tutor in the University of Leicester School of Education.*

Undoubtedly Newsom has been welcomed as a new weapon in the fight for a more liberal conception of secondary education. It is not pie in the sky but a collection of realities. Many schools have been on the Newsom road for some years. The debate has lasted twelve months and the spirit of the Report is spreading among teachers and administrators. I am not sure that it has got much further so we cannot afford to be too starry-eyed.

Some of our problems of a day-to-day nature arise out of the structure of secondary education and many of us regret that the committee saw fit to interpret its terms of reference so that all serious consideration of structure was omitted.

We are faced now in modern and comprehensive schools with the problems of preparing for the extension of the leaving age to 16, among those very pupils who are reputedly the most difficult to teach. Clearly many staff are not too happy with the practical aspects of this legislative act. This feeling is widespread in the more difficult areas. We fear it, I suppose, because around the corner are the H.O.R.S.A. huts of 1947 still full of children and we suspect that the heavy expenditures implied by Newsom will not be willingly met by ratepayers and local education authorities. The problems of school leaving at 15 have not everywhere been solved. Then we must be honest about teacher supply. Sir Lionel Russell, Chief Education Officer for Birmingham, says 'The teacher situation is likely to remain extremely grave for the next 10 to 20 years'. When a doctor uses such language the patient is likely to die. The forces that stand against the teacher are strong. Children of 15 are induced by powerful aural and visual aids to earn not learn. Children of 16 are more likely to respond to such seduction. We must decide our aims and a practicable policy within the confines of the reality which we all know.

The spirit of Newsom must not be misinterpreted. We should ensure the educational validity of all we do. It is the easiest thing in the world to drop into the child's sub-culture. You become popular but you do not teach. In a short article I cannot discuss what is educationally valid. My daily

rule of thumb is to teach communication in English and Mathematics (the linguistic inadequacy shown by Newsom), show the way to social understanding and tolerance and urge maturation and the full life. I regard communication as all important. By 1970 I hope I can assume that my 15-year-olds will be literate. If not there must be something still very wrong with diagnosis, treatment and perhaps size of classes at an earlier stage. I have taught in my present school for ten years. It is a large boys' modern school set in the centre of a very large council estate. What I write now relates to what we have done in the past and what I would hope to do in the future. Our problem is motivation. In such an area the virtues of education are not apparent to all.

## Fifth-year schemes

On the child's entry into the fifth year he should be given as much choice of work as possible. We divide our forms into four types in our present final year—woodwork based, metalwork based, art/printing, physical activities. Each form has the equivalent of one full day's work in its specialised area. Groups are small and much fruitful work is done. The printers have several platen machines and different founts of type. They print programmes for school activities, letter headings and so on. We have obtained all our equipment quite cheaply, paying for it by voluntary contributions, musical concerts and plays. The metalworkers work on car and motor-cycle engines and on more orthodox metalwork shop techniques. We have been much hampered by shortage of space. The physical activities form goes out of school on Tuesday afternoons and sometimes all day, sailing, canoeing, rock climbing, trekking, cooking and map reading. All forms go out on initiative tests every six weeks in the county to expose the boys to discomfort, fatigue and mental challenge. I hope to extend this Adventure training into weekend work. We rent from a nearby River Board a small island which we use in these activities, although vandalism in the locality has almost brought us to a halt.

All this work is used as a motivation in English. Our main aim is to buttress and extend literacy. Generally the Newsom child does not like English and Mathematics. Surely we are better at our job than that? We show films once a fortnight through the year and much good work springs from them. For example I do work on Bias and run a German wartime newsreel and an excerpt from an American war film showing the apparent immunity of both nations from cowardice, double dealing and disaster. I do not exempt Britain from the course, by the way. Work in English is strengthened by use of a short wave radio receiver in the stock room, fortnightly inter-form competitions, advertising analysis, wall newspapers, mock newspapers, tape recorder work, criticism of television and films.

### **Effective facilities needed**

This year we are building, with the blessing of the L.E.A., a large fourth-year centre containing space for a Morris 8, benches and visual aids and through a movable dividing wall, a heavy crafts room. I hope to link Roadcraft with the motor maintenance course. Recently I spent a day at an Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion. Could we in secondary schools have just a small share of the hutted, heated and lit space they have? Elasticity must be our rule. Why cannot boys take a cooking course and girls car maintenance? The facts of modern life seem to demand it. If the facilities are not in our building then let us swap with the girls school next door. Our years' extension is our opportunity.

I hope I am not leaving an impression of diletantism. During the week not more than one day is spent upon the form's specialisation—the rest of the week covers the orthodox time-table with breaks for films, visits and initiative tests. The mathematics is of a realistic nature—traffic census, navigation problems and so on. Discussion techniques are used widely in R.E. Because of this extra-classroom motivation the work more directly concerned with literary and mathematical skills is far more successful.

I think it is vital that boys of 15 and 16 should have a special position within the school with exclusive use of lawns and parts of the school building and special responsibilities. I would welcome a fifth-year centre as described by the Ministry Development Group in Newsom—a most impressive part of the Report. Certain schools in some authorities are being developed as Youth Centres. The new buildings could certainly be planned to have a day and evening function. It should be clearly a privilege to belong to the fifth year and I would move more

and more towards the use of a fifth-year elected Council as my disciplinary controlling body. This works in our present final year, practically the only sanctions being censure and withdrawal of privileges by the boys' peers.

It is going to be essential that staff working in the extended year should have a clear conception of what is involved. There will have to be changes in attitudes. Newsom says 'the school programme in the final year ought to be deliberately outgoing—an initiation into the adult world of work and leisure'. The teacher should be trained to do this—I am not sure that at the moment he is. I do not want to say much about training but it might not be a bad idea if experienced teachers could become involved in the process of training and assessment without having to opt out of teaching. It is also true that our best, most mature people often get promotion and move further away from the child. I would like to see them able to stay on the classroom floor and still obtain salary and status increases.

Many people underrate the inhibiting power of the huge bronze doors of the local Technical College and College of Further Education or the apparent social tightness of existing leisure groups. Our boys find it painful to make the step into Technical College, amateur theatre, rugby club or sailing club. The people who inhabit them do not bite but there is a strong belief that they do. We educate for life—we should help the boys to step from school to adult life even if we hold their hands and take them across the threshold. The links that Newsom would like to see are of this nature.

### **Links with Further Education**

We ourselves should renew our links with staff in Further Education centres of all kinds to see that our pupils are pressed forward as far as their abilities and inclinations will allow them to go. If we do not believe in the universal good of Further Education, who will? As far as introduction to work is concerned I hope that local industry will co-operate on a much bigger scale than before. I envisage day-long visits where my boys can go into the byways of factory and office life, really have time to talk to people and understand more of the atmosphere and processes. If the job of Careers Master were properly assessed he would have time to make these contacts and act as an effective link between school and work.

I have said nothing of examinations but it is probable that of the range of our fifth-year pupils some will take 'O' level and some C.S.E. I still hope that C.S.E. will not prove restrictive and it should not if we are strong enough to fit the examination

to what is educationally desirable and not the reverse. Apart from those children who take public examinations and need some practice in techniques I see no use at all for marks or competitive tests of fact acquisition during the day-to-day running of my courses. Progress is measured by standardised tests of attainment and, more important, by the constant control and judgment of staff working with the boys. In English, for example, if there is a ferment of work and the class is not overlarge we can produce at the end of the year a fair and complete assessment of the boys' work in that subject. Newsom says the boy has a right to some report upon his work at the end of his course. I agree but I think an examination based internal leaving certificate is neither necessary nor desirable.

### **Parity of esteem**

My suggestions will apply largely among the non-examination boys. Because of the nature of examinations freedom to exploit the day-to-day situation and to get out of the form room is elusive but the spirit of the schemes should spread where possible into the 'O' level and C.S.E. areas of the school. By using such methods with our fourth year leavers in the past years we have certainly achieved parity of esteem between examination and non-examination boys—both in the eyes of boys and parents. In fact our problem is often to persuade an examination boy that his work is as purposeful as those of his fellows in the middle streams. Of those boys who were retarded at 11+ and have received a concentrated specialised course to combat this, the extra year will be invaluable. It will let them spread themselves, acquire social graces they may have lacked, gain confidence and maturity. The retention of their newly-acquired literacy will prove more probable.

Our pupils are not going to wave any banners upon entry to their extra year unless we motivate them with work relevant to their interests and conditioning. We need mature staff trained to an awareness of the problems of this sector of secondary education, staff who know what professional standards mean. We need to win over the ratepayer to our view that every child is worth educating to the full. Jack Walton gave some indication of the cost in the last number of *FORUM*. I think he underestimated it. Our pupils will not be pushed around, they will not be taught at but they will work with us. The old conception of the classroom as the powerhouse of the school is not outdated if we revise our attitudes and provide a new fuel. It is an exciting prospect.

## **The Local Authority and the Probationary Year**

E. L. EDMONDS

*Dr. Edmonds is a Past President of the National Association of Inspectors. He is the author of The School Inspector (1962), a history of the role of inspection in the organisation of schools. He deals here with some pressing problems in the organisation of teacher training.*

In the last few years, long-overdue research has begun into the problem of first-year teachers, and a working party, representing the N.U.T., the A.T.C.D.E., and the N.A.I.E.O., is currently reviewing the situation. The general picture is already familiar; over half of all probationer teachers do not experience any difficulties; about 3 per cent to 5 per cent have to serve an extended period of probation (usually six months). One alarming figure of 7 per cent leaving teaching at the end of the first year for other posts needs very close investigation; such wastage in so grave a time of national teacher-shortage cannot be tolerated; wastage from other causes, notably marriage by women teachers in their first year, has already prompted some critics to query how 'prevalent' human nature should be.

But a more insidious problem may be created by the impending separation of L.E.A.s from teacher training altogether, as recommended by the Robbins Report. Representation of up to one-third on the new governing boards for Colleges of Education may not amount to much from a Local Authority point of view; and the new-found academic freedom of the colleges may only serve to emphasise the deep-rooted L.E.A. suspicion (sometimes fostered by students' own comments at interviews for initial posts) that in pursuit of general education, colleges lose sight of professional training as it is needed in the classroom in so many different contexts. These suspicions may be largely unfounded; nevertheless, they do exist, and they may grow after separation, unless some means are found for other fruitful relationships between college of education and L.E.A.

**A suggested means is to extend the present three-year course or diploma year into the first year of teaching. Thus, no teacher would gain 'recognition' at all until he or she has satisfactorily completed one year of teaching.**

The proposal would have several advantages:

1. It would serve to 'marry' L.E.A.s and Schools of Education. For example U.D.E. and College tutors would have a proper reason for asking to see all reports made by the L.E.A. officer (heads, inspectors, etc.), and at present rightly regarded as pastorally confidential to teacher, head teacher, authority and/or Department of Education and Science. Such a 'feed-back' would enormously benefit their own processes of assessment of a teacher-in-training.
2. It would take the sting out of the divorce of L.E.A.s from their colleges which, incidentally, seems likely to come in the next five years, if only for the sake of the whole future academic status of a unifying profession. Most colleges will move into the university orbit eventually — the few that have done so already have hand-somely proved the point. Under this new proposal for a composite course, L.E.A.s would still retain a national connection with teacher-training, which is the field wherein they must be allowed to have garnered a rich experience. This would not (and must not) be lost to the profession.
3. It would hasten the demise of this truly remarkable anomaly in English education that if a graduate comes direct into teaching (i.e. without a training year) he can gain immediate 'recognition' if he satisfactorily completes his first year's teaching. Under this new scheme, a training year would be obligatory; and one would hope that the direct grant and independent schools would co-operate here. And if anyone doubts the efficacy of the one-year Diploma course, facts dispel them: the failure rate for the untrained first-year graduate teacher (reckoned on extension of probation) is three times higher than that of the trained graduate.
4. It would facilitate further research into the whole nature of the first year of service, the more so if it led to experiment in new types of appointment. Thus, why not a series of half-and-half appointments between L.E.A. organising inspector and college lecturer? These might be, say, three days in college and two days in schools spent

specifically with first-year teachers; or other permutations of time, on a termly basis, perhaps, could be investigated. One would hope that the young teacher, the college of education, and the L.E.A. would all benefit from this widening port of experience. It would certainly make far more flexible the interchange of staff between college and L.E.A. and in a rapidly expanding programme for teacher-training, this might be of even greater value than it undoubtedly is now.

It is idle to pretend there would not be many difficulties. A few are:

(a) The L.E.A. with its inexorable administrative logic, would want to know the nature of its own executive links with 'half-time' inspectors. There is a partial parallel of course in the case of some educational psychologists whose salary is paid half by the Education Department and half by the Medical Department: this arrangement usually works satisfactorily. In the ultimate resort the paymaster is the same in both cases. But something more precise might be required vis-à-vis the new University Schools of Education (and it is hoped that the constituent colleges will not be at the end of the financial queue under any new dispensation).

(b) Again, the proposal might exacerbate rather than heal the sometimes strained relations between the 'maintained' and the independent system of education. Thus, already it is not unknown for the latter to have 'appointed' to its ranks a number of teachers in training long before the plumb-line of Easter agreed to by all the appointing L.E.A.s. The independent and direct grant schools have their own shortages of staff of course, no less than maintained schools; some in principle in any case like to appoint direct from the university degree course. An almost superhuman act of faith, therefore, will be required if the proposed integration of a first year of teaching with the teacher-qualification is to be 100 per cent operative—as it must be to stand any chance of success. It is emphasised that clearance from probation in these cases would continue to be a responsibility of the Department of Education and Science (through Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools as heretofore).

(c) Looking further ahead, the proposal might prove to be creative in development of one of the most forward-looking ideas of this half-century, namely professional unity. To have administrators, inspectors, and teachers all working together in a joint enterprise would gladden the hearts of so many who cherish the ideal of a unified profession.

# Grading and Conditioning

C. GODDEN

*Mr. Godden has been Head of the English Department in a non-selective four-stream secondary school for the past seven years, during which time (and for many years before) he taught fourth year boys and girls in the lower ability ranges as well as those in the higher streams. He is at present form master as well as the English teacher of the lowest stream fourth year class.*

Readers of FORUM who are concerned with primary education have for long accepted the imperative necessity to rid the primary schools of the pernicious evils of 'streaming'. Indeed, many who have never perhaps heard of FORUM, but who have felt its indirect influence, have come to believe that 'streaming' must go in the primary schools.

So far, however, apart from an occasional indirect comment in contributions to FORUM, there appears to be what amounts to a conspiracy of silence on secondary school 'streaming'. In your Spring issue writers on Newsom rightly condemned the report's pussy-footing approach to the subject. It is time those of us who have to live and work with the problems which streaming creates proclaimed and explained our disgust at a system whose effects in the secondary school are so much worse than they are in the primary school. Let me, therefore, be the first to rush in where, perhaps, those more qualified fear to tread.

## Conditioning effect of streaming

The first and most disturbing thing about 'streaming' (or 'grading' as it would surely be more accurate to call it) is its sheer inhumanity; its breathtaking assumption that human individuals are so many eggs to be sorted, boxed and given an appropriate label. But, inevitably, worse is to follow. Having decided that some of these human individuals are Epsilons and some are Alpha-pluses, we then, often with the best and most benevolent intentions, proceed to condition them to accept the labels we have bestowed upon them. The fact that at about thirteen or fourteen many of these boys and girls become bitter and subconsciously refuse to accept the status of 'B', 'C' or 'D' citizens surely gives rise to that hatred and contempt of all things connected with school life that so many of us expend so much time and energy trying in vain to dispel.

It is not necessarily, as implicitly suggested in the Newsom Report, our teaching which is at fault; much of the kind of teaching advocated, I have seen carried on by skilled and experienced teachers. The fault lies in the grading and conditioning of developing human individuals whose natural strivings to mature in mind and spirit have been stifled by repeated doses of the same medicine. Can we wonder that they are unco-operative and anti-social? The wonder is that they don't pull the schools down over our heads. That they don't quite do this is, I believe, due to the patience, understanding and professional skill of their teachers. How many times has one heard teachers comment on the differences between the bright, eager eleven-year-olds and the surly reluctant louts who are the same children four years older. 'What have we done to them?' we say. The answer surely is, 'We have graded and conditioned them.'

Perhaps though, there are strong educational arguments for the practice of 'streaming', strong enough in fact to outweigh the social disadvantages. There is first the argument that the 'high-flyer' might be held back. There is, of course, no evidence for this, but if the argument were to be taken seriously it makes the slanderous assertion that teachers are more concerned to help those few children—very few in non-selective schools it would be argued—who are least in need of help, at the expense of the majority who need it most. The contrary argument has more apparent validity—that the less able children can be more effectively taught in a 'streamed' class than in a mixed ability class. Here again there is no evidence, but the theory is hardly borne out in practice. The social segregation of the less able, with the resulting non-co-operative attitude it engenders, scarcely makes for effective learning.

If schools unstream their classes, there will, of course, still be a need for some remedial teaching in small groups for retarded or backward children, but only, I suggest, in the basic skills of reading and number. Children could be withdrawn from their normal classes for these periods only, or perhaps when their classes are doing modern languages or mathematics. These children should, however, be returned to normal class-work as soon as possible; as the Newsom Report suggests 'the time spent in a remedial class should be kept to a minimum'. Such groups would be very small and it should be possible through the individual attention given to each child to intergrate them completely in their own classes by the third or fourth year.

Finally, we are told that the teaching of mixed ability classes is difficult if not impossible. Apart from a natural resentment at the slur on the professional skill of the nation's teachers, do we not

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find the teaching of our present adolescent 'C' and 'D' classes difficult if not impossible?

## **The devaluation of personality**

Are there, however, any positive educational advantages in non-streaming it may be asked? Here there would seem to be some definite evidence, published, I think, in FORUM within the last two years, which showed a clear rise in attainment levels in an unstreamed junior school over a streamed junior school.

This would seem to support the most disturbing of all educational consequences of streaming: that the attainment gap between higher and lower streams is progressively widened as the children get older. This is due in large measure to what the Newsom Committee describe as 'well-intentioned simplification' and a disregard of the Report's assertion that 'boys and girls, properly taught, can reach much higher standards that is commonly assumed'.

Another problem with which most FORUM readers will be familiar is the annual or terminal staff meetings to decide borderline cases of promotion and demotion, the results of which are rarely satisfactory, especially to the parents of those children who have been demoted, while they are often disastrous to the demoted children themselves.

But whatever the educational effects of non-streaming may be, there can surely be no doubt that, if this method were used, our secondary schools would be much happier communities; and that those children who are 'underestimated and underemployed, in the sense that their occupations in school commonly make insufficient demands on them' would no longer regard themselves as people of inferior status for whom the school has little or nothing to offer.

It would be absurd to pretend that non-streaming would completely eliminate all problems of behaviour: we should have to tackle misfits of one kind or another, but at least the problems would not be aggravated by the devaluation of the human personality that the present system of grading and conditioning produces; and the misfits by being scattered among a number of classes, instead of being herded together as they so often are, could receive the necessary individual attention and help from the form teacher.

As I see it, the case for non-streaming on both social and educational grounds is unanswerable. I firmly believe, therefore, that the abolition of streaming in secondary schools of all kinds would be of greater value to English education than the attainment of every one of the Newsom Report's admirable proposals.



# Visit to the German Democratic Republic

H. RAYMOND KING

In April 1964 four members of the Editorial Board of FORUM visited the German Democratic Republic at the invitation of Dr. Wolfgang Reischock acting on behalf of the Editorial Board of *Deutsche Lehrerzeitung*. This Teachers' Journal, along with some twenty other educational periodicals, issues from the Volk und Wissen Verlag (V.W.V.), official educational publishing organ of the G.D.R.

'We regularly receive your interesting and well-edited journal,' wrote Dr. Reischock. 'A number of the problems you deal with are also being discussed in this country, although the social and political foundations of education are quite different from yours. As we think that mutual information on our problems, activities, and experiences can contribute not only to the development of education in our countries but also to a better understanding between our teachers and our peoples, we should much appreciate it if we could get into closer contact.'

The members of the FORUM Board who were able to accept the invitation were most hospitably received and given remarkable opportunities, in a relatively short stay, to study various aspects of 'polytechnical education' in schools, colleges, universities, factories and farms. A report on their impressions requires more space than can be given in the present number.

In this brief account of an eminently worthwhile tour, the most—and the least—that can be said is that we noted a number of developments being systematically carried out that we find admirable where, in our own system, they already exist or are being tentatively introduced or foreshadowed. The ideology from which the G.D.R. education system derives is not the sole provenance of certain educational principles and practices which we found to be good.

Moreover, at a time when our own educational system and outlook are undergoing considerable changes, it would be profitable, we thought, to pay attention to a range of experiments that are going forward, and the operational research by which they are being tested: in school organisation, mixed-ability groups, and syllabuses; in the motivation of pupils through realistic, applied, and socially relevant studies; in the relations between the school and the social and industrial life of the community; in opening routes to university education for all sections of the population; and in the training of teachers for the approaches that their polytechnical

education calls for, and that we could profitably adopt or adapt with many of our own pupils.

We were impressed by the manifest care the people of the G.D.R. have for their children: not only parental and pedagogic care, but one that manifests itself as public care in action. Whether we approve their route or not, they have gone further along it than we have along ours towards the 'educative society'.

\* \* \*

A full report of the delegation's visit will be published in the next issue of FORUM. Ed.

## The Swing to Comprehensive Education

A further article on local authority reorganisation plans was announced for this issue. The article was to deal with the plans for Manchester and Liverpool, both of which are concerned to abolish the selection examination by the development of forms of comprehensive schools.

However, at the time of going to press, neither authority had completed the final preparations. It is understood that both authorities will finalise their plans in the autumn and it is hoped to include an article analysing these proposals in the next number (January 1965).

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## Book Reviews

### Educational Psychology and Progressive Teaching

E. A. LUNZER

*Dr. Lunzer is lecturer in educational psychology at the Manchester University Department of Education.*

J. H. Flavell, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget*. Van Nostrand, 1963. (68s.)

J. McV. Hunt, *Intelligence and Experience*. Ronald Press, 1961. (64s.)

L. S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*. M.I.T. Press, Wiley, 1962. (45s.)

Progressive teachers may reasonably complain that they have not always been well served by educational psychology. Until recently this has offered little by way of theoretical inspiration for the development of new methods, and few experiments have been directed to their validation in the laboratory.

Many different theories of learning have been put forward by psychologists. Some, like the theories of Tolman and Gestalt psychologists, come fairly close to the kind of position which a sympathetic and empathetic teacher might reach in his efforts to come to grips with the learning problems of the children in his charge. Others, like the behaviouristic theories of Hull and Skinner, seem altogether too formal and remote from day-to-day human learning in the classroom. But from the standpoint of the present day, there can be little doubt that the concentration of effort on the search for the most general principles of learning, which would be equally applicable to animals and to children and adults, has tended to shift the interest of psychologists away from the analysis of those specific learnings which are of the greatest interest to the teacher.

In particular, psychology has had but little to offer by way of elucidation of the manner in which children acquire the concepts and skills which go to make up the greater part of school education. A part of the reason was no doubt the belief that one could hardly expect to reach a scientific understanding of complex, conceptual learning before gaining a

thorough grasp of the processes involved in the simpler learning of animals. But this is by no means the whole story; and a large part of the explanation lies in the fact that psychologists have long held a concern with 'ideas' to be inconsistent with a rigorous and scientifically objective approach. Nor is the suspicion wholly without foundation, for not only is objective investigation difficult in this field, but it is even more difficult to weld theory and experiment into a whole, so that the outcome of experiments yield unambiguous confirmation (or information) for the postulates of the theory.

It is this situation which has enabled the theory and practice of psychometry to gain so large a share of the interest of educational psychology, both in the training of teachers and in educational administration. The forward-looking teacher is alarmed, not so much because he fails to recognise the existence of individual differences, but because his vocation commits him to the belief that, at least insofar as such differences affect what is learned and how well it is learned, these differences must themselves be partially under his influence. Given the best methods of teaching, it should be possible to accelerate the progress of all children, and, more important, to raise their ceilings, even if it is neither possible nor even desirable to eradicate the differences between them.

#### Three important books

The publication within a short period, of three important and general psychological books, all of which are more or less directly concerned with what children learn and how they learn it, is certainly an expression of a changing outlook in psychology. It is no accident that one of these is exclusively devoted to the work of Piaget, while a second draws heavily on it. For the work of Piaget represents the most thoroughgoing attempt to date to extend the psychology of development and learning so as to compass the emergence of new and increasingly powerful modes of conceptualising experience, and hence of new ways of learning which draw on these new systems of conceptualisation.

Flavell's *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget* is a summary account of Piaget's theoretical and experimental publications. Although it extends to 446 pages, the writer has had to exercise a great deal of selection in deciding on what material to include in his treatise. The bibliography alone covers 16 pages and lists no less than 137 books or periodical articles bearing the name of Piaget either as author or as co-author. No one who is familiar with the work of Piaget can doubt that Flavell has done a magnificent job, and that his book will long serve

an important function as a guide to the student and as a major source of references.

Flavell's aim is to provide a complete exposition of Piaget's theory together with a representative cross-section of his experimental work. In his preface to the book, Piaget himself recognises the difficulty of the task and acknowledges the excellence with which it is executed.

The most important criticism one would make concerns Flavell's attempt to separate theory and experiment. This makes some of the expository chapters both dreary and difficult, while the significance of the experiments is not always adequately brought out. Fortunately, Flavell has not always adhered to his own plan. Thus his summary of Piaget's studies of early development is the more satisfying in that there he uses the observational and experimental material to illustrate the theory. The same holds true of the penultimate chapter, on related studies, which will unquestionably prove a most rewarding source of materials both for admirers of Piaget and for his critics.

#### **A new critique of 'intelligence'**

Hunt's *Intelligence and Experience* is the most significant of the three books under review. In essence it is a polemic directed against the twin theories of fixed intelligence and pre-determined development. Because it is also an extremely scholarly work, it is no exaggeration to say that its publication constitutes a landmark in the history of educational psychology.

In his first three chapters, Hunt examines the evidence in favour of fixed intelligence and pre-determined development and finds this insufficient to justify educational practices based on these premises. The view which he advocates as an alternative involves the conception of development as the outcome of continuous interaction between the organism and the environment. The fourth chapter considers some of the main sources of support for such a view, particularly from among recent neurologically or cybernatically oriented studies of the learning process.

The central portion of the book is again a summary of Piaget's contribution, which Hunt takes to be the most comprehensive and detailed account yet available of the way in which knowledge arises as a result of the interaction between organism and environment. While Hunt's resumé is necessarily briefer than that of Flavell, it has the advantage that Hunt is more concerned to present the work of Piaget in a language which will prove acceptable to the more pragmatic Anglo-Saxon reader. A second feature of his exposé is the free

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use of diagrams to illustrate experimental situations and a constant endeavour to bring out their theoretical import and their implications for educational practice.

Hunt's main thesis is that the appearance of new and more effective ways of handling experience depends on the provision, at each stage of development, of suitable 'matches' between the demands of the environment and the strategies already available to the child. Ideally, the former will exceed the latter, so that the child is compelled to reorganise his handling of situations, but only by a small margin, so that he *can* do so. Because Piaget supplies a new understanding of the ways in which children do organise their experience at successive stages, the provision of such matches is made easier. Education must harmonise with spontaneous development, and at the same time it must anticipate its course.

In his penultimate chapter, Hunt provides a detailed survey of other studies bearing on his theory of learning by 'match' between organism and environment, adducing a number of classroom experiments as well as numerous clinical and laboratory studies. He does not deny the existence of individual differences but concludes that given more effective ways of teaching, the intelligence of all children may well reach ceilings which exceed their present levels by as much as 30 points of IQ.

Not everyone will agree with Hunt's arguments and he himself is well aware that the evidence is still less detailed and less conclusive than one might wish. It remains that his work constitutes a major challenge not only to the research worker but also to the practising teacher. It may be that some day his far-reaching vision will be so out-passed by events as to appear positively conservative.

### A brilliant essay

Vygotsky's monograph is very different from the other two books. While they were written in the late fifties and sixties, *Thought and Language* was first published in 1934; and while the others are scholarly treatises designed for study and reference, Vygotsky's is a brilliant essay to be read in a couple of evenings. Yet the reader cannot but be struck by the way in which Vygotsky anticipates current theoretical trends. Although much of the book was written in criticism of Piaget's earliest works, Vygotsky's emphasis on the crucial role of systematisation in the developing power of thought is in fact wholly consonant with all of Piaget's subsequent work.

Vygotsky's thesis is that thought and language are separate in origin but subsequently become

more and more dependent on one another. Both are modified in the process. The language of thought is not the same as the language of speech, for it is a later development. Yet language plays a central part in the organisation of thinking, and it is language which makes the systematisation possible.

I myself incline to the view that Piaget is correct in his belief that the systematisation of thought is the leading strand in cognitive development, and is not a mere by-product of language. But it is almost certainly true that Piaget underrates the influence of language on the process. In particular, the current emphasis on the role of language in education is surely justified. Nowhere will the reader find a richer and more provocative source of inspiration than in Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*.

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