

Summary account of Seminar 1 in ESRC-sponsored seminar series 'How to motivate (demotivated) 14-16 year olds with special reference to work-related education and training'

December 13 2002

Professor William Richardson (WR), University of Exeter, presented a paper on 'Schooling and further education for 14-16 year olds in England 1941-1980'

Prior to 1946 there was no publicly-funded education provision for adolescents who had left school. The 1944 Act concentrated on improving secondary provision and day-release for young people post school-leaving was again (was it) incorporated in the Act (as in 1918) but implementation was left to the discretion of LEAs. Nevertheless, in the thinking of the time (ref.?) it was already being stressed that models of learning for the 'lower half' needed to be different and innovative.

Corelli Barnett has criticised the failure to provide for vocational and technical education in the immediate post-war years, but it must be remembered that infrastructure reconstruction had to be a priority following the destruction of the war.

The immediate post-war period was characterised by a pervading sense of moral crisis. A publication (?) 'The Youth Service after the War' called attention to the 'moral dangers of misspent leisure'. The Youth Service offered practical education and leisure activities, including a Youth Parliament.

The Nuffield Foundation Science and Mathematics curriculum development projects were also designed to engage a wider cohort of pupils in school.

However, curriculum issues in relation to the 'lower half' were very problematic. The secondary modern school was designed to be an exam-free zone.

One example of successful and innovative approach taking advantage of this freedom was teaching through the medium of the school farm or through a range of practical subjects eg domestic science.

However, pressure to allow secondary modern pupils to be entered for public examinations reduced the motivation of teachers and pupils to engage in this type of curriculum.

Shortly afterwards the effects of immigration and multi-cultural classrooms became priorities for schools and teachers.

At the same time, and despite massive investment in FE Colleges in the post-war period the FE inspectorate and FE staff felt marginalized in relation to the wider educational project.

Studies which questioned those who experienced 11+ 'failure' at this time do not reveal a sense of the blight of failure of the 11+ at the time. However, it was perceived as a blight retrospectively. At the same time, the gulf between the culture

and physical environment of working-class children attending the grammar school was also a considerable handicap. Early leaving of working-class children from the grammar school (at 15 rather than 16) was a major problem.

From 1960s onwards we see the result of the failure of institutional forms

Secondary technical schools had no supporting constituency, not even among employers who appeared to prefer the products of the grammar school. The attitude of the TUC to education, and vocational and technical education in particular .....(?)

Funding for FE was reduced and there was no clear ethos or mission for Further Education.

An echo of the original vision for secondary modern schools was found in the 1963 Newsom Report 'Half our Future' which recommended that schools should follow young people's lives as a basis for curriculum planning, not vice versa.

Reference to 'county colleges .....

Surveys of young people's attitudes in the 1960s does not report disaffection. Young people about to leave school (at 15) were found to be looking forward to an exciting next stage of their lives. Although they did not always find school particularly relevant or stimulating they were prepared to accept it as the gateway to this next stage.

The extension of public examinations at age 16 (following ROSLA) to almost the whole age group changed this 'acceptance', compounded by swift collapse of the youth labour market in the mid 1970s.

We have progressively moved away from innovative non-academic educational curriculum for the less academic. Pressure to extend public examinations and certification to all has been a major factor.

**Ken Franklin** (Sheffield College, formerly DfES), (KF) presented a paper entitled 'Avoiding "the blind alley": English attempts to develop vocational and technical education in the second half of the twentieth century'

Have lessons been learnt from successive mushrooming of initiatives in this field? TVEI was launched 20 years ago. Thatcher saw it as 'new institutional arrangements for technical and vocational education'. But concern with Britain's neglect of technical and vocational education can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Bryce Commission) '.....special regard to profession or trade to be followed'.

TVEI originally aimed to develop learning through involvement in and responsibility for practical enterprise. It was not intended to be vocational training. As a result of TVEI increasing attention was paid to FE and vocational preparation. The DFES was criticised for being out of touch with economic change.

The origins of TVEI can be traced back to teachers' rejection of the half-time system in place at the beginning of the century. Teachers thought children should be at school and not at work. But they could learn through practical activity organized by the school. However this was only possible in a non-pressured environment. (Does this link up with some of the points made by WR)?

TVEI emerged from this area of thinking and experience.

Currently, the initiatives in the area of work-based education and training need to focus on implementation and we need to examine which models have worked well.

#### Points made in discussion

We need to look at models of inducement to persist and study.

We need to look at what is happening earlier on (ie in the primary stage of schooling)

It was difficult to have any impact on classroom practice with TVEI.

We need to be clear about whether we are reflecting on the usefulness/desirability of VET or education using a practical thematic approach.

Valerie Bayliss (Educational consultant, formerly DfES) presented a paper on 'Policy thinking in the 80s and 90s: all change or no change?'

Disaffection was not a major problem in the 1980s. The main concern was youth unemployment. Holland 1977 .....?

Employers criticised young people's attitudes and basic skills.

HMI were pooling experience ..... nothing more was heard from them.

(Unified Vocational Preparation) UVP was a joint MSC/DES initiative.

The effect of the urban riots of 1981 on the government was quite profound, this was seen as evidence of disaffection.

The DES could not be the means of effecting fundamental change because did not have enough power, also did not want provision that would tempt young people out of school. However, MSC had power to fund educational and curriculum change directly.

TVEI was presented as being 'about the changing world'. One objective was better adaptation to labour market demand. Was TVEI ineffective because of insistence that it should cater for the whole cohort?

TVEI has been 'disappeared' – not mentioned in current literature. TVEI always had to struggle to avoid deficit models in education. Mainstream provision and academic teaching could not be challenged.

Turf wars played a damaging part in failure to grow something enduring from TVEI. The 'two cultures' problem persisted in the DfES. There was an inability to ask deep

questions and reflect on research. Perhaps this helps to explain how little effect big policy initiatives had.

### Points made in discussion

There is a lack of logic in the academic/vocational distinction. Why are professional qualifications labelled 'academic'? Vocational could/should be defined as preparation for a profession or trade. It should cover the academic skills necessary for work, ie applied knowledge. (Does this link with the quote from the Bryce Commission?)

Employers seem to be the dog that didn't bark through out the period under consideration. Why are they so uninvolved? What do they want? Do they know what they want?

We need to think about what 'vocational' means, can we find a more satisfactory definition/solution?

Education should be transformative and about transmission. In its widest sense it should be apprenticeship for adult life.

Crowther Report (1959) offered advice about appropriate courses for young people.

'What employers want' is usually government rhetoric.

We must now aim to enable institutions and different systems to work better together – we need a willingness to recognise change and act upon it.

Do we value those who are pedagogically valuable in relating to more difficult and less academic pupils? Have we removed the opportunity for teachers to undertake curriculum development?

### List of those attending