

education beyond school

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1. introduction

The purpose of this pamphlet is two fold. First, we wish to clarify the cultural perspectives within which tertiary education (that is, education beyond school in all institutions which offer full time and sandwich course study) operate, and to suggest that these perspectives place unnecessary constraints upon the development of tertiary education and indeed, upon the education system as a whole. Secondly, we wish to suggest that tertiary institutions, more specifically those who control them, have a responsibility not only towards their students, but also to the schools which feed them and to the communities in which they are located. Clear proposals will be put forward to show how these obligations can be fulfilled.

Fundamental to the argument we wish to present is an understanding of the concept "culture". The historical development of tertiary education since the mid-nineteenth century will illustrate why we attach such importance to this concept. Two distinct traditions can be identified in the development of the education system since the last century. On the one hand, a liberal-elitist strand which can be traced through the development of the universities, the public schools and subsequently the grammar schools, and on the other hand a technical-utilitarian tradition which developed in response to the more immediate problems thrown up by industrialisation and the development of a predominantly urban society. This tradition is seen in the rationale behind the elementary schools, the secondary moderns and, in the last decade, the polytechnics. The binary system has been a rationalisation of these two traditions. The liberal strand has provided a distinctive cultural perspective and one in which knowledge has come to be organised within tight boundaries. It can be seen principally, as Raymond Williams shows (*Culture and Society*, Penguins, 1958), as a reaction against the pernicious and brutalising effects of industrialisation. Writing in *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold expressed a view which many would still find acceptable: "Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred, culture has one great passion, the

passion for sweetness and light. It has one even greater!—the passion for making them prevail". In these terms culture and knowledge are seen in universal terms, as freed from the local and the particular and from any kind of social context. Such a definition leads to a restricted conception of the relationship between theoretical knowledge and "everyday life", the separation of "theory" and "practice", "education" and "training" and above all the reduction of culture to what Arnold called "an inward condition of the mind". In fact, culture suggests two major possibilities. The traditional liberal-elitist model is still the prevailing cultural form, and has a number of consequences for the organisation of knowledge at all levels of the education system. First, it is concerned with the pursuit of excellence, and that which is excellent is judged to be so by those who are themselves regarded as excellent. Secondly, the traditional cultural model encourages reflective pursuits rather than active pursuits, thereby enforcing a kind of mind-body dualism. At an institutional level, this is implicit in the binary system; one set of institutions concerning themselves with vocational work, another set with research and learning "for its own sake". The traditional model can be closely identified with what Basil Bernstein has called the "collection code" in his important analyses of the classification and framing of educational knowledge (Michael Young *Knowledge and Control*, Collier MacMillan, 1971).

In the context of tertiary education, this cultural model has serious consequences for the curriculum, as Young points out in this statement of the characteristics of "high status" knowledge: ". . . literacy, or an emphasis on written as opposed to oral presentation; individualism (or avoidance of group work or co-operative-ness, which focuses on how academic work is assessed and is a characteristic of both the 'process' of knowing and the way the 'product' is presented; abstractness of the knowledge and its structuring and compartmentalising independently of the knowledge of the learner; finally and linked to the former is what I have called the unrelatedness of academic curricula, which refers to the extent to which they

are 'at odds' with daily life and common experience". This is one cultural model and its effects. It is important to remember, however, that they are effects which are felt beyond the boundaries of the institutions in which "high status" knowledge is most established: the universities. The alternative perspective which we believe should be developed in the education system and which we shall explore in this pamphlet, is one which sees culture in more pluralistic terms, as related to the communities in which educational institutions are placed and one which places social responsibility as a high priority. This is not to confuse the "social" with the "sociological" in the study of society. Our argument is that the "frames" within which theoretical knowledge has come to be organised can be relaxed at a number of points to accommodate insights derived from the "everyday knowledge" of those who participate in the education system and those who are outside it. (These ideas are a development of Berger and Luckmann's work in *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin, 1966).

The ideas contained within this pamphlet stem principally from our experience as students of education at the universities of Cardiff and Leicester and from our own teaching. We have been led to conclusions, however, which coincide with current developments in the sociology of education and the sociology of deviance. We believe that the perspective adopted in Michael Young's book *Knowledge and Control*, urgently needs to be applied to the tertiary sector. By going beyond the environmental and personal "causes" of academic success and failure we can begin to look at the structure and organisation of curricula in tertiary institutions and relate them to the everyday experience of different social groups. The central questions then become: What counts as valid knowledge? What are the boundaries within which knowledge is classified and organised? What is the relationship between theoretical and "everyday" knowledge at different levels of the education system? Statements of educational policy have neglected these questions or at best, treated them superficially. We wish to redress the situation

as far as tertiary education is concerned and to demonstrate that there are no unequivocal answers to our questions. In making our proposals for reform we are more than aware of the constraints which act upon the education system from outside, from economic and governmental pressures, for example. We fully agree with Young when, following on his definition of "high status" knowledge, he points out that "... any very different cultural choices that reflect variations in terms of the suggested characteristics, would involve a massive redistribution of the label's 'educational' 'success' and 'failure', and thus also a parallel redistribution of rewards in terms of wealth, prestige and power". Taking these factors into account we want to be pragmatic in our suggestions about the possible lines along which change can occur. We do not believe that the education system can be used as an instrument to change society. Jenck's work shows this to be a foolish argument (*Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*, Allan Lane, 1973).

We intend to use the theoretical argument developed in the introduction to clarify discussion about a number of areas of education beyond school which we believe have either been neglected or studied from a false perspective. In the first section we look at student counselling in tertiary education and attempt to show how definitions of failure are closely related to the structure and assessment of courses. In the second section we examine the relationship between secondary schools and the universities, and in so doing, argue that reform of secondary education is largely determined, or constrained by, assumptions held in the universities about the structure and assessment of knowledge. In the third section on curriculum and community we consider some of the possible ways in which curricula in tertiary institutions can be brought into closer contact with local communities. We also give examples of successful attempts to do this. Finally, we set out our proposals for the structural reform of education beyond school and argue that the concept of a comprehensive tertiary system should be revived.

2. students

Once questions are raised about the organisation of knowledge in educational institutions and about their cultural perspectives, a number of issues can be seen in a new light. Student "problems", their academic "success" and "failure", for example, can be looked at in terms of curricular and institutional solutions as well as psychological ones. Attention will be given in this section of the pamphlet to three main areas: counselling of students, assessment of courses and training of teachers in the tertiary sector.

The extent to which students in tertiary institutions experience problems which require the institution to play a supportive role has been of considerable interest to researchers. Between ten and twelve per cent of university students are said to require counselling by a trained psychotherapist or psychiatrist, whilst a large proportion of students will require advice on matters of accommodation, careers, grants, family planning and the law. Similar needs exist in public sector colleges. Several studies have shown that both students and staff regard the provision of guidance facilities as a responsibility of the institution, though there is disagreement about the form which such facilities should take (*Journal of Counselling Psychology*, Volume 12; 2, 1965).

student problems

Student problems have been categorised in a number of ways and a simple classification is a useful starting point for discussion. The first set of problems experienced by students relates to those situations in which the cause is both obvious and immediate. The student may have inadequate financial resources to pursue his academic career, or be unable to find the right kind of accommodation, or have difficulty in choosing between a number of course options. In Further Education, additional problems arise because many of the students are required to attend an institution even though they have no real desire to do so. At the Newport and Monmouthshire College of Technology student support services have been designed to meet student accommo-

modation needs whilst at the same time offering a counselling service. The appointment of staff with special responsibility for such activities is a relatively recent development in public sector institutions, however.

The second set of problems are those which cannot be dealt with in a purely pragmatic way and which require a caring counselling relationship. Three kinds of problem fall into this category:

1 *Problems of insecurity* where the student feels insecure away from home or feels that he is out of his depth or being pushed by his parents to achieve something of which he is not capable.

2 *Problems of relationship* where the student feels that he has difficulties in relaxing with his peers or is unable to form a stable friendship or a relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

3 *Problems of context* where the student is unable to translate the work he is pursuing into a meaningful activity. He may become alienated from his studies.

The responses which have been made to this second set of problems are of a different kind and require deeper examination. Some universities and a smaller number of institutions in the public sector have "dealt" with these problems by appointing full time counsellors. Such appointment have followed largely from the work of Nicholas Mallenson at the University of London and R. J. Still at the University of Leeds, where psychiatric techniques have been used to help students "adjust" to the institution or cope with personal problems.

Whether psychiatric or psychotherapeutic in nature, the development of institutional mechanisms for dealing with individual problems carries implicit dangers. Thomas Szasz (*Ideology and Insanity*, Calder and Boyers, 1973) has provided case materials, for example, which suggest that counsellors in American universities tend to act as agents of the educational institution, rather than the agents of their clients. In this way they can be used to

minimise deviance and consolidate the norms of the institution. The implication of this is that in considering student problems, attention needs to be paid not only to those individuals who are considered to be deviant, but also to the values and objectives from which they are said to deviate. Unless this is done the emphasis will be moved away from the deficiencies of particular institutions and courses, towards the deficiencies of problem students. This point will be taken up later.

The practice of using professional counsellors to promote institutional goals and efficiency is not confined to American universities. In an analysis of counselling procedures, Simon Maddison has shown that many of these tendencies can be detected in the writings of professional counsellors working in British universities. This does not add up to a simplistic "conspiracy" theory about student counselling, but does underline some of the unexamined assumptions implicit in it. As Maddison argues: "Psychiatrists do not even have to enter the formal decision making process to act in a social and political way. As sociologists of psychiatry and mental illness have forcefully argued, the very use of the traditional medical model of practice, with its implications of an unfolding disease process similar to a physical illness, has social and moral implications. For unlike a physical illness, recognition and definition of mental illness depends not upon expert diagnosis, but on social evaluations of specific behaviours which are the property not of an individual but of an interaction situation", Ian Taylor and Laurie Taylor (*Politics and Deviance*, Penguin, 1973). That is, an interaction situation itself susceptible to change.

The most important consequence of treating the goals of the institution as unproblematic in the discussion of the policy and practice of student counselling is that the curriculum as a source of strain is left unexamined. Student problems will tend to be explained in terms of individual psychological weaknesses rather than as the result of institutional inadequacies. Still, for example, has argued that the causes of academic failure do not lie in

the stresses of the academic situation, but in some flaw or weakness in the student's own personality: "The situation in which the student finds himself is not one which would give rise to mental ill health were it not for the presence of some such weakness or idiosyncrasy" (*Universities Quarterly*, Volume 17, Number 1, 1962). This is quite breathtaking in its complacency. As we have already argued, greater attention needs to be paid in such matters to the role which curricula and methods of assessment play in the generation of psychological problems.

curriculum and assessment

Problems of context, where the student is unable to make sense of his work or cannot see the relevance of his course, may have very little to do with psychological weakness. A student may become alienated from the content of his course because an inadequate attempt has been made to present it to him in a context which has any meaning or apparent application. Whilst he may be able to cope with this by adopting a purely instrumental attitude to his work, a great deal could be done by teaching staff to develop a more satisfactory relationship between intellectual, social and expressive aspects of courses. Successful attempts to do this could lead not only to a decrease in the number of students who experience psychological stress, but also to increased motivation on the part of other students. The point is that a broader based strategy towards student problems can be adopted.

There are two principal ways in which these proposals could be put into practice. First, the movement towards student participation in course development which resulted from the unrest of the late sixties should be continued. There is little need to argue the case for this as it is well established and, in the universities at least, widely accepted. Second, a more concerted effort could be made to place theoretical knowledge in a context which makes its application and relevance to "everyday knowledge" more evident. Links with the communities in which tertiary institutions are situated should be

strengthened so that those subjects which lend themselves to practical work, the social sciences for instance, can be seen by students to have some function outside the lecture room and the seminar. This point will be taken up and exemplified in chapter four.

Whilst stress may also be due to the methods of assessment used in tertiary institutions, little attention has been paid to it by counselling experts. Mallenson acknowledges that a number of student problems may be caused by the strain of assessment (*Sociological Review Monograph*, Volume 17, pages 141-159). He suggests, however, that to deal with such stress, counselling services need to anticipate the problems that will arise and ensure that they are able to deal adequately with them. The fact that one student may be more suited to one kind of assessment rather than another is ignored.

Until relatively recently, universities and colleges have assessed students by means of the final or terminal examination. The arguments against such rigidity have been well rehearsed. Several studies, particularly those by Ruth Beard (*Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Penguin, 1970), have pointed to the failure of these methods to achieve their objectives. Since 1967, assessment procedures have been scrutinised by many tertiary institutions, largely due to student demands for change at a local level and nationally through the National Union of Students. The trend is towards a system in which individual students are able to choose a method of assessment which is suited to their particular capabilities and ways of working. Stress is likely to decrease because the pressure to conform to a rigid pattern of study is less intense.

A more sensitive response to student needs could also be achieved by making assessment throughout the academic year more frequent, less emphasis being placed on a single exam or assignment. Open University Students, for example, have regular computer marked tests, essays and assignments as well as an annual examination. In this way stress is

distributed more equally throughout a course. Such regular assessments are used to support the student's performance by providing immediate knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, and to give a statement of progress during the year.

the training of teachers

The demand for a more professional approach to the development of courses in tertiary education necessarily focuses attention upon those who teach such courses. It has now been accepted that teachers in primary and secondary schools need a thorough preparation for their careers. Secondary teachers in all subjects except mathematics and certain science subjects are required to hold a professional qualification. Yet in tertiary education the gifted amateur reigns supreme. A study conducted by Harriet Greenaway for the Society for Research in Higher Education (*The Training of University Teachers*, 1972) points to the fact that incoming university teachers receive no more than four days training. What is done in these four days varies greatly, but it is unlikely that basic teaching skills or wider educational issues are considered in any depth. There can be little discussion of objectives and even less examination of innovatory teaching methods.

Although further education establishments have started to take trained teachers in larger numbers and university education departments are beginning to train further education teachers at the postgraduate level and on an in-service basis, there has been no insistence that their staff should be professionally trained. Tertiary institutions have a responsibility to ensure that the quality of teaching is as professional as conditions allow. It is not simply a question of maintaining academic standards. This is only one criterion by which teaching can be judged. There is no reason to suppose that teachers at this level of the education system need any less professional training than those in the primary and secondary sectors. The reverse in fact, is more likely to be the case.

3. schools

It is surprising that the major institutions in the tertiary sector of the education system have neglected for so long to make regular and positive contacts with the schools which feed them, since this is one area with which the closest of relationships might have been expected.

The universities have had a deep influence upon the structure of secondary education. This has operated in three main ways. First, in terms of the definition of "high status" knowledge. Second, through control of all but one of the GCE examining boards. Third, through entrance requirements and the selection of students. The pressure has, however, been towards greater specialisation and subject based examinations. Bernstein is well aware of the connection between reforms in secondary and tertiary education when he writes that ". . . if there is to be any major shift in secondary schools' syllabi and curricula, then this will require changes in the tertiary level's policy, as this affects the acceptance of students.

Such a change in policy would involve changes in the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of knowledge at the tertiary level. Thus, the conditions for a major shift in the knowledge code at the secondary level is a major shift in the knowledge code at the tertiary level" (in Michael Young, *Knowledge and Control*, Collier MacMillan, 1971). It is these issues which we wish to take up in this section.

Secondary school curricula are not formed solely by influences stemming from the tertiary sector, yet it is significant that where other influences can be felt, from the primary schools or the Schools Council for instance, their effect is contained within the boundaries set by the system of GCE examinations. The abolition of the eleven plus for a large proportion of children, has led to a marked growth of innovation in the primary and lower secondary school.

The movement towards inter-disciplinary study, the new emphasis on creative work, the community and environmental basis of the curriculum, are all derived in some

part from work pioneered in the primary classroom. Yet the constraints are very clear.

The example of the Schools Council Humanities Curriculum Project demonstrates forcibly the way in which selection procedures in the upper secondary school have led to the development of differentiated or "streamed" curricula (Michael Young's paper on the Schools Council in *Economy and Society*, volume 1 number 2, is important in this context). The Humanities Project, although eminently suitable for the whole of the ability range, has been restricted in its application, to school leavers, because the open ended, multi-media approach embodied in the material, could not be accommodated within the traditional examination structure, the unavoidable hurdle to those who wish to go beyond O level or CSE. These two examinations represent the separate "tracks" of the secondary school curriculum. The irony is that the development of more relevant and innovative curricula at CSE in fact makes it more difficult for children who take such courses to reach the level of the sixth form. They will have suffered from a more pervasive form of streaming. We strongly endorse efforts to move away from such differentiation towards a common system of examination at sixteen. And yet, the effect of such reform will not be far reaching until the universities in particular, demonstrate in the selection procedures which they adopt, that they want students who are broadly educated, and not merely specialists in academic subjects.

It would be a mistake to place all the responsibility for the problems of secondary education on the institutions in the sector above. There can be little doubt, however, that the framework of secondary education as it has evolved, geared as it is to the selection of a minority, is making the education of the majority doubly difficult. Talented teachers can still work within the system and give children an education which is relevant. The work of Albert Rowe in Hull and of Lease and Prior in Cwmbran are encouraging examples of this. But the fact remains that the content of the secondary school

curriculum and the methods by which it is assessed, are determined largely by factors external to the school.

assessment

The attempts by the Schools Council and the Standing Conference on University Entrance to create a more broadly based and flexible mode of assessment in sixth forms, have shown the difficulties involved in developing effective and positive relationships between tertiary education and the schools. But, perhaps more important, they demonstrate the extent to which assumptions about the definition, classification and assessment of knowledge have become entrenched. The "Q and F" proposals, for example, although an acknowledgement of the need to reform the examination structure, did not encourage any significant move away from subject centred study. A broad and general education was equated with the addition of more subjects to the sixth form curriculum, rather than with integrated studies in which various skills and techniques from a number of disciplines might be used to solve a common problem. The subsequent suggestion that a level assessment be based on a 20-point scale, avoided completely the central issues and conferred upon this examination a reliability which has not been borne out by research.

Whilst the more recent "N and F" proposals go little further towards resolving the issues which have been raised, any concessions that they do make have already been strongly criticised by representatives of Oxford University. They suggest that the extent of specialisation in sixth forms has been exaggerated and go on to say that "As far as university applicants are concerned the greater freedom of choice hoped for is to a large extent illusory. Three Ns and two Fs would be markedly inferior to three As levels as a preparation for degree courses" (*Times Educational Supplement*, 1 March 1974). For them, selection for university provides the sole criterion by which sixth form courses are to be judged. Effective reform of assessment procedures

in sixth forms, reform which might allow for continuous assessment or a greater degree of teacher moderation, can only take place if a co-ordinated policy is adopted by tertiary institutions. Schools need to be able to develop curricula which are relevant to local conditions, to the capabilities of the teachers and, most important, to the interests of the children. This requires a greater degree of flexibility than exists at the moment. Flexibility, would allow the upper reaches of secondary schools to become less narrowly academic and free them from the stranglehold of external syllabi. It is not, after all, only working class children who are rejecting what schools have to offer them.

the curriculum

A more flexible approach to assessment procedures in the secondary school has two major consequences. First, a greater opportunity is created for gearing the mode of assessment used, whether it be examinations, continuous or oral assessment, to the demands of a particular curriculum or group of pupils. Second, the introduction of the "everyday knowledge" of pupils into the curriculum is facilitated. This last point will be raised in greater detail later.

Quite separate from their involvement in selection and assessment in secondary schools, however, tertiary institutions have another part to play in the development of alternative courses. If secondary schools are to relate their curricula more closely to local communities, as is frequently advocated, or to come to terms with the mass media, a lead must be given in tertiary education. The implications of such work and the theoretical framework underlying it need to be worked out at a high level if it is to have any degree of rigour or status. Relaxation of the boundaries of "school knowledge" cannot be attempted without careful consideration being given to the consequences.

The study of popular culture and the mass media is a striking area of neglect in

tertiary education and, as we have argued, one which has immediate and obvious repercussions upon the development of such curricula in the schools. It is more than a decade since the Newsom Report drew attention to the fact that "The culture provided by all the mass media, but particularly by film and television represents the most significant environmental factor that teachers have to take into account. The important changes that take place at the secondary stage are much more influenced by the world offered by the leisure industry which skilfully markets products designed for young people's tastes. The media help to define aspirations and they offer roles and models. They not only supply needs (and create them) but may influence attitudes and values" (*Half Our Future*, HMSO 1963).

Adolescents watch, on average, over sixteen hours of television a week. Their involvement with pop music is also important to them as Murdock and Phelps have shown (*Mass Media and the Secondary School*, Schools Council, 1973). Such an obtrusive area of the "everyday knowledge" of secondary school pupils cannot justifiably be ignored. The fact remains, however, that very few courses have been developed in the tertiary sector which prepare potential teachers for this task. Angela Martin's unpublished research for the British Film Institute confirms this. It shows also, that where such courses do exist, they have been given low status and tend to be tacked onto other subjects such as English, Drama or Art. Examples of significant work are few—the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University, the Bachelor of Education course in film study at Berkshire College of Education and the School of Media Study at the Polytechnic of Central London. The low status of such courses in the tertiary sector is mirrored in secondary schools. They are to be found at the level of CSE, in General Studies syllabi, in Rosla departments and in further education.

In the same way, the failure of institutions of tertiary education to work out a coher-

ent relationship with their local communities also has serious implications at the secondary level. It is one of the reasons for the half hearted nature of "official" attempts to develop a community orientated secondary school curriculum. Schools Council Working Paper number 17 provides an example of this and demonstrates the limitations which formal examinations have placed on such proposals. Working Paper number 17 suggests that "Social service work provides one way for the pupil to move from the security of the school into the half-feared, half-longed-for world of the adult community: he finds himself in real situations in which he can no longer rely on someone else to tell him what to do". The rationale is basically sound, but there is a very definite need to conceive of links with the community as involving something more than social work, and to avoid the danger of tacking such work on to traditional curricula which have already failed in an attempt to revivify them. Fundamental questions have to be asked and they can only be answered effectively and in real depth at the tertiary level. This point will be taken up in the third section of the pamphlet.

An example of the kind of approach which might be adopted in secondary schools is the proposed A level Environmental Studies project in Hertfordshire which aims to develop an awareness of and constructive response to, social and environmental problems. The scheme is based on a team teaching approach so that questions about such things as town planning, the social implications of technological change or of pollution can be considered in an inter-disciplinary fashion. Courses of this kind are important, because they give relevant out of school experience to children of all abilities and not just to those who by academic standards have been "written off". The acceptability of such courses depends however on tertiary institutions.

The process of interchange between secondary and tertiary education cannot be limited to questions of curriculum and assessment. Ultimately, it is the individuals who work within the education

system who determine its success or failure. We believe that universities and polytechnics have a responsibility in the education of teachers which extends beyond the courses which they set aside for this specific purpose. It is implicit in what has been said so far that course development at this level should be looked at in terms of the education system as a whole.

Those departments in universities and polytechnics which contain a large proportion of students who intend to become teachers have a particular responsibility. Greater opportunity should be given for these students to take option courses which are of relevance to their future careers and which allow them to develop new approaches to their subjects. English, history, modern languages and maths departments fall very much into this category. To take two examples, literature courses could be supplemented by setting time aside for the study of popular literature or for more creative work of the kind teachers expect of their pupils; history departments could explore environmental approaches to the subject more fully. The challenge is to administrators and students alike, as Eric Robinson indicates, "There is a huge development of university courses which are designed with little or no concern for the student's future vocation and many university teachers are proud of this. The student who is prepared to pursue study for its own sake (whatever that means) is highly prized by many university teachers and a student's indifference to his future career is often regarded not as irresponsibility but a virtue" (*The New Polytechnics—The People's Universities*, Penguin 1968).

Robinson, to whom we owe a considerable debt in the development of our ideas, has been optimistic, nevertheless, about the potential of the polytechnics to develop new styles of learning and vocational study and to become the "bridgehead" of a more open system of education. This potential has not been fulfilled because of a lack of parity with the universities in terms of resources and status. Pratt and Burgess (*Polytechnics: A Report*, Pitman, 1974) have shown that

as the polytechnics have become national institutions they have lost their local relevance, as they have sought single site development their links with the community have been weakened and as they have increasingly developed the characteristics of universities so the proportion of working class students has fallen. A process of "academic drift" similar to that which occurred in the secondary modern schools in the fifties has taken place. This movement towards the paradigms of "high status" knowledge as enshrined in the universities has prevented the development of innovatory curricula on any scale.

What has emerged from our analysis of the connections between secondary and tertiary education is that in a number of fundamental ways, the curricular alternatives open to secondary school teachers to meet the needs of their pupils are restricted by the influence of the universities upon the operation of the schools and also upon other institutions in the tertiary sector. We are led to the conclusion that the inherent logic of the movement towards comprehensive secondary education, requires a similar shift in the organisation of the tertiary sector. This will be taken up at length in the final section of the pamphlet.

4. curriculum and community

At several points in the discussion reference has been made to the relationship between educational institutions and local communities. One difficulty this raises is that although the concept of "community" is much used and indeed fashionable in educational circles, all too often it is used loosely and not defined with any degree of rigour. Stronger links between schools and communities have been seen as a panacea for educational problems ranging from reading failure to delinquency. In examining some of the ways in which the curricula in tertiary institutions can be brought closer to the communities in which they are located, we wish to be quite precise about the objectives of such innovation and about the attendant problems.

One of our basic points has been that an inadequate attempt has been made in tertiary education, in the universities in particular, to utilise the resources of the communities in which institutions are located to supplement course work of a more theoretical kind. We have argued that this situation needs to be rectified for two main reasons. First, because a community setting provides a context in which students are more likely to be able to develop a concrete awareness of the applications of theoretical work. Second, although there have been some efforts to develop community related curricula in schools, innovation at this level cannot be effective until a similar shift in the curricula of tertiary institutions is made. Yet there is another, perhaps more fundamental, dimension to the argument.

The universities have been concerned primarily with theoretical knowledge as a source of insight and understanding and, as we have shown, this has had a number of important consequences for the organisation of teaching and learning. By and large, legitimacy has not been given to alternative sources of knowledge. Berger and Luckmann argue that there are a number of competing definitions of "what counts as knowledge" when they write that "Theoretical knowledge is only a small part and by no means the most important part of what passes for knowledge in a society. Theoretically sophisti-

cated legitimations appear at particular moments of an institutional history. The primary knowledge about the institutional order is knowledge on the pre-theoretical level. It is the sum total of 'what everybody knows' about the social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals values and beliefs, myths and so forth . . ." (*The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin, 1966). Their critique is placed within the context of a redefinition of the scope of "the sociology of knowledge", but it has wider implications and applications.

Whilst it is reasonable that tertiary institutions should be concerned principally with theoretical knowledge, students should be given a greater opportunity to become familiar with knowledge at a more common sense or practical level within their particular field of study. Perhaps paradoxically, this would serve to strengthen more traditional kinds of learning. Community experience, in those subjects which lend themselves to it, could be utilised to make theoretical work more concrete. It is difficult to talk about these issues in general terms. More specific reference will now be made to experiments in this area of the tertiary curriculum.

We have already implied that not all courses lend themselves to community experience. It is difficult to see the ways in which even an essentially practical subject such as medicine could lead to community based study, for example. The decision to encourage probationary doctors to work in health centres rather than hospitals perhaps indicates one possibility, but as yet such trends are not significant. The Faculty of Community Medicine, under the direction of Professor A. L. Cochrane, is currently exploring some of the ways in which community experience could be built into medical courses.

The subjects which lend themselves most readily to community involvement are the social sciences—sociology, law, education, psychology, social administration, industrial relations and politics—and those "pure" and "applied" sciences which have a direct concern with community

issues such as pollution, re-cycling of waste matter, agricultural development and so on. Though the social sciences would seem to be the most fruitful subject area for the development of community related curricula, departments in social science faculties have shown themselves to be peculiarly reluctant to involve students in this sort of work, perhaps because the outcomes are uncertain and less easily controlled than those in more conventional methods of study. There are, however, some significant examples of innovation within the social sciences.

Students in Birmingham undertook a study of body and room temperatures in the homes of elderly people as part of a combined medical sociology project. Their results were used to study the potential danger of hypothermia and to explore positive courses of action to avert possible deaths. The students provided the elderly with information about grants available for fuel and pressured the social services into increased activity to deal with the problem. In Cardiff, law students have assisted in a tenants' advice bureau which offers legal assistance to local tenants with problems connected with terms of lease or difficult landlords. Representation has also been provided for tenants at the Rent Tribunal in the City. Similarly, law students in a number of polytechnics have given advice about the legal problems which arise in running voluntary social service groups.

Students in Cardiff have also been involved in a gypsy education project which forms a recognised part of their teacher training course. Teaching skills have been employed to help to raise standards of literacy in a section of the population who, more often than not, suffer from neglect. A number of further possibilities are being explored in the field of industrial relations at two polytechnics. Students have been involved with shop stewards and representatives of management to examine the feasibility of worker participation in decision making in industry. Students service committees and help the unions to draw up their proposals and at the same time get an insight into the practice of industrial relations.

In this section we have tried to show that it is both desirable and possible to inject some element of community experience into a number of courses in tertiary education. The projects we have described have a double function. Students can apply the skills and knowledge they have been taught and at the same time provide positive help for a vulnerable section of the community. We believe that this kind of re-orientation would necessarily lead to greater emphasis being placed on the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspects of learning. A problem centred context is also provided within which further curricular innovation such as inter-disciplinary study can exist. A number of disciplines could be used to illuminate a specific problem, for example. But before such radical change can occur new and more flexible structures will have to be developed in tertiary education. For, as we have already shown, assumptions about the organisation and classification of knowledge have been built into the fabric of educational institutions.

5. structures

Education beyond school, it is now clear, is facing a challenge of a new kind. The old challenge to provide more places remains pertinent, but the challenge to assumptions implicit in tertiary institutions, to the content of courses and questions of status, represents a powerful attack upon the present system and calls for change. We wish now to look at the kind of structural framework and policies within which the proposals we have made can be most effectively put into operation.

The four main types of institution in the tertiary sector: universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and colleges of further education reflect historical factors which, to a large extent, no longer prevail, but which have nevertheless led to ideological positions which inhibit change. The powerful position of the universities in the education system is the most enduring example of this. The idea that they should remain as the institutions which, in effect, determine what counts as high status knowledge in a situation in which degree courses and advanced study have expanded rapidly in other kinds of institution, is outmoded.

Perhaps more important, the rationale behind the binary system spelled out in Anthony Crosland's policy statements in 1965 that there are two kinds of students involved in education beyond school—those whose fundamental interests lie in "academic" education and those committed to vocational studies—has never stood up to serious scrutiny and is simplistic in the extreme. This point is well made by Eric Robinson when he writes that "We used to think of liberal education of the elite and vocational education of the mass but this is now outdated. In contemporary society everybody needs both—the manager needs technical expertise as well as clear thinking, the worker needs understanding as well as manual skill" (*The New Polytechnics*, Penguin, 1968). A policy is required which allows such a synthesis to take place.

During the late fifties and early sixties, particularly since the introduction of the present system of student grants in 1961 and the Robbins Report in 1963, develop-

ments in tertiary education have been rapid. Attendance at a university no longer involves extreme financial hardship; degrees and higher diplomas are available in the polytechnics; training colleges have been able to broaden the basis of their courses and the Open University has been created. We believe that whilst many of these developments have been important, there is now a pressing need to co-ordinate policy in the tertiary sector more fully.

The concept of a comprehensive system of education beyond school was first floated by Robin Pedley, Jack Straw and others at the end of the sixties. Such a system was seen to be the logical outcome of the comprehensive re-organisation of secondary schools. Whilst the concept has held little currency in the last few years we believe that the condition of flux which has followed the publication of the Conservative Government White Paper on Education (*Education a Framework for Expansion*, HMSO, 1973), calls for a reappraisal of the arguments in favour of a policy change of this kind.

a comprehensive tertiary system

The White Paper planned for a major expansion of provision in all areas of tertiary education with the exception of the universities. Whether the economic situation will permit the achievement of the targets for educational growth outlined in this document is a matter of some doubt. Cuts will certainly be made if capital allocations to building programmes, for instance, are not increased to cover the cost of inflation. If the targets remain, the present quinquennium, ending in 1977, will see an addition of 78,000 places in the universities and 54,000 in colleges of further education.

All political parties, however, seem committed to some form of expansion of post-school education, though there is disagreement about the form such expansion should take. The emphasis of the White Paper development programme was placed strongly upon the polytechnics. In 1973 the polytechnics had just

over 68,000 students attending full time and sandwich courses and the White Paper projected an expansion towards a student population of 180,000 by 1981. Such expansion of the polytechnics is important, for it would strengthen the public sector by challenging the university domination of the award of qualification above HND level. Certainly, the record of the polytechnics in the speed with which they have been able to develop new courses, if not impressive, has been consistently better than that of the universities.

Since 1972, however, the polytechnics have not been able to develop the kind of courses which they appear to have wanted.

Three main factors account for this. First, the Conservative Government failed to plan effectively for the growth and development of education beyond school during the early period of their administration. The polytechnics and the universities were uncertain about the direction of future development and about the degree of support that they could expect for their projects. Second, there has been the process of "academic drift" in the development of polytechnic courses which we have already discussed. Polytechnics have been unable to compete effectively with the universities in the battle for cash and status. Not only do staff salary scales, staff-student ratios and library facilities compare unfavourably with the universities, there have even been problems in filling available places (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 1 February 1974). Students prefer to obtain their degrees in the still more prestigious and wealthy universities. Third, no effective brief has been given for the development of a research role for the polytechnics. This has been one of the more crucial ways in which these institutions have been placed in a position of "low status". The development of a comprehensive tertiary system would go a long way towards ironing out these anomalies.

The comprehensive pattern which we envisage would not as Crouch and Mennel have suggested, bring uniformity

and prevent the co-existence of a wide range of different objectives within tertiary education (*The Universities: Pressures and Prospects*, Young Fabian Pamphlet 28, 1972). On the contrary, it would allow for an altogether more flexible framework for the future development of tertiary education and provide a wider range of "high status" courses. In a situation of genuine parity between institutions, the drift towards university derived paradigms of knowledge, would become unnecessary as a means of gaining prestige. The autonomy of individual institutions would, in this way, be increased. The essential elements of the comprehensive system we advocate are as follows.

1 Education beyond school should be regarded as a national enterprise rather than a local one. Local education authorities should cease to control the financing of education beyond school. This should become the concern of a National Tertiary Education Commission, operating along similar lines to the present University Grants Committee.

2 The Tertiary Education Commission would be responsible for the financing of all tertiary education establishments and for co-ordinating the development of education beyond school on a regional basis. This would allow for a more sensitive response to local conditions. There needs also to be a close relationship between the Commission and the Regional Economic Planning Boards (or regional parliaments, in the case of Wales and Scotland, if the recommendations of the Kilbrandon Report are implemented), in order that educational development is considered as part of a regional social and economic policy.

3 There should be genuine parity in terms of resources and finance between tertiary institutions engaged in the same kind of work. In this way irrelevant hierarchies of status can be removed.

4 All tertiary institutions should have autonomy in the day-to-day organisation of teaching and learning, but long term development and major changes in policy

should be made only after discussions with other institutions in the same organisational unit.

5 Courses should be organised on a unit system, so that a certain number of credits would qualify the student for the award of certificates, diplomas or degrees. Such a system would allow for a greater degree of transfer between institutions and across courses, a fundamental concern in the creation of a comprehensive system. Students should also be able to return to tertiary institutions during their careers to obtain further credits to increase their qualifications. Much could be learnt from the Open University in this respect.

6 Research should be developed in all tertiary institutions engaged in advanced work and not concentrated upon the universities.

7 All institutions should be encouraged to teach courses at a variety of levels. The Diploma in Higher Education could become the basic building unit of a large number of courses. Students could then either leave after two years or go on to get further qualifications, possibly in another institution.

8 The organisation of sixth form examinations should involve all institutions which draw their students from secondary schools. In this way a broader range of alternative courses in sixth forms could be provided.

The concept of comprehensive tertiary education is not as remote from reality as Crouch and Mennell have tried to suggest. Some small but significant movement towards it can already be detected. The Welsh Joint Education Committee presented detailed proposals in February 1974 for the amalgamation of public sector institutions in six of the seven new Welsh education authorities. Their plans for South Glamorgan, for example, include the merger of seven LEA colleges to form a single institution of 2,400 students. Whilst in Clwyd, Dyfed, Gwynedd, West Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan, the institutions would be only half this size (*The Western Mail*, 26 February 1974).

There is also the increasing trend, resulting from the reorganisation of teacher education, for colleges of education to merge with polytechnics. Developments of this kind are promising and provided they are based on educational considerations and not upon economic and administrative convenience alone are likely to be influential. They do not fully embrace the principles of a genuinely comprehensive system, it is true, but until binary policy is removed, this remains an impossibility.

It might well be argued that a comprehensive system of tertiary education would lead to the emergence of a large number of multi-site institutions which would suffer from a lack of corporate identity, direction and co-ordination. The opposite is in fact the case, for in a number of instances reform of this kind would be more logical than the duplication of facilities and courses which exists in many towns and cities, at the moment. Jack Straw (*The Red Paper*, edited by Douglas Gowan, Bob Cuddihy and Colin Lindsay, Islander Publications, 1970), has pointed out that twelve of the polytechnics are located in cities which also have universities: In Leeds, Birmingham and Liverpool they are on adjacent sites. All eight of the London polytechnics are more centrally situated than many of the constituent colleges of the University of London. In Manchester, where the university, the polytechnic, the Institute of Science and Technology, the school of medicine, the colleges of art, education and music are on the same site and Loughborough, where the University of Technology, the college of education, the technical college and the college of art are similarly situated, the creation of a comprehensive institution is long overdue.

Even when multi-site institutions do result, there is no reason to believe that the co-ordination of policy is made more difficult. The evidence provided by the amalgamations to form polytechnics in the last few years would seem to support this. The central point is that, apart from providing a more coherent pattern for education beyond school, a comprehensive system would result in marked

economies of scale and more effective use of scarce resources.

control

Effective reform of education institutions cannot be arrived at unless consideration is given to the question of control. In our outline for a comprehensive system two points of control were suggested. First, control at a national level through some kind of "buffer" organisation standing between tertiary institutions and the Government. In this way some degree of independence could be maintained. Second, local control within institutions, particularly in relation to the content of courses and the day-to-day organisation of teaching and learning. Whilst their very size would make comprehensive institutions more powerful and therefore more autonomous, this second level of control involves a number of problematic issues. Principal amongst these are the question of staff and student involvement in decision making and, in view of the fact that we have argued for a greater emphasis on the resources of local communities in the development of curricula, the role which community representatives should play in discussions of policy and course content.

In considering the first issue, the function and composition of governing bodies is of central importance. The extent to which governing bodies control the internal policies of educational institutions differs widely. By and large, however, they do act as the focal point of the system of control in most institutions. There is a definite need for greater involvement of academic staff and students in these bodies. It is also important that the function of governing bodies is more precisely defined and, in matters of curriculum development, evaluation and long term planning, greater openness and participation should be encouraged.

Advocacy of stronger links between tertiary institutions and local communities should not avoid the possible conflicts which might result between academic staff and representatives of local interest

groups. Friction between teachers and community groups closed 900 New York schools during the teachers' strike of 1968 and has continued ever since. The problem has, ironically, been exacerbated by the system of community control of schools begun in 1971 (Prue Chamberlayne, "Teachers versus the Community", *New Society*, 15 November 1973). This is perhaps an extreme example, and the fact that tertiary institutions do not draw all of their students from local communities, means that such conflicts are less likely to be so intense and, if a system of closed decision making is operated, more likely to be between staff and students. It is vital, however, that relationships between tertiary institutions and local pressure groups and individuals are very carefully worked out if full academic autonomy and control over the content of courses is to be maintained. The voice of local communities should be heard, many decisions taken about the future of tertiary institutions affect local people, but it should not be a dominant voice. Academic staff have obligations which extend beyond local commitments. In calling for curricular reform we would not wish this to be forgotten.

Finally, the changes in the structure and organisation of education beyond school we have called for cannot be dictated by legislative machinery which compels amalgamations and imposes new mechanisms of control. Incentives should be given to those authorities and institutions who wish to move towards a comprehensive system. In the short term, such incentives should be directed towards strengthening the public sector, funding curriculum projects and research of the kind we have argued for, and raising the status of teachers in the LEA sector of the binary system. More sweeping changes such as the establishment of a Tertiary Education Commission would follow once the ground had been prepared. In this way, comprehensive education beyond school would be the inevitable end product of activities pursued in tertiary institutions, rather than an inflexible pattern imposed from above.

6. conclusion

Although we have necessarily made a number of suggestions for reform in the tertiary sector and set down specific proposals for structural change, the pamphlet is not intended purely as a policy document. If it lacks the pragmatism of tone which marks the majority of Fabian publications, this is intentional. The ideas contained within it have grown out of a belief that discussions of policy at this level of the education system have tended to neglect a number of fundamental issues. Whilst there has been considerable and often controversial debate about content, objectives and teaching methods in primary and secondary school courses, for example, very little attention has been paid to the form and assumptions underlying tertiary curricula.

We have tried to show how alternative definitions of "culture" and of "what counts as knowledge", lead to alternative methods of organisation both at the level of curriculum and of structure. An awareness of factors such as these can, as we have shown, facilitate the solution of a wide range of problems within education. It is for this reason that we believe that it is of great importance that the curriculum be placed at the centre of discussions of educational policy. The perspectives which we have put forward offer a more fruitful basis for reform.

Above all, we have attempted to draw attention to some of the hidden consequences for the education system as a whole of maintaining a policy in which, to use the words of Crouch and Mennel "The universities should be regarded as centres of mainly academic work, both in the content of their activities and in the orientation of their students", (*ibid*). The key role which these institutions play in curriculum change needs to be examined more closely.

Finally, we are not optimistic about the chances of achieving either rapid or radical reform of the kind we have advocated. It has, after all, been one of our basic themes that definitions of knowledge are bound up with the structural pattern of educational institutions. Individual academic careers, teaching roles and

interests have been invested in particular and well-established methods of organisation. Resistance to innovation will be considerable and understandably so. This is the point Bernstein is making when he argues that far reaching changes in the structure of knowledge and from one form of curriculum to another, may well bring about a disturbance in the distribution of power and authority and of existing educational identities. Or, as he puts it more cogently himself "How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control" (in Michael Young, *Knowledge and Control*, Collier MacMillan, 1971).

young fabian group

the authors

The Young Fabian Group exists to give socialists not over 30 years of age an opportunity to carry out research, discussion and propaganda. It aims to help its members publish the results of their research, and so make a more effective contribution to the work of the Labour movement. It therefore welcomes all those who have a thoughtful and radical approach to political matters.

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The group publishes pamphlets written by its members, arranges fortnightly meetings in London, and holds day and weekend schools.

Enquiries about membership should be sent to the Secretary, Young Fabian Group, 11 Dartmouth Street, London, SW1H 9BN; telephone 01-930 3077.

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