DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 090 150 SP 007 875

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TITLE A Firsthand Look at the British Open School.
INSTITUTION Oregon School Study Council, Eugene.
PUB DATE Mar 74
NOTE 22p.; OSSC Bulletin v17 n7
AVAILABLE FROM Oregon School Study Council, College of Education, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403 ($1.50)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Economically Disadvantaged; Elementary Schools; *Integrated Curriculum; *Open Education; Program Descriptions; *Progressive Education; Socially Disadvantaged
IDENTIFIERS Britain

ABSTRACT

The author of this informal critique of the British Open School spent the 1972-73 academic year as a teacher in London's Battersea School as part of an exchange program in which six British open school teachers exchanged places with six teachers from British Columbia, Canada. After a brief description of the daily and weekly program at Battersea School, the author discusses some of the strengths and weaknesses of the British open school system. The weaknesses are that a) although each child is expected to proceed at his own pace, the gifted children receive more attention than the children with learning difficulties who need more attention; b) theory often differs from practice; c) there is a lack of educational alternatives within the schools which results in poor service for about 25% of the children; d) there is little concern for children with learning problems such as dyslexia; e) the British headmistress has autonomy and authority which is unparalleled in North America; and f) the emotional exhaustion of teachers, caused by the constant movement and aggressive behavior of children, results in an extremely high turnover rate. The author notes the following strengths of the British open school: a) teachers are very dedicated; b) teachers are committed to the programs which their headmistresses initiate; and c) while teachers are severely underpaid, abundant resources are allocated for equipment and materials necessary for the operation of experiential learning programs. (HMD)

OSSC BULLETIN

A FIRSTHAND LOOK AT THE BRITISH OPEN SCHOOL

by
Gerald J. Staley

Oregon School Study Council
Vol. 17, No. 7
March 1974

FOREWORD

The author, Dr. Gerald Staley, was a former Graduate Research Assistant with the Field Training and Service Bureau of the University of Oregon. Currently Dr. Staley is principal of Kerrisdale Elementary School in Vancouver, British Columbia, and he was one of six Vancouver educators selected to take part in an exchange program with British counterparts during the 1972-73 school year. The Vancouver School Board initiated and promoted the exchange because it wanted to learn more about the British open school, specifically as it operates at the primary level. Thus it arranged for six Vancouver educators to spend a year in England, exchanging places with teachers in schools that had exemplary programs in open education.

In this Bulletin, Dr. Staley shares his observations and some experiences of his year in England with OSSC readers. Those who are concerned with early childhood education will find his description and critique of the British open school of special interest and value.

Kenneth A. Erickson
Executive Secretary
Oregon School Study Council

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A FIRSTHAND LOOK AT THE BRITISH OPEN SCHOOL

Introduction

This is an informal report on a teacher exchange program that was conducted by the Vancouver, B.C. School Board during the 1972-73 school year. The project had its inception in the fall of 1971 when officials of the Education Department of the School Board decided that they would like to have investigated, on a firsthand basis, the claims that were being made concerning the British Primary School.

It was decided that for the 1972-73 year, an exchange should be arranged with half a dozen British primary schools which had exemplary programs in open education. The plan was to bring to Vancouver from England six teachers who were operating in six different English schools, and to have their places taken in the English schools by five teachers and one principal from Vancouver schools.

This project was publicized in the British Isles in teachers' journals and newspapers. Over two hundred applications were received. Similarly, the positions open in British schools were advertised for Vancouver teachers. As a result of these efforts, the six exchanges were arranged. Two of the Vancouver teachers were to go to London schools, three were to go to schools in Bristol, and one was to go to a school in Lancashire. I was assigned to one of the schools in London. The British counterparts of these six teachers were assigned to six different Vancouver elementary schools--ranging from kindergarten up to year six level.

This Bulletin conveys some of my impressions and observations about London's Battersea School, the primary school where I was working. These findings should not be generalized beyond this single school. During the year in England, I spent approximately two-thirds of my time in Battersea School; the remaining third was spent taking courses and visiting other British open

schools. My observations of these other schools are given toward the end of this Bulletin.

Battersea--Open School Meets Needs of Deprived

Battersea School is located in the Battersea area of London. The school is a small island in a sea of industrial plants and high-rise council flats. The neighborhood contains a network of railway lines, a power station belching clouds of dense smoke, a gas works, a foundry, and a milk depot. The noise from the trains and the heavy trucks often drowns out the sound of normal conversation.

The Old School

The building formerly used by Battersea was 102 years old and possessed all the interesting characteristics of an old-fashioned London three-story school. Originally it housed over 600 students, but the population had decreased to about 270 pupils when I arrived there. While the building was in many respects antiquated, it was well-lighted, brightly painted, and had certainly more than ample space than was required for the 270 pupils who were enrolled.

As is the case of most of the Victorian-age primary schools in London, the three floors of the school were utilized as follows: the ground floor housed the nursery and reception class, the infants were located on the middle floor, and the top floor housed the juniors. Since you may be unfamiliar with these different age divisions of a British elementary school, let me explain what they mean. The nursery in North American context would normally be thought of as pre-school, three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half-year-olds. The reception class is the normal intake class or beginning group and corresponds roughly to our kindergarten. The infants correspond roughly to our six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds, and the juniors to nine-, ten-, and eleven-year-olds.

The New School

A new school building, which at the time of my arrival was nearing completion and which was being built on the school grounds, was ready for occupancy at Easter, 1973.

This new building was an open plan design and it housed the existing three floors of the Victorian-age school in three of its four quadrants. While it certainly provided the physical environment necessary to facilitate the achievement of the educational goals, there was little doubt that the spaciousness of the old building was sorely missed by the teachers after they had moved in.

The Team Arrangement

During the year, I worked as a member of the four-teacher team who were on the middle floor of the school and working with the infants (i.e., in North American terms, the primary-age children). The actual age range in this particular division of the school was from five years of age to nine, but of course the majority of the children were six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds.

There were approximately 90 children in this infant section who had been vertically grouped into three homeroom classes. Vertical grouping means that each of the three classes had children ranging from five to eight years of age. It was quite evident that great care had been taken in providing an age range in each class and in matching pupils and teachers.

In order for you to understand the team arrangement, I will describe a typical day and week in the infant division of the school. When school began at 9 a.m., children would go to their homeroom classes for registration, free milk, and announcements. At 9:30, children left their registration classes and would go to whichever one of the five working areas that they decided to choose that day. These areas, which were classrooms within the middle floor, provided spaces for drama, art, number work, language, and a library.

The first four classrooms or work areas were supervised on a rotating basis by the four team

members. (The librarian remained permanently in the library.) Each team member was responsible for setting up the materials and teaching in one of the four areas for a two-week period. The two-week span insured continuity for the pupils and also allowed teachers to share ideas and develop a high degree of competence in all the areas of work.

In the afternoons, pupils remained in their roll rooms where they could either continue work that they had begun in the morning session or begin new work assigned by the classroom teacher. At 2:55 each day, children went to one of three story groups where they were read interesting and stimulating stories.

The following schedule is a more graphic presentation of the above description:

GENERAL DAILY SCHEDULE

9:00 - 9:30 a.m.	*Children were in their homeroom classes for milk, registration, and announcements.*
9:30 - 10:45 a.m.	*Children went to one of the five areas described previously.*
10:45 - 11:00 a.m.	*Play time or recess.*
11:00 - 11:45 a.m.	*Children would return to whichever of the above areas they had been working in prior to recess.*
11:45 - 12:15 p.m.	*There was an assembly where children would sing songs, be told stories, or have an opportunity to show their work, or listen to announcements.*
12:15 - 1:30 p.m.	*Lunch and play time.*
1:30 - 2:55 p.m.	*Pupils would return to their homeroom classes where they could either carry on the work begun in the morning, or they could do something new which had been assigned by the teacher.*

2:55 - 3:25 p.m.	*Pupils would go to one of the three story groups described previously. Placement in the groups was determined by the maturity of the pupil and their level of development. The most mature pupils, of course, were read longer and more challenging stories.*
3:25 - 3:30 p.m.	*Pupils would return to their homeroom classes for dismissal which was at 3:30 each day.*

The Weekly Schedule

Built around the above general daily schedule was the weekly schedule. On Mondays, it was as already described for the daily schedule, except that from 3:45 to 5:30 there was a staff meeting. The meeting was attended by all of the teachers in the infant division, the headmistress of the school, and one observer from both the reception-nursery section of the school and the junior division of the school.

On Tuesdays, the daily schedule was as described above with this exception: the headmistress conducted the assembly at 11:45. This enabled the teachers to be free to meet and discuss floor plans or problems. During Tuesday afternoons, each of the classes had thirty minutes for movement or use of apparatus. These thirty-minute sessions were held in the hall--the English equivalent of the gymnasium. Here in the hall there was the normal climbing apparatus usually found in an elementary school and, in addition, balance benches and beams.

Wednesdays followed the regular daily schedule.

On Thursdays, the headmistress conducted the 11:45 assembly again, and this time the staff of the infant division was also present. During the afternoon session, once again each of the three classes had thirty minutes for movement or for use of apparatus.

On Fridays there were several changes from the normal daily schedule. Play time was held early, at 10:30, since the youngsters were picked up by chartered

bus and taken to the local swimming pools at 11:00. They had a half hour of swimming, from 11:30 to 12:00, and were returned to the school generally by 12:15.

Every Friday afternoon, half of the infants were transported by chartered bus to the local park where the youngsters were permitted to play on the swings, and, weather permitting, go into the wading pools.

In addition to this weekly arrangement, youngsters who were in the infant division of the school were able to go once a month by chartered bus to wherever they wished in the Greater London area. During the year, visits were taken to see the changing of the guard, to visit parks, the London airport, Hampton Court palace, and other places of interest.

Open Classroom Environments

The typical classroom in Battersea School looked very much like a workshop. There were no rows of desks nor any desks at all. The room was arranged into about eight different areas. These areas contained tables and chairs of varying sizes, bookcases, storage shelves, easels, cupboards, and equipment. The largest area was carpeted and was surrounded by the classroom library. There was also an area for art work; number work; science (including boxes containing plants); writing; making models; what was known as a home corner (with clothes for dressing up); and drama. While the spaces were quite small (10' x 10'), they were adequate for the small groups of children who cycled through them during the day.

Life in the Classroom

Let us now have a more intimate look at life in a Battersea infant classroom. At 9 o'clock the children come into the classroom and gather on the carpet. They are free to look at a book, talk with their friends, or discuss things with the teacher. The free milk that is provided is available to all who wish it; it is given out to the children while attendance is being taken. Special announcements, if any, are made and children are free to chat or read until 9:30.

At 9:30, children then go to whichever area they have selected to work in for that morning. There are some practical limits on these choices. No more than 24 children are permitted into the art room or 16 into the drama room, but these limits were seldom exceeded. Insecure children often remain with an individual teacher or with a friend until they get enough confidence to launch out on their own. Some children stay in one area, say, working on a number project, for a week or more, while others change rooms almost every day. There is a record system that permits teachers to know where every child is each day and what he is working on. Children, once they have made a choice, are not permitted to change areas during the morning without the permission of a teacher.

While at Battersea, I noticed that there were a few children who could not handle the open situation and had to be assigned to a specific teacher. There were, however, surprisingly few children who abused the freedom and whose movements had to be restricted.

Because of the free movement of pupils and the use of knives, saws, tools, etc., there were a considerable number of accidents. One child received a fractured skull, another lost the end of his index finger, and many had to get stitches for cuts. It was not always possible for the teacher or the aide to be physically present with children, and it was felt that the risk of injury had to be accepted if the program was to be maintained.

As mentioned previously, there was a small number of children who could not cope with the freedom they were given. One boy of ten was constantly disappearing from the junior division of the school. He either disturbed other students or left the building. Moreover, he continually persuaded other children to leave the school with him. Consultation with the boy, his parents, the welfare worker, and the staff proved ineffective in rectifying the situation. Unable any longer to accept the risk to the boy and to other pupils, the headmistress

arranged to have the boy put in custodial care. He was placed in a day residential home, and is expected to remain there until he can be helped to change his behavior and act more responsibly.

To continue the description of life at Battersea, in the afternoons, children remain in their homerooms working in the various classroom areas. Informal daily records are kept of their activities and accomplishments. Since they are vertically or family grouped, the older children often work with and help the younger ones. Children are encouraged to do reading or readiness activities, writing, art, drama, and number work each day or each week, but little pressure is placed upon them to achieve. The librarian is available in the afternoons to listen to children read, and to assist them in locating material for projects.

Battersea as a Part of London Schools

Battersea School is one of inner London's EPA (Educational Priority Area) schools. These schools, now in their third year of operation, enroll children who are said to come from domestic or social environments where serious deprivation has occurred. To compensate for overcrowding, poor housing, broken homes, low income levels, high unemployment, parents on social assistance, a high percentage of immigrants, and severe social problems, the EPA schools are permitted an improved teacher-pupil ratio, ancillary assistance, and additional funds for field trips, supplies, and equipment.

Battersea School is very high on the list of EPA schools and therefore receives rather generous allowances for the above items. The teacher-pupil ratio is about one to twenty-three, with classes averaging about twenty-eight. There are four teachers and four classes in the nursery and reception areas. The infants and juniors each have four teachers and three classes. Each term, one teacher in the infant and junior division acts as a spare. The person who does not have a roll class teaches in the open situation each morning from 9:30 to 11:30, and in the afternoon tutors small groups of

youngsters or, in the absence of the regular teacher, acts as a substitute.

In addition to the commendable staff ratio, Battersea School has a very generous number of teacher's aides. Nursery and reception teachers have one full-time aide each. Infants have two full-time aides and the juniors have one aide. These aides, under the direction of the teacher, work with small groups of children, prepare materials, and supervise play time and lunches.

Despite such a favorable teacher-pupil ratio and the additional ancillary help, teaching in Battersea School is not without its problems. I have never worked with children who were as emotionally disturbed as some of these children. The reasons pupils were sometimes upset, unhappy, and occasionally violent were quite apparent--parents attempting suicide (one successfully, in the first term); children being abused by parents (several children had refused to return home because they were constantly being beaten); mothers who were prostitutes; parents on the run from the law or in jail; racial antagonism (West Indian versus African); fighting between parents; broken homes; child neglect because of alcoholism; and the constant threat of poverty and economic insecurity through unemployment.

One might well imagine, then, that children with such problems made Battersea School a "blackboard jungle." This was emphatically not the case. The above environmental factors did contribute towards children being at times sullen, disrespectful, and aggressive. But the majority responded in socially acceptable and mature ways. Open education was making it here, under conditions much worse than any you can visualize or are likely to ever experience.

The key was the teaching staff. The teaching staff was selected by the headmistress, both for their teaching skill and their ability to work with children who had emotional problems. Teachers were not only skilled in the techniques of open education, but

were persons who exhibited love, kindness, and compassion in their relationships with the children. They accepted each child even when his actions were socially unacceptable. They cared--and the children knew it. As a result, the teachers became quite emotionally involved in the pupils' lives. This was a great emotional strain on the teachers, and they seemed to need an occasional day off in order to "recharge their batteries."

There was no corporal punishment at Battersea School. It is unacceptable to publicly punish for antisocial behavior, children who are the victims of social and domestic injustice. When a child threw a temper tantrum, the usual response of the teacher was a bear hug and kind words. In the process, teachers often got kicked in the shins or bitten, but the child got the much-needed acceptance and reassurance. This did not occur every day or every week, but when a child "flipped"--usually because of conflict with other children--teachers responded in this unique fashion.

Reading and Arithmetic Achievement

Pupils at Battersea School are about one and a half to two years behind the national norms in both reading and arithmetic. It is, however, important to keep in mind three factors related to this statistic. One, if deprivation did not result in retardation, there would be no justification for the EPA status, and for the extra assistance made available to pupils. Two, seven years ago, when the school was run along more traditional lines, about half of the children who went to secondary schools were non-readers. Now, every pupil can read. Three, children who would be classified as ESN or Educationally Sub-Normal and put in special classes in other school districts, are, in London, left in regular classes. This means that the range of ability in any given class is much wider than what we would normally experience in our schools.

Despite the children's deprived backgrounds, many at Battersea School were as bright and as keen to learn as any that I have ever taught. In order to survive in

their environments, children seemed to develop, at an early age, a great understanding of how the adult world operates. Unlike some of our children who are very much sheltered from the realities of life, these children lived with few conventional fantasies about the world.

The Headmistress

The headmistress of the school was a highly dedicated person. She had been at the school for three years and had hired most of the present staff. Her life was dedicated to Battersea children and she worked tirelessly to obtain the things needed by both pupils and staff. In addition to carrying a substantial administrative load, she spent part of each day teaching on each floor. She was intimately acquainted with all the children and their families, and like the teachers, she often acted as a surrogate parent.

The headmistress also played a key role in the inservice development of the staff. Inner London Education Authority has an impressive program of inservice education for its teachers. There were the usual after-school and evening courses, but teachers could also be released for one day or up to six weeks in order to attend courses at teacher centers or residential centers. The headmistress selected teachers to attend these courses and this insured that the resources of the Authority were utilized to serve the needs of an individual school. By giving teachers time off from school to learn new techniques and to develop professionally, morale was boosted and teachers worked even more diligently. Half of the staff received time off to attend a course during the academic year. Their classes at Battersea were covered by students in their final practicums and by the spare teachers on the staff.

Staff Meetings/Parents

Each floor held a staff meeting once a week. The meetings generally lasted from 3:45 until 5:30. The infant division of the school met on Mondays. The agenda for each staff meeting was prepared by all the team members

and the head, and team members took turns acting as chairman and recording secretary. General staff meetings were held at lunch time about once a month.

The situation regarding parents at Battersea School was interesting. The majority of parents never attended any of the school functions, but they seemed--from whatever contact we had with them--to appreciate what was being done for their children. A group of parents did organize a PTA and began fund-raising activities so that the school could have its own swimming pool. A considerable number of mothers came to the school to work as volunteer aides, accompany pupils on field trips, or prepare materials for teachers.

For More Information on Battersea and British Primary Schools . . .

If you would like to know more about Battersea School, I would suggest that you read chapter four in the book, Toward Informality. This chapter was written by the former head of the school and describes conditions as they were from 1963 to 1968. Reading the chapter would give you some appreciation for the progress that has occurred during the last ten years. The book is one of those in the British Primary Schools Today series and was published by the Schools' Council. There are 22 other booklets in this series which was jointly funded by the Ford Foundation and the British School Council. Other titles in the series include: Evaluation of Achievement; Music; Art; Drama; Science; Informal Reading and Writing; as well as Recording Children's Progress; and the Teacher's Role; the Pupil's Role; and the Head Teacher's Role. Anyone who is looking for a fairly comprehensive picture of what is going on in British primary schools today is encouraged to read any or all of these booklets.

The British Open School Generally: A Critique

Before going to England, I had read most of the booklets in the series just described, plus articles written by John Holt, Paul Goodman, Joseph Featherstone, Vincent Rogers, Charles Silberman, Lillian Weber, and Molly Brearly. Upon reading these articles, I got the impression that surely what was going on in Great Britain today was a high water mark in primary and infant education, and that Britain really had the answers to many of the questions that were plaguing educators in North America. However, after having been there a year, visited many schools, talked with British educators, and done considerable inservice work on my return, I must confess I have doubts about the accuracy of the observations which have been made by others who have gone to the British Isles.

One's perceptions are often colored by one's previous experiences. I should think that if an individual came from a school system or school district where there were, for example, racial problems, that the model of education as seen in the British Isles might look very good. However, trying to look objectively at British open schools brings to mind several criticisms for consideration.

Disguised Elitism

My first criticism begins with the underlying philosophy of British education as it is practiced in some of the progressive schools. As I see it, this philosophy is basically a disguised elitism. Each child is expected to proceed at his or her own pace. What I observed, however, is that the bright are given a great deal of attention and the slow are often allowed to drift. The justification for this is heard in statements such as "He needs to play" or "She needs the extended chance for socialization." Both statements may be true, but teaching is basically intervention in order to insure

that needed skills and knowledge are acquired. Surely the child that is slow needs to have more done for him than to allow him to meander through a number of years of schooling with the justification that he is proceeding at his own speed and developing in his own way. The bright are, in many instances, force fed or put in pressure cooker situations in order that they can obtain the knowledge and skills that they need in order to pursue academic goals. This is not always legitimate, either.

Theory and Practice Differ

My second criticism of British open schools is something that becomes very apparent to even a casual visitor to the British Isles. One notices it when talking to headmasters or headmistresses, and then observing classes, particularly in progressive schools. British heads seem to have a very good ability to express the underlying philosophy of their school and the aims and objectives of their educational program, but what these goals are in theory and what they turn out to be in practice are two different things. There seems to be a very strong belief that, because the theory is right, the practice will necessarily be developed to fit the theory.

I think it has been observed by European educators that American or North American education tends to be very pragmatic, that is, very much concerned with practice rather than with the theory or philosophical rationale behind the practice. I think the reverse could be said for British education, that in practice many things seem to be permitted which do not fit with the theories which are said to be in operation or with the philosophy which supposedly underlies the schooling that is being offered.

For example, in many schools, arts and crafts is the core around which the balance of the instructional program operates. According to the theory, the child, through the creative arts, finds himself and is able to engage in discoveries in other subject matter areas. In practice,

it often seems that this emphasis on the arts is basically a dodge, a convenient way of keeping kids busy and of keeping them "off your back" rather than a method of having youngsters explore and discover in different subject matter areas.

Good for One, Good for All?

A third criticism of British education is the lack of alternatives within the schools. I think it becomes very quickly apparent to one who visits British schools that an entire school operates on a single philosophy. The underlying assumption seems to be that what is good for one is good for all. For example, if a school operates on the informal learning style, then every class and pupil must follow this mode.

In any given situation, perhaps as high as 25 percent of the pupils were being poorly served. Some needed much more structure and greater external direction. Indicative of this need were the problems created by the collision of pupils who were permitted to roam at random and whose wanderings brought them in conflict with other children. There needed to be, in situations like this, much more structured modes of learning.

Little Concern for Learning Problems

The fourth criticism is related to the "disguised elitism" apparent in British schools. It seemed to me that there was far too little concern for the child with learning problems. There was little or no recognition of such disorders as dyslexia or neurological dysfunction. Children were usually regarded as being bright, average, or slow, and there was virtually no diagnosis of learning problems, or specialized personnel provided to carry out any remedial activities. The underlying assumption seemed to be, if a child does not succeed, he can always take some less intellectually challenging job. I felt that if such attitudes or practices were expressed in North America, there would be a considerable revolt among parents.

Principal as Authority Figure

The fifth criticism relates to the role of the English head teacher. The English head teacher (or principal) has autonomy and authority unparalleled in North America. I observed that he (or more commonly for elementary education, she) was in many ways the absolute monarch of the school. The hiring of staff, the awarding of special allowances, the expenditure of funds, the setting of the curriculum and school philosophy, all rested with the head. The degree of staff involvement in decision making was virtually negligible. While this situation had contributed over the years to the development of some exceptionally creative primary schools, it had also enabled reactionary heads or those who were content to maintain the status quo, to prevent modification of educational structures.

Since the head sets the philosophy for the school, what one does, they all do, and there is really very little deviation from the headmaster's model. As a parent you either subscribed to the philosophy of a particular school or you looked for a different one. There is little possibility of finding a school that satisfies both the traditional and the progressive parent.

It is paradoxically true that in the midst of this significant revolution, informal education, there continues to exist one of the most highly structured examination systems in the world. This is also related to the complete authority vested in the headmistress.

High Turnover of Teachers

A sixth observation has to do with the teachers. There was a very heavy drop-out or transfer rate among teachers in most of the so-called better British primary schools which I visited. Teacher turnover was commonly 50 percent per year, with only the heads and deputy heads as semi-permanent personnel. There were, undoubtedly, external factors related to teacher salaries which contributed to this situation. However, a significant internal factor was the sheer emotional exhaustion of the teachers caused

by the constant movement of the pupils, their aggressive behavior, and the lack of sanctions against destructive and emotionally disturbed children. Teachers would often become so wound up that they would simply have to take time off in order to recover their composure. As a result of this adverse learning situation, from the point of view of the teacher, it was often felt that the best way out was to move to another school where things might be a little better.

The "Integrated Day"--A Misnomer

The integrated day of the British open school or as its critics called it, the "disintegrated day," in theory seemed to offer a highly desirable learning advantage over the conventional subject-oriented elementary curriculum. I observed that in practice it was more of an educational fraud than an educational benefit. Far from enabling pupils to see the internal interrelationship of all learning and of utilizing one subject area as the vehicle for exploration of other subject areas, it instead permitted teachers and headmasters who had a particular viewpoint, to over-organize the curriculum so that one facet was examined in depth and others were ignored. Science and social studies received short shrift and far too much emphasis was placed on the arts and the crafts--to the exclusion of the more traditional subjects of a curriculum.

Family Grouping Fails

Another criticism of British primary schools deals with the technique of family grouping. Family grouping technique is primarily used to enable the teacher to have a range of ages--usually six- to eight-year-olds or nine- to eleven-year-olds--and to keep these children for two or more years. The rationale suggests that 1) the extended exposure of the teacher to the child makes it more likely that the chief concern of the teacher will be the child, and 2) the family-like spread in ages provides a more normal learning context in which the child may develop. It seems that this practice can be justified if the

teacher does remain with the pupil for an extended period of time. It was my observation, however, that in school after school, the mobility of the teachers as well as the reassignment of teachers within the schools meant that the objectives of family grouping were constantly being undermined, and that the goals which were ascribed to this particular technique were seldom, if ever, achieved.

Strengths Cited

This has not by any means been an exhaustive criticism of some of the practices prevalent in British primary schools. The foregoing points out what I consider to be some of the more serious weaknesses. Despite these weaknesses, there are some strengths worth noting in the British open schools.

Teachers Dedicated

I have seldom worked with teachers who were more dedicated and concerned about children than the teachers I worked with in British schools. Considering that they work for a salary that is a small fraction of the North American salary, and, even in the context of British wage structures, is much lower than what they could get for any other job with similar training, British teachers are indeed dedicated individuals.

These teachers seemed to have a depth of concern and love for the child which I had seldom observed in any of the teachers that I had worked with in North America. There was real empathy and understanding--one might say a compassion for children. The teachers' selection of education as a career probably related to their deep concern for children and perhaps a corresponding lack of concern for their own financial future and economic welfare.

Teachers Committed to Program

The teachers believed very much in what they were doing. At times I felt that they were wrong and that the practices they were engaging in were very weak. Nevertheless, they strongly

believed in what they were doing and were very much committed to these things.

The teachers certainly tried in their relationships within the school and, in particular, their relationships with one another to be positive and to bring out the best in each other. They worked diligently as a united team to achieve the objectives which had been set for the school.

Supplies Abundant for "Learning by Doing"

While salaries for teachers in Great Britain are very poor compared with those in North America, and it appears that education is the poor cousin of the services within the country, it is also quite apparent that this penury did not extend to the consumable supplies needed to run the schools and offer a varied educational program. This was a very high priority with school districts and there was a great deal of money allotted for books, supplies, materials, and other consumables. These supplementary materials were very helpful in the development of concepts related to various subject areas. This relates to the British idea of learning by doing, that is, participation as a way of acquiring skills, knowledge, and understanding. In this regard, it appeared that the British were making considerable strides, and that a great deal of progress had already been realized.

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS STILL AVAILABLE

Bulletin	Price
Problems in the Organization and Administration of Career Education Programs by George Smith; Vol. 16, No. 1; September 1972	$2.00
Classroom Supervision and Informal Analysis of Behavior by Ray Hull with John Hansen; Vol. 16, No. 2; October 1972	$2.50
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