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# SYMPOSIA REPORTS

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1994

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### **Managing Autonomous schools (BERA Task Group) Oxford, September 1994**

Hugh Busher, Department of Education,  
Loughborough University

Managing Autonomous schools has been established as a BERA task group in succession to that on LMS and focuses on the way in which such schools are organised and funded either as individual institutions or as a sector of educational provision. The symposium at the Oxford conference captured this sense of unity in diversity as well as raising questions about the broader conceptual frameworks within which such studies are located - whether political policy frameworks, theoretical frameworks about organisations or economics, or ethical frameworks about what it is acceptable to reveal to public scrutiny and with what constraints.

Broad-ranging papers on the complexity of the impact of Local Management on schools (Bullock and Thomas) and on the differences in establishing devolved management in Scotland and England (Arnott and Munn) made participants in the symposium aware of the diversity of policy and practice at local and national level and how changes at this level were having an impact on individual institutions.

Walford's paper on Faith-based Grant-maintained schools showed how policy implementation in one country has been imitated to produce policy in another country. In the course of such transposition, he suggested, the original intentions of a policy become lost as the practices are squashed into the existing policy and social frameworks of the new host country and new social values and purposes become attached. Penney and Evans argued that some national policies implemented for a particular claimed rationale actually resulted in different and contradictory practices. They noted how the implementation of the National Curriculum, for example, although intended to be part of a package increasing the diversity of

choice in education, had actually severely restricted the opportunities of schools to respond to local needs.

A thread which ran through several of the papers was that of the market in education and its imperfectness. Levacic discussed how different secondary schools are likely to be able to take differential advantage of the opportunities available to them in the education market place, to some extent depending on the proportion of surplus places available in any particular geographical area or 'competitive arena'. Penney and Evans noted that there are inequalities in the education market partly because of bureaucratic supra-structures and partly because of the outcomes of historic policy decisions at national and local government level. Busher and Hodgkinson discussed how schools in some areas were collaborating, despite the pressures to competition inherent in the current administrative framework, in order to maintain, as their teachers perceived it, an equitable provision of education to meet as many of the needs of the local community as possible. One of the participants in their research described this as the setting up of a local co-operative, not the recreation of a small scale education authority, and perceived subsidiarity as a major tension in the development of such networks.

Those papers which focused on the internal workings of schools drew on different conceptual frameworks, particularly those of organisation theory in some of its many manifestations. Two focused on the role of leaders in schools in different circumstances, the one exploring the role of deputy heads in Primary schools and how this has altered since 1988 (Maw), the other considering the role of a headteacher in helping a school to cope with a crisis (McPherson and Vann). The latter used notions of educative leadership to provide a framework for analysing the headteacher's actions. The final paper brought the discussion full circle, considering how maintained schools had become increasingly concerned with efficiency as a

result of delegated management (Huckman) - national policy influencing institutional practice and seeking to alter locally held values. For example, the paper noted how financial constraints are apt, in dire circumstances such as potential budget deficits, to drive out deeper considerations of educational values and effectiveness. Although the implementation of delegated management since 1988 has led school leaders to become more involved with and sophisticated about budget management, it has also raised questions about the extent to which practices and conceptual frameworks can be transposed directly from the commercial world to that of a non-profit making service industry such as education without taking account of the different natures of the industries involved.

Participants were sufficiently stimulated as well as exhausted by the symposium to want to organise another one for the next annual BERA conference and would like to hear from other people in the BERA networks who are also working in this somewhat diffuse field. In addition, the task group circulates a termly newsletter. It is intending to use this as a vehicle for making available abstracts of papers from this year's BERA conference to policy makers at national and local level. If you would like to submit an abstract or to present a paper at next year's conference please contact Dr Hugh Busher, Department of Education, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire UK LE11 3TU

### **Managing Difference**

Convenor: Penny McKeown

Contributors: Stewart Ranson and Jane Martin (University of Birmingham), Jon Nixon (University of Sheffield) and Penny McKeown (University of Ulster)

All three papers in this symposium related to the ESRC-funded project, *New Forms of Educational Management (ESRC Local Governance Programme)*, in which the contributors are currently involved. Presenting the first of these papers - entitled 'Managing Difference: Context, Purposes and Research Design' - Stewart Ranson and Penny McKeown outlined the aim of this project as being to study changes in school and college management in the context of educational

reforms which have emphasised institutional self-governance, market formation and national regulation of the curriculum. The study, which is both comparative and longitudinal, is examining the impact of this restructuring of education upon disadvantaged contexts across the UK and is seeking to analyse the extent to which culture is mediating political change.

At the same time, in focusing on management processes the study is exploring the conditions which enable the research to theorise the varying forms in which schools and colleges develop cultures of learning that value 'difference': especially in teaching and learning and in home-school relations. Two further papers outlined the theoretical orientations of the project in relation to these particular areas of interest. Presenting the first of these two papers - 'Theoretical Orientations: The Relationship between Parents and Schools' - Jane Martin introduced the notions of 'code', 'practice' and 'structure' as key concepts with which the project is attempting to theorise cultural change. The final paper - 'Theoretical Orientations: Developing and Analytical Model of Learning' - was presented by Jon Nixon and outlined the team's early thinking on the nature of learning and the role of educational institutions in structuring learning.

### **Small schools: quality in isolation or co-operation**

Convenors: Linda Hargreaves and Maurice Galton

This symposium began with a report on the ESRC-funded project on the role of clusters in national curriculum implementation in small schools in the Midlands. Maurice Galton, Chris Comber and Linda Hargreaves from Leicester University, reported some results of an ESRC-funded project, 'Implementation of the National Curriculum in Small Schools' (INCSS). The INCSS project is examining the role of clustering in national curriculum implementation in small schools in three Midlands LEAs. The research, based on survey and case study data in three Midlands LEAs has attempted to validate, and consequently has revised an earlier three-phase model of cluster development to a four-level model which recognises 'independent individualist' schools as distinct from 'tentative

clusterers'. A survey of small schools' teachers' self-rated confidence and competence in ten curriculum areas revealed higher levels than comparable data from large schools even in music and IT. A hypothesised correlation between levels of cluster cohesion and confidence was not confirmed statistically although case study data provide an objective foundation for increased confidence.

Two head teachers who have participated in the INCSS project, Lyn Evans and Mal Rivers from Staffordshire and Northamptonshire respectively, then presented descriptions of their own cluster histories, cluster development planning, and the benefits gained from cluster membership by children, all staff, governors and parents. These presentations highlighted the roles of LEAs in support of small schools' cluster development.

In the second part of the symposium, David Keast of Exeter University took up the theme of LEA support for small schools in a paper entitled '*The cost and value of small rural primary schools*'. The paper began with a discussion of the definitions and relative quantifiability of the concepts of **cost**, **worth** and **value** in educational and societal terms of rural schools to their local communities/LEAs. The paper provided figures about the amounts and types of support given to small schools by their LEAs, figures which contradict a reasonable expectation that LEAs with a high percentage of small schools (NOR <90) would adopt funding formulas to assist those schools. Less than half of LEAs with large numbers of small schools have any explicit small schools' policy. There is a clear need for small schools to state formally what their needs are, as schools in Berkshire, for example, have done, and for LEAs to formulate policies for small schools in terms of funding, the costing of services and the provision of a named person in the LEA with a brief for small schools.

Next, Prof Karl Jan Solstad, Director of Schools in Nordland, Norway, reported the results of a major survey of the very isolated small schools in northern Norway which was part of the broadly based 'RKK' initiative to support rural schools implement recent daunting reforms of funding and curriculum from a centralised to a highly localised system. Significant and surprising associations between school quality, based on a questionnaire, and teacher turnover and number of fully qualified teachers were presented e.g.

small schools with highly stable, fully qualified staff achieved lower quality scores than those with either a medium staff turnover or some un-certificated teachers. The research showed an increase in appreciation of the RKK support network of over the two years since its introduction.

Finally, John Thorp of University College, Scarborough presented a paper on teacher co-operation in clusters in which comparisons of ESG-funded and self-help clusters were made. A three stage model of the development of teacher co-operation which moves from initial communication to eventual confederation was outlined. The paper went on to predict the potential long-term outcomes of different cluster geneses, arguing that in imposed, funded clusters which tended to have administrative concerns, pedagogical change was potentially less than in self-chosen unfunded clusters which had focused from their inception on classroom practice.

The symposium was useful in bringing together several lines of research on small schools working in groups or alone and the nature of support systems for them.

Linda Hargreaves

October 1994

### **School Effectiveness and School Improvement: Bridging the Divide**

Convenor: Dr Louise Stoll, Institute of Education, University of London

This symposium highlighted several research and action research projects carried out by members of the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre (ISEIC) at the Institute of Education with various partners. These projects blend school effectiveness and school improvement research orientations in order to understand better the links between the processes of school improvement and the outcomes more generally associated with school effectiveness.

In February 1994, the Scottish Office Department funded an action research project in Scottish schools that links school effectiveness and school improvement and combines quantitative research methodology. John

Macbeath and Peter Mortimore described how a team from the University of Strathclyde and the Institute of Education will focus on a sample of 60 schools, including 24 case studies. The researchers will study how these schools seek to improve and will offer support in taking forward current priorities in one of three key aspects of school improvement: school development planning, developing a 'moving school' ethos, and teaching and learning. The remainder will receive feedback on baseline and value-added measures for their own use. This design will enable the researchers team to compare and learn from different kinds of improvement processes. Through use of multi-level modelling techniques, it is intended to track the connections between school and classroom processes and pupils' progress and development from a value-added perspective.

While it has been common in North America to blend school effectiveness and school improvement approaches through action projects, few examples have occurred in this country. In their paper, Louise Stoll and two LEA partners, Kate Myers (Hammersmith and Fulham) and John Harrington (Lewisham), examined the variation in the two approaches, and argued that it is time to put differences aside and for higher education and practitioners to work together to develop a better understanding of school improvement and how to increase effectiveness. Two action projects set up by these London LEAs were described, focusing on origins and aims, structures, strategies and evaluation. Common themes and unresolved issues were drawn out.

Early findings from an ESRC-funded project on the impact of school development planning in nine primary schools were shared by Barbara MacGilchrist and Jane Savage. An overview was given of the research design, instruments, fieldwork and analysis techniques. Initial analyses have revealed that school development plans make a difference to schools but the nature of that difference is determined by the plan in use. A typology of four kinds of development plans and their characteristics was described, representing a continuum from the most to the least effective type of plan. The key characteristics of the two most effective types of plans were offered as 10 theoretical propositions.

Pam Sammons reported on an ESRC study of differential secondary school effectiveness carried out with the Institute colleagues Peter Mortimore and Sally Thomas and two educational consultants, Rosemary Cairns and John Bausor. The study has three major aims: first to extend knowledge about the size, extent and stability over time of differences between secondary schools in their overall effectiveness in promoting pupils' GCSE attainments. Second, the study is exploring the extent of variations in school effectiveness at departmental level and for different pupil groups. Third, and the focus of this paper, is an investigation into reasons for differences in effectiveness. The methodology for the investigation of school and departmental processes were described with initial findings from headteacher interviews in selected case study schools. A related paper on results of multilevel statistical analyses of stability and consistency in secondary schools' effects on students' GCSE outcomes was presented by Sally Thomas, Pam Sammons and Peter Mortimore at another BERA session.

How can the presentation of information about the performance of schools take into account the different challenges they face? This was the question at the heart of a six month project commissioned by the Office For Standards in Education (OFSTED). Pam Sammons and Peter Mortimore (on behalf of Sally Thomas and Josh Hillman), with Peter Matthews from OFSTED, reported on the study's background, process and findings. The researchers suggest that until individual pupil data related to prior attainment are available, national data sources (including the census) can be used to put schools' performance in a more realistic context. They argue, however, that better pupil and school level information about schools' actual intakes are needed. In addition, further research is needed to examine value added and contextual models for different age groups; and to investigate application of such approaches to the study of secondary school department differences and to analysis of school performance in non-academic outcomes.

Papers are available from Louise Stoll, ISEIC, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

## OFSTED SYMPOSIUM

There were five contributions to the symposium from either on-going or recently completed research on aspects of OFSTED inspections.

David Hustler from Manchester Metropolitan University gave a paper describing the work he, Alan Goodwin and Mike Roden had carried out on lay inspectors. One early finding was that lay inspectors are 'mainly male, retired/redundant, a bit over 50, with above average qualifications and coming from occupations in education, finance and manufacturing.

Nicola Brimblecombe, Michael Ormston and Marian Shaw of Oxford Brookes University are in the first year of a three year project which is examining the reactions of classroom teachers and others to the inspection process. Their paper focused on the reactions of teachers to the inspection and the changes they intended to make afterwards. Men tended to be less concerned by the process as did those in senior positions in school. 39% of teachers said they intended to change their practice as a result of the inspection.

Joanna Matthews from the University of Reading presented a paper based on case studies of four inspected schools. Interviews with the heads or senior staff before and after the inspection formed the data. The main finding was that three out of the four schools found the OFSTED report and feedback useful whilst one appeared to approach the inspection with negative feelings and did not view the process positively afterwards.

Val Klenowski and Janet Ouston of the Institute of Education in London gave a verbal report on a recently commenced RISE project investigating the involvement and reactions of parents to school inspections.

Brian Fidler of the University of Reading, Janet Ouston and Peter Earley of the Institute of Education in London gave a paper describing the results of a survey of the schools inspected in the Autumn term 1993. The project funded by BEMAS is examining the extent to which OFSTED inspections contribute to school development.

Respondents valued the final report most highly but both the verbal report and preparation for the inspection were also viewed positively for school development. Few schools made use of

external consultants or others to prepare, to produce an action plan or to implement the action plan.

Brian Fidler

## History, Theory Education

This symposium was concerned with theory in two senses. It was concerned with theories of education that have circulated in the past but also with current theories that seek to explain the historical objects researched by the presenters of the papers. The symposium brought together a combination of active, experienced and beginning researchers in the field of history of education. It also was marked by a concern with issues to do with social class, gender and diversity. Five of the papers were concerned with aspects of child-centred education. Clem Adelman of the University of Reading gave a paper entitled *Pestalozzi and Froebel: An Intemperate Meeting*. He described how Froebel 'spent' nearly two years (1808-10) at Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon. Froebel recorded this briefly and appreciated the good intentions of Pestalozzi but criticised him for lack of any expounded theory for basing his system of education. He argued that Froebel misconstrued and overlaid a key part of Pestalozzi's praxis that pivoted on children's ability to reflect on their own perceptions; apperception.

Kevin J. Brehony of the University of Reading gave a paper called *Montessori and individual work in the English elementary school classroom*. In the paper he examined the claims made by Montessori and her followers to have produced an individualised pedagogy within a system based on school classes. Her work was situated in the *long duree* consisting of the transition from uniform, class instruction to individualised work. This pedagogic transition was considered in relation to Foucault's notion of individuation, the psychometric paradigm, to tendencies in contemporary philosophy and changing conceptions of citizenship. The aim of the analysis was to try to determine the extent to which Montessorian discourse legitimated changes in education that were already taking place and to what extent it was a contributor to those changes.

Lesley Fox-Lee of the University of Reading

presented a paper on the Dalton Plan entitled, *The Dalton Plan and the 'Loyal, Capable, Intelligent Citizen'*. The Dalton Laboratory Plan was brought to the attention of English educationists in 1920. The Plan advocated a complete break with previous methodology, requiring schools to re-arrange classrooms as laboratories, and teachers to prepare assignments which pupils completed under contract. The Plan was embraced with enthusiasm in many Public and Independent schools as well as in some state elementary schools, and international interest helped to maintain its high profile throughout the decade. The Plan's rhetoric addressed teachers' personal and professional concerns and offered an opportunity to examine educational practices abroad, and to make contributions to an increasingly experimental field. It was argued that Dalton Plan teachers' interests in achieving short-term educational and long-term social goals were encapsulated in the Dalton Plan, and that such interests persist in the field of education.

Celia Jenkins of the University of Westminster presented a paper on *The New Education Fellowship and its Emancipatory Interests*. The New Education Fellowship was a voluntary but influential organisation, launched in 1921, to create and disseminate a new pedagogics of education as the foundation for future world unity and democracy. As such, it provided an important field of intellectual activity and practice, informed by a variety of perspectives including New Psychology, psychoanalysis, philosophy and religion. New Education created a positive philosophy of a child-centred pedagogy, predicated upon the needs of the child.

The investigation of the NEF and its discourse of New Education also serves as a case study of the social origins of progressivism. At a time when educational provision had an unambiguous relationship to social class basis of the movement. New Education was developed by and for the caring professions and their academic supports, in opposition to the traditional public schools and their social supports.

New Education promoted an 'Emancipatory Pedagogy' based on principles of freedom, self-development and love. This form of progressivism was set against the more hierarchical teacher/subject-centred, explicitly

assessed forms of traditional practice. The conflict was between those in the emergent caring professions and their academic supports and those in industry and the older professions of law, medicine and the church. New Education was a realisation of an ideological conflict between different fractions of the middle class.

The final paper on child-centred education was given by Jody Hall of Middlebury College in the United States. Her paper was concerned with *Pragmatism of the Interwar Period*. The Hadow Report of 1931 and the work of Susan Isaacs, to name two, extol the benefits of pursuing interests in the environment, a strategy regarded as a means of breaking up the hegemony of the subject based curriculum of the junior school. The paper looked more carefully at versions of the pragmatic in the interwar period and compared them to current practices.

A prominent theme in several of the papers on child-centred education was the role of women in its promotion. Two papers in the symposium explicitly addressed issues to do with women and education. *The Only Place for Women Was Home? Gender and Class in the Elementary School Curriculum, 1870-1904* was the title of the paper given by Jane Martin of Nene College. Her paper examined the position of women involved with the institution of elementary education. It focused on the twenty-nine women members of the London School Board. In exploring the role of women as educational policy-makers, the paper helped to correct the emphasis upon predominantly male agents in existing historical accounts of the origins and development of mass schooling. It also considered how, and to what extent, assertive and principled women representatives were able to influence the changing shape of the formal curriculum in state elementary schools through an analysis of their actions at different periods in time, first, between 1870 and 1885, and second, between 1886 and 1904.

Lesley Furlong of Lancaster University spoke on, *'The problem was keeping awake in the long afternoons ...' Grammar/High School Girls 1920-1960*. The paper was concerned with aspects of the school careers of a small number of women who attended girls' grammar and high schools between 1920 and 1960 in different parts of England and Wales. Questions were asked about the types of identities (gendered, classed and

other) that the pupils adopted in those single-sex institutions and how they, as scholarship, fee-paying and eleven plus entrants, acted and reacted in response to the predominantly middle-class and academic ethos they encountered there. It was argued that from their retrospective recollections they both accepted and rejected sometimes simultaneously, facets of their experience of schooling. The concept of dominant and muted groups was used in order to focus on the women's perceptions of themselves as schoolgirls and the ways in which their relatively privileged secondary education benefited but also in some respects disadvantaged them at the same time.

The final paper in the symposium was presented by Mary Hickman of the University of North London. Her paper dealt with issues to do with Irish ethnicity and identity and was called, *Incorporation and Denationalization: Catholic Schools and Second Generation Irish Children in England During the 19th Century*. The paper examined the role of Catholic elementary schools in educating the children of Irish migrants, in the context of the nationalisation project of the British State. The production and dissemination of a British national identity was an important feature of the 19th century. Of particular interest was the racism implicit in British national identity and the significance of Irish Catholics as a signifier of colonial racism and the cultural differentialism which underpinned British identity.

The Irish migrants of the period were problematized as a social and political threat and represented a visible and alarming element of the rapidly growing urban working class. The development of Catholic elementary education was examined to show how 'one strong cultural institution' developed objectives of incorporating and denationalizing a specific section of the working class population.

One of the chief aims of Catholic state education in Britain was to incorporate and denationalize the children of working class Irish migrants in the process of strengthening their Catholic identity. Specifically, strategies which were developed in the 19th century to incorporate second-generation Irish children continued to be employed and relevant in the 20th century.

Kevin J. Brehony  
The University of Reading

## 'Race' and Culture

The symposium collected together a variety of new perspectives on the issues of 'race', culture and anti-racism in Britain. It brought together emerging material on the current situation of education in relation to issues of 'race', giving a platform to a number of new voices. The papers suggested ways in which it might be possible to re-define and re-align current polarised positions with respect to multi-culturalism, anti-racism and post-modernism. Moreover, they were framed in such a way as to escape the trap of focusing only on 'race' to the exclusion of other structural sources of oppression: black and white femininities and masculinities were in question, as were issues of social class.

Kaye Haw opened the symposium, speaking on her research showing 'Why Muslim girls are more feminist in Moslem schools'. She gave her presentation jointly with the Head of an all-girls Moslem school. The paper examined how the discourses of gender and 'race' are articulated in the educational experiences of Muslim girls. 'Some ethical dilemmas in fieldwork' by Mehreen Mirza, followed. She drew on her own experience as a South Asian woman researching into the educational experiences of South Asian women and girls, questioning current, standard, feminist and anti-racist approaches to resolving the ethical and practical dilemmas of research. Tony Sewell presented a paper on 'Black British youth culture and its relationship to schooling'. He argued that black African-Caribbean culture, although difficult to define, is now a major force in explaining their attitude to schooling. He also argued for a move away from the anti-racist perspective to a post-structuralist viewpoint. Lis Martin and Christian Akwesi presented some on-going work in a Development Education project in a paper called 'Did you go to School? Deconstructing Ghanaian stereotypes for English schoolchildren'. They examined strategies used in face-to-face encounters, and drew out issues related to using such material where such meetings were not possible.

Sarah Neal opened the second half of the symposium. Her paper, 'Equal Opportunities policy processes in Higher Education: Some case studies', drew on ethnographic fieldwork to examine equal opportunities policies and anti-racist initiative in four higher education institutes, to look at how equal opportunities

and anti-racism appear in the context of higher education. Richard Hatcher's paper, 'Racism and children's cultures', moved the focus from higher education to younger children. It addressed 'race' within the cultures of white children, drawing on research into children aged mainly 10 and 11 years old in three predominantly white primary schools, to analyze how they constructed 'race' within their friendship and other peer groups. Paul Connolly's paper drew on his fieldwork to examine the way that racism has been theorised and understood in research accounts of educational settings. His paper, 'Theorising racism in educational settings: reintroducing the work of Pierre Bourdieu', argued for a new look at the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his three inter-related concepts of habitus, field and capital. Finally, Claudette Williams, in her paper 'The Whiteness of the Curriculum', reported an empirical investigation into ways in which African Caribbean parents can prepare their children for school. It discussed some difficulties in carrying out such research are discussed. On the one hand there are a very small number of black researchers in education, and on the other, resourcing constraints on such projects make finding subjects for the research a problem.

Morwenna Griffiths

School of Education, University of  
Nottingham

### **BERA 20th Anniversary Symposium**

Despite having been given quite a high billing in the Conference Programme, this symposium turned out to be something of an anti-climax. There was a slightly hungover mood to the whole event, which not even the best efforts of the four speakers could dispel. But the low-key does not necessarily signify irrelevant: end-of-conference weariness had perhaps left the participants disinclined for fierce debate, but it also meant that there was little energy or inclination to resolve some sharp divisions of opinion about what BERA had so far achieved, and what it should aspire to in the future, which emerged during the course of the morning.

David Hamilton, the first to speak, highlighted tendencies towards academic elitism as an underlying problem for the organisation, going right back to its early days. This immediately struck a chord in some members of the audience for whom the conference location itself signalled the continued dominance of such tendencies. Hamilton's version for BERA, insofar as this became apparent in a fairly brief presentation, was more than anything about the extent to which it was open to all potential researchers.

John Gray, following him, emphasised in a more positive way the ever-widening scope for academic research, and opportunities for researchers, which this particular conference - with its large number of participants from all areas of education, such as school students, practitioner researchers and research students - so vividly represented. It was when Donald McIntyre went onto present his case for asserting criteria of quality in educational research as firmly as in any research enterprise that divisions really emerged. McIntyre argued that the world of educational research as represented by BERA could only hope to exercise real influence if it insisted upon and strove for a properly rigorous approach. This did not go down well with everyone: the whole notion of quality in research was viewed by some participants as an increasingly worthless and corrupted concept, and ultimately antithetical to BERA's democratic purpose.

Finally, David Hargreaves spoke of his current project of developing an agenda for future educational research, work in which he is currently engaged with Professor Mike Beveridge. He seemed rather bemused by the attacks on the notion of quality which had preceded his contribution, but went on to offer an interesting and stimulating outline of how the educational research community could very successfully collaborate in the development of high quality research.

This symposium proved to be a slightly unsettling way to end a conference. Not exactly a jolly birthday party perhaps, but at least it showed that BERA cannot yet be accused of having settled into comfortable middle age.

Chris Davies

## Using Databases for Research: Some new and some neglected opportunities

It is self-evident to researchers that at a time of rapid change in education, conclusions drawn from research evidence are urgently needed by policy makers (politicians, executives) and practitioners (teachers, managers, inspectors, governors) on a wide range of issues. However there is a contemporary tendency for educational researchers to restrict their enquiries to first-order data which they collect by interview, questionnaire or observation of relatively small populations. Inevitably this takes considerable time and since the findings are based on small populations there is a tendency for policy makers, if not practitioners, to discount them.

This symposium drew attention to some of the second-order data which is currently available, and to some that may be available soon.

Jane Kirk (Nottingham Trent) said 'In an age when there has never been easier access to more information - I fear that there has never been less attention paid by researchers to the existence of that information.' She described a number of the on-line and CD-Rom search facilities. Michael Bassey then reported how, working with Jane, he had explored the vexed issue of children's achievement in relation to class size in primary schools, and has identified 15 substantial papers where abstracts are available on CD-Rom or on-line, showing evidence of children gaining educationally in smaller classes, providing that their teachers were using appropriate methods.

David Soulsby (OFSTED) discussed the research interests of the inspection agency and then described the kinds of data that are at present available from OFSTED (copies of inspection reports). To date over 900 secondary schools have been inspected and the powerful computing facilities in use enable 100,000 lesson reports from these to be searched in about 15 seconds. It is hoped that this can be made available to bona fide researchers, but first a number of issues such as anonymising the data, controlling the potential workload and organising access have to be resolved.

Jan Hunter (Islington Education Department) described some of the data bases at individual pupil level which as an LEA researcher she has access to in her own borough, and which

presumably are existent in other places. The problem is to see how researchers can gain access to these. Conceivably, given appropriate anonymising, local authorities might see this as a source of income, but then the question is whether research teams could afford to buy the data!

Janet Hooper (Southampton, working with Ros Mitchell) described some of the data bases available for language learning research. She described the *Childes* data base of child language, and the *Koala* data base of second language learning, discussed how they can be accessed and some of the software that has been devised to analyse this material. She also referred to the learner material which they are collecting in their research with school children starting to learn French, and the problems of transcribing and archiving this.

Michael Bassey

## The Changing Nature of Teaching in Primary Schools

There were three contributors to this symposium. The first two reported on aspects of their ESRC sponsored research on 'Creative Teaching in the National Curriculum', while the third reflected on the changing role of primary headteachers with regard to opportunities for creative and innovative work.

The first paper, 'Reacting to External Influence for Change', given by Peter Woods, examined the career of a major government initiative, 'Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools: A Discussion Paper', from inception to implementation. The document, launched in 1992, roused spirited and sometimes acrimonious debate in the press, and among politicians, educationalists and teachers. The widely differing interpretations of the discussion paper were seen as products partly of differing interests and partly on the different contexts and phases the paper went through. These phases consisted of contexts of general influence; opportunity and initiation; text production; immediate reception; mediation; and implementation. These contexts fall into two broad stages - the political, when the policies of the 'New Right' dictated the course and reception of action; and the educational, when

the document was mediated into practice through the LEA (showing 'strategic leadership') and headteachers (acting as 'gatekeepers'), and appropriated by classroom teachers. Among the factors affecting the meaning and interpretation of the document were the selection of the authors, the time-scale, the terms of reference, the status of the paper, and the conflicts and compromises of production. Political and educational interests were inextricably involved at certain junctures, coming to a head in the immediate reception phase when the media engendered a discourse of derision and a number of myths, inducing a moral panic about educational standards and 'progressive' teaching methods. A number of issues are highlighted in this event, including the 'career' of policy initiatives during which their usages and meanings undergo change, often considerable; the way different interest groups interpret it, using different discourses to imbue sense to the document rather than taking sense from it; the purposes and control of the dissemination of educational research; and the experimentation with and consolidation of new roles by various agencies and personnel in the new educational order.

The second paper was given by Bob Jeffrey under the title 'New Dilemmas, Old Remedies?' The paper identified a number of curriculum dilemmas that face primary teachers. Some of these dilemmas are similar to those identified by Berlak and Berlak (1981) and some are new dilemmas resulting from the innovations introduced since the Education reform Act of 1988. The dilemmas were explored with reference to the research into creative teaching and illustrations were given as to how these dilemmas are transformed or resolved by the teachers. Although this model appears to represent accurately the nature of primary teaching, the teachers were less keen to talk publicly in dilemmatic terms for this might entail them as being seen, particularly in the current adversarial climate, as weak or disloyal. (Alexander 89).

The transformations and resolutions show how these primary teachers mix ideology and pragmatism. Finally, the paper highlighted, through the dilemma model, some of the values belonging to these creative teachers.

The third paper was on 'Headteachers,

Collaborative School Cultures and School Improvement: A Changing Relationship?' Geoff Troman examined the role of the headteacher in relation to the management of school cultures and school improvement. Through a case study of the work of one headteacher, he provided an illustrative example of a headteacher's role in the management of a collaborative school culture and school improvement to achieve radical educational reform in a period prior to the Education Reform Act of 1988. The case study shows how this role has changed as a result of the impact of measures contained within the Act. It was argued that recent policy and legislation, the stated intention of which is to facilitate school improvement has, in the case of one school and its headteacher, had quite contrary effects. Current policy initiatives (such as the Local Management of Schools, which may be considered by some to support school improvement), by ignoring the complexity and role conflict inherent in headteachers' work, may be achieving the opposite effect, that is inhibiting the headteacher's role in the management of collaborative cultures in order to achieve school improvement.

Peter Woods

The Open University

### **Leverhulme Appraisal Project**

Nearly 70% of teachers feel that appraisal has been of benefit to them, but fewer than half say that appraisal has affected their classroom practice. Male teachers who were being observed by male appraisers say they were more at ease than did female teachers being watched by female appraisers. Some teachers were observed once, for as little as ten minutes, when it was decreed that they should be watched 'on at least two occasions'.

These are just a few of the teasing findings that have come out of the Leverhulme Teacher Appraisal Project, a national study of 1137 teachers and appraisers, and 109 Local Education Authorities conducted at Exeter University, in which we monitored teacher appraisal during the vital 1992 to 1994 period, when by law all teachers had to be appraised, many for the first time. Our principal focus was on the lesson observation element of appraisal, but we

inevitably uncovered considerable information about personal relationships, group dynamics, school management and teachers' attitudes to their craft.

### The LEA study

We obtained that research rarity, a 100% response from all 109 English LEAs, to our request for information on the training of appraisers. Some had put out little more than a reproduction of DFE documents. Others produced detailed training manuals, used videos, identified key professional skills. Most stressed the sensitivity of classroom observation and the need for positive relationships between teacher and appraiser. Only one LEA required a quality rating each lesson on categories such as 'Outstanding' or 'Satisfactory'.

The four most common tips were: (1) be objective, not subjective; (2) look at performance, not personality; (3) be supportive, not judgmental; (4) be sensitive. Yet given the sensitivity attached to the observation of teaching, surprisingly little time was devoted to classroom observations skills during training, typically between an hour and half a day.

### The national survey

A total of 658 teachers and 479 appraisers responded to our questionnaire. Most teachers were appraised by someone who had managerial responsibility for them, though 11 per cent were appraised by someone of the same status. Their responses showed that almost all teachers were happy with their appraiser, only one per cent saying they were not, though a further six per cent had reservations. Half the teachers had had an appraiser assigned to them, the others either chose their own or negotiated an appraiser.

Despite the requirement that teachers should be observed twice, some 28% were only seen once. About half the observations lasted under 45 minutes per occasion, and three teachers claimed they had been observed for less than ten minutes. It seems that most aimed at the statutory minimum of one hour spread over two sessions, and only a minority found time for more. Teachers had to choose an aspect of their teaching on which to focus, and the most popular topics were classroom management, mainly of pupils, but also resources, and teaching

skills. Only four per cent focused on pupil assessment.

There were two particularly telling questions in the questionnaire. In answer to the question: 'Has appraisal benefitted you personally?', 69% of teachers gave a positive response, most citing as their reasons improved confidence, self-awareness, helping determine priorities, professional development. Only three per cent believed it would aid their career development. Yet fewer than half, 49%, stated that appraisal had actually affected their classroom practice, some saying it had only confirmed their good points. Teachers valued care and collegial interest, even if there seemed to be no tangible pay-off.

Most teachers were satisfied or happy with the outcome of appraisal, but there was a significant gender effect. Perhaps it was because of the male bonding 'buddy' culture, but men who had been appraised by a male appraiser reported higher satisfaction than did women appraised by a female. This partly affected primary/secondary teacher differences, as the former were notably less at ease with an observer present than the latter.

Appraisers themselves expressed satisfaction with their training, though many were negative or non-committal about the observation training they had received. Few had received any induction into specific observation skills, and this seemed a significant omission. The majority simply observed in an intuitive way, and although 88% made notes, only a third of appraisers gave a copy to the teacher.

### Case studies

The 29 case studies of teachers observed and interviewed over a long period in 14 primary and secondary schools often fleshed out what we had found in the national questionnaire. Teachers were apprehensive about appraisal in the long term, wondering if it would simply be a management tool, or be used for performance-related pay, something not everyone opposed, though all said that it would not affect their teaching. Almost everybody found problems with time. Interviews and feedback after observations were done hole-in-corner, usually within 24 hours, but rarely immediately. There was concern whether the school would find the

time and resources to follow up the targets that had been agreed.

Appraisers expressed their lack of confidence in their own ability to observe, one saying, 'I thought I knew all about classroom observation and it taught me really that what I'd been doing was going into a classroom and not really observing'. Yet relationships were often strengthened, one teacher saying, 'I think the key part was the interview. You can build up quite a solid friendship through having time just to sit and talk'.

*The full findings of the Leverhulme Teacher Appraisal Project will be reported in the book Teacher Appraisal Observed by Ted Wragg, Felicity Wikeley, Caroline Wragg and Gill Haynes, to be published by Routledge, Summer 1995.*

### **Emerging patterns of teachers' assessment, national testing and their articulation in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland**

All five members of BERA's Policy Task Group on Assessment took part in this symposium, joined by John D'Arcy from Northern Ireland. Richard Daugherty, task group member, took the chair and ensured that the timing of the presentation of the five papers allowed questions for clarification after each one and a full half hour for discussion at the end.

The title of the paper presented by Patricia Broadfoot on behalf of the Primary Assessment, Curriculum and Experience (PACE) Project team, *Diagnostic Discourse or Dead Data? Teacher Assessment at Key Stage 2*, reflected a theme emerging from the PACE project's study of KS2 teachers' views and practices concerning assessment. Findings were reported from the second stage of the PACE project which is concerned with teachers' and pupils' experience of the national Curriculum and its assessment at Key Stage 2. There was a tension between teachers' assessment as formative, intuitive and essentially learning-oriented and as more systematic, planned, semi-summative and recorded. Such a shift had been identified in KS1 teachers by the first stage of the PACE project and was evident in some KS2 teachers. Its consequences could be more informed teaching, making use of the more carefully

targeted assessment in diagnostic discourse, or it might end in assessment taking a summative role and ending in dead data.

Caroline Gipps presented the paper by members of the National Assessment in Primary Schools: An Evaluation (NAPS) project team entitled '*What have we learnt from national Assessment at Key Stage 1? - a retrospective*'. The focus was on Year 2 classes, although the findings are relevant more broadly. In common with the PACE findings, the NAPS results clearly showed a shift in KS1 teachers' assessment practice from an intuitive approach to one based on evidence and written records. Study of teachers' practice in assessment showed that teachers were not using the SOAs in their assessment and thus were not adopting criterion referencing in their assessment. They wanted to reward effort, improved behaviour and progress. These and other findings led the authors to suggest that the teachers' view of what was appropriate assessment, teaching and learning for young children was not that proposed by the TGAT report. They suggested that there were specific issues relating to the age of the children and that these should be accommodated in different assessment programmes.

John D'Arcy reported on the second pilot year of the assessment arrangements in Northern Ireland in *Assessment in practice at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 in Northern Ireland*. Following an intensive evaluation of the first pilot year experiences of assessment and testing at key stages 2 and 3, revised pilot arrangements had been introduced for the school year 1993/4. These featured substantial changes to the relationship between teacher assessment and the outcomes of external assessments as well as the introduction of a quality assurance system of moderation. External Assessment Resources (EARs) in English, mathematics and science, intended to be used as part of on-going work, had continued to be made available to teachers to help with their own assessment. Although in 1992/3 55% of KS2 teachers had used EARs and found them useful, there was a distinct reduction in the use of EARs during the 1993/4 pilot year, with less than a third of both KS1 and KS2 teachers making use of them. This and other evidence suggested that teachers' assessment has been down-graded in their priorities.

In 1993/4 new assessment units were provided to help a teacher confirm an assessment of a pupil's progress in an attainment target at the end of a key stage. It was clear, however that many teachers did not have the confidence to make their own assessment of pupils' levels, or did not realise the need to do so, and a substantial proportion used the assessment unit material itself as the basis of determining the pupils' levels of working rather than the prior judgement of the teacher. In these cases the assessment units were not being used to confirm teachers' assessments, as was intended. All the evidence pointed to a swing away from formative towards summative assessment and an emphasis on test results as producing the hard data which was perceived as being necessary for results which were collected centrally and could be used to create league tables of schools.

Some of the issues in earlier papers were reflected in the presentation by Wynne Harlen of a paper by the team evaluating the implementation of the new curriculum and assessment in Scotland. *Teachers' Assessment and National Testing in Primary Schools in Scotland: Roles and Relationships*. The revised arrangements for national testing, introduced into primary schools in Scotland in January 1993, give the tests a role in confirming teachers' assessments of when pupils have achieved certain levels of attainment. The test units, in reading, writing and mathematics, are used at any time, with individual pupils or with groups, at teachers' discretion. This paper explored how teachers carry out formative assessment and how they decide when a pupil is likely to succeed in test units at a certain level. There was evidence of considerable moves towards teachers' assessment becoming more systematic, wide-ranging and more often recorded. However the moderating role of the tests material has not been taken on board by the majority of teachers. There was evidence that Scottish teachers do carry out their own assessment and use this in deciding about the test units to use, in contrast with the situation

reported for Northern Ireland, the teachers criticised the tests for providing no additional information about their pupils, in particular having no diagnostic value. The legacy of the previous role of the tests may have obstructed the acceptance of tests in a new role in moderation of their own assessments.

Similar issues were explored by Mary James in a paper deliberately echoing the title of the one relating to Scotland, *Teachers' assessment and national testing in England: roles and relationships*. The requirement to report a teachers' assessment score at the end of the Key Stage means that teachers have to 'sum up' their teacher assessments by aggregating and reducing their formative judgements on qualitative criteria to the numerical form used in the standard tests. Thus teachers are still expected to convert formative assessments into summative assessments.

Evidence collected in the course of conducting four consecutive studies of the implementation of national curriculum assessment and moderation arrangements in East Anglian LEAs suggests that the increasingly 'high stakes' attached to the scores awarded for pupils' performance at the end of the key stages, whether in the form of teachers' assessment or standard task, has allowed the summative purpose to dominate. Although there is evidence of teachers and schools using national curriculum assessment information for some formative purposes, there is considerably more evidence that teachers regard standard tasks as a model for their teacher assessments and are, for example, using old standard tasks as the basis of their teachers' assessment in much the way that 11+ practice papers and past GCE papers were once used. In one LEA a key stage 1 moderator, herself a teacher, expressed the concern that whilst test scores might rise as a result of this practice, educational standards judged in other ways might actually be falling.

Wynne Harlen

SCORE