

## New Vocationalism

New Vocationalism2000/5/3/2000/P.Covington/2000

With reference to the behaviour objectives associated with life skills training, it is argued that the hidden curriculum has now surfaced as the official curriculum

Dennis Gleeson, 1986

Occupationalism can be seen as more precisely reflecting the interests of that fragment of the middle class based in industry and commerce than did the humanist education of professions.

Stephen Moore.

A bloated public sector, which was strangling the wealth-creating element of the economy.

Dan Finn

### The New Political Agenda

In Britain from the **middle of the 1970's**, other issues gradually replaced government concern with **equality and equality** of opportunity. Successive governments showed **little interest in adopting policies that attempted to compensate for class inequalities**. Interest in **gender** and **ethnic inequalities remained strong** and in many new areas, policies were developed to combat these problems. However, many of these were **localised**, in particular schools whilst central government made no real concerted effort to stop these problems

### THE NEW RIGHT

This signified a rise in the influence of the New Right ideas in education. Some of these ideas resemble **functionalist ideas**, though in a rather crude form.



### The Great Debate

Although Conservative governments of the 1980's and 1990's introduced **modifications** to the education system, which reflected new priorities, the change in thinking began under the last Labour government of the 1970's. **James Callaghan's Speech at Ruskin College** and a following Green Paper argued

*It is vital to Britain's Economic recovery and standard of living that the performance of the manufacturing industry is improved and that the whole range of government policies, including education, contribute as much as possible to improving industrial performance and thereby increasing national wealth.*

In a period of **rising unemployment** and the apparent decline of Britain's economy, the concern was that education was **failing to produce appropriately skilled and motivated young workers**. - That it should produce equality of opportunity was deemed less important than the **needs of industry**. This new emphasis was called **New Vocationalism**.



# New Vocationalism: The New Right's Agenda for Education

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## Education and the New Right

This new wave of thought from the **Labour Party** of 1979 was surprisingly **in tune with the new right**. Although they did not believe in equality of opportunity, they **liked the ideas of promoting economic growth**. Employers were telling them that education was **not meeting their needs**, and part of the reason why there were so many unemployed was that they were unemployable. They did not have the skills required.

They did not see the answer in pumping money into the problem. They believed that part of the problem was the **oversized state sector** that strangled private initiative. Extra resources for education could only come from the profits of British Industry and so reduce Britain's competitiveness.

Thus in 1979 education was subjected to a 3.5% cut in expenditure.



## Competition, Choice and Standards

Thus, the main aims were to produce....

- 👉 **Economic growth**
- 👉 **By encouraging competition**
- 👉 **Increasing choice**
- 👉 **Raising standards by market competition**

## Exercise One

1. Working with another student, identify two arguments for and two against education directly serving the needs of industry.
2. Study items D and E. Identify two arguments for and against the claim that educational standards are falling.
3. What do the following terms mean.... depoliticising the curriculum, widen parental choice and control, instil market forces into education, enhance the powers of central government and individual schools in the control of education.
4. Can you identify any contradictions in the New Right educational aims that Simon identifies?

## How was this to be done?

One-way to do this was to increase competition through the increased use of **testing**, and **examinations** and the **publishing of results**. This was to help make parents **more informed** of the best choices. Testing was not via coursework (seen not to be good) but via the use of **unseen tests**, so direct **comparisons** can be made between students. To encourage this competition the use of **league tables** was introduced (See League table handout, soon!)

The paradox here was that **such standard test** goes against new right thinking. They are supposedly **against imposing conformity on schools** and they value 'their diversity'. However, in this case most thought the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages.



This was to be done by using **The Continental System of Education** where....

- ✧ Teaching groups of **roughly similar abilities**, repeating years for those who fail.
- ✧ **Different pathways**, reflecting academic, technical or vocational goals, open to youngsters from the age of 12-14 onwards, invariably the vocational tracks, and often-technical tracks begin with basic, practical studies before progressively using higher technology.
- ✧ **Access to pathways is by choice**, teachers provide parents with guidance, but parental choice is paramount.
- ✧ **Progression along pathways depends upon performance** and there is often a settling down from more demanding tracks to less demanding ones.
- ✧ **Bridging and transfer mechanisms exist** which allow youngsters to move from one part of the system to another
- ✧ **The mark at the end of the school year, which determines whether a pupil is ready to move on to the next year** depends upon their subjects, a pupil cannot give up on a subject, say maths, simply because he or she does not like it.
- ✧ **There is a range of school leaving diplomas** closely tied in with future job opportunities.
- ✧ The labour market is so organised that **clear standards are demanded in all occupations**, standards are highly dependent on success in the educational system.

## Exercise Two

How practical or desirable is this model for the British system?

Would you say that we have moved to this model over the last few years?

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## The New Right Curriculum

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Although radical in some areas, the new right promoted **the teaching of traditional subjects**. According to **Stephen Ball** they advocated the teaching of

- Latin
- Greek

But were opposed to **social science, peace studies, and PSE and multi-cultural studies**, and widespread **ethnic minority languages**.

Instead, the emphasis was on standard subjects such as **French, Italian, German and Spanish**.



Again, here there is a **paradox**. The new right believes that the market should lead to the choices available. Yet, the market would not pick Latin and Greek. And indeed far more students take social sciences than the other more capitalistic useful subjects.

Some other thinking has influenced educational policies, Traditionalism has also been important.

### Exercise Three

List three paradoxes of the new right's education policies.

### Exercise Four

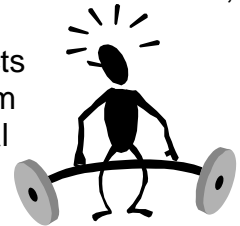
Link the following ideas to the 1970's or the 1990's

1. Education was not geared up to work.
2. CSE and O level
3. No inspection
4. Rigid work practices.
5. OFSTED
6. LEA control
7. No Standard Curriculum
8. Progressive Teaching
9. SATS
10. A wide gap between vocational and academic qualifications.
11. CTC's
12. A National Curriculum
13. NVQ's
14. Opt out

## Exercise Five

Looks at the following are they strengths or weaknesses of The New Vocationalism

1. New Vocationalism recognises the idea of social engineering did not work.
2. Competition amongst schools has led to increased passes at GCSE. Last year, saw the best GCSE results ever.
3. New Vocationalism was the first real attempt to abolish the gap between education and training as for this it must be applauded.
4. Much training has not enhanced social mobility for individuals and groups undertaking it; rather it has tended to reproduce existing social inequalities based on example, race and gender.
5. Britain was indeed falling behind its industrial competitors, this initiative tackled one of the major reasons for this a poorly trained and unproductive work force.
6. New vocationalist policies have shifted power into the hands of employers and national politicians. Teachers, parents, students, and the local community have lost power and control of education and training.
7. New Vocationalism has resulted in a more rationalised examination system, with one exam taken by all at 16, whilst continuing with the 'gold standard' of A level.
8. The system may encourage some pupils not to be entered for any exams at all, for fear of reducing their pass rates.
9. The state has become involved in all areas of individual life and aspects of personality that are not the concern of education and training system or of the state. For example, the refusal to place dangerous ideological subjects such as Sociology and Politics is indicative of this ideological stance.
10. Money has been wasted on publicity for training schemes and on 'evaluations' by outside (expensive) consultants, whilst the schemes themselves have been under-funded.
11. Policy has been concentrated on the lower levels of education and on lower achievers rather than areas of the economy that would make British industry competitive abroad.
12. It has encouraged further class division, with middle-class parents being able to pay for public transport to send their children long distances to schools like Coopers'.
13. But the needs of league tables now drive schools.
14. Bad schools are now weeded out by OFSTED inspectors and closed down, or given Action Plans to encourage them to improve their performance. For example, The Ridings School in Halifax has seen much improvement since their enforced shut down.



## The New Right and Control of the Education System

The 1988 **Education Reform Act** Richard Johnson argues that many strands of thought resulted in this act. Opposition was strong, even within the Conservative Party some saw it as **too weak**. To a historian of education like **Aldrich (1988)** one of the striking things about the National Curriculum is **that it is at least 83 years old**. He makes a comparison of the subjects included in the syllabuses prescribed by The Board of Education in 1904, following the 1902 Act, which established State Secondary Schools and those in the 1987 National Curriculum



1904	1987
English	English
Maths	Maths
Music	
Manual Work/	Technology
Physical Training	Physical Education
Science	Science
History	History
Geography	Geography
A foreign Language	A foreign Language
Drawing	Drawing

As we can see, the **only subject not included** in the **1904** was **music**. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced a National Curriculum, which was a return to **traditional subjects** similar to the old **Grammar school Model**. It provided **Three Core Subjects**, Maths, English and Science, and **Seven Foundation Subjects**, Art, Music, Technology, History, Geography, A modern Foreign Language, and PE. In addition, locally determined and agreed syllabuses for religious education were taught.

The Curriculum for each subject was laid down in **statutory orders**, with attainment targets, programmes of study and **ten levels of attainment** defining what a **pupil must know** and be able to do at each level. Pupil achievement was to be assessed through standardised National Tests at the end of the 4 key stages at age seven, KS1, 11 KS2, 14, KS3, and 16, KS4

## THE DISMANTLING OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

No sooner than the National Curriculum had been established than it became obvious that it would need to be amended. **Key Stage 4 was the first to be changed.**

In 1991 the then Secretary for State, **John Macgregor**, announced the **curriculum overload could be solved by the introduction of short or combined courses at GCSE**. Pupils could study either **history or geography or a combination of both**.

In 1992-3, there was strong opposition to the National Curriculum from parents, employers, the training lobby and teachers. It came to a head with the boycott of Standard Assessment Tests by all the teaching unions, for example, Mr. Covington, refused to invigilate in SATS at Coopers', as a member of the NUT.

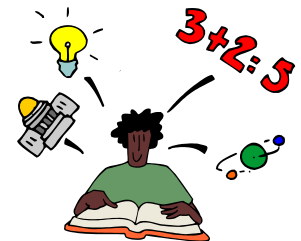


## Changes in Education 1979-94

### Education Reform Act

The following measures were introduced

1. **Testing and Attainment Targets** were introduced for **7,11, 14 and 16** years olds in the hope that standards would rise as schools competed against other.
2. **National Curriculum was introduced**. Each pupil was required to study, Maths, English, Science, History, Geography, Technology, Music, Art, PE, plus a foreign language. This was intended to ensure that pupils concentrated on what the government saw as essential subjects.
3. **The Act emphasised Parental Choice**, in theory parents had the right to **choose to send** their children to the **school they wanted**. This would help encourage competition. A policy of open enrolment compelled every school to recruit pupils up to the maximum, which could be accommodated in their buildings.
4. **The act allowed the setting up of CTC's** These **City Technology Colleges** would be inner city and concentrate on specialising in technology. They would be sponsored by private industry so that the state would not have to pay the full costs of building the colleges and would be independent of the LEA's. CTC's would cater for the 11-18 year old age group and would compete with existing schools.
5. **Existing schools were able to opt out of LEA control** and are funded by central government. The Opting out category created the Grant Maintained Schools, which were self-governing. By Feb 1984, 814 out of 24,000 schools had opted out. Coopers' being one of them.
6. **The act gave greater autonomy to the schools** in how they spent their money. LMS (local management of schools) gave the responsibility for managing school budgets to headteachers' and governors, thus reducing the power of the LEA's.
7. **Under the new system of formula funding**, the financing of schools was largely based upon the number of pupils. This was intended to reward successful schools with more money.



A number of important changes were not part of the **GERBIL (Government Education Reform Bill, 1988)**

- ◆ **TVEI**: was started as a pilot scheme in 1983 in 14 LEA's. It was a scheme for 14-18 year olds, which ran alongside the conventional curriculum and included work experience. The TVEI became available to all Secondary Schools in 1986 and was later extended to include the 6th form, further education and tertiary colleges.
- ◆ **Certificate for Pre-Vocational Education**, CPVE, was similar to TVEI, in stressing preparation for work. CPVE first taught in 1985-6 was for those over 16 who were uncertain about what they wanted to do. It offered work experience and was taught in schools and colleges. CPVE taught practical skills, but could be combined with taking exams in traditional subjects, although in practice students who were unsuccessful in traditional subjects took it. The CPVE was not a great success and was later replaced by vocationally orientated exams like GNVQ's and NVQ's.
- ◆ **In 1986 the National Council for Vocational Qualifications** was set up, with the aim of introducing standardised vocational qualifications related to particular occupations. In 1990 about 170 NVQ's had been established. These were intended to reward practical achievement with qualifications being obtained by demonstrating competencies. NVQ's have four levels from Level one (GCSE standard) to Level Four (Post graduate level). GNVQ's were introduced nationally in 1994. These were intended to provide a vocationally orientated alternative to traditional exams like A Level.
- ◆ **GCSE replaced the O'Level system and the CSE system**. All students were entered for the same exam. Although there were some differences in Maths. They also introduced a considerable amount of coursework, much against New Right Thinking. This encouraged pupil orientated approaches rather than chalk and talk.



## Exercise Six:

Look at the following sentences and match them to the educational reform...

1. Exam to unify the examination system at 16 to avoid the old O level and CSE hierarchy.
2. Schools were paid in relation to their success on getting 'bums of seats'.
3. Its general purpose was to widen and enrich the curriculum so that young adults were prepared in a practical and relevant way for the world of work. Ideas used included work experience, records of achievement, and the widening of provision of IT in schools and colleges.
4. They attempt to produce examination qualifications equal to those obtained by the academic route of GCSE and A level.
5. Exams taken at 7,11,14 and 16.
6. The Introduction of the same curriculum for all students across the country.
7. A one-year full time course for post 16 students in colleges and schools. Course consisted of the core, (numeracy, science, technology and IT), Vocational studies, and additional studies (GCSE and Leisure Studies).
8. Schools independent of local authority control, and in part, were established with the aid of industrial sponsorship. Emphasis is given to science, maths, and IT.



## DEARING AND BEYOND: THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM UP TO DATE

Worries about the complexity of the National Curriculum led the Secretary of State by now, **John Patten** to **appoint Sir Ron Dearing** as **Chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority**, fortunately, shortened to **SCAA**, to make recommendations to **slim down the National Curriculum**. Although many agreed with the idea of the National Curriculum not many thought it was workable in its proposed state. It was regarded by many as....

- Over **prescriptive**
- Administratively **Complex**
- **Introduced Too Quickly**, with teachers not being properly consulted
- This evidence informed Dearing's Final Report which recommended that....
- The National Curriculum should be **slimmed down for 5-14 year olds**
- To Free 20% of teaching time **for the discretion of the school**.
- At KS4 only English, Maths, Single Science, PE and short courses in Modern Languages, Technology, RE, and Sex Education are **mandatory**.
- To allow scope for **Vocational Options at KS4, GNVQ's were to be developed for 14-16 year olds**
- No Changes were to be made to the **National Curriculum for Five years**.
- **SATS** were to be held **only in the core subjects**.



### Exercise Seven

Acronym	Full Meaning
TVEI	
SATS	
CTC's	
LMS	
CPVE	
OFSTED	
KS	

### Resources Used

Investigating Education and Training: Paul Trowler  
Sociology, Themes and Perspectives: Michael Haralambos, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition  
Education and Training: Tim Heaton and Tony Lawson  
Sociology in Perspective: Mark Kirby et al  
An Introduction to Sociology: Mike O'Donnell, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. 1997