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# Conference Reports

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## Teacher Appraisal

The aim of the symposium was to clarify issues which researchers could usefully address as teacher appraisal schemes are developed at school, LEA and national levels. It was divided into three one and a half hour sessions. Each took different but inter-related themes and consisted of two paper presentations. The chairperson tried to ensure continuity and coherence in the symposium by identifying major themes and issues across the sessions.

The following people contributed papers to the symposium:

Del Goddard, Chief Adviser for Enfield, with a response from Lesley Kant, Senior Adviser for Norfolk: Issues from the Perspective of a Local Educational Authority Adviser.

Anne Moran, University of Ulster: The Significance of Organisational Climate in Schools for the Quality of Appraisal Schemes.

Christopher Day, University of Nottingham. The Contribution of Classroom Research Literature to the Development of Classroom Observation Methods for Appraisal.

John Elliott, University of East Anglia: Research Perspectives on the Problems of Defining Criteria and Processes for Appraising Teachers.

The symposium was very well attended throughout the day. The two papers per session format allowed plenty of time for discussion of issues. The papers were sufficiently overlapping to enable continuous discussion on identifiable themes throughout the day. The major themes were:

- ▶ the necessity not to treat appraisal in isolation from other Government initiatives;
- ▶ can appraisal be educative for teachers or is it simply a mechanism for de-professionalising them?
- ▶ can a management controlled appraisal system foster the professional development of teachers?
- ▶ what is the relationship between organisational development and the development of teachers as persons within the framework of teacher appraisal?

- ▶ do different research paradigms facilitate the different kinds of power relations in education and if appraisal constitutes an instrument for establishing a certain form of power does it imply a preference for a particular paradigm?

Requests for copies of papers should be addressed to the authors.

John Elliott, University of East Anglia

## Further Education in Scotland

The symposium on further education developments in Scotland was aimed at a general audience of those interested in education at 16+. The Scottish context of a further education sector which had recently undergone a complete transition from traditional provision to a modular structure incorporating major innovative features was the setting for a series of papers by policy makers, researchers and practitioners on a number of aspects of the Government's 16+ Development Programme. These were: Curriculum; assessment; marketing modules and the labour market; and the practicalities of implementation.

HMI Donald Mack provided an overview of Action Plan, the document which heralded the changes in FE. He identified the main features, the current views of policy-makers and the likely directions FE might take.

The symposium then considered three of the curricular features of the 16+ programme: curriculum articulation; guidance and choice; and personal and social development (PSD) in the curriculum.

David Taylor, of Jordanhill College of Education presented findings from a study into the extent and nature of articulation, or the extent of 'fit' between modules and previous learning, between modules, and between modules and higher and advanced education provision.

The opportunities for flexibility in the modular programme were next considered by Angela Roger of Dundee University, and Pamela Munn, of the Scottish Council for Research in Education. In particular, they drew attention to the variety of guidance systems in operation in colleges and the overall lack of opportunity students had to choose the modules which made up their programmes of study.

Ron Tuck, HMI, presented the policy-makers' view of one of the innovative aspects of the new 16+ curriculum: modules in personal and social development. He described the rationale behind PSD in the curriculum and the efforts which had been made to promote PSD in colleges, which included the setting up of a working party and the implementation of staff training programmes.

Harry Black, of the Scottish Council for Research in Education, reported on current assessment practice under the National Certificate. He indicated that staff in further education found the new assessment system largely supportive of their teaching.

Work-based assessment was the focus of the contribution from Lindsay Mitchell (Scottish Vocational Education Council). She described the current concern for crediting students' achievements in the workplace and the problems posed by competency testing.

Sandy Thomson (School of Further Education, Jordanhill) and Marilyn Stone (Heriot-Watt University) who have been studying the issue of marketing college courses reported on the obstacles encountered and FE users' opinions, concluding that considerable progress was being made by colleges in adopting a marketing approach.

The symposium then considered the experience of young people themselves under the new FE system. David Raffe (Centre for Educational Sociology, Edinburgh University) presented findings from the Scottish Young Peoples' Surveys which showed the uptake of modules amongst youngsters and the routes they had followed since acquiring their modules.

Finally, the floor was given to two practitioners in FE: Assistant Principal, Joyce Johnstone (Glennrothes and Buckhaven Technical College) and Principal Mike Taylor (Telford College) who testified to the enormous effort staff in FE had made to implement the new National Certificate within limited resources and within a tight time-scale. Joyce Johnstone described the staff development programme which was launched in her college and is continuing. Mike Taylor spoke realistically of the problems encountered in implementing Action Plan and optimistically of the unexpected benefits of the changeover while anticipating continuing progress in the near future.

Further details may be obtained from the organiser of the symposium.

Pamela Munn, SCORE

## Science and Writing in the Primary School

In this symposium some findings of research in progress at Bristol University were presented. The project is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council within their Teacher Education Initiative. The purpose of the work is to study variation in the initial education and training of primary school teachers with specific emphasis on the teaching of science and writing at the junior level. Three colleges involved in teacher training are participating in the research and both B.Ed. and PGCE students have been studied. The entry characteristics of these students have been collated and relevant attitudes, beliefs and knowledge have been measured. By means of questionnaires.

Three aspects of the research findings were presented. The first dealt with a provisional model of effective teaching that listed seven necessary conditions of excellence. The research was set within this model and it was argued that quality overall was limited by the value of the weakest feature in the profile. Some initial general findings relating to this model were reported. Secondly, the link found between academic qualifications, science knowledge and confidence in teaching science was discussed in the context of teacher training and science teaching in schools. Finally, the results of a study into the treatment of children's creative writing by student teachers were presented. The research indicated that a qualitative change takes place as the students progress through their training. General findings, including a provisional model of the sequence of development, were presented.

Discussion of these areas followed. Particular interest was expressed in the work relating to the students' treatment of children's writing. The ways in which students dealt with form and content was focussed upon, and reasons why the students' in which students' treatment of form seemed to be limited to spelling and punctuation were discussed. Further research was already underway at the time of the symposium to investigate the omission of comments concerning areas such as organisations, vocabulary and grammar from the students' responses. The outcome data relating to student teacher quality was in the process of being analysed so further discussion regarding the significance of this work awaits the completion of this stage of the research.

Peter Noyes, Bristol University

## Special Educational Needs

The day long symposium on Research in Special Education at this year's annual conference attracted papers from researchers with a range

of backgrounds. No specific initial issues had been suggested for a theme but the concerns emerging from papers and subsequent discussion suggested that a determination to develop more sharply focussed research practices in special education was beginning to achieve positive successes.

The first paper by Roland Chaplain focussed on the potential for abuse to children's rights by professionals under the guise of working in their best interests. An ethical code for Intervention Agencies was proposed that took account of professional inputs and the child's role in the decision making process. David Thomas outlined research projects on the issues facing managers of special schools, suggesting that accountability in special education and administrative confusions called for considerable managerial skills that are not always given sufficient contextual consideration.

The third paper by Judy Sebba traced the development and impact of INSET programmes in Special Ed. Needs in the North West of England; This paper was followed by Andrea Freeman's research on the reflexive processes involved in evaluating the special needs provision in a comprehensive school, the ethical and procedural issues were widely discussed as were the issues of research 'ownership' in special needs settings.

The post lunch presentations followed up the reflexive theme of the morning; Christine O'Hanlon identifying issues of concern in teacher education in Northern Ireland. The balance between tutorial teaching, as opposed to student facilitation was discussed. It was debated that teachers beginning to research their own practices must be encouraged to articulate their particular and individual problems in as mutually a supportive setting as possible.

The final paper from Malcolm Hind concentrated on the development of computer-aided learning for physically handicapped and speech impaired children, using BLISS symbolics. Malcolm demonstrated his innovative and revolutionary research findings which are in the final stages of development at Edge Hill College.

It is intended to publish the papers of the Special Education Symposium in March 1988. There will be a charge to cover postage and BERA members wishing for further information should contact David Johnstone, Edge Hill College, St. Helens Road, Ormskirk, Lancs LA39 4QP.

D. G. R. Johnstone, Edge Hill College

## Appraisal Studies

The first paper in the symposium reported research into teachers' opinions about what kind of appraisal scheme was most likely to improve their professional performance. The results revealed the existence of strong preferences for some practices, and equally strong beliefs about the lack of value in others. Overall, the teachers in the study thought they would be most likely to improve if their appraiser was removed from their own professional specialism, the less practical benefit they expected to obtain from his or her appraiser. Thus the head of department emerged as a key figure, but governors, parents and other non-professionals were given little credibility. These were the views of a group of secondary teachers who had never yet been formally appraised. Nevertheless, such beliefs would be crucial to the success of a new appraisal scheme. For if a scheme is believed to be invalid by the appraisees, they are less likely to be influenced positively by what it says to them.

The remainder of the symposium included a paper about appraisal in higher education, another written from the standpoint of primary education, and one on issues of motivation, judgement and control. A common theme which emerged, both from the papers and from the discussion, was that appraisal is not as straightforward as some of its advocates seem to think. Appraisal may be well established in parts of industry and public administration, but perhaps the same old bag of tricks can't be applied in teaching without re-thinking a lot of basic assumptions. For instance, there was much debate during the symposium about professional autonomy—what it is, whether appraisal threatens it, and whether that would matter anyway. Another lively discussion revolved around the concept of motivation. What stimulates members of a profession to give a fine standard of service? The prospect of scoring high points on an appraiser's checklist, or something more profound? One was left with the impression that a great deal of research needs to be done on appraisal, and that we haven't yet identified all the important issues.

Nick Boreham, University of Manchester

## 'Qualitative and Participatory Approaches in International Perspective'

This was a well attended symposium which centred on the use of qualitative research approaches in international and particularly, Third World contexts.

A group of papers addressed research about teachers and classroom practices.

Janet Stuart referred to an action research project involving teacher in-service activities in Lesotho. Jenny Morgan presented her observations of the teaching of primary science in Botswana classrooms. Audrey Nunn referred to her anthropological study of the implementation of the Peruvian educational reform in the locality of Ayacucho, involving a macro and micro-ethnographic perspective. In all these presentations, the discussion of the characteristics of teaching as seen or as perceived by teachers was a central point, as also a discussion about the possibilities and limitations of the methods of research used.

A different set of papers concentrated on the viability of qualitative approaches for the determination of policy and for the evaluation of policy implementation. Kenneth King referred to his experience in a training workshop for policy-makers Thailand which used a collaborative and qualitative mode of investigating a particular innovation. Fazal Rizvi and Rob Walker presented a report on the evaluation of an Australian project sponsored by the State of Victoria, focussing on the difficulties of using critical/action research approach when bureaucratic interests have to be satisfied. A similar situation and similar problems were discussed by Steve Jordan and David Yeomans regarding the Leeds component of the national evaluation of TVEI carried out in Britain, which includes the use of qualitative methods of classroom observation.

Finally, Beatrice Avalos discussed the possibilities and limitations of qualitative research approaches when the concern is recognisable change in order to assess the need for extension of a particular programme. She referred to a pilot scheme for in-service teacher training carried out in Thailand.

Discussion after each presentation was lively and related not only to clarification of the work presented, but also to the raising of issues about qualitative research approaches. The international perspective was rich and the feeling of participants was that in future conferences this dimension should not be lost.

Beatrice Avalos, University College, Cardiff

## 16-19 Initiative

The symposium supplied details of the background and design of the 16-19 Initiative and gave the four University research teams involved the opportunity to report some preliminary results from the first wave of data collection. The 16-19 Initiative is a five-year programme of research on economic and political socialisation with a core longitudinal research project involving data collection by questionnaire, and interview and ethnographic methods from up to 6,000 young people in Kirkcaldy, Sheffield, Liverpool and Swindon.

Each team pursued a particular theme through the preliminary analysis of their data. Liverpool compared political attitudes across the four areas pointing to evidence of discontinuity—a "Liverpool effect". Swindon reported on the study of self-perception with evidence of striking differences between boys and girls and older and younger cohorts on measures of self-worth and self-esteem. Kirkcaldy explored educational, leisure participation and domestic life in the Kirkcaldy project. Sheffield compared attitudes to education, jobs and training across the four areas.

The presentations prompted many questions and some methodological criticism. It provided a valuable opportunity for the research teams to hear reactions to their work at a time when many options on future design decisions are still open. Hence that might be seen as a slightly premature venture into reporting proved to have much formative value for the development of the project.

John Bynner, Open University

## GRIST OR GROPE?: a critical look at the new INSET

Two major themes emerged from the presentations. 'What, if any, are the educational priorities of the GRIST exercise?', and 'How can GRIST be located within the curriculum development and educational innovation movements of the last two decades?'

The first presentation, by members of the Surrey TRIST Evaluation Project, reported on a study of fifteen selected LEAs and their responses to the TRIST initiative. Some general findings were outlined on the way in which TRIST has enabled change in different local authority settings, and continues and discontinues apparent in the transition from TRIST to GRIST arrangements were also considered. In particular, three models of change were identified; 'strategic', 'experimental' and 'incremental'.

Charlie Naylor, representing the Bedfordshire NUT, then offered a critical view of how GRIST had developed in Bedfordshire. He gave an account of the development of TRIST and then GRIST in the county, and the response of the teacher unions to what was essentially a management-led initiative. In concluding that GRIST had made no significant difference to traditional in-service arrangements in Bedfordshire, Charlie suggested an alternative, genuinely 'school focused' model for INSET.

The local perspective was widened further by a presentation from Sheila Miles ex-INSET co-ordinator of Haringey. She argued, in her analysis of GRIST policy, that whilst the overt rationale of GRIST had been to encourage LEAs to plan and set up coherent programmes for teachers'

professional development, there was a hidden agenda. The underlying intention was to curb the independence of local authorities by making their INSET programmes more responsive to government priorities.

Leone Burton (Thames Polytechnic), Helen Burchell (Hatfield Polytechnic), and Gaby Weiner (Open University) each looked at the impact of the new GRIST arrangements on the 'providers'. Leone reported that the changes in INSET had not only caused immediate chaos in planning but had also put most of the longer term day-release courses in jeopardy. The two most immediate effects were that polytechnic staff were being bought in for 'one-off' sessions as consultants/experts by the schools, and that the demand for polytechnic-run courses was that they should be short, cheap and 'modular'.

Helen Burchell focused more specifically on the ways in which TRIST had been negotiated between LEAs, schools/colleges and HE, and suggested that the lessons learnt might well have relevance to GRIST. She identified four (often problematic) stages in the management of school-focused INSET—the identification of 'need', INSET planning, the INSET programme and the impact of the INSET programme—but was nonetheless optimistic about the value of the experience.

Its emphasis on bureaucratic mechanisms and the diversity of its implementation led Gaby Weiner (in a joint paper with Mike Flude) to question GRIST, both in its everyday working and the ideology underpinning its formulation. They argued that the redefinition of in-service education marked by the arrival of GRIST rested on a particular ideological construction of the inadequacies of state schooling. Presenting a range of evidence on the implementation of GRIST, they claimed that GRIST should be seen as part of a wider restructuring which embraces a vision of future educational provision as bureaucratic, managerial and cheap at the same

time as denigrating current provision as chaotic, unplanned and expensive.

Gaby Weiner, Open University

## Electronic Networking

Five people contributed to the symposium. David McConnell (University of Bath) spoke of using an electronic conferencing facility with M.Ed. students. Tony Scott (Sussex University/Croydon LEA) described the background to, and the consequences of introducing modems into schools. In particular he noted the different strategies used by different local authorities—all of which had different educational, political and social consequences. Charlie Crook (University of Durham) reported on the use of electronic mail as a communication system within a university psychology department and between the department and its undergraduates (who had access, for instance, to terminals in their halls of residence). And finally, Bridget Somekh (Cambridge Institute) gave a graphic account of setting up an electronic mail link between Cambridgeshire and the USA.

Given the general state of the art, all contributors were able to provide accounts of implementation problems, not to say cock-ups. To this extent their papers were within the general literature on innovation. But, beyond this, the papers and the discussion reached to deeper questions, most of them related to the fact that such new media of communication disrupt cultural norms. For example, electronic mail is a relatively 'open' and informal systems of communication yet it was being used in institutions not noted for their collaborative forms of working. To this extent, the future of electronic networking is, I believe, poised between structuring itself along the same lines as its host institutions (e.g. top-down) or in spearheading new kinds of relationships (e.g. sharing and collaboration).

David Hamilton, University of Glasgow