

# STRENGTHENING THE INQUIRY NETWORKS

## BERA in Nottingham: Review

### REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE ORGANISER

This is a note for those members who missed the Annual Conference in Nottingham. Two hundred and forty people didn't: they came from institutions in these numbers — universities 110, polytechnics 35, schools 29, LEAs 25, colleges 22, research bodies (NFER, SCRE, NCC, SEAC) 12, overseas 7. About 150 people contributed papers to the conference. There were 21 symposia and 40 individual papers. 128 bottles of wine were consumed at the annual dinner (courtesy of Carfax). The three days' full board cost £132, which is cheaper than most conferences even if student accommodation isn't quite the Hilton. The 64 pages of the conference programme, containing abstracts of the papers, show that a very wide range of research topics featured — representing every imaginable paradigm of educational inquiry. The claim that this is the biggest annual gathering of educational researchers in the United Kingdom was again justified.

But the real value of our annual conference is not measured in terms of numbers of speakers nor bottles of wine, but in the flow and creation of ideas which occur when people are prepared to reveal their thoughts and share their experiences about their research. I guess what the conference does is psyche us up for the coming academic year. How about coming to Stirling next year?

As conference organiser I would like to express thanks to the many people who contributed: to the members of the local committee, to the symposium organisers, to the chairs of sessions, and to all who helped make it a successful venture.

I wouldn't recommend any incoming president to be conference organiser as I was, but at least it served to bring me into contact with many members of BERA whom I had not previously met and to get a greater understanding of the potential wealth which our members have to offer.

What is desperately needed at this time is that we communicate our research findings to those engaged in policy making. Education is on the march and we can make a vital contribution to mapping the route.

Michael Bassey

### AND THE PAPERS SAID:

#### Sandbaggers blasted over lack of plain speaking

The ivory tower has crumbled. Researchers are emerging into the world of policy making, but few can speak its language and many are shackled by the refusal of some funding bodies to publish their results.

However, there was some optimism at last week's British Educational Research Association conference that despite the tendency of politicians to put two fingers up at educationalists, those in power are turning to researchers for advice.

Professor Michael Bassey, the association's new president, told members that they must first learn plain English and then demand the right to tell the public of their discoveries. He accused them of "turgidness" and "name-dropping," and said that *much of their work was long-winded, poorly structured and had little concern for its audience.*

If they were to influence the future of education they must desist from "genuflecting," "king-making" and "sandbagging" — academic games which made many research papers unreadable. Their work was littered with references that consisted of ritual obeisance to the founding parents of educational theory; giving undue authority to unresearched utterances; and listing authoritative names to back up a weak statement.

Researchers had an important role in the democratic process, he argued, but other people had to be able to understand them. Some wrote in

language that even their colleagues could not understand, he added after his speech.

Another factor which prevented them from gaining greater influence was research contracts which restricted their rights to publish findings, he said. These were particularly common among government bodies responsible for implementing education reforms.

Professor Bassey cited the £21 million Language in the National Curriculum project, the publication of which was banned because ministers disliked its results, as an example.

Researchers must strive to influence policy but must not be surprised if their recommendations were ignored by a government with different views, he said.

However, Professor John Gray of Sheffield University said that those in power approached the education establishment surprisingly often for information. "In practical terms I find myself being asked frequently for evidence about where things are up to. I don't go along with the rhetoric that the Government is not interested, but we don't have all the answers," he said.

Although research funds were limited, both local authorities and schools were recognising that researchers could make a contribution, he said.

"Providing you are good you will survive, but you have to be more pro-active and you have to behave more as people in the industrial world behave."

Although the "teachers' day" held at last year's conference, during which individuals presented the findings of small-scale research, was not repeated this year, there was still some space given to this kind of work and a small but significant number of contributors were classroom teachers.

Last year's president of the association, Professor Sally Brown of Stirling University, felt that much of the unrest which existed within the research establishment a year ago, stemming from opposition to education reforms, had subsided.

"Now researchers have developed a better sense of where their efforts are going to have most impact and some of the passions and agonies about the national curriculum have perhaps settled down," she said.

She was more optimistic than Professor Bassey about the secrecy which surrounds some research findings, arguing that changes were afoot among the funding bodies. In the past few years, she said, they had become more aware that they were accountable to their political masters. This had led them to be more interested in disseminating information, and in showing that something

practical had come out of a project: for example, a set of in-service training materials.

However, she added, it was worrying that funding bodies were offering more short-term contracts.

The number of organisations which would pay for research had grown, but some had unrealistic expectations of how much the work would cost, she said.

It seems policy-makers and researchers have discovered each other: now all they have to do is to communicate.

From Abrams,  
TES 6/9/91

## Researchers boo former NCC chief

Educational researchers hissed and heckled Duncan Graham, the former chairman and chief executive of the National Curriculum Council, last week.

Mr. Graham was greeted by cries of "shame!" as he mounted a defence of the national curriculum during an after-dinner speech at the British Educational Research Association Conference in Nottingham on Friday.

He was making his first public appearance since he left the NCC in July after a series of disagreements with Kenneth Clarke, the Education Secretary. His former post has now been split into two.

The research establishment must work to prevent the reform, from being diluted, he said.

"If we go on from here chopping and changing by hunch and by prejudice, who knows where we will end up?" he asked.

However, Mr Graham appeared to misjudge the mood of the audience when he criticised the more child-centred approach which preceded the national curriculum. It had been implied that children could learn "by osmosis" and that so long as they were enjoying themselves they would be adequately educated, he said.

BERA members hissed as he told them: "Like it or not most of the content has been broadly accepted. In its own way it works at least as well if not better than what went before."

He disappointed the conference by avoiding the issue of his departure from NCC, but urged researchers to save the structure which he had worked to set up. What was needed now was empirical evidence that the curriculum was working and had led to the dissemination of good practice in schools, he said.

There must be a bed of research knowledge, fully,



properly, and openly debated, and teachers must be trusted as professionals. After the shock treatment must come *rapprochement*," he added.

The president of the association, Professor Michael Bassey of Nottingham Polytechnic, said that not all members took offence at Mr. Graham's speech.

He said: "I would expect him to speak very positively about the national curriculum and I am not surprised that some of our members took offence at the way in which he was saying it has vastly improved education.

"Seeing the detail of it many of them do see it differently. The positive thing he was saying was that educational researchers' time has come. We need to replace the politician's hunch by the critique of research."

From Abrams,  
TES 6/9/91

### 'School system geared to elite'

Britain's education system is heading down an elitist road, a top Nottingham educationalist has warned.

Professor Michael Bassey of Nottingham Polytechnic as speaking at the 17th annual British Educational Research Association conference.

Professor Bassey said that the political far right had attempted to clear the way for introducing elitism into education.

#### Direction

"The development of city technology colleges and opting out arrangements for schools point in that direction," he said at the Nottingham conference.

"So does the decision to continue with Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) in infant schools and to extend them to seven-year-olds.

"SATs are being used to identify the most able children who will become elite.

"This means that the most able would receive an intense education while the others would receive a second-class education."

Professor Bassey believes Britain's education system has become more elitist, but educational research could play a vital role in stemming the tide.

He urged researchers to make their findings more widely known to the public.

"One of the positive things to take from the Citizen's Charter is that parents are to be given more information about schools," he said.

The role of research has been played down by the

Government, delegates heard.

"Many of the changes to our education system have not been based on research evidence but on political hunches," said Professor Bassey.

The four-day conference is being held at Nottingham Polytechnic's Clifton site.

More than 200 top educationalists, teachers, school governors and local education authority officers from around the country are at the conference.

Nottingham Evening Post  
30/8/91

### Truancy tops table of disruptive behaviour

Pupils at a comprehensive school regarded truancy, taking drugs, gambling or copying as the most disruptive behaviour which could take place in any school.

But for teachers, the most serious offences were pupils chasing in class, shouting, singing, laughing or "rocking a chair defiantly".

These were the results of a study presented to the association yesterday. Genya Savin, a senior teacher at Bluecoat School in Nottingham, asked 23 teachers and 106 fourth-year and fifth-year pupils to describe what would constitute disruptive behaviour. There were marked differences in their views.

"Teachers don't rate truancy highly, because if a pupil is absent they are not a problem. Pupils take it very seriously," Mr. Savin said.

Also high on the pupils' disruptive list was wearing make-up. But this did not particularly concern teachers. The only thing the two parties agreed on was that keeping a coat on, or refusing to do set work, disrupted a class.

Pupils did not think chasing round a classroom was a serious problem. "They see it as an extension of the playground. But I see it as a total loss of control," Mr. Savin said.

The study also looked at the rewards or sanctions used to modify behaviour. Pupils wanted tangible rewards such as trophies, prizes or grades, and nice comments written on their work. But teachers thought the most effective rewards were praise, recognition, encouragement and a pat on the back.

The worst sanction for a pupil was having a mark lowered because of bad behaviour, or being insulted or shamed in the class. Teachers did not think these were very effective — they favoured a

telling-off or direct counselling. Pupils, however, took a telling-off in their stride.

Independent  
31/8/91

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON SCHOOL GOVERNORS

Convenor: Mike Golby, University of Exeter

The Symposium on school governors heard papers on a wide variety of topics within the broad field of school governorship. Rosemary Deem and Kevin Brehony presented a paper which focused, among other things, on the LEA context of school governors' work. There was interesting discussion on the factors making for variation in governor satisfaction and the quantity and quality of their business. David McCallan presented an interim report of his own work as a practitioner who had researched the work of one governing body in the period leading to the closure of its school. He examined the proposition that school governorship could act as a vehicle for parental involvement and concluded provisionally that the omens for this were not strong. Rosemary Viant presented an account of the ongoing work at Exeter which focuses upon the reports of 22 local researchers on the work of their governing bodies. This phenomenological work raised interesting methodological questions which representatives of the Exeter team found helpful. How can experiential enquiries be rendered reliable and valid? Merce Boix of the University of Barcelona discussed the Catalonian context within which democratised governing bodies were forming new relationships with other levels of the governmental structure. This discussion afforded important comparative perspectives for those of us working in England and Wales. Finally, Stephen Brigley considered some theoretical questions surrounding the use of concepts such as accountability, control and participation. Following on from his own doctoral thesis, he proposed a normative view based on democratic theory for the furtherance of school governors' work. In particular, governor training was presented as a form of political education.

There was, of course, insufficient time for the required discussions of these various contributions. It was also unfortunate that we were unable to make the links with the LMS Symposium which many of us would like to see forged.

Mike Golby  
School of Education, University of Exeter

## AND THE PAPERS SAID:

### Governors 'put more focus on exam results'

The Ivory School governors attach great importance to exams, but pay little attention to the vocational education offered in their schools.

Professor Rosemary Deem, of Lancaster University, and Kevin Brehony, of Reading University, sat in on the governing bodies of 10 schools and questioned 250 other governors about their role.

Their findings, presented to the British Educational Research Association in Nottingham yesterday, showed that governors at all the secondary schools were concerned about exam results. But if governors at one school were typical "then the Government's proposals to secure parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes to higher education are doomed to failure. University entrance and success at A-level hold a central place in their knowledge of the purposes of schooling.

"The education of pupils who are not en route for university is rarely discussed. For pupils who leave at 16, what employers appear to require is an issue that is frequently raised but, TVEI (Technical and Vocational Education initiative) excepted, the substance of their education is not considered."

In the schools studied, few governors had attended state comprehensive, technical or secondary moderns, although more attended state primaries. They were predominantly white middle-class people in professional and managerial jobs, even in schools with a high proportion of working-class or ethnic-minority backgrounds. Many had a degree of professional qualification. Just over 20 per cent of the lay governors worked in education, in jobs varying from school meals staff or adult education teachers.

Women governors, ethnic-minority governors or working-class governors speak less in formal meetings. Women with wide experience in bringing up children and voluntary work do not draw upon this experience "while men and women with industrial and commercial knowledge do so at every possible opportunity". The most usual source of information about schools was gained from school visits. Chairs of governing bodies spent more time in schools, but this was often with the head or senior staff. Other governors focused more on the classroom.

If governors were critical, it was frequently of the conditions of work and the buildings rather than



the teachers. [Some of those governors who are most critical of their schools and staff are local authority governors who never visit the schools.]”

Ngaio Crequer  
Education Correspondent  
Independent  
30/8/91

### ‘School bodies have no power’

Lay governors are relatively powerless to reshape education, according to new research presented at a conference in Nottingham.

And contrary to popular belief, researchers Kevin Brehony and Rosemary Deem found the 250 governors they studied were not trying to shape education in their own image.

The two researchers presented their paper at the annual British Educational Research Association conference at Nottingham Polytechnic’s Clifton site.

Nottingham Evening Post

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

**Convenor: Professor Peter Mortimore, Institute of Education, London**

Reforming legislation can provide a context for change, but significant developments in the quality of learning and teaching also requires the commitment of all who are involved in the management of schools. This Symposium provided a opportunity for discussion by BERA members of ways in which programmes of school improvement can be structured so that learning and teaching can be better supported. Its specific aims were:

- to address questions about school improvement from a variety of perspectives

- to foster dialogue between practitioners and researchers

- to increase understanding of the mechanisms of school improvement.

In the introduction by the convenor, the term School Improvement was discussed. Rather than using general attempts to make *all* aspects of schooling better, many school improvement programmes have used systematic investigations which involved evaluation of the current and potential success of individual schools. The International School Improvement Project (ISIP) sponsored by the OECD provides a well-disseminated example of international work

focusing, in the main, on school processes.

Likewise, a number of projects — including those carried out in the United States, Canada and Australia — have sought to develop their approach on the basis of findings from the research studies of school effectiveness. Whilst school improvement and school effectiveness studies have different aims (whether different processes can affect student outcomes and whether schools can change) they overlap in a number of ways and frequently draw on common data.

The importance of the topic of school improvement — in view of a world-wide interest in school reforms — is indisputable. There is a general acceptance that schools need to change in order to ensure that better educated young people can take advantage of developments in the organisation of work. Furthermore, it is accepted that many heads and teachers are committed to improving their schools and are seeking help from researchers. Finally, school improvement offers the opportunity for collaborative endeavour for all those involved in schooling: government (both central and local), practitioners, governors and the research community. Accordingly, five participants, each with a different perspective, addressed the topic of school improvement.

The first perspective was that of an educational researcher and came from Mike Wallace, a Research Fellow from the National Development Centre for Educational Management and Policy at the University of Bristol. Drawing on his work at Bristol, Mike Wallace presented a strategy based on the need for the management of multiple innovations. Such a strategy has to accommodate value issues and deal with the dilemma of feasibility as well as desirability. In his view, a feasible strategy must take account of the contextual factors which affect schools. These included the local neighbourhood context, lasting turbulence following central and local government innovations, LMS arrangements, and the possibility that resources would be insufficient to implement the necessary innovations within the time scale envisaged. Based on his view that a ‘headcentric’ perspective was necessary, Wallace stressed the importance of team building activities, consultancy support, training for heads and other senior staff, clearer lines of accountability for senior staff, periodic school inspection linked to follow-up support, and training for governors and heads in selection procedures. Finally, Wallace stressed the need to focus more research on the school improvement process in the United Kingdom and to promote the development of released materials for use by those in schools.

The second perspective was that of an HMI. David Taylor is currently the Staff Inspector with



responsibilities for the 16-19 curriculum and for secondary inspection/reporting procedures. His presentation offered an HMI perspective on the concept and evaluation of school improvement, drawing on recent Inspectorate-wide thinking. He argued that criteria for judging educational quality needed to be based in the first place on concepts of fitness for purpose. Where purposes conflict, they may have to be resolved by recourse to higher-order judgement of what is intrinsically worthwhile. He also stressed that schooling of high quality should provide equal opportunities for all individuals to learn well what they need in order to function happily and effectively as responsible and autonomous agents, but should do so in a society with legitimate expectations of the outcomes of schooling. Drawing on criteria for judging quality adopted by HMI, Taylor underlined key factors associated with effective schools. In his view evaluating quality needed clearly thought-out and stated principles, a focus on effective learning (which includes the value added by individual schools) and the capacity to address both educational processes and outcomes. Finally, he stressed that the policies of central government were closely tied to the objective of school improvement, with implications for the response of individual schools. A national curriculum, local management, greater accountability to parents and the community, together with more frequent inspection and reporting, are intended to provide a framework for improved school management. This would include such elements as clearer objectives and targets, the use of development plans linked to budget-setting and strategies for self-evaluation.

The third perspective was that of a Local Education Authority and was provided by Peter Housden, Director of Education, Nottinghamshire. In his view, LEAs are currently engaged in a cultural transition, shifting their focus from close control over resource inputs to a context in which operational decisions rest with the institutions. The locus of school improvement must rest with school self review and with school generated improvement programmes. In this situation, the dialogue between the school and the LEA focuses upon educational outputs with the LEA seeking to support schools in the development of the quality of internal processes towards agreed goals. These relationships depend entirely on an affective partnership. The LEA component of the partnership will include creating a system of intelligence, which is comprehensive, regular, consistent and performance related. In Housden's view, the School Management Plan should help harness the creativity and commitment of all staff, but since a plan could not

exist in a vacuum, it needed also to be located within the framework of support provided by an LEA. The school must also be enabled to make a direct input to policy formation within the LEA and in this way, an organic connection between the Education Authority's Development Programme and the school's Management Plan could be formed. This relationship then needed to be cemented through an annual dialogue between the school and the LEA, focusing all of the LEA's "intelligence" on the school's performance and reflecting this back to school management in a supportive way. Such an endeavour would, however, require educational data of sufficiently sophisticated nature which went far beyond crude league tables.

The fourth perspective was provided by a headteacher of a secondary school, Tamsyn Imison, head of Hampstead School in Camden. She provided a brief history of the school since she became head in 1984, stressing what had been achieved and seeking to identify the significant factors that had contributed to the progress of the school. These were: a holistic view of schooling, high expectations and trust, active involvement by staff and pupils, counselling, good assessment and evaluation and an emphasis on equal opportunities. In Imison's view, a number of positive performance indicators could be identified in school data. These included staying on rates, recruitment patterns, attendance rates, attainment — measured by using examination results and records of achievement — indicators of the ethos and a student destination survey. Imison considered that initial training needed to be better linked with schools so that students could gain from good practice and contact with effective practitioners. The LEA ethos was also crucial, as were the initiatives and practical support it provided (including an inspectorate able to analyse good practice). The aims statement of the school included the phrase 'to love learning and have the courage to take creative roles both as individuals and with others for future society'.

The final perspective was that of the Head of INSET in a university department of education. This was provided by Barbara MacGilchrist of the Institute of Education, University of London. Her presentation was based on the premise that helping schools improve is best achieved by helping them to help themselves. In her view, improving the quality of pupil learning, raising achievement and narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest and the highest achievers in the schools depended, ultimately, upon the quality of actions performed by those who work within the school. In MacGilchrist's view, the role of those outside should be to empower those within



to work continuously towards their own improvement. Drawing on Canadian research, MacGilchrist proposed a multidimensional approach to school improvement that aimed not only to raise general levels of achievement across the school as a whole by focusing on strategies to improve the whole school management and classroom practice but also aimed to narrow the achievement gap by focusing on specific aspects of learning. In order to do so she argued that a partnership for school improvement between the school and outside agencies was essential, though she stressed that the school had to remain the major shareholder. Drawing on current work at the Institute of Education, MacGilchrist provided practical examples of such a multi-dimensional approach. She reported on a study of school development planning (a strategy for whole school improvement) beginning this autumn (funded by the ESRC); the development of school-managed INSET materials in order to provide a strategy for improving the management of teaching and learning in the classroom (funded by the DES Task Force under the direction of the Institute for the central London consortium of LEAs); and the development of a reading recovery training centre based on the early intervention work of Marie Clay (funded jointly by the Institute of Education, supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and a consortium of London LEAs). MacGilchrist concluded her presentation with a series of suggestions for future work which would strengthen this multi-dimensional approach to school improvement.

The general discussion that followed the five presentations was wide ranging. It touched on the changing role of inspection and the responsibility of LEAs to help schools to evaluate themselves, as well as acknowledging the importance of the open discussion of values in any attempts to improve schooling. It also reiterated the importance of relating change to positive pupils outcomes, both academic and social.

A Symposium lasting three hours can only address topics in a superficial manner and achieve limited success. However, because of the wide ranging contributions from the five presenters and from participants at the Symposium, there was a consensus that the time had been well spent and an agreement that the topic was of considerable importance at a time when schools were facing multiple innovations. Despite the obvious pressures affecting all those concerned with schools at such a time of change, and the implication that turbulence was unlikely to cease, the Symposium ended on a note of cautious optimism about the importance of schools and about the ability of those working within them —

with help from the research community — to improve and to make a greater, and more relevant, contribution to the education of the next generation.

Peter Mortimer  
Institute of Education  
London

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

**Convenor: Gwen Wallace, Derbyshire College  
of Higher Education**

Seven contributors from cross-disciplinary perspectives covered research projects in hand from Scotland to Bristol at a well-attended session.

Pamela Munn argued that, in Scotland, research into parental choice since 1981 indicated a victory for producers rather than consumers of education. Teachers had had their roles strengthened, and members of School Boards (which had far fewer powers than South of the border) appeared reluctant to challenge Heads or even ask for information. However, an alliance was emerging between LEAs, Trades Unions and parents over testing. Unintended consequences might well accrue from the ways in which schools were enlisting support from School Boards.

Rosalind Levačić compared the hierarchically organised U-Form firm with the multidivisional M-Form which regulates its operational divisions from a central office via an internal market. Evidence from one LEA indicated evolution towards M-form, but the profitability measures used to assess market performance and align the goals of middle management with those of the commercial firm were difficult to replicate in the public sector. Improved efficiency and effectiveness could not be assumed, given the costs of the vast increase in information being generated to monitor the goals of social policy.

Pam Sammons presented detailed data from five London boroughs, with special reference to the way they were measuring social/economic disadvantage, and identified 'marked differences' in philosophy and rationale. Boroughs proposing to use low attainment on SATs as a measure of need, ran the risk of rewarding bad schools. Given the 'considerable resource implications' of special need criteria, a clear rationale for choice and weighting of factors was necessary for the operation of an equitable system.

The realisation that Stockport's age weighted pupil formula provided considerably more for an



eleven year old than a ten year old, had led them to allocate a 'guestimate' of time to all the jobs teachers did in their directed time. Alison Kelly's account demonstrated the advantages of a rational research procedure for deciding the criteria for allocating funding. Whilst initial results appeared to support the case for higher funding for under 5s and over 16s, the activity-based model suggested more or less constant funding across the rest of the age ranges.

Presenting a paper on behalf of a team of researchers, David Shearn took up the issue of gender. Arguing that women were being displaced from positions as a result of the male oriented, bureaucratic nature of LMS, he claimed that the 'invisibles' of social relationships could not be accounted for. The result was that expressive values were being downgraded.

Lynda Huckman's PhD. research provided detailed case study data on the effects of LMS on five primary schools in one LEA. Using March and Olsen's 'theory of ambiguity', she set the day to day reality of decision-making in a climate of uncertainty, against the rational-bureaucratic assumptions of management theorists. Lack of information and misinformation, poor communication between sub-committees, lack of control over external events, and the time commitment required by Heads to keep track of complex decision making processes, made for a 'disorderly and turbulent environment' overlaid by attempts to create a sense of order through 'rituals associated with rational decision making'.

Unfortunately, Kate Reynolds failed to get to BERA but subsequently sent on a paper on the fate of equality of opportunity. She argued that, far from increasing consumer choice for pupils, LMS rules out pupil choice altogether. Pupils have become the 'products' not the consumers of the market oriented system.

With 'decentralisation' of education decision-making a key issue across Europe, we aim to make next year's LMS symposium a Euro-wide event. We also plan to coordinate our efforts better by joining with Rosemary Deem and Kevin Brechony's symposium on Governing Bodies. Euro contacts please to Gwen Wallace.

## **AND THE PAPERS SAID:**

### **Parent power plan 'rebounds on ministers'**

Teachers are harnessing parent power to oppose government policy in Scottish schools, according to research presented yesterday to the British Educational Research Association.

Pamela Munn of the Scottish Council for Research in Education, argued that that was the unintended consequence of 'giving parents the dominant say in school boards. The School Boards (Scotland) Act, which came into force in April 1989, provides for all schools to have a board and parents are in the majority.

They have fewer powers than governing bodies in England and Wales, which can hire and fire staff, but they approve head teachers' plans for spending on books and equipment, help to select senior staff, and can raise educational matters.

Ms Munn told the meeting in Nottingham that the boards were developing in ways not anticipated by the Government. "Boards have not acted as a thorn in the school's flesh, rather they have been harnessed to support schools and to put pressure on education authorities for more resources for schools."

They have had few inhibitions about cross-examining education authority officials about financial allocations to schools. "Boards are sympathetic to head teachers' concerns about the lack of money for books and equipment and are generally shocked at the low level of per capita allocation, especially in primary schools."

Lack of spending on school repairs and decoration is highly visible to board members. They have also raised the questions about the need for parents to subsidise educational visits. The general trust in teachers' educational expertise and the belief in Scotland that education is "a collective welfare right for all" had been reflected in boards' suspicion of government policy enabling schools to opt out of local authority control. "Boards' concerns that opting out might lead to a two-tier education service to some extent lie behind the fact that no school in Scotland has yet opted out."

Ms Munn said: "Perhaps the most striking and unexpected (by government) role adopted by boards has been to collaborate with schools and teachers in opposition to national testing. It is ironic that government, having explicitly set out to create a parental voice in school affairs, through parental choice and school boards, has had to live with the consequence of this voice being raised in opposition to its own policies and in support of schools. Boards have in effect supported one kind of education producer, schools against another, government."

There was widespread boycotting of national testing by parents in April, when children were withdrawn from the pilot tests.

Boards might also subvert the Government's market forces approach to school improvement by forming a national federation. Moves were already



under way to develop such a federation. It was likely this would exert pressure on the Government rather than on regional authorities.

By encouraging schools to make their own development plans, the Government was giving boards "a potentially powerful negotiating weapon". Schools would be better able to articulate their main areas of endeavour and the resource implications of their plans. "Skilful head teachers will be able to expose the competing demands on schools, and gain parental support for the schools' development plan against additional demands for developments from either central or local government."

Ngaio Crequer  
Independent  
29/8/91

### Teacher courses 'more damaging than strike action'

Teachers who take time off to attend in-service training courses may cause as much disruption to a school as a teachers' strike.

Some heads were stopping staff from going on training courses because of the disruptive effect, according to research presented to the association in Nottingham.

J B Connor, a former Schoolteacher Fellow of the University of Warwick, studied five secondary schools in Coventry to examine the effect of teachers attending courses. Cover for absent teachers caused strain on the schools and affected pupils' academic progress, he said.

In-service training had been described as "an unpayable debt". Pupils missed lessons to enable staff to train, and this benefited future generations.

Audit Commission figures suggested that absence for training should account for 10 to 23 per cent of all cover. But at one Coventry school the figure was 21 per cent, and at another, 29 per cent.

Heads said training took too many teachers out of the classroom for too long. One commented: "I think if we did a thorough analysis of the records for 1987/88 we would probably find that the pupils lost as much time through in-service training as they lost through teachers' industrial action." Another said: "It cannot be right for schools to feel there's more disruption built into the system than through industrial action . . . that is our feeling."

Heads questioned whether the pay-back was worth it, and some had stopped staff attending courses. The head of one school said that pupils

needed continuity and became difficult if they had two supply teachers out of four in a day.

Governors, too, questioned the practice. They were asking searching questions about whether it was value for money.

One teacher was in the middle of a course which he had found valuable when the head stopped it. The teacher said: "When the course was stopped the school suffered and I suffered. I was not party to the decision but could understand it."

Teachers expressed concern about leaving exam classes. "Awareness of the impact on classes has made me say 'no' to attending courses if I know the same fourth-year or fifth-year class would be hit several times," one said.

Ngaio Crequer  
Independent  
31/8/91

### Primaries fall into generation gap

Local authorities spend up to 70 per cent less on the education of 10-year-olds in the last year of primary school than on 11-year-olds in the first year of secondary.

The finding revealed that primary schools were grossly under-funded, researchers from Stockport, Greater Manchester, said. Dr. Alison Kelly, a borough education officer, told the BERA conference that staffing levels should remain constant across the age range for compulsory schooling instead of rising sharply for secondary pupils, as it does under local management of schools.

Secondary representatives on the research group, which also included members from primary schools, sixth-form colleges and teacher unions, walked out when the conclusion was reached, she said.

A new model for delegated budgets, based on educational needs rather than on pupil age has been drawn up. However, the borough has been unable to adopt it because it would mean pumping a huge amount of extra money into schools, said Dr Kelly, the education officer in charge of the study.

The group worked out the size of class needed for different age groups, the number of hours of teaching needed per week and the number of children in an average primary or secondary school. It also took into account the 10 per cent of pupils with special educational needs, time needed for assemblies and extra supervision before and after school for younger pupils.

Dr. Kelly said: "heads were asking what happened to 10-year-olds over the six weeks of summer to make them worth so much more."



The group estimated that staffing should be on a ratio of 16:1 for primary schools, with an additional head and deputy, and should be the same for secondary pupils up to 16, with an additional head and three deputies. The current levels in England and Wales were 21:1 for primary schools and 15:1 for secondary schools.

If the national curriculum was to work in primary schools, subject co-ordinators would need more time with their colleagues and all teachers would need time away from the classroom for marking and preparation, she said. Teachers' workloads remained constant throughout the 11 years of compulsory education, and this should be reflected in staffing ratios.

The conference also heard the findings of the BERA task group on local management of schools, convened by Gwen Wallace of Derbyshire College of Higher Education.

"The group found that the new system of funding failed to meet either educational needs or the requirement for standardised assessment under the national curriculum.

School management teams were being forced to abandon educational needs for commercial ones and to work within a "perverse and contradictory system," it said.

The group found that local authorities had calculated the method of age-weighted pupil funding in very different ways, and that schools had had to take on a great deal of extra work with few new powers to compensate them. Instead of teachers being given new freedom, control had been handed over to small groups of senior staff.

TES  
6/9/91

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON CHANGE IN CLASSROOM PRACTICE

**Convenor: Hilary Constable**

This symposium and the BERA Regional Seminar held earlier (May 1991) brought together researchers pursuing four related questions

1. What changes take place in classroom practice?
2. How do classrooms come to be the way they are?
3. What causes change?
4. How can this be researched?

The papers in the seminar and symposium drew on previous work from a number of existing

traditions including classroom studies, evaluation of funded initiatives in education and training, and research into pupil and student outcomes. As well, the tradition of course evaluation which is especially strong in the public sector has made a substantial contribution to thinking in this area. The focus on the classroom was seen as helpful in informing staff development and in-service education and built creatively on a previous BERA seminar reviewing the impact of in-service education.

Methodological considerations were prominent and studies ranged from those where an intervention was pursued, through attempts to give a natural history of classrooms, to longitudinal studies. The ESRC funding initiative Innovation and Change in Education; the Quality of Teaching and Learning was thought to be especially welcome in that it was likely to accelerate the development of research methods and contributors working at the early stage of this initiative were especially welcome.

The difficulty of tracing effects, let alone attributing cause, is not new and much progress has been made already. Themes for both the seminar and the symposium included recording change, patterns of change, themes of change, partnerships in change and the effects of professional and organisational development activities.

David Blake, Maggie Blake and Jerry Norton chaired the sessions.

Contributors were:

P Adey	Process Product Research Revisited
A Bishop & Simpson	Problem Solving in Technology in the Nursery: Gender Implications
S Beverton & J Grey	Teachers' Perceptions of Oracy and Information Technology
J Carneson	Taking Teachers Seriously Understanding Change in Classroom Practice
H Constable	Teachers Identifying Change
H Constable	Change in Classroom Practice: Teachers Perceptions of Changes and their Causes
M Dadds	Can Inset Essays change the World for Children?
T Dalton	Common Curriculum but Diverse Experience (GYSL)
A Dyson & C Clark	Teachers Researching Their Futures: The Use of Soft-Systems Methodology in the Structured Exploration by Special Needs Teachers of their Changing Roles
SJ Farrow	Impact of NC on Planning for Classroom Science



- J Greenacre Partnership in Change in Classroom Practice: Pupils Acquisition of a Foreign Language
- J Harland & K Kinder A Typology of Inset Outcomes
- D Hustler Improving Education Practice: Collaborative Professional Development on a Modular Masters Course
- A Campbell & H Strahan
- K Johnston Promoting Professional Development through Supportive INSET
- D McIntyre & P Cooper Accessing and Relating Teachers' Teaching Strategies and Pupils' Learning Strategies
- J Norton 'Enforcing' Good Practise in the Primary Classroom — the first stages
- L Thompson & P Milward Children Talking about Poetry
- G Vulliamy Does Teacher Research Affect Classroom Practice?
- T Wick Expect the Unexpected: School Specific Contexts and the shaping of school based inset projects.
- S Wootton-Freeman The Curriculum Consultant as Change Agent in Classroom Practice

H Constable  
Sunderland Polytechnic

inservice training sessions scheduled during the school day.

Professor Robert Lindley, Director at the Institute of Employment Research, examined supply teaching as an aspect of both teacher supply and the labour market generally. Supply cover was discussed as an example of a more generic labour market phenomenon concerned with labour flexibility and the organisational structures advanced to promote it.

Peter Earley's paper drew on recent NFER research which had culminated in a DES funded research report *Enabling Teachers to Undertake Inservice Education and Training* (Brown and Earley, 1990). Discussion centred on the recommendations contained therein.

The starting point of Marlene Morrison's presentation was to identify a number of interpretations about substitute teachers and teaching. It was proposed that a clarification of assumptions which underpinned the language of supply would necessitate a re-focusing on existing perceptions; these included those reflected in the shifting interface between LEAs, schools, and teachers in 1991.

Marlene Morrison  
CEDAR  
University of Warwick

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON SUPPLY TEACHING IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS

Convenor: M. Morrison

A group of research, academic, LEA and school-based practitioners discussed issues arising from five presentations.

The opening paper was given by Sheila Galloway, Research Fellow at CEDAR, the University of Warwick. Along with Professor Bob Burgess and Marlene Morrison, Sheila is working on a two year research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust. Her paper explored themes like availability, quality, disruption and invisibility, using data derived from research projects on inservice training conducted since 1988 at CEDAR. The paper drew on interviews with senior teachers and on the literature.

John Connor, a Birmingham Secondary Headteacher, then described research undertaken in Coventry which had focused on disruption. This examined the reactions of Headteachers and staff to staff absence caused by attendance at

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON NATIONAL CURRICULUM POLICY ANALYSIS

Convenor: Richard Bowe, Kings College, London

The BERA Curriculum Task Group organised two symposia, the first of which on National Curriculum Policy Analysis was held on the first afternoon of the conference (28th August). The symposium was organised by Richard Bowe (King's College, London) but was chaired by Harry Torrance (University of Sussex) since Richard was unable to attend the conference. The intention of the symposium was to continue the process begun in 1990 of examining the implementation of the National Curriculum and analysing the relationship between curriculum policy and practice.

First of all a paper was presented by Mike Askew (King's College), Stephanie Prestage (University of Birmingham) and Angela Walsh (Cambridge Institute of Education) entitled "Degrees of Openness and Control: the effects on learning with particular reference to mathematics". The



paper described a nationally funded project (by the NCC) begun in 1990 which was exploring ways of supporting teachers in operationalising the "Using and applying" attainment targets (ATs 1 and 9) in Mathematics. The project discovered that these 'process' aspects of National Curriculum Mathematics seemed to be being interpreted in similar ways to coursework in GCSE — as something separate from and additional to 'real maths', and the paper identified a framework to assist teachers in addressing "Using and Applying" in all of their mathematics work. Discussion of the paper revolved around the issues of interpreting and defining National Curriculum Mathematics — whose version of "Using and Applying" counted, and why? The complexities and interactive nature of policy 'implementation' were also underlined.

Next Dawn Penney (Southampton University) presented a paper by herself and John Evans (Southampton University): "From Policy to Provision — The Development and 'Implementation' of the National Curriculum for Physical Education". The paper outlined a Sports Council-funded study of National Curriculum PE which was both investigating the development of National Curriculum PE and using it as a case study of policy development and implementation. It was argued that PE 'content' was particularly vulnerable to variable contextual features when provision was examined (eg variations in equipment, resources, trained staff, etc. all of which in turn could be affected by other features of the ERA such as LMS, competition between schools, etc.) In what sense would or could PE be 'National'?

Finally Carrie Paechter (King's College, London) presented "Subcultural Retreat: Negotiating the Design and Technology Curriculum". She had been working on a SEAC-funded study of coursework assessment in GCSE and had become particularly interested by how the 'new' subject of Design and Technology was being interpreted and developed. 'Old' subjects of Craft, Design and Technology, Home Economics, and to a lesser extent Art, were being merged in so far as teachers of these subjects were being asked to collaborate on new programmes of study. But far from creating a 'new' subject, previous subject identities and allegiances were being maintained as teachers tried to 'make sense' of the programmes of study and make sure that skills and attitudes which they valued were preserved.

Overall each of the papers begged questions about how texts are written and interpreted (and indeed where the boundaries of a text could be drawn); and highlighted both the anxiety of teachers to 'get it right' and also the space available for interpretation, be it perceived positively (as in the

first paper) or negatively (as in the last).

Harry Torrance  
University of Sussex

## AND THE PAPERS SAID:

### Does method or solution rule?

The national curriculum has left maths teaching split between child-centred learning and a more structured approach, a National Curriculum Council-funded project has found.

While some teachers concentrate on helping children to discover solutions, others spend their time teaching formal methods of solving problems.

Researchers working with groups of teachers in London, Birmingham and Cambridge found that they had difficulty interpreting the "using and applying" attainment targets in the curriculum.

The finding was backed up by the results of survey carried out among 300 teachers during an 18-month project.

The group is one of three which have just been awarded £1 million by the NCC to carry out more investigations into how the curriculum is being implemented in maths, science and English.

One of its members, Mike Askew of King's College, London, told the BERA conference that teachers tended to veer to one of two extremes.

"For some, 'facilitate' is the word which gets bandied around. What is important is presenting nice activities for children to get on with and creating a nice, warm, cosy environment without any clear structure of the process skills. "Others are trying to define specific things to work through in solving a problem or doing an investigation," he said.

Children in the latter group were left thinking that the methods they used were more important than solving the problem, while others were unclear how to structure their work.

The group has produced in-service training materials now being looked at by the NCC, designed to help teachers to teach the new curriculum.

It argues that pupils should be encouraged to find their own methods of solving problems, but that the teacher's supporting role should not be undermined.

The group was reporting to a symposium called by a BERA task group on national curriculum policy analysis, at which a study on GCSE coursework in design and technology was also presented.



Carrie Praechter, of the Centre for Educational Studies at King's College, London, carried out research at two schools in an outer London borough.

She found that because design and technology is meant to be delivered in a cross-curricular form, power struggles were taking place for control of it between different departments.

Teachers of subjects which had traditionally been low in status, such as home economics, art and design and craft, design and technology, had recognised opportunities for new recognition and promotion in the new curriculum.

However, she found that the change had also had positive effects. While some staff retreated into nostalgia for their old disciplines, many had taken an opportunity to review and overhaul their methods of teaching.

TES  
6/9/91

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON ACTION RESEARCH AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

**Convenor: Pam Lomax, Kingston Polytechnic**

In his presidential address to the conference, Professor Michael Bassey described a way of 'creating education' by asking questions; by searching for evidence; by asking about intentions and determining their worth; by appraising resources; by identifying alternative strategies; and by monitoring and evaluating outcomes. He went on: 'It is creating education through symptomatic and critical enquiry; it is creating education through research'.

The symposium outlined below took place before the inaugural address, and yet all the elements described so eloquently and forcefully by the incoming President were contained in the presentations made at the symposium. It was as though Michael Bassey had attended, and then written his paper. Of course he hadn't, but the thinking matched so well to that espoused by many convinced of the importance of action research as a means of creating education.

The presentations made were all by teachers who were relatively inexperienced in research work. Yet they all gave accounts of their studies with a freshness and vigour that was not always replicated elsewhere in the conference. It seemed as though everything was important and relevant to them, probably because they were working on problems which they had identified, a key factor in practitioner action research. The six accounts all

considered practical problems about management in schools, most of them dealing with the development of professional relationships in the management process. Two head teachers were concerned with the promotion of team building and collaborative working; a deputy examined the working relationship with his head; and a head of year in a secondary school gave an account of role sharing with a head of History.

Other studies dealt with gender issues in middle school classrooms, with the dynamics of meetings, and with appraisal. All were using action research methodology, essentially sharing in what is sometimes called affectionately 'grass roots development'. And in that there was a dilemma. Here they all were fitting the norms of the world of educational research by presenting 'papers, a strategy which is characterised by 'experts' presenting knowledge, and where 'sitting at the feet of the master' seems to be still a most common teaching and learning style.

And yet this time it was different, helped very much by the arrangement of chairs in a large circle. Not for this group was it to be questions controlled by the chair, or indeed no questions at all. The contributors appeared as learners and partners hoping for critical discussion about what they were doing. So what came from the session? Not all the points listed below stemmed directly from the presentations. Many did, but others came after reflecting about the issues raised in the discussions. There is a set of beliefs which underpin action research. They are that teachers will become more effective when they:

- study problems they have identified in their practice
- reflect on and evaluate the issues arising from the study of that practice
- consider different methods of working following those reflections

For some that effectiveness will be enhanced by working in partnership with other teachers, and/or with colleagues in further and higher education.

For teachers and other practitioners undertaking action research the symposium highlighted certain key issues.

- the important effects of hierarchies on data gathering and interpretation
- the effects of beliefs opinions and bias in research design
- the need for research workers to examine and make explicit their value systems, not only about education, but also about research methodology



Of course in lively discussion there will always be differences of opinion. In this symposium some of these differences concerned the effectiveness of action research as a strategy for improvement, others about the relative importance about key issues listed above. There will always be those who expect too much; and others, including the writer, who enthuse too much. But in this symposium a happy balance of views emerged. And finally, two thoughts about action research.

1. Action researchers are not, and never can be, knights in shining armour, setting out to fight and win all educational battles. Disappointment and disillusionment follows that thinking.
2. About action research. 'It is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they need to study it for themselves'. Lawrence Stenhouse.

What a pity there were not more to listen to the effects of teachers studying it for themselves.

Don Cooper  
Sheffield City Polytechnic

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON EQUALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS (1)

**Convenor: Morwenna Griffiths, University of Nottingham**

The Friday afternoon symposium on Equality, Social Justice and Educational Success, convened and chaired by Morwenna Griffiths of the University of Nottingham, presented research on issues of race and gender. It did more than this — the presenters themselves were women and black people. Thus it raised the questions of research methodology and epistemology implicitly as well as explicitly. Such questions include the validity, standpoint, epistemologies and the ethics of research — if research is, indeed, what one set of people do to another. These questions were taken up again during the Saturday morning discussion of research issues.

The session attracted a large audience who came both to listen and to discuss. The presentations themselves were very varied in content and methodology, and each of them attracted a lively, critical but sympathetic response from the other participants. The chair found herself having to tell the group as a whole 'Three minutes left' and 'Sorry: time's up!' rather than addressing these remarks only to the presenters.

Leone Burton, Janet Powney and Gaby Weiner opened the symposium with an account of their EC funded project which used a life history approach to explore management strategies in educational institutions which enhance the

promotion of women and black/ethnic minority men and women. They reported on a preliminary analysis of the data on individuals' career strategies and on institutional policies which had proved helpful. A discussion about the double-edged nature of equal opportunities policies was taken up in the next presentation by Joyce Tomlinson, who had also used a life history approach to examine the careers of nine African Caribbean Women teachers in London. Her data challenged current taken-for-granted assumptions of white society, the barriers Black women face, and the homogeneity of the category 'Black women'. Her paper, like the previous one, raised questions about individual career strategies and about the effectiveness of institutional strategies.

Joy Stanton reported research in her own institution. She described the progress of a project investigating the achievement of Bangladeshi and African Caribbean pupils in a boys' secondary school in Northamptonshire. Of particular interest to the audience was the question of the strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, of researching the individual attitudes of pupils, parents and teachers from a position within the institution.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford also focused on questions of race and racism in her paper, 'Racism in Initial Teacher Education: not so much a wolf, more of an American pit bull terrier.' She argued that just as pit bulls had been created and could be re-created by human intervention (unlike wolves) so we could re-create institutions of initial teacher education so as to eradicate racism. Proposals for making a start on this were included in the paper, and were the subject of discussion by an audience itself largely from such institutions.

The last two papers each addressed both race and gender, but in very different ways. Elinor Kelly discussed how sexual and racial harassment and bullying could be understood. She made reference to research begun for the MacDonald report, and reported how it had developed. The development was both empirical — continuing action research in schools — and also conceptual — finding ways to differentiate harassment and bullying, while understanding the links between them. Ahmed Gurnah gave an inspiring and challenging presentation of a project in Sheffield. Yemeni women in the area had been able to achieve literacy at the same time as taking a lead in the project, only when professional educators had given up their attachment to the importance of professionalism, and allowed the black community to direct and influence the content and style of their own education.

Morwenna Griffiths  
Nottingham Polytechnic

## AND THE PAPERS SAID:

### Spoke in cycle of racial inequality

The rising debate over racism in education may bring forth good intentions among professionals and directives from Government officials, but it is still failing to penetrate, according to a paper for the British Educational Research Association.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford, of Warwick University, argues in her presentation that teacher education must address a basic lack of understanding about racism in society if it is to recruit more black teachers and offer black children equal opportunities.

She says what while research so far has identified racism in teacher education departments it has not tackled the ways to change attitudes of future teachers.

Ms Siraj-Blatchford will outline her plans for a future research project on race equality teaching methods within departments at a university, a polytechnic and a higher education college.

It will be the only way to break the cycle of inequality in schools leading to underachievement of blacks and unwillingness to enter the teaching profession, she says.

"We still do not have research evidence to show how many black students fail to complete their courses, are failed, drop-out of teaching practices or never go into teaching after qualifying.

"There is an urgent need for more black staff in initial teacher education. This will only come about if we effect changes first", she adds.

Her research will help to develop and monitor student and staff selection procedures and the content of courses and lectures.

Student teachers must be taught how to examine attitudes and teaching strategies, enabling them to share the child's community.

Teachers in suburban and predominantly white schools also need to take on anti-racist approaches to their work.

"Too many inner city teachers come in from outside and never really perceive the needs of the community group. They impose their own perspectives and values on education", her report says.

Completed research up to now has identified that poor experiences in schools is a major deterrent against blacks choosing to enter the teaching profession. Black teachers represent only 2 per cent of the profession despite numbering 4.4 per cent of the population.

National concern over supply has only recently prompted the Department of Education and Science to apply ethnic monitoring strategies.

Jennie Brookman

THES

23/8/91

### Race bias 'rife in education'

Discrimination is rife throughout educational institutions from primary schools through to universities, according to new research presented at a Nottingham conference.

A research team funded by the EC's Equal Opportunities Unit found that racial and sexual discrimination "was as endemic in education as it is in other spheres".

Schools and further and adult education colleges tended to have better track records on equal opportunities.

But the higher education sector — particularly universities — fared the worst.

Researchers found that while many of the institutions advertised themselves as equal opportunities employers, very few showed any real commitment to ensuring policies were carried out.

The team interviewed 38 white women, black men and black women in managerial positions throughout education.

Their findings — presented at the annual conference of the British Educational Research Association at Nottingham Polytechnic — revealed all three groups encountered "horrendous" obstacles in their career paths.

Nottingham Evening Post

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON EQUALITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS (2) RESEARCH ISSUES

### Convenor: Morwenna Griffiths

This symposium set out to do what BERA professes as good educational practice, but tends to ignore when it comes to symposia! As the second half day of deliberations on social justice, it



was dedicated to a review and discussion of research issues.

As Chair, Gwen Wallace began by addressing the critical research issues raised by a number of research approaches: positivist, interpretive, and anthropological/cultural — which included ethnology, comparative studies, action research and ethogenics. With the development of such diversity, important questions were being raised by, for example Martin Hammersley, about the worth of research approaches which could not accommodate hypothetico-deductive analysis. Could we answer Hammersley's charge that all interpretive approaches are politically anarchic and allied to green, urban romanticism?

In a wide ranging but structured discussion, interspersed with papers from Gaby Weiner on life histories, Wilf Carr on critical theory and action-research, Carrie Paechter on the dilemmas which come with contract funding and Mo Griffiths on feminist conceptual research, the large group of participants made a number of important points. Accepting the validity of some of the criticisms of interpretive approaches, we nonetheless needed to develop a critique of more orthodox methods. The research questions and the values within which they are placed, drives the research. The nature of the research question is itself a political statement. Criticism is therefore also political and hostility must be expected. In our research we are engaged in a transformative exercise.

We need to establish the context in which we are doing it and set the parameters within which the critiques can take place. The processes of acquiring and understanding knowledge, and the process of social change are not three different processes but the same thing. The only way to change practice is to change the practitioners.

Major issues which needed to be addressed included: Who does research on whom and for what purpose? How constrained were we by funding bodies when it came to bringing gender and race issues into funded projects?

What kinds of consent should be sought from participants? Could we do research on others anyway or should our enquiry be directed towards our own practice?

At the end of a stimulating symposium, about which one participant declared, 'This meeting *is* action research', we thought it would be a good idea to try to tackle the issues further with a book proposal to BERA Dialogues.

Gwen Wallace  
Derbyshire College of Higher Education

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON INTERNATIONAL STUDIES OF THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Convenor: Dr Karen Evans, University of Surrey

Securing the successful transition of young people to adult and working life is a priority shared by "developed" and the "developing" world. In countries throughout the world Governments are introducing new policies and programmes of education and training with the central purpose of achieving the social and vocational integration of young adults in ways compatible with their political objectives and national development goals. This symposium brought together contributors from around the world, to present research findings and discuss common issues and themes in youth transition.

A common starting point in international comparison is to look at the institutional arrangements which structure the transition process. Is the model being used a 'schooling' model, a 'dual' model or a 'mixed' model of provision, and which models appear to work best? The opening contributor (Dr Karen Evans, University of Surrey) argued that such an approach ignores the relationship between institutions of education and training and the other social cultural and economic structures of society, particularly the labour market, and cultural assumptions about the ways in which young people should be prepared for adult and working life via a combination of education, training and work. Despite global trends towards extended periods of 'anticipatory socialisation', there are considerable variations. Findings of the ESRC 16-19 Initiative and recent Anglo-German studies show, for example, that youth is weakly institutionalised as a life stage in England, whereas in Germany historical factors have led to strong institutionalisation. These and other variations are reflected in differential timeframes for transition, much longer in Europe and in North America than in the UK, where young people are 'closer' to the labour market in many senses. Institutional arrangements are shaped by a host of cultural and socio political influences which make them operate in the way they do. Furthermore cultural and socio cultural influences are manifested in young adults' subjective views of their position in relation to work; the attitudes and beliefs of young people thus become important elements of comparative study.

Youth attitudes and beliefs about work were the focus of the paper from the Canadian contributor



(Dr Maurice Taylor, University of Ottawa). Using instruments adapted from the ESRC 16-19 Initiative, Dr Taylor's paper showed variations in young peoples attitudes towards technological training, beliefs about work and economic locus of control between young people in different labour markets in Canada. These ranged from affluent Ontario to Newfoundland labour markets where unemployment has reached very high levels. Clear gender differences were also shown in young peoples attitudes towards technological training and willingness to move in order to find work.

The theme of participation patterns and rates was pursued in papers from Australia (Dr John Ainley, Australian Council for Educational Research) and from Zimbabwe (Dr James Omoding-Okwalinga, University of Botswana). John Ainley's paper, reporting findings from a longitudinal study, drew attention to the dramatic increase in post 16 educational participation in Australia (35% in 1981 to 64% in 1990). He also showed the importance of the first years of secondary school for what happens subsequently, showing the strong and independent influences of early achievement and attitudes to school on post-16 destinations as well as the role of background factors such as socio economic status, parental expectations, ethnic background and gender. A paper from Zimbabwe took another angle on transition pathways and destinations, focusing on expectations of trainees in Zimbabwe's rural youth technical training centres. The findings showed that, contrary to the policy objective of using such centres to produce vocational practitioners who would remain practising in the rural areas, a significant proportion of trainees intended to practice in the city/town and in Government agencies. This reflected the widespread problem in developing countries, of rural-urban drift, and illustrated the problem of the escalation of qualifications required for entry to training in a context in which the education system is producing many secondary school graduates with limited opportunities for further and higher education.

European comparisons focussed on Germany and France. In a paper based on a recent Anglo-German study conducted by the Universities of Surrey, Liverpool, Bielefeld and Bremen, Martina Behrens (University of Bielefeld) showed how comparison of typical career patterns of young people in comparable labour markets in the two countries had produced some unexpected results. While the German dual system produced stronger occupational identity and a more solid foundation of education and training, the earlier exposure to work experienced by English participants had been shown to generate high levels of occupational self

confidence and flexibility towards the labour market. With 1992 on the doorstep the increased importance of European initiatives was picked up in a paper by Jan Shepherd on Vocational and industry links in France. Exploration of the approaches to education and industry links in France had revealed a stronger 'European' orientation than was evident than in British developments in this area, concluding with a discussion of the way in which exchanges between Britain and other European countries could become an integral part of courses in schools and colleges.

Discussant for the symposium was Dr Philip Brown of the University of Kent. He focussed the discussion on three themes introduced in the Karen Evans' opening paper: ACCESS, RELEVANCE and PROGRESSION. Countries throughout the world are aiming to increase participation rates in post compulsory education. Relevance to the labour market was of central importance, with the opening up of international labour markets redefining what counts as relevant in education and training. The equivalence of qualifications is internationally of increasing significance. Are developments leading us towards longer and longer periods of 'anticipatory socialisation' for young people? How long will Britain's 'mixed' model of post-16 provision, already internationally distinctive in the developed world, survive?

Karen Evans  
University of Surrey

## **REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY MAKING IN SCHOOLS AND LEAs**

**Convenor: Hugh Busher, University of  
Loughborough**

Participants in this symposium heard three papers on different aspects of educational research. Carol Fitzgibbon, of Newcastle University, unravelled some of the intricacies and explained some of the advantages of using performance indicators to evaluate practice in school institutions. Roger Morphy, of Nottingham University, explained the work of himself and some colleagues at Southampton University on the Primary School Assessment Project and how the involvement of teachers as researchers in this project had affected their careers and their approaches to constructing the curriculum. It was a collaborative project run jointly by the Hampshire LEA and Southampton University.



Chris Day, also of Nottingham University, enlightened participants about his work in exploring how INSET affected teachers' learning and practice. Most striking of his discoveries in these dirigiste times, though least surprising to those who construe people as individuals rather than as operatives filling institutional roles, was that the impact of INSET depends on individual teachers' life histories and career stages. This challenges policy makers in the field of INSET to create sufficiently flexible packages to allow individuals to take part ownership of the opportunities created for teachers' professional development by the changing needs of institutions.

Although there were barely 20 participants, a small audience, it represented an interesting cross spectrum of interests in the educational sphere including LEA Administrators, Psychologists and Advisers, as well as researchers from a variety of different institutions of higher education. Regrettably I did not detect any school based teachers in the audience.

Hugh Busher  
University of Loughborough

### **REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON ACTION RESEARCH, EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

**Convenor: Jack Whitehead, University of Bath**

The contributors to the symposium, Moira Laidlaw, Phil Coates, Erica Holley, Kevin Eames and Jack Whitehead had prepared a set of papers which they believed constituted a new view concerning the nature of educational knowledge and educational theory. Their papers were based on a view of educational theory as being constituted by the descriptions and explanations which individual learners were producing from their own educational development. They offered accounts of their own professional development as learners, in their educational enquiries of the form, 'How do I improve my practice?'. Each placed their own 'I', as a living contradiction, in their claims to know their own educational development. They explored the implications of their claims for the logical form of educational knowledge, the values which characterised their development as 'educational', their educative relationships with pupils and for the formation of action research groups for whole school review and development.

The symposium succeeded in stimulating questions from the participants and some lively exchanges. However, unlike the BERA '85 symposium on action research, educational theory and the politics of educational knowledge, the BERA '91 symposium did not succeed in focusing criticism on the group's central claims concerning the nature of educational knowledge. The group believe that this difference in the quality of the criticism was due to the fact that at BERA '85 all the papers were circulated to participants a day before the symposium. Thus as a forum for testing the validity of the contributors' claims to educational knowledge the symposium was a disappointment.

Jack Whitehead  
University of Bath

### **REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SKILLS RESEARCH**

**Convenor: Bob Burgess and Helen Phtiaka,  
University of Warwick**

This symposium was designed as a showcase for some of the work that has recently been conducted in Britain with the support of the British Library Research and Development Department. Four papers dealt with specific projects. David Scott considered organization and utilization mechanisms in relation to library resources in primary schools, while Helen Phtiaka examined the development of the role of the secondary school library in the last fifteen years. Sharon Markless provided a report of research and development activities that had taken place in a range of further education colleges. Finally in terms of substantive papers, Dorothy Williams provided a discussion of information skills and library use in the context of recent developments in the Scottish curriculum.

In two further papers Ann Irving and Bob Burgess explored a set of wider issues. While Ann Irving traced major trends in library research, Bob Burgess focussed on research agendas that could be developed in the future.

Together the papers demonstrated that research on libraries and information skills can relate to a broader range of topics concerned with theory, policy and practice.

Bob Burgess  
Helen Phtiaka  
CEDAR  
University of Warwick

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON ASSESSMENT

**Convenor: Caroline Gipps, Institute of Education**

The symposium began with a presentation by Professor Wynne Harlen of the Policy Task Group paper: *A Comparison of the Proposals for National Assessment in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*. The paper was well received and generally felt to be both enlightening and useful. Despite the fluidity of the situation the Task Group was urged to get as much publicity as possible from its paper.

Professor Desmond Nuttall's paper on *Assessment Developments in the USA* followed. This provided a fascinating extension of the Task Group's comparative theme. President Bush has announced assessment and testing at Grades 4, 8 and 12, and the move in test development is away from multiple-choice testing towards 'performance' or 'authentic assessments'.

Dr Caroline Gipps' paper from the *National Assessment in Primary Schools: an evaluation* project focussed on some issues arising from this summer's 7-year-old testing programme. This large-scale 'authentic assessment' survey meant extra work, stress and change for teachers. In some schools, however, considerable professional development took place and the nature of the SATs led to a broadening of some teachers' experience.

Dr Hilary Radnor described the Reconciliation model of moderation developed in the *Moderation and Assessment Project in the South West*. This project developed a particular model of moderation which gives the assessing teacher a significant role in the moderation process and has a spin off effect on their assessment skills.

Caroline Gipps  
Institute of Education  
London

### AND THE PAPERS SAID:

#### TGAT is dead, will the NC survive?

The Government's favoured model for pupil assessment in England and Wales, which has dominated policy for the last four years, is finally dead, according to leading researchers in a report issued this week.

The TGAT framework for testing, which had once been approved by Tory ministers in the wake of the Education Reform Act, was now deemed too

complex following the backlash from teachers and the more recent comments from the Prime Minister regarding assessment's future.

Only the apparent need to test at the end of the four key stages (seven, 11, 14 and 16) seemed to be surviving. The rest had now shifted away from what many regarded as the most exciting aspect of testing — diagnostic, process orientated assessment — because of political and practical opportunism.

But while the TGAT ideas had been rushed through, without the benefit of trial and error, it still had much to offer, particularly in the way of diagnostic testing, with teachers firmly at the heart of the process, according to the team of British Educational Research Association researchers in a report this week.

The team — Professors Desmond Nuttall, Sally Brown, Patricia Broadfoot, Wyn Harlen and Dr Caroline Gipps — claim in a report for their association's annual conference in Nottingham this week there were 'bizarre' differences between testing regime in England and Wales compared to that in Scotland and/or Northern Ireland. Dr Gipps told *Education* on Tuesday that she doubted it was now possible to assess the national curriculum. It would be left rudderless. Dr Gipps, who is based at the London Institute of Education, said: 'If we are to have the sort of short written test demanded by the Prime Minister then I don't see how on earth teachers can avoid teaching to the test. All that TGAT promised is finally buried. And I don't see the national curriculum surviving much longer either.'

But the extent of ministers' folly had not been arrested at the English and Welsh ports. Northern Ireland had been forced to accept the same imposed system, whereas in Scotland the temptation to rank the performance of schools and pupils in some sort of order had been positively outlawed, as least well ahead of the statute book.

The BERA report, on comparative assessment proposals for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, says that the 'robust data for public consumption' in tests in England and Wales is not replicated north of the border, where a backlash against crude examination results, and their use, had earlier this year provoked parents to withdraw their children from assessment classes.

It asks the question why, if the Government's assessment structure was aimed at making comparability more easy, it had not had the courage to introduce identical frameworks and principles across the UK.

Education  
30/8/91



## Formal tests 'damage' pupils

Formal testing in England and Wales has damaged teachers and pupils, a research paper to be published tomorrow will claim.

The more relaxed approach in Scotland, where less emphasis has been placed on using results to compare schools, should be adopted in the rest of the UK, the British Educational Research Association's annual conference in Nottingham will hear.

League tables of results have been officially discouraged in Scotland, in contrast to England and Wales. As a result, the validity of tests has been undermined in England and Wales because people have tried to make them both manageable and comparable, a BERA task group argues.

The group, headed by Professor Wynne Harlen of the Scottish Council for Research in Education, spent the past year studying the differences in national assessment across the UK.

It found that Scottish teachers, who administer external tests only in English and mathematics and who can pick them from a catalogue, were relaxed, but those in England and Wales were under strain. The psychological burden placed on teachers by the heavy workload of the tests and the knowledge that the results would be used to judge their school had been "crushing", it found.

Its report voices fears that teachers and parents could try to boost children's test scores by coaching them. Some British teachers have shown an undue respect for the testing procedures, says the report. This has damaged teachers' confidence in their own assessments and could turn pupils' days into a series of practice "mini-SATs".

Records of achievement will also suffer because of the more formal approach to testing, the report says. As assessment will not be used to support learning, the more positive approach now being adopted by many schools could be lost.

Pupils with special educational needs could also suffer because the development of SATs in England and Wales has taken little account of their differences, the report argues. In Scotland the more relaxed approach to testing may lead to better diagnosis and support, but in England and Wales such children may simply be ignored.

The same argument is applied to pupils for whom English is not the first language. The SATs used south of the border forbid staff to explain the English tasks to children in their mother tongue.

The group found that assessment in Northern Ireland was a mixture of the formal approach in England and Wales and that of Scotland. Teacher assessment plays a bigger part in testing there than

it does in England, but a more formal atmosphere is created by the knowledge that key stage 2 results could be used to allocated places at Ulster's grammar schools.

Professor Desmond Nuttall of the London School of Economics, a member of the group, said that BERA hoped to provide evidence to persuade ministers that a less formal approach was more useful.

"The Government is changing its mind every two or three minutes and we think this is a campaign still worth fighting, particularly as the same Government is doing something different elsewhere," he said.

Fran Abrams  
TES  
30/8/91

## National testing showed teachers better methods

Teachers discovered better ways of teaching as a result of the first national testing of seven-year-olds conducted in the spring, according to researchers who monitored the testing.

They warned the Government that a move towards simple pencil and paper tests would narrow children's educational experience.

The research, based on 32 schools in four local education authorities, found widespread stress among teachers, but few pupils were upset by the tests — some were bored, but most enjoyed them. The teachers, far from "teaching to the tests" as feared, found out more about planning, assessment and teaching.

The tests, in English, maths and science, matched the tasks given to children in good infant classroom practice, the researchers said: "A return to narrow pen and paper tests of the traditional, limited standardised type will effect a narrowing of teaching again . . . The lesson of our experience must be that good quality assessment is time and resource-consuming and requires commitment not just from professionals, but also from politicians and those who control the system."

The research was undertaken by Caroline Gipps, Bet McCallum, Shelley McAlister and Margaret Brown, from London University's Institute of Education and the Centre for Educational Studies at Kings' College London.

They told the British Educational Research Association in Nottingham at the weekend that 15 schools *began* by saying they had learnt nothing to further their understanding but, later, during interviews, contradicted this. "Virtually all our

schools found they had learnt something from the experience. This is in contrast to the widely reported, 'they told me nothing I didn't already know' comments," they said.

Ngaio Crequer  
The Independent  
2/9/91

## Motivated to become achievers

### Training

Teachers should fight low staying-on rates and high levels of truancy by giving children a sense of achievement, the BERA conference heard.

Recruits should start work on an advanced diploma as soon as they qualify so that they can study practical ways of motivating their pupils, said Professor Jean Ruddock of Sheffield University.

Higher educations should become more involved in in-service training and work partnership with schools, she told a symposium convened by the BERA task group on teacher education.

Student teachers often complained that their postgraduate certificate in education courses failed to stretch them intellectually, she said. As a result, schools were failing to motivate pupils and this led to high absenteeism and low staying-on rates.

"We are failing to get young people to insist on their rights and to have a sense of their own achievement. Too many pupils are sitting on the sidelines of their own education," said Professor Ruddock. Teachers should spend more time learning how pupils' self-images were shaped and how attitudes to school could be improved.

Higher education tutors should work with schools on a combined system of initial and in-service teacher training which would strengthen the links between them, she argued.

A practically-based diploma for newly-qualified teachers could lead to either a Master of Arts or a Master of Education qualification.

Schools would become primarily responsible for subject-based training of students planning to become secondary teachers, and clusters of institutions could ensure that they had experience of different settings.

The rest of the symposium was largely taken up by discussions on "reflective practice", and on providing new teachers with a framework within which they could fight class, race and sex discrimination.

However, the only point on which most members of the task group seemed to agree was that almost everyone had a different opinion of what

"reflective practice" was. Peter Lucas, of Sheffield University quoted interviews with teacher educators who defined the term as "ripping yourself to shreds," or as a constant self-evaluation.

TES  
6/9/91

## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON TEACHER EDUCATION

Convenor: David Hustler, Manchester  
Polytechnic

This Symposium was "designed to generate discussion and action concerning existing research (and necessary research) as regards:

- (i) the relationship between 'reflective practitioner' models in initial training and effective bases for continuing professional development;
- (ii) the relationships, if any, between teacher retention and perceived erosion of teachers' capacities or opportunities to act as thinking professionals;
- (iii) evidence concerning potential 'de-professionalisation' consequential upon current major structural changes e.g. the variety of emerging routes into teaching; changing professional development support structures, particularly in the first five years of teaching; LEA changes".

The intention was to build for the above through a series of brief 5-10 minute contributions, based on very brief papers. There were, in fact, eight such mini-presentations from: Anne Edwards; John Elliott; Dave Hill; Peter Lucas; Donald McIntyre; Jean Ruddock; Bridget Somekh; Rosemary Webb. Some of the titles of these papers give the flavour of the major themes.

"Teachers as Thinking Professionals: learning from the Luddites"

"Three Perspectives on Coherence and Continuity in Teacher Education"

"A Radical Left Approach to 'Reflection', Ideology and Policy Developments in Teacher Education"

"Tutors' Different Interpretations of Reflective Practice: An Under-estimated Problem in Initial Teacher Education"

"Redefining the Contributions of Higher Education Institutions and Schools to the Task of Initial Teacher Education"



"Primary Teachers as Thinking Professionals in a National Curriculum Context"

The symposium was very well attended, but there is no doubt that the agenda was somewhat too packed for full discussion, let alone an action plan. The BERA Teacher Education Policy Group is currently considering how best to make the substance of the papers available to a wider audience. In the meantime copies of the papers are available from David Hustler at a charge of £2.00 per set to cover costs.

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## REPORT ON SYMPOSIUM ON JUDGING THE PERFORMANCE OF SCHOOLS: ISSUES, FRAMEWORKS AND EVIDENCE (1)

**Convenor: Brian Wilcox, University of Sheffield**

Introducing his paper John Gray argued that school effectiveness research had reached a crucial juncture. It was being widely cited by practitioners as a basis for informing change strategies and for commenting on the effectiveness of individual institutions. Nonetheless, there were a number of crucial questions on which the research evidence remained confused. These included:

1. How are schools' effects on different outcomes related?
2. How many outcomes are needed to "capture" a school's efforts?
3. How many broad groups of performance should be used to interpret the schools' results and are separate analyses required for different sub-groups?
4. Is some contextualisation necessary whatever the outcomes being considered?
5. How much do schools' performances change over time?
6. To what extent do similar school processes underpin different outcomes?

Given the high profile in the Parents' Charter of reports on schools rates on 'unauthorised non-attendance' David Jesson's paper set out to gain some purchase on the incidence of attendance and persistent non-attendance levels amongst Year 11 pupils in two local authorities with rather differing

characteristics, together with an assessment of the impact of truancy in a large national sample of Year 11 pupils.

Broadly speaking, schools differed very much more in their ranges of attendance (from 95% to 77%, with an average attendance rate of 86%) than they did in their proportions of persistent non-attenders (the average level per school was around 6%). Using multi-level modelling procedures the variation between schools on the former was around 16%, whereas it was only around 5% on the latter. This suggests that 'persistent non-attendance' was a phenomenon common to most schools but at a rather low level. The model however identified some schools which appeared very much less successful in limiting the levels of their pupils' persistent non-attendance. A similar picture emerged from a study of Year 11 pupils' self report truancy across a national sample of just under one thousand schools. Here the majority of pupils reported that they 'never truant' whilst the average schools suggested that most suffered a degree of 'occasional' truancy. The differences between schools on this national sample had variance of around 5%, close to that observed for the distribution of school differences on persistent non-attendance.

Measures of 'human deficit' (such as being on 'free school meals', coming from a large family, or being in a school with larger proportions of pupils in these categories) were employed to seek to obtain some provisional understanding of these differences between schools; but without great success. A more promising line of enquiry was opened up by the existence, in some of the data analysed, of information about pupils' attitudes towards schools. This suggested that more positive attitudes were associated with lower levels of persistent non-attendance both at the individual, and, even more at the school, level. Whilst these indications cannot be ascribed to 'cause and effect' relationships, their existence should prompt greater emphasis on researching school policies and practice in this area. The data analysis described may assist in this process by identifying schools which appear to be particularly successful or unsuccessful in dealing with this problem.

*A fruitful focus for future complementary action by both qualitative and quantitative research?*

The question of how much schools change their performances over time was raised by Nicholas Sime (in a paper written with John Gray). Using some newly-available data and sophisticated multi-level modelling procedures he showed that change in schools' performances over time, in relation to exam results, were moderate in comparison with the differences in schools' effects that existed at

any one time. In the subsequent discussion it became clear that without careful attention being given to this question by practitioners the efforts of certain schools to improve could be easily overlooked, ignored or discounted.

Brian Wilcox assessed the merits of recent Government proposals on inspection. Three broad issues were emphasised:

- the independence of inspectors
- the nature of inspection methods
- a market approach to inspection

The Government's views on the first two issues tended to reflect a positivist emphasis on 'objectivity' based on a performance model of the school. It could be argued however that the practice of inspection more closely resembles that of naturalistic enquiry. Use of a naturalistic model helps to clarify some of the methodological challenges of inspection. Purposeful sampling, qualitative data analysis, condensed fieldwork and triangulation were some of the concepts found to be particularly fruitful.

A market approach to inspection would mean local inspectorates competing with private inspection firms. Quality control and accountability would be achieved through an accreditation process carried out by a re-structured HMI. An examination of the likely practicalities suggested that it would be difficult to reconcile a statutory duty for inspection

with a market-driven model.

Jon Nixon and Jean Rudduck reported on work they had carried out as part of their ESRC-funded "LEA Advisers/Inspectors Implicit Criteria for the Judgement of Schools" project. They highlighted a number of key themes emerging from their interview evidence: the need to reconcile external accountability with internal growth and development; the role of intuition and insight and how, if at all, these may be communicated within a rational framework of judgement; the kinds of criteria that might give a reliable bearing on the less quantifiable aspects of school life; and the importance of feedback, follow-up and reporting procedures in helping schools to take stock, move forward and locate growth points. Taken together, they argued, these themes represent a distinct, if as yet emergent, mode of inspection which is currently under threat.

#### **Conclusion**

The symposium brought together contributions based on two important, but still largely unrelated, traditions — quantitative studies of school effects and qualitative interpretations based on inspection. Both generate important information about schools which will need to be reconciled in the public's mind if the expectations of the Parents' Charter are to be realised.

Brian Wilcox  
University of Sheffield