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Educational Disadvantage

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Are a child's chances of doing well in school affected by the qualities, characteristics and abilities with which he is born? This is a question with which most teachers, at least in their own minds, have to come to terms. Any teacher who has worked with a child who has been physically, mentally, emotionally or otherwise disturbed will recognise the fact that he has the potential, at least, to be seriously disadvantaged from an educational standpoint. The fact that so much has been done in terms of additional special resources, the training of teachers, and the preparation of special programmes where appropriate, is a recognition that there is need to make provision out of the ordinary for such a child. The growth of the special education system, be it in the form of special schools, special classes within the normal schools, withdrawal groups or peripatetic support is an acknowledgment that Government, Local Authorities and teachers are very conscious of the need to give such a child the special help that is necessary to meet his very special problems.

I realise that the question which forms the thesis of this seminar is not about special education, with which we are already familiar. However, Warnock in the recent report on Special Educational Needs\(^1\) raises some issues which may at least impinge on our deliberations. There is that which questions the "cut-off" point for offering support to a child in need. The ten categories of handicap form the basis of the criteria generally applied in the majority of cases. Warnock stresses the need to widen provision, to include children who need special help at any time in their educational career whether that need stems from failure which is part of a child's inherited characteristic or from the fact that he has been absent from school for a short period. In practical terms, Warnock wishes a lowering of the "cut-off" point and suggests the inclusion of many more children within the ambit of the special help category. This philosophy is also part of the argument which I wish to make.

The second major concern within the totality of special education provisions is the age at which a child might be identified as being in need of special help. It is my contention that many such children are not identified at a time when remedial strategies can be most effective. It may be that he has reached the age of 9, 10 or even 11 years before attention is drawn to the fact that he is not reaching his full potential and is not getting the help that he ought to, if his needs had been identified earlier. This, too, positively relates to the argument that I wish to make.
The third issue of concern is that which relates to the mismatch between the identified need of the child and the appropriate remedial measures that are taken. Often teachers who are dealing with withdrawal groups, or with groups who are in receipt of remedial help, set particularly low standards for such children. They offer them a programme which is orientated towards basic knowledge and skills and which gives little that will promote the development of attitudes and values, of qualities and of concepts. Little attempt is made to widen the children’s horizons so that there is a gulf between what they are capable of, what they need in order to live a full and satisfying life and what the teachers’ expectations of them are. There is little doubt that many of these children have potential that is rarely realised, have qualities and characteristics that are never developed. May it be said that the school adds to their disadvantage?

I would put to you that there is yet another group of children who may be considered disadvantaged in that the school makes little, if any, special provision to meet their needs. I am referring to those children who are born with special aptitudes and abilities and whom we frequently categorise as gifted. Their giftedness may be, in itself, a bonus but for the providers it may create a problem. This group may to some extent be considered disadvantaged but because of their giftedness they are able to compensate for the lack of suitable provision and cope with the demands of society.

But the question to which we are asked to address ourselves is whether the chances of doing well in school are affected by the accident of where one happens to be brought up. If this is so and I have no doubt that it is, then it is a sad reflection on educational provision in the latter quarter of the 20th century. Taylor and Ayres in “Born and Bred Unequal”, argue that there are non-educational factors in the environment which help to influence the quality of educational provision in any locality or area. They list these factors as:

— the level of health enjoyed by parents;

— the standard of social services;

— local prosperity measured in terms of personal income and income available to the local authority;

— local opportunities for employment;

— social class structure;

— levels of literacy among parents, relatives and employers.

Implicit in Taylor and Ayres’ findings is the fact that a child’s education may be, in a positive or a negative manner, affected by the locality into which he is born. If a child is born into an area where all the factors listed
are positive then the chances of that child benefitting from the education that is provided will be much higher than they would otherwise be had he been born into an area of social and economic deprivation.

Running parallel must be the question of the small rural schools. We cannot avoid asking whether a child’s chances of success in education are better or worse if he grows up in a rural rather than urban setting? There are many factors associated with the rural school which we have come to know, respect and admire. Not least of these is the very close and personal relationship that develops between the teacher and the pupils. Ronan in his report to the Social Priority Working Party pointed most vociferously to some of the adverse aspects of rural education and suggested that rural deprivation in its own way was equally disadvantageous. The school, he went on to say, was adversely affected by:

- seasonal demands and interests in a farming community;
- time spent in non-productive travelling;
- the special influences and the special difficulties in achieving parental involvement in the life of the school;
- teacher isolation;
- the transition from the family atmosphere of the rural school to the ferment of its large urban counterpart;
- teacher absence;
- lack of teacher involvement in in-service education;
- the limitations in respect of the amount of school-focussed activities that are possible;
- the lack of career opportunities for teachers;
- the nature and organisation of the curriculum;
- the limitations of the library and other services and facilities.

To sum up I put it to you that in regional terms the educational opportunity available to children depends to a great extent upon the variety and quality of education provided in the area in which they live and further that a number of non-educational factors in the environment influences this quality.

What then do we mean when we speak of educational disadvantage? Plowden in her 1967 report was perhaps the first to stress the need to identify local areas where educational handicaps are reinforced by social
handicaps. When we speak of educational disadvantage, we are implying that in each case an aspect of the child's environment outside his formal learning experience is impeding the learning process and causing him to achieve less well than his abilities would allow in more favourable circumstances. We are talking about the child who has the potential to do better than he is currently doing, but because of the handicaps of his society, because of where he lives, is being suppressed. A joint D.H.S.S./S.S.R.C. report, "Transmitted Deprivation," identified a number of associated factors:

- lack of mother love;
- lack of material resources;
- deviation from society's values;
- violence, excessive and stressful experiences.

It may be that the report which has most to offer in terms of suggesting causal factors was that published by the Schools Council Research and Educational Development Project on Compensatory Education. The report suggested that educational disadvantage stemmed from:

- Material deprivation as evidenced by poverty, poor housing conditions and family inadequacy in the physical care of children.

- Cultural deprivation which can be seen as inadequate cultural stimulation by the family of the child's sensory and linguistic development accompanied by a general lack of interest in the child's education. Many of us have worked with such children and are familiar with those who come to school with few words and limited experience and where there is a feeling on the part of the parents that "the school did little for me and I don't see it doing anything for my children either".

- Emotional deprivation brought on, in the main, by family stress. Northern Ireland perhaps more than any other part of these islands has suffered the consequences of family stress and the adversity, for whatever reason, of fatherless or motherless children, where the emotional climate within the home militates against sustained learning. The consequences of the stress of daily life and the emotional strain on the family are that children come to school ill-prepared to receive the type of education that we are currently prepared to give them. It may be that a radical review of the curriculum both in terms of methodology and content is necessary to overcome the antagonism of children so disadvantaged.

If, added to these disadvantages one can, in certain circumstances, point to unsatisfactory school facilities, inadequate teaching, uncaring
teachers and lack of provision for social development then it is easy to see the reality of the cycle of deprivation.

It is important to recognise when referring to educational disadvantage that we are not only considering educational failure in the sense of academic achievement but that we also recognise the behavioural and other associated problems directly attributable to that failure. We are all too well aware of the undesirable growth in the disruptive behaviour of many of our children, behaviour which is all too frequently associated with adverse parental attitudes to school and to all that school stands for. Growing anti-social behaviour on the part of pupils does little to encourage a high standard of staff morale in the school. So it is that all who are involved within the educational system are drawn into the spiral of disadvantage.

The rapid growth in pupil absenteeism can be viewed as but one of the consequences arising out of a neglect of those who come within the cyclic nature of deprivation. In 1977 a study\(^6\) of absenteeism in schools in Northern Ireland was undertaken among 11—16 year olds. It was found that 11.6% of the total 11—16 school population were absent from school for more than 14 days of the Spring term for reasons other than those of physical illness. Of the 14,223 children in this category 57.3% were absent from school with the knowledge, consent and approval of their parents — not just knowledge, not just consent, but with their approval. A further 20% of the parents were unwilling or unable to insist on their children returning to school. In this case there was parental knowledge but not parental consent. A further 12% were absent without the parents' knowledge or consent. Of the 14,223 children absent for more than 14 days in that term 12% could be described as truanting and 77% were absent with the knowledge of their parents. This was a shattering revelation to those involved in the study and it is but one of the problems associated with educational disadvantage; there is a grave danger that such "side effects" can be overlooked in our search for causal factors. A follow-up to the study attempted to correlate absenteeism with those geographical areas which, by whatever criteria used, can be designated as disadvantaged. In all cases the correlation was positive and in many instances the positive correlation was high between the socio-economic problems within the designated area and the levels of pupil absenteeism. Of the 50% of the children who were absent for more than 50% of the term there was a positive correlation of 0.8 between them and adult males unemployed in the area in which they lived, and a similar correlation with juvenile males unemployed in the same areas. It is apparent therefore that one of the effects of unemployment in an area is to cause children to absent themselves from school. It may be that the curriculum which the school offers is not matched to pupils' needs as they see them, it may be that the relationships are not right, it may be that conditions don't match requirements, but whatever, in areas of disadvantage, children are not attending school. In the survey the correlation with owner occupied
housing was the only negative one to be found. Where parents are buying their own homes and are clearly seen to be making an effort the negative correlation is high. It is also worth noting that a high positive correlation exists between those children in receipt of free school meals and those who were absent for more than 50% of the time, that correlation was 0.87.

When we speak of educational disadvantage we are implying that in each case an aspect or aspects of the child's environment outside his formal education are directly impeding learning and are having other undesirable affects.

The second part of our task then is one of identification; Before searching for units of measure however and before putting stickers on children entitled "educationally disadvantaged" we should ensure that we have a worthwhile reason to justify such an identification. There is little value in such an exercise unless we are prepared, are willing and have the facilities and resources, both within individual schools and throughout the educational system, to support those children thus identified.

I wish to put to you three approaches to the task of the identification of the disadvantaged. The first is aimed at the level of the individual child where identification is made in order to give additional resources to the school to be used solely for the benefit of a named child. This approach has been used in parts of the United States under the heading of "Title one Funding". While the identification at individual child level is straightforward, it may be, for example, a stated poverty or low income line, the application of additional funding to an individual within the setting of a school is more complex. Nor does the possibility of imposing any stigma on the child add to its appeal. However easy it may be to identify children at an individual level the ramifications associated with its application have too many potential hazards to make it an acceptable approach within the context of our school system.

An alternative approach to the problem of identification might be on a geographical area basis such as that which pertains in the inner urban programmes that currently operate in Great Britain. Such an approach was used in a Northern Ireland project under the title of "Belfast Areas of Need". In this scheme a multi-disciplinary or inter-departmental body drew up a list of measures relating to housing, unemployment, family incomes and health factors which were used as the basis upon which areas were designated as being inside or outside the B.A.N. areas. The areas identified had the electoral divisions or Wards within the Belfast urban area as the base unit. Additional resources were given to all departments in order to tackle the problems of need in the broadest sense within the identified wards. The intention was to increase employment in those areas, to improve the quality of housing, to improve the educational facilities in the area and to add to the public amenities. The programme
was seen as a long-term project. In broad educational terms the additional resources were to be spent on:

— minor works such as renovation and redecoration;

— staffing;

— curriculum projects;

— the promotion of in-service initiatives.

— the development of a pool of curriculum co-ordinators.

At individual school level the additional funds were used to:

— boost staff morale through an increase in the number of posts of Special Responsibility and in an improved pupil/teacher ratio;

— develop links between home and school;

— introduce a greater degree of freedom in the school's use of its own resources.

— support schools in curriculum planning and in alternative programme planning;

— support staff development;

— support inter-agency development;

— support programmes for parents and for parenting.

Despite the good intentions a number of administrative difficulties arose. Because the areas were identified on a Ward basis it was found that in many cases the secondary schools which serviced them did not fall within the designated Ward areas. They did not therefore qualify for additional funding although the main body of their pupils at an individual level would have been entitled to extra finances. It appeared to those from the educational sector who were involved in the Project that whatever area-based procedure is adopted there will always be more children who are educationally disadvantaged in schools outside those schools which are receiving funding.

Harbison⁸ in reporting to the Social Priority Working Party suggested that whatever indices were used to determine educational disadvantage they should always be:

— relevant i.e. agreement must be reached that the indices used will
identify areas where educational handicaps are reinforced by social handicaps;

— quantifiable, standardised and relatively readily available;

— in a form that could be readily combined into a single factor score;

— applicable to all schools;

— without stigma.

He stressed that whatever indices were used to identify need they should never have the effect of penalising schools. Mainly on his evidence the Working Party\(^9\) agreed to adopt the following measures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Low income</td>
<td>(a) Percentage pupils receiving free school meals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Percentage of guardians of pupils out of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Percentage of guardians of pupils in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Family stress</td>
<td>(d) Percentage families with 4 or more children.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(e) Percentage of pupils not living with both natural parents.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(f) Percentage of pupils living in poor housing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Individual Problems</td>
<td>(g) Percentage backward children.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(h) Percentage children rated disturbed on behavioural scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(i) Percentage children absent beyond criterion level.</td>
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The adverse affects of educational disadvantage are disturbing. To bring about change will undoubtedly require additional resources. The "critical mass" is in the order of 20% above normal per pupil expenditure. It is widely held that additional funding below this level has little if any worthwhile impact. In order to maintain profitable funding it may be necessary
to concentrate even more on fewer children consequently calling for
greater refinements in the identification procedures. Can our society
afford the increased expenditure that is necessary? Can our society afford
not to increase its expenditure?

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An Evaluation of Educational Intervention Programmes

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The principle of Equality of Educational Opportunity is one that is widely accepted in Western civilisation. In its most simple form this principle requires that all children — irrespective of irrelevant criteria such as gender, class or religious belief — should have equal access to educational facilities. It is true to say that in this century great strides have been made towards providing such equality of access. Nevertheless it is unfortunately also true that participation and success rates in education are highly related to social class membership.

One group of children who perform particularly poorly in school has been variously described as culturally deprived; educationally deprived or socially disadvantaged. A U.N.E.S.C.O. meeting in Hamburg adopted the term educationally disadvantaged and defined a child as being disadvantaged "if for socio-cultural reasons, he comes to school with knowledge skills and attitudes, which impede learning and make adjustment difficult". (Passow, 1970). This definition suggests that the environment which the child encounters in the four or five years before coming to school strongly influences the development of certain personal characteristics which in the case of the disadvantaged child make it difficult to take on the work of the school. It does not, it should be noted, imply that the personal characteristics of children described as being disadvantaged are inferior in any way to those of other children rather it suggests that there is a discontinuity between the home and school experience of such children.

School as an institution is shaped by and tends to reflect the dominant values of a society. In our society those values tend to be middle class ones. A child from a middle class home has a marked advantage in school over children from other classes since the home supports the work of the school and what children are expected to learn at school is simply a continuation and development of what they have learnt at home. So, when at age four or five, children go from a situation where most of their time is spent at home to one in which their time is divided between home and school the transition is effected relatively smoothly in the case of the middle class child but with great difficulty in the case of the disadvantaged child. Not only may the initial period of transition be difficult, but there is evidence that the problems of disadvantaged children increase as they grow older as manifested by growing problems for the classroom teacher and a continued deterioration in the scholastic performance of the child.
(Deutsch and associates, 1967; Martin, 1979). Many programmes to help the disadvantaged have taken the form of trying to overcome the discontinuity between home and school by providing children in the preschool years with opportunities to develop educationally relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes and thereby better prepare them for the work of the school.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Before turning to educational programmes for the disadvantaged I want to look briefly at research on the nature of disadvantage. The inclusion of this kind of research in a paper on intervention programmes can be justified on the grounds that it was conducted primarily to facilitate the development of intervention programmes and its findings have, in fact, been influential in the formulation of many programmes.

Much of this research consists of attempts to document ways in which disadvantaged children differ from their middle class counterparts. As a result I will tend to use middle class performance and characteristics as the criterion or yardstick, though as Gordon (1968) has pointed out this is not the only way the subject can be treated; for example, instead of talking of the inability of the disadvantaged to delay gratification, we might talk of the inability of the middle class to enjoy the present or of their fear of the future.

Intelligence

Disadvantaged children perform relatively poorly on IQ tests (Brugha, 1971; McGee, 1970). In spite of a vast amount of research in this area, there is very little consensus about the origin or nature of the observed differences in measured IQ between the disadvantaged and their non-disadvantaged peers. There have been considerable differences of opinion in the literature about whether the differences are due to genetic causes (Eysenck, 1971; Jensen, 1969) or environmental factors (Bloom, 1964; Hunt, 1969). It has also been argued (e.g., Riessman, 1962; Rohwer, 1971) that IQ tests may systematically underestimate the learning ability of children from disadvantaged backgrounds simply because such children have had limited exposure to the kinds of tests and materials of which the tests are comprised. A full discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the fact remains that the knowledge and skills which IQ tests measure tend to be poorly developed in young disadvantaged children. Since this set of knowledge and skills is also important for school success, the disadvantage is serious.

Language

The language of the disadvantaged is an area that has received considerable attention over the years. Earlier views stressed the restricted nature of lower, class language and are typified by the following

In practically every aspect of language development that has been evaluated quantitatively, young disadvantaged children have been found to function at the level of average children who are a year or more younger (Bereiter and Englemann, 1966, p. 4).

This kind of position no longer seems tenable. Linguists have pointed out that no language variety is better developed than any other. Labov (1969) for example, has demonstrated that the speech of American negroes is as internally consistent and as organised as many of the more accepted forms of spoken English. It seems important, therefore that we do not label the speech of the disadvantaged as deficient since it is probably more accurate to view it simply as a variety of English which is different from but not inferior to the variety used by the middle class.

Nevertheless because middle class language is the language in schools, if disadvantaged children are to succeed in the existing school system they must learn to discard their own language and speech patterns in favour of those of the school, at least while they are actually in school. Some writers have suggested that the problems of the disadvantaged in attuning to the language of the school are analogous to those of learning a second language (Baratz & Baratz, 1970).

Personality and Social Characteristics

In the area of personality and interpersonal relations, important differences have been noted between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children (cf. Gordon, 1968). Among the findings are the following: disadvantaged children are less likely to choose to delay gratification preferring immediate reward; they are likely to be more aggressive in demonstrating disapproval; they have low self-esteem and have difficulty in maintaining their attention and motivation in school situations.

Home-background Characteristics

Another type of research on the characteristics of the disadvantaged which is oriented towards intervention is that which not only describes disadvantaged children but also attempts to explain the development of their characteristics in terms of home-background variables. Some of the defining characteristics of the disadvantaged child can be attributed relatively easily to the more obvious physical and demographic aspects of poverty: poor accommodation and size of family, for example. Other characteristics seem to have their origins in more subtle aspects of the disadvantaged home. Some important advances have been made, for example, in understanding the child rearing and socialisation practices in disadvantaged families. It is now possible to better understand the behaviour of a disadvantaged child by referring to parental behaviour. Archer and Kellaghan (1975) have summarised the ways in which disadvantaged homes appear to differ from middle class ones.
In such homes, there is less personal interaction between mother and child (Hunt, 1969; Kagan, 1969; Radin & Kamii, 1965) and the child is less likely to receive explanations from his parents for things that occur in the environment (Robinson & Rackstraw, 1972). The child is not encouraged to discriminate characteristics of the environment, to note similarities, differences and relationships (Hunt, 1969); his language models are out of tune with the models in operation in schools (Bernstein, 1971) and books and other materials which enhance language development are absent (Bernstein, 1960; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Olim et al., 1969). Finally, parents of disadvantaged children are not well attuned to the cognitive level of their children (Hess & Shipman, 1967), p. 29.

The differences in socialization patterns are in turn, of course, the result of larger social structures particularly of the system of roles which society creates for its members (Bernstein, 1971). For example, a research finding, often mentioned in the literature, describes the tendency of lower class parents to rely on what are called status-oriented control techniques to regulate the behaviour of their children. In other words, they are more authoritarian in their approach to children than are middle class parents (Cook-Gumpertz, 1973; Hess & Shipman, 1965). It has been suggested that this results from the fact that lower class parents generally occupy low power positions occupationally and socially and that the greater use of authority in the home is a method of coping with this situation (Archer and Kellaghan, 1979; Scheinfeld, 1969).

INTERVENTION ATTEMPTS

A feature of current thinking on educational disadvantage which I have tried to emphasise so far in this paper has been the shift away from what has been called the deficit position in favour of what has been called the "difference" position. The deficit position basically sees the life style of the disadvantaged as falling below the standards set by society in general and by schools in particular. The currently more acceptable difference position on the other hand talks in terms of "sub-cultures" and of a discontinuity between home and school. This consideration poses a serious question about preschool programmes for the disadvantaged which in the early years were termed "compensatory", with the obvious implication that something about the children involved was sub-standard. Rejection of the deficit position renders the term "compensation" inappropriate. However preschool intervention remains a valid notion, in as much as it may help to prepare the child for a change from one subculture (that of the home) to another (that of the school). In these terms preschool intervention might be seen as an attempt to remove the discontinuity of experience between the home and the school.

The best known and most widespread attempt at early intervention
for the disadvantaged is represented by a series of programmes implemented as part of the Head Start project in the United States. The types of strategies employed under Head Start varied enormously in terms of the nature and intensity of the intervention. Therefore overall assessments of the success or otherwise of Head Start are not really appropriate. Nevertheless the publication of an initial evaluation in the late 60s (Westinghouse Learning Corporation/Ohio University, 1969) gave rise to a widespread belief that Head Start had been a failure. I will briefly return to this in a moment, however, I want first to look at a series of evaluations of smaller scale programmes. I will look separately at two types of intervention: those conducted in group settings in specially provided preschools and those which attempt to in the home of the disadvantaged child.

**Intervention in Group Settings**

In a review of studies of preschool intervention deemed to be methodologically sound Bronfenbrenner (1975) suggests the following:

1. In almost all cases children showed substantial gains in measured IQ during the first year of intervention and were found to come close to the average IQ for their age.

2. Programmes which pursued explicitly stated cognitive objectives in a structured manner produced greater gains than play-oriented nursery programmes.

3. Age of entry into a programme or duration of a programme were not found to be associated with gains in intellectual functioning.

4. In general the observed gains in IQ were not sustained or translated to improved school achievement. The period of sharpest decline in functioning occurred after entry to school, although there are some indications that a continuation of intervention in the school years may offset somewhat the magnitude of this decline.

5. The benefit derived from preschool intervention appears to be related to severity of disadvantage, with those who are most deprived profiting least from the intervention.

6. Some slight evidence exists that the long term effects of preschool programmes may be enhanced by a high level of family involvement in the original programme.

More recent reviews (Irving & Darlington, 1982; Palmer & Anderson, 1979) which involved some reanalysis of original data from project Head Start and other projects provide a somewhat less pessimistic view of preschool programmes than that presented by Bronfenbrenner. These reviews suggest that early intervention reduces the likelihood of a child
being retained at a particular grade level or being assigned to a special class. In addition some small effects on achievement in reading and mathematics have been noted. Nevertheless, the overall impression remains one of substantial gains occurring in the early stages of intervention with subsequent dissipation, especially during the school years.

In the Republic of Ireland the largest single effort at preschool intervention and the only one to have been subjected to a systematic evaluation is what has become known as the Rutland Street Project. Established in 1968, the preschool had two broad aims: firstly to facilitate in the child the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes, appropriate for later school success, and secondly to involve parents as closely as possible in the education of the children. It has been noted by teachers and others that the general attitude of parents in the area towards school was one of apathy and even hostility (Holland, 1979).

In relation to the first objective, a structured curriculum was developed. The curriculum drew heavily on existing theories of cognitive development and set out the kinds of activities which are felt to be helpful in the development of logical thinking and in the acquisition of school related skills and concepts. Specifically the cognitive curriculum contained suggestions relating to the development of Piagetian concepts of classification, seriation and one to one correspondence. Language occupied a central role in the curriculum and methods of vocabulary building and suggested modes of teacher-child interaction were outlined. While personality and social development were also catered for this aspect of the programme was far less structured than the cognitive and language areas.

The second major feature of the programme was that a high level of parental involvement was sought. This was not done through formal organisations like P.T.A.s, but through informal contact between teacher and parent. Teachers visited the children's homes before they entered school. Parents, particularly mothers, frequently visited the classrooms and spent some time observing the teacher at work. In addition, at the beginning of the project three social workers were employed, part of whose function was to acquaint the families with the aims and workings of the school.

The formal evaluation of the Rutland St. Project (Kellaghan 1977) set out to establish what impact if any the preschool programme had on the first group of 90 children who entered the preschool in 1969 (the experimental group). This was done firstly by a series of assessments carried out at yearly intervals, before, during and after the programme and secondly by means of a comparison of the experimental group at age eight, with the performance of a similar group of eight year old children (the control group).

We will look first at the progress of the experimental group over the period 1969-74. The basic measure used was the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale.
On entering the preschool, the experimental group had a mean IQ of 92.99. Tested after a year in the preschool, this figure had risen to 96.44. By the end of the preschool programme the mean IQ had risen to 99.44; thus the group were performing at the level of the general population. However, when the group was tested a year later they had spent a year in primary school, the mean IQ had dropped to 95.06. From the first to the second year of primary school, the mean IQ remained more or less unchanged but by the time the children were eight years of age their mean performance was down to 90.91. This figure is about the same as the initial one. In other words, no sustained gain was produced over the five years of the project. In this respect the Rutland Street data are similar to those obtained in the American studies that have been reviewed. The preschool appeared to have some beneficial effect but many of the advantages created were lost after the child entered school.

The picture is not quite as gloomy as it might seem, however, because we can predict that, in the absence of intervention, the mean IQ would have dropped even further than it actually did. This can be seen if we compare the performance of the experimental group at age eight with a control group of 60 eight year olds living in the Rutland Street area in 1969. The Stanford-Binet IQ of the experimental group at age eight was, as we saw, 90.91. This figure compares favourably with the score of the control group which was 84.71. Thus, although the score of the experimental group fell by almost 10 points between the end of the preschool period and the time of final testing, it was still significantly better than the score of comparable eight year olds who had not been exposed to intervention.

A short interview carried out with a sample of mothers who had had children in the programme revealed highly positive feelings about the preschool. This contrasts sharply with earlier reports of negative feelings among parents towards the school. In addition scores of experimental group mothers on scales measuring environmental processes (Dave, 1963; Wolf, 1964) were significantly higher than the scores of control group mothers, indicating that an experimental group child was more likely than a control group child to receive support for school work at home. It seems from this that the programme had some success in achieving one of its primary aims — increasing the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

In general, the preschool programme seems to have done two things, firstly, it raised the level of cognitive functioning of the children and secondly it helped bring about changes in the homes. Both of these one would expect should have resulted in increased school success. The available evidence does not however allow us to conclude this has happened in that the long term performance of experimental group children at age eight was not found to differ from that of the control group on tests of English and Irish reading (Kellaghan, 1977).
It should be noted that the presence of an innovative project like a preschool in a depressed area has consequences which go beyond the domain of scholastic performance and which are almost certainly positive. In the case of Rutland Street, it is clear that morale and a sense of community responsibility were strengthened through the operation of the preschool. This was shown very clearly in the late 1970s when a proposal to cut back on preschool provision was actively and systematically opposed by local residents (Holland, 1979). The importance of the effects at community level of early intervention is also stressed in a recent reappraisal of project Head Start (Zigler & Valentine, 1979).

Partly as a response to the perception that IQ gains were not being translated into improved scholastic performance an attempt to extend some features of the "Rutland Street approach" to the conventional infant classroom was initiated in 1974. An experimental programme was set up in which the procedures used with four year olds in the preschool were used in Junior Infant classes and an extension of these procedures was developed in time for the children's passage into Senior infants at approximately age five. Seven schools in the Dublin area which seemed suitable for the new programme were identified on the basis of inspectors' reports and their principals and managers agreed to participate in a pilot project.

An evaluation of the "Seven Schools" experiment conducted between 1975 and 1978 proved generally favourable (Archer, 1979; Holland, 1977). Teachers and other project staff were found to be enthusiastic about the programme and the performance of children who had participated in it was found to be relatively satisfactory and superior to that of a control group on a series of specially devised reading and mathematics tests. On the basis of this evaluation, a decision was taken to continue the work of curriculum development and to set up a project in which the new material was made available to a sample of teachers working in infant classes in disadvantaged areas. Over a two-year period, the reactions of the sample of teachers to the new material were monitored. Although much of the analysis of the data obtained remains to be done, we are hopeful that the material will prove to be a useful addition to the armoury of teachers of infants, particularly those who deal with large numbers of disadvantaged children.

Home-based Intervention

In the light of what appeared go be disappointing results of preschool programmes conducted in group settings (e.g., Jensen, 1969), educators began to undertake programmes which sought to intervene directly in the home of the child.

The rationale for home-based intervention derives from the belief that the pattern of interaction between preschool disadvantaged children and their parents (paru'cularly the mother) acts to inhibit the children's later
scholastic progress. Support for this belief comes from those studies mentioned earlier which provided evidence of differences between the interaction patterns of disadvantaged homes. In the broadest sense home intervention can be seen as an attempt to influence mothers to behave in ways which will ultimately be of educational benefit to their children.

The strategy of home intervention usually involves a series of regular visits by a "tutor" to the home of the disadvantaged child. While some of the visit may involve actual tutoring of the child, the main focus is an attempt to engage the mother in activities designed to prepare her child for school. Teaching strategies are demonstrated to the mother and useful opportunities for mother-child interactions are emphasised.

A number of experiments have been carried out in the United States (e.g., Klaus & Gray 1965; Levenstein 1970; Weikart & Lambie 1968) designed to assess the effectiveness of home intervention programmes. In most of these studies, gains on IQ tests and other measures of cognitive functioning have been found to be associated with the intervention.

In his review, mentioned earlier, Bronfenbrenner (1975) suggests that while the gains produced by school based programmes tend in general to disappear after the children enter the regular school, some of the home based programmes have produced gains in IQ which are in relative terms large and are sustained for at least two years after the completion of intervention. In addition, in contrast with studies of institutional intervention, gains in home-based programmes tend to be cumulative from year to year and are related to the age at which the child enters the programme. Furthermore there is some evidence that intervention of this sort may benefit not only the children who are directly involved but also their younger siblings (Gray & Klaus, 1970). It should be noted however that as with school based programmes, there is little evidence that gains in IQ have been translated to improved school performance.

Bronfenbrenner (1975) argues that the more successful home programmes are those in which the home visitor adopts, what one might call, a low profile approach. Rather than pose as an expert, the visitor presents herself to the mother simply as someone with "helpful hints" about books and educational toys and emphasises that the mother is in fact the chief educational agent in the preschool years. In line with this argument is the reported success of programmes which used members of the local community rather than professional teachers as home visitors (Levenstein, 1970). The effectiveness of home intervention seems to be restricted when the child is participating in some other educational programme (for example attending a preschool); this may suggest that in this kind of situation it is difficult to convince the mother of the importance of her own teaching role.

A number of small scale studies of home intervention have been carried out in Ireland. The data from these studies are not quite as encouraging as the results of comparable American studies in terms of children's
performance on standardized tests. In a separate paper (Archer & Kellaghan, 1979) we have suggested caution in interpreting Bronfenbrenner's conclusions on home-based intervention which we see as somewhat over-optimistic. Nevertheless, it should be said that the impressions of those who have worked on the Irish home programmes were favourable and the reactions of mothers who participated in them was overwhelmingly so. If such impressions can be taken as an index of programme effectiveness there is no reason in the light of the Irish experience to disagree with Bronfenbrenner's conclusion that home based interventions are likely to be more effective than school based ones.

Conclusion

Taking the research on school-based and home-based intervention together, one's conclusions must be mixed. While some advances have been made, it is patently true that results have not lived up to the expectations which were held when the preschool movement began in the early sixties.

Part of the reason for the relatively disappointing results of early intervention may be due to a preoccupation on the part of researchers with demonstrating effects (often narrowly conceived solely in terms of intellectual functioning). One wonders if it is not premature to be concerned about the effectiveness of early intervention in the absence of a clear understanding of the nature of disadvantage and the development of models of intervention designed to deal with that disadvantage.

Beyond the difficulties of evaluation procedures however, there is perhaps a more basic reason for the failure of preschool education to make a significant impact on the later school life of the disadvantaged child. This emerges if we reexamine the definition of disadvantage presented earlier in the paper. There we defined a child as disadvantaged, if "for socio-cultural reasons he comes to school with knowledge skills and attitudes which impede learning and make adjustment difficult". (Passow, 1970). I noted earlier that this definition implied a discontinuity between the home and school experiences of the child. Although there are two elements contributing to the discontinuity which the child experiences, the home and the school, we have concentrated all our efforts on one element, the home. We have tried to compensate for home experiences in the case of school based programmes and have actually tried to change these experiences in the case of home-based intervention. This bias is reflected in some of the things we say about disadvantage. We talk, for example, about the disadvantaged child being unable to cope with the demands made by the school. It would be equally valid to talk of the school being unable to cope with the demands of the disadvantaged child (Gordon, 1968).

A number of aspects of school policy and administration, which cause the disadvantaged difficulties and which might be amenable to change are worth speculating about.
School Organisation  The sense of order, ritual and regimentation, which is common in many schools is something alien to a child whose home life is characterised by a series of unpredictable events. In school, for example, punctuality is a highly valued virtue, in the disadvantaged home it is not a particularly meaningful concept. It is often noted that disadvantaged children have a low tolerance for motor inactivity, yet schools require that children sit quietly in desks for long periods of time (cf. Holland, 1979, for a discussion of some possible types of reorganisation.)

Teacher Training  Another obvious area in need of attention is the question of preparing teachers for work with the disadvantaged. At present, very little special training exists in spite of the fact that it is probably true to say that instruction of disadvantaged pupils requires skills which are quite different from those required for instruction of middle class pupils. One area where teachers of the disadvantaged seem to encounter particular difficulties is in relation to language. As I suggested earlier middle class teachers and disadvantaged pupils may speak different varieties of English. If it is reasonable to expect the pupil to learn the language the teacher uses, it also seems reasonable to provide the teacher with training in the type of language pupils use.

General orientation of the school  Competition plays an important part in the present school system arising out of what has been called the "achievement ethic" (Getzels 1974). Under this system there is little need for immediate tangible reward since success and "getting on" are satisfying in themselves. This is a philosophy which does not come easily to a child who comes from a community based on a survival rather than an "achievement" ethic. The possibility of schools stressing cooperation rather than competition between pupils and possible changes in the reward system of schools are innovations which would be likely to contribute to an easing of the problems of the disadvantaged.

The particular aspects of school policy and administration I have mentioned were introduced to indicate the scale of the reappraisal which I believe to be necessary if our schools are to adjust successfully to the needs of disadvantaged children. There is not much evidence that the kind of radical reappraisal which seems to be required is occurring.

When government and educational administrators are pressed for action on educational disadvantage the typical response is to provide schools for the disadvantaged with additional support for the kinds of resources that are available to all schools. New schools are built, grants for books and equipment are increased or extra remedial teachers are recruited. All of these things are worthwhile and much more could be done but basically this kind of response amounts to little more than hyping up or intensifying the existing treatment. This treatment which works reasonably well with the majority of pupils, has clearly not succeeded in overcoming the problems of the disadvantaged. It seems to me unlikely that simply
increasing the dosage will bring about more than a marginal improvement. None of this is meant to devalue accumulated educational wisdom or the fund of professional expertise that exists in the educational community. However, in relation to the minority of pupils with whom this seminar is concerned, conventional educational strategies, however successful in other contexts, may simply not be appropriate.

Finally, it should be noted that the root causes of educational disadvantage are political and economic in that the problem reflects the unequal distribution of power and wealth in society. It is unreasonable to expect that educational intervention alone can break the cycle of poverty.

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Economic and Social Policy and Educational Disadvantage

D. F. Hannan

Educational and Social Research Institute

INTRODUCTION

As a sociologist I find myself in a situation where economic or budgetary matters are the predominant policy considerations in education. In reaction to this budgetary crisis, however, we need to keep our main social objectives as a people constantly in mind and not allow them to be submerged by purely accounting considerations. These, by and large, leave unquestioned the underlying bases of current taxation and expenditure programmes. As a sociologist I would like to suggest that there are a number of alternatives to current policies which are being left out of consideration and which we need to pay very close attention to.

I have four objectives in this paper:—

(i) Set the main policy constraints within which education policy will develop in the next 4/5 years: mainly demographic and budgetary constraints.

(ii) To discuss what should be our main educational priorities to 1986/7. Should we continue on the way we have been going— or are there certain problems arising from this direction which need to be corrected. Do we need to redirect our educational resources towards different objectives or different priorities?

I shall suggest — as we have seen at this seminar — that there are very serious problems arising from current policies, particularly class inequalities in educational achievement and especially those arising amongst early school leavers.

(iii) How does the broader framework of social policy relate to these problem areas in education?

— family income support policies
— housing policy
— health policy

(iv) Finally, how can we finance new developments in this area— particularly given our very serious budgetary position?
— (i) Can we redirect expenditure within education?
— (ii) Are there other areas of Social Expenditure — Health, Housing etc., — from which funding can be redirected?
— (iii) What about taxation?

POLICY CONSTRAINTS

The main constraint is a budgetary one — that of a very high level of exchequer borrowing which all three main parties are determined to bring under control within the next 4—5 years.

Between 1977 and 1981 total exchequer borrowing had grown from £545m. to £1722m — from 10% to 17% of G.N.P. In other words between 1977 and 1981 the major expansion in government services and in the remuneration of public servants was mainly paid for by borrowing rather than by taxation. Total expenditure on Education, Health, Social Welfare rose from 22 to 27 per cent of G.N.P. Indeed in the same period we actually reduced our tax base. Whereas rates, capital taxes and estate duties etc. amounted for 9 per cent of total tax yield in 1977 this was reduced to 4 per cent in 1981 (See Economic and Social Policy, 1981 and 1982, N.E.S.C. reports Nos 62 and 70).

This level of borrowing is, however, no longer sustainable — the three main political parties having united in their policies of wiping the debt out over a 4—6 year period; the two main parties seeing very little room for any taxation growth. Therefore, the essential policy is to reduce it by reducing expenditure, or by increasing expenditure by less than the growth in G.N.P. The main areas likely to be faced with effective cuts are Health, Education, Housing and Welfare.

To take one example of the size of cuts involved - the "current budget deficit" of £800m in 1981 was 29 per cent greater than total current expenditure in education;and in 1982 will be closer to 36 per cent greater! (N.E.S.C., Economic and Social Policy, 1981). Between 1976-1981, for instance, total expenditure increases were of the order:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>+27%</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>+30%</td>
<td>Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare</td>
<td>+27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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If we are to reduce the deficit significant cuts in these expenditure are almost inevitable.

These cuts in expenditure are coming at a time when there is continuing rapid growth in participation at all levels of education; and increasing growth in demands for expenditure in many of the social
areas. It is expected, for instance, that over the period 1981-86 pupil number changes will be of the following order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projected Pupil No. Changes 1981-86</th>
<th>Relative Cost per Pupil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First level 2-3%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second level 8 - 9%</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third level 19-23%</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
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</table>


In other words the least expensive education will remain relatively stable — whereas there will be rapid growth in the most expensive education. So that the overall per pupil cost of education will increase rapidly as participation expands in the senior cycle of 2nd level and in 3rd level.

Given these demands for increased resources, combined with repayments of government borrowing and a stated belief by both main political parties that we have reached the limits of taxation, we come to the simple conclusion that we cannot continue to finance these educational developments as we have done heretofore.

In these circumstances we need to look both at the assumptions about taxation limits as well as the tax base. And we need to re-examine the objectives we are trying to serve in educating all our children and whether the central priorities are being met. What one would really fear in these circumstances of stringent cutbacks is that they would substantially reinforce or exacerbate the gross class inequalities that heretofore exist in the system, as well as reduce the effectiveness of educational programmes. For example, it is envisaged in the Way Forward that capital expenditure in education is to be held at its 1982 level of £94 million ("in nominal terms") up to 1987. Given continuing inflation and the rapid expansion in pupil numbers expected at second and third level - this envisages a very fast decline in capital expenditure. This plan does not discuss current expenditure — except in terms of income restraint. But if the latter is not obtainable, at least to the level expected, very real cuts in current expenditure can also be expected.

Given also the rapidly increasing demographic pressures for expenditure expansion beyond the compulsory ages, and the class selective character of students mobile to third level, it may be politically very difficult to effect significant economies at this level. "Across the board" cuts would very severely worsen current inequalities. Even in these circum-
stances I would argue that we need to redirect expenditure and substantially increase educational resources at much earlier stages, and I would argue that we need to do so even as taxation and expenditure constraints become tighter. Perhaps such a time of crisis is the only time when public opinion, or a sufficiently powerful political will, can be mobilised to overcome the institutional inertias and interests that underlie current educational provision arrangements as well as other expenditure programmes, and that allow us to redesign or redirect them to meet more fundamental social objectives.

PRIORITIES IN POLICY TO 1986.

Given these expenditure constraints we need to think very carefully indeed about how we are spending our money at the present time and whether we are spending it in ways which are achieving the objectives we have set ourselves. We had many objectives. For instance, when we went into the "Free Education" scheme one of these was to increase access to and to help equalise opportunities across all social class and income levels.

Given the very rapid expansion in participation rates at second level there is no doubt that the "Free Scheme" has been enormously successful in that respect. Between 1967 and 1981, for instance, the percentage of boys' and girls' cohorts doing the Inter Cert, increased from around 25 to about 75 per cent for boys and from around 32 to 82 per cent for girls, an extraordinary improvement by any standards. It is clear also that if one examines levels of class inequality in participation at second and third level — it has shown some decline. But at the senior cycle of post-primary, and particularly at third level, the glaring class inequalities present have largely been unaffected. (See Rottman and Hannan et alia, 1982, Clancy, 1982; Breen et alia, 1983).

For example, comparing University participation rates for students from professional backgrounds with students from unskilled manual backgrounds the following inequalities were estimated to have existed in 1965/6 and 1978/9.

Table 1: The Participation rate of third level students from different social backgrounds, 1965 and 1978/79

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1965 University</th>
<th>1978/79 University</th>
<th>1978/79 Other Third Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled Manual</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3% (Rottman et alia, 1982, p.61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28
In relative terms the participation rate has increased at a much faster rate at the bottom than at the top so that there is an overall relative decline in inequality. But the absolute advantage for the middle class was so great at the beginning that, in fact, the absolute gap between them and the lower working class has widened very considerably. In Regional Technical Colleges, however, a moderate improvement has occurred.

In other words the increased public expenditure on second and third level education has gone disproportionately to the better off parents, mainly because of differences between social classes in the economic, social and cultural resources which they possess and which allowed them to take full advantage of "free education". (See Tussing, 1978). There are, however, substantial institutional "biasses" in our second and third level educational system which are almost designed to amplify or maximise class differentials in educational mobility.

The most serious problem has been amongst the educationally disadvantaged, largely the "dropouts". Even by 1980/81 up to 14 per cent of boys and 10 per cent of girls had left school before age 15 - the statutory school leaving age; most of them between the ages of 14 to 15.

Estimates made from the National Manpower Service (NMS) "School Leaver Surveys" (1980, '81, '82) indicate that about 10 per cent of boys and 8 per cent of girls leave school without any certification, with about 20 per cent of boys and 10 per cent of girls with less than Inter Cert. qualifications.

Some further analysis of those NMS results shows that about two thirds of these early leavers are from manual worker families (40-50 per cent from unskilled/semi-skilled manual), while only a quarter of those who completed the Leaving Certificate come from the same social background. To express these class inequalities another way: 45 per cent of boys from unskilled and semi skilled manual backgrounds leave school with less than the Intermediate Certificate, compared to less than 1 per cent of those from upper middle class backgrounds. Only about half of the former go on beyond the Inter. Cert, compared to 99 per cent of the latter. (Hannan, Breen et alia, 1983).

The whole structure of our expanding educational system and its rapid increase in public financing, has clearly been to the advantage of the middle class. Unless specific policies are devised to correct this bias, it will inevitably become more unequal, not less. (See also Tussing, 1978). The effect of educational level on unemployment has become more serious as the economic crisis deepened.
Table 2: Percentage of boys unemployed of those with different levels of education. (N.M.S., School Leavers Surveys, 1980 to 1983).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>% Unemployed or Seeking Work</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Group Cert.:</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Leaving Cert.:</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Added later</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The probability of unemployment is between two and a half to five times greater among the early dropouts than amongst those with the Leaving Certificate. As youth unemployment has been growing faster than that amongst older workers, and the momentum of the unemployment problem continues, the position of the poorly educated work seeker becomes increasingly more serious. Almost half of those who left school in 1981/82 without any certification remain unemployed one year afterwards. There has been a long-term secular decline in manual and labouring employment and the recession has had a particularly serious effect on this. The children of what one could call the traditional Irish working class, in unskilled manual or labouring employment, are now in a very precarious position. Their traditional manual or employment outlets are being closed down while children of the middle classes are beginning to compete with them for positions as skilled manual apprentices. That class has always had high levels of unemployment or frequent spells of temporary unemployment. In urban areas particularly their communal forms and cultural characteristics were traditionally such as to make it very difficult for their children (in terms of style of life, values and even household facilities etc.) to compete successfully in educational achievement, so that almost all research studies of educational underachievement show its concentration amongst lower working class families. So that as traditional employment outlets are closed off and education becomes more crucial in occupational placement (Hannan, Breen et alia, 1983; Rottman et alia, 1982) their position becomes increasingly more marginal.

The disadvantaged position of these families is not merely a matter of educational deprivation or even of educational policy; family income support policy is involved, as is housing, health and employment policy. In all of these areas, given the pressure on budgetary resources and the essential political weakness of this constituency, the class is, paradoxically, more open to and far more responsive to budgetary cuts. So, given the pressures on government finances, unless countervailing pressures can be built up for a more redistributive and more effective social policy, current class inequalities in education and other areas will almost inevitably increase. As structural changes in the economy continue to erode their traditional employment base and educational/training policy fails to cope with the resulting problem we continue to promote and even augment a rather large underclass or lumpen proletariat which is effectively
institutionally disfranchised: uneducated, unemployable, and increasingly more alienated.

Family Income Support Policy

As for family income support policy, with some budget exceptions in recent years there has been a long term decline in the relative value of family income support policies: children's allowances, tax allowances for children etc. This policy contrasts very sharply with that of most other E.E.C. countries where such support has been increasing. (See N.E.S.C. Report, No. 47, 1980). As a result the "poverty cycle", to use Rowntree's (1899) term, the period of poverty in working class households where there are an increasing number of young children dependent on a single and inflexible wage, has been becoming more serious in working class families, particularly where the head of households is unemployed or in low paid employment. This countervailing trend, coinciding with increasing educational needs for children to remain in school into their late teens, has enormous social implications for all families but particularly for those with low incomes. It badly needs correction. (See N.E.S.C. Report 47, 1980; N.E.S.C. Report No. 61; Rottman et alia, 1982).

Housing Policy

Even if we take a very short period of time, 1976—1981, when Public Capital Expenditure on housing increased in real terms by 28 per cent; the actual amount devoted to local authority (LA) housing declined and the number of LA houses complex declined from 7,300 to 5,700, while the number on the waiting list increased from 19,200 to 29,000. (See N.E.S.C., Economic and Social Policy, 1981, 1982).

Increasingly expenditure has been directed towards the direct and indirect subsidisation of private house purchase. There has been a substantial diversion of resources away from the poorest and the most deprived sector. Again the interrelationship of different policies amplifies educational and related social disadvantages.

Taxation

From a situation in the mid 1970s when up to 11 per cent of total taxes were levied on property (rates etc) or capital the yield from these taxes declined to around 4 per cent of the total by 1982 (Economic and Social Policy, 1982; N.E.S.C. Rept. No. 70, 1983). At the same time indirect taxes (V.A.T.), which are highly regressive, have increased markedly, and income tax rates and the income level at which they "bite" have increased in severity. In other words the burden of overall taxation has been shifted away from the medium and large propertied class to the disadvantage of the salaried middle class and that of poorer people in general. As a result there is significant leeway now in the taxation base. Instead of cutting expenditure should we not consider returning to a reformed rates system which would be progressive, and to those pre-wealth-tax capital regimes which raised more revenue than any of their
successors? After all, part of the reason for the high budget deficit is the tax giveaways. In fact one could say that there is nearly as much leeway in the taxation base as there is in reducing budgets in Health, Housing or Welfare. There is, however, no El Dorado in the tax base argument — unless high levels of other taxation are also kept up significant real cuts in expenditure will have to be carried out.

CONCLUSION
Given the fiscal and demographic constraints under which educational policy must be phrased within the next few years what room for maneouvre have we got? If we assume we have reached the "limits of taxation", (both in terms of its base and of its yield), if we cannot reallocate expenditure from other areas like Health or Agriculture or Housing, and if there is very little leeway for reallocation within the Education budget itself - from third level or senior cycle second level to the compulsory age groups, for instance — and if the current budget deficit is to be wiped out by 1986/7, then very damaging "across the board" cuts will have to be made within the Education budget that will have much more serious impact on the socially deprived than on the well off.

But have we "too much" taxation? What is our standard or who do we compare ourselves to? The British comparison is completely inapt — it is a mature industrial country with substantially lower dependency rates and less serious development problems. Countries like Finland or Israel are more apt in terms of stage of development and associated problems and in terms of their tax rates. It seems to me that we need to build a national consensus to agree to pay higher levels of taxation to help pay for both our urgent economic and social development needs and for our substantially higher dependency rates. In this respect the adjustment problems of the next decade are the crucial ones. After that relaxation should be possible. In such a high tax regime social equity becomes a crucial consideration and would need to be assured. It is noticeably absent at present.

If we do not maintain high and equitable tax rates and if we maintain progress in closing the current budget deficit by 1986/7 the combined effects of increasing demographic demands in education, health, housing and welfare will mean that very fundamental adjustments of these social policies are necessary. In this process of adjustment it is absolutely essential that organised professional bodies, such as the teachers’ unions, develop fully informed, critical and positive policy responses to the crisis that faces us. If they don’t and if they react defensively and negatively we are in for a very serious period of crisis.
References

Reports of Discussion Groups

The participants at the seminar were divided into discussion groups to consider the following topics as they affect children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds:—

1. early education
2. school discipline
3. curriculum
4. language development

Group leaders were appointed prior to the seminar and they agreed to prepare reports based on the discussions. The following is the text of the reports. The names of the group leaders are given after each report.

Early Education

The focus of the discussion was on the specific educational needs of the children when they came to school because of their poorly developed cognitive and language skills.

The necessity for teachers to be able to identify the specific problems was also discussed.

It was stressed that the children need to be given experiences that improve their cognitive and language skills. This would require the development of a suitable curriculum which would bridge the gap between the child’s home experience and the experience in school.

The teachers also discussed their own needs as teachers and some of them pointed out that their training did not adequately prepare them for working with disadvantaged children.

They felt that teachers need more time and support for the development of an early education programme geared to suit the needs of disadvantaged children.

Some teachers spoke of the isolation they experience and the benefits that would be gained from the opportunity to discuss with other teachers of disadvantaged children their problems and developments in regard to planning, teaching skills and resources.

The teachers urged the establishment of a curriculum development unit for schools in disadvantaged areas which would assist in the development of appropriate curricula and teaching strategies. It was emphasised that teachers should not look to some outside body to deliver the "ideal" curriculum for the early education of disadvantaged children but that they...
should look for the support and resources to develop their own. The
teachers should retain control over the development of the curriculum
as they are the people most in touch with the problems involved.

The question was asked as to whether present curricula were too
dependent on books. It was emphasised strongly that, rather than have
children focus on learning a number of sight words, there was a great
need for a child's oral expression to be developed.

It was pointed out that the whole concept of teaching needs to be
looked at in relation to disadvantaged children. There appears for instance,
to be a great need for more informal extra curricular outlets and activities.

All the groups emphasised the need for a structured preschool pro-
gramme which would incorporate the following; low pupil teacher ratio,
i.e. 1:15; classroom assistants; meals for the children; appropriate buildings/
facilities, in line with INTO policy. The Rutland Street Project was taken
as a good model.

There was agreement in all the groups that the early years of a child's
schooling were vital. The children's interpretations and attitudes to their
school experiences are formed at this time. It was seen as essential there-
fore that this should be a time for involving parents and sharing with them
some skills and expectations that might assist them in relating to the
child's school experiences. The development of programmes of parental
involvement was considered to be essential in this regard. It was also
pointed out that the school needs to be an open and welcoming place
which parents feel free to visit. Children need to see continuity between
their home and the school.

The present piecemeal approach to the development of preschool
services was criticised. Disadvantaged children should automatically have
preschool facilities. These preschools should have trained personnel if they
are to provide the children with the structured learning environment which
they need for their optimum development.

The positive effects of the well structured preschool, as in Rutland
Street, on the behaviour, language and attitudes of the children who had
passed through was outlined. Again it was argued that these facilities
should be made available in other areas of need.

All the teachers agreed on the need for a three year infant programme
and a reduced pupil teacher ratio. Large classes in the region of 30 to 40
made the teachers' task an impossible one. Small classes would enable the
teacher to have greater personal contact with each child.

The benefits of a resource teacher and a home-school links teacher were
discussed. The resource teacher would co-ordinate planning and the
development of curricula as a means of tapping the talents of teachers already working in the area, so that teachers would be able to share skills and support each other. The role of the home-school liaison teacher in developing and encouraging home-school contact was seen as crucial if inroads into the problems of disadvantage were to be tackled effectively.

It was noted that the school system itself may need to change radically to accommodate disadvantaged children. They need to feel that their school experience is relevant from their earliest encounters. Finally, it was felt that educational intervention alone, even at the earliest stages of development would not of itself be sufficient to eradicate educational disadvantage without other social and economic changes.

Anne McGough, Chairperson
Liam Walsh, Rapporteur

School Discipline

"Our youth now loves luxury. They have bad manners and contempt for authority. They show disrespect for their elders and love idle chatter instead of exercise."
Socrates: (470-399 B.C.)

The Sources of the Problem
A quick glance at the agenda for the annual conference of any teaching union in England or North America will reveal alarm at teachers' perception of a growing tide of disruptive behaviour in schools. Some people will argue that there is no reliable way of comparing the prevalence of disruptive behaviour over prolonged periods of time, but few will reject the assertion that anxiety about problem behaviour has grown alarmingly over the last decade or so. During the course of this seminar it became clear very quickly that many teachers were seriously concerned about the negative effects of indiscipline in classrooms and schools in Ireland, and that guidance and assistance are urgently required in order to provide the kind of learning atmosphere which they regard as being desirable. Although a majority of schools can cope with disciplinary problems with relative ease, a minority are in more serious difficulty and urgent steps are required if the interests of all their pupils and teachers are to be safeguarded.

There is evidence of new and urgent problems of disturbance, truancy and apathy in these schools. These are located mostly in inner-city areas, and in ill-provided housing estates, where unemployment is high, social problems are widespread and facilities are minimal. Life is so anonymous on large new housing estates that community disapproval is largely ineffective, social cohesion is almost non-existent and the support of the
extended family has been ruptured. Schools cannot be isolated from the influences around them. Education, particularly where values are concerned, involves a complex pattern of interacting institutions including the school, the family, the neighbourhood, the media, the churches and the peer group. It is difficult to compete for the child's attention in an environment where certain norms are accepted which may be in conflict with much of what is taught in the formal educational setting.

What is School Discipline?

Although very little time was devoted to possible definitions of discipline, an analysis of the discussion provided an outline of the perceptions and expectations of the seminar participants. Society expects national schools to carry out the following functions at least.

1. The organisation, guidance and support of effective learning.

2. The provision of assistance in inculcating the prevailing values and behavioural norms of society.

3. The identification of ability as a basis for further education and employment.

4. The provision of a reference point for child welfare including health checks and remedial treatment for handicaps.

5. The provision of religious and moral education.

6. The provision of a sanctuary for all children during recognised school hours.

Since a school is primarily a community of learning, order and discipline are necessary at every stage so that the preconditions for learning are present at all times. In addition, every teacher is responsible for the welfare and safety of children as well as for the protection of property. Certain conditions are necessary to uphold these obligations. Before a child can ever hope to reach the ultimate goal of self-discipline he has to understand the necessity of accepting responsibility for his actions. Discipline, as distinct from self-discipline, is therefore, a means to an end and not an end in itself, and it is only when normal classroom management techniques fail to maintain an acceptable atmosphere of learning and behaviour that it becomes necessary to seek other methods of control. At this stage it is important to stress that two distinct categories of behaviour were identified:

(a) Serious breaches of discipline which only occur occasionally.

(b) Regular incidents of relatively minor misbehaviour which impose a fairly constant pattern of disruption.
It would seem that in most schools the second category imposed most problems for teachers and it has become difficult to provide adequate solutions in present circumstances. Talkativeness, attention-seeking, petty-theft, teasing, name-calling, bad language, constant movement, refusal to carry out instructions promptly or at all, heedlessness, minor damage to other pupils' or school property, avoidance of homework, etc., are all examples of unacceptable behaviour which disrupt school work, interfere with other children, annoy children and teachers alike and make orderly progress virtually impossible.

Possible Solutions

Many teachers would argue that most educational problems would be tremendously reduced within the classroom if class sizes were reduced substantially. However, many teachers who spoke during the seminar, emphasised that with the exception of infant and junior classes, reduced class numbers will not in themselves make any significant contribution to an amelioration of disciplinary problems in their schools. The nature and extent of the problem cannot be solved without a very far reaching and indepth attack on the root causes.

Because many young children enter an alien environment imposing new and different values when they come to school, it was suggested that a well-structured pre-school system should be available which would help to induct children into the more formal school atmosphere. This system should be designed to introduce parents to school as much as possible, in order to gain their assistance, support and understanding in helping their children to adapt to the new demands being made on both. It should be designed to assist in diagnosing, assessing and remedying personality and possible educational deficiencies which may lead to failure, frustration and indiscipline it left undetected.

A home-school liaison teacher has been working in some areas and this work has been tremendously effective in establishing and maintaining relationships with parents. This innovation should be extended to more schools without delay because of the clear positive impact which it has had in the small number of cases where it has been introduced. It was also stressed that teacher aides are of great value especially with younger children, whose constant activity requires supervision if discipline is to be maintained,

There was general agreement that many disciplinary problems can be blamed much more on what we teach than on how we teach. The curriculum is at the heart of the school, therefore at the heart of discipline and if it has not enough to offer then boredom, truancy and anti-social behaviour are inevitable. There is no doubt whatever that many disadvantaged children find much of what they are expected to learn irrelevant and potentially useless and they react accordingly. The current curriculum serves most children reasonably well because it is designed to meet their interests and aspirations and those of their parents, but there
is no doubt that it alienates some and is a source of indifference to others. In the past one parent described school as a place to be tolerated before getting out into the real world. Although many would argue that the present curriculum is sufficiently flexible most would agree that considerable adaptation is urgently required, and individual teachers or indeed individual schools do not always feel competent to undertake the necessary changes c.f. "The Educational Needs of Disadvantaged Children" paragraphs 2.5.1 and 2.5.2.

Internal Organisation

Because constant minor interruptions were seen as the major problem of immediate concern to the classroom teacher, a considerable amount of time was devoted to discussion of causes and in suggesting some possible remedies. These remedies may be summarised as follows:—

(a) Parental co-operation is essential in maintaining discipline, and because it is difficult to cultivate in the circumstances under which the teachers concerned worked a very heavy burden is placed on the school.

(b) Most incidents of misbehaviour require a quick response. Delay in correcting misbehaviour promptly is unfair to the teacher and pupil and is generally ineffective.

(c) Positive methods are the ideal to be aimed for, but it must be accepted that they do not work in many cases.

(d) There must be consistent policy in the school. Parents, pupils, and teachers must know and understand which kinds of behaviour are unacceptable and the relative degrees of unacceptability.

(e) It was agreed that many traditional sanctions are ineffective, unworkable or undesirable.

For example, detention during school places more burdens on teachers who have to contend with extra stress already. Detention after school may have legal implications apart from problems caused by transport, supervision and parents expectations that children will arrive home at a certain time. Assigning extra work is ineffective when many children will ignore it or refuse to do it anyway. It may also build up hostility to ordinary schoolwork since it is associated with punishment and may reinforce negative attitudes towards learning.

It was emphasised that there should be facilities for the withdrawal of persistently disruptive children from their ordinary classes. Because some schools have a disproportionately high number of disturbed and disruptive pupils psychological and other support services backed up by extra special facilities for placement are urgently required, if their rights and the
rights of other children are to be effectively promoted. Such facilities and support services are deficient at present.

There will be occasions when schools will be obliged to suspend or exclude some pupils for persistent misbehaviour or serious incidents. However, since this is an extreme measure it was not seen as part of the normal pattern of school discipline, and undue emphasis should not be placed on its use or effectiveness. It is a measure which must be available as a last resort only, and will only be desirable either when other methods have failed or when immediate severe action is unavoidable.

The question of changes in disciplinary methods brought about by Circular 9/82 was discussed at all three sessions. Although most teachers seemed to conclude that a discussion on physical punishment was not of much relevance in the present context, it was clear that although some teachers approved of the change, others, probably a majority, believed that discipline had deteriorated since the implementation of the new rules. Several teachers stated that they disapproved of the changes introduced in the new regulations.

The conclusions and recommendations of "The Educational Needs of Disadvantaged Children",* would, if implemented, resolve many of the problems being encountered by teachers who participated in the seminar, and in this context the paragraphs which concentrate on home-school links, education welfare officers, preschools, staffing, classroom assistants, curriculum and services are of special importance. They would not solve all the problems, and there is considerable confusion and dissatisfaction with the existing situation. Teachers are finding it extremely difficult to implement their programmes and teach their classes as well as they would wish and the delay in assisting them by providing additional resources, guidelines for discipline and appropriate sanctions where necessary, is diminishing the value of their efforts to a serious degree.


John Carr, Chairperson
Mick Finn, Rapporteur
School Curriculum

The function of the school — need for change

The school should provide for children a curriculum with which they are able to cope. This, in turn, should enable them to cope with life within their community. Many teachers, working in schools which cater for a high proportion of disadvantaged children, feel that the present curriculum fulfils neither of these functions. Children who have been consistently deprived of suitable environmental, verbal and auditory stimuli in the home are frequently unable to respond sufficiently to such stimuli when they come to school. The absence of basic skills among many parents of deprived children is in itself evidence of such failure in the past. Teachers are concerned that what happens in schools at present should minimize the incidence of such failure in the future.

Dissatisfaction was expressed with some specific aspects of the curriculum.

Irish: Many teachers felt that an inordinate amount of primary school time was spent in attempting to teach Irish to disadvantaged children, considering that the vast majority of them neither use it nor hear it being used outside the confines of their classrooms.

Texts: Many of the text books available are alien in content and prohibitive in cost to people in deprived areas. Many teachers still feel that they are under considerable pressure to use them.

Employment: School work was seen as being irrelevant to the future employment status of the pupils.

Adult Education: The parents of disadvantaged children often lack basic academic, domestic and childrearing skills. Any re-appraisal of the curriculum should involve some provision for adult education.

Access: In many communities where there is a high incidence of disadvantage the school may be one of the few facilities available. However, the school is often not regarded as being an integral part of the community. Teachers however may have more prolonged contact with the youth of an area than perhaps any other groups or individuals. It was felt that if their work did not significantly affect the problems of disadvantage, it was unlikely that much would be achieved by any other means.

Factors which would Aid Curriculum Development

A pre-requisite for devising a curriculum to serve the needs of a particular area must be a knowledge of the area, its people and their problems.

Home/School Links

The appointment of a home/school liaison officer would be of great assistance to the school in identifying and assessing the extent of the
curricular change required. Such a person could also help in co-ordinating the work of other groups and individuals in the area.

Preschools
The establishment of preschools, would not only compensate for the effects of adverse environment, but would also give an insight into the curricular needs of the children.

Difficulties in Curriculum Development

1. Innovation
It was felt that insufficient innovation was taking place for a variety of reasons. Teachers, particularly young teachers on probation, are under pressure to adhere rigidly to the established curriculum. It is important, therefore, that teachers should have the security of a school policy in regard to curriculum, which would enable them to discuss their problems with their colleagues, the principal and the school inspector.

Pressure "downwards" has been experienced from post-primary schools, in some cases forcing primary schools to virtually abandon the new curriculum. Discussion with other schools in the area, with post-primary schools and with the inspectorate should take place.

2. Devising a New Curriculum
Devising a new curriculum — even in one subject area — is an enormous task for an individual school. This work would have to involve all the staff. As it is unlikely that all the teachers in a school could be available outside of school hours, time would have to be made available within school hours. A core curriculum, derived perhaps from discussions with other schools over a wider area, would be a useful starting point.

3. Great concern was expressed that adaptation of the curriculum should not lead to further deprivation by omitting or "watering down" parts of the existing curriculum, e.g. while it was felt too much time was being spent on Irish, its exclusion from the curriculum would deprive children of something to which they have a right.

It was stressed that the adapted curriculum should not aim to limit its objectives to merely coping with the disadvantaged. It would be necessary to ensure that children in the school who were not educationally disadvantaged would not be adversely affected by changes in the curriculum. The problem of dealing with disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children in the same unit would be alleviated by smaller class sizes and the provision of more remedial teachers.
Each discussion opened with the chairperson reading a short discussion paper in which she outlined two of the accepted arguments on the language of the disadvantaged child, viz. (a) that the child's language is different because the child has a way of using language to communicate which is unusual; (b) that the child has a language deficit because he/she lacks sufficient vocabulary to communicate. The chairperson then distributed a handout with five points to help stimulate discussion. These were:

7. Is language a problem? Identifying the problem — is it one of deficit or difference?

2. To what extent does the attitude and language of the teacher/school contribute to the problem?

3. Is the answer one of remediation and replacement or one of acceptance and addition?

4. What are the implications of questions 1, 2, and 3 for the teacher in the classroom?

5. Need for inservice training.

On the question of language difference or deficits all the discussion groups felt that there was a difference and that there was also a deficit. It was felt that the disadvantaged child's own language style has value and should not be totally replaced. However, it was also seen that the child was at a distinct disadvantage in certain situations, e.g. job interviews without standard English.

With regard to the attitude and language of the teacher/school it was felt that often the language of the teacher/school was at total variance with the child's language at home and play. The point was made that language was not solely for communication but had a wider role of providing a tool for learning and that language development included oral language, listening and comprehension and that it was up to the teacher to develop the child's ability to use and understand language in these areas.

Many felt that teachers were ill-prepared for dealing with the children's own language and other difficulties. Teachers, it was felt, were working in a vacuum without some of the teaching skills necessary to work on language development. Class size puts constraints on the oral language development that can take place in the normal classroom.

The lack of equipment to test the children's linguistic ability was
deplored as was the lack of pre and inservice teacher training in this area. Many believed that standardised tests were not necessarily the best way of assessing children in language skills but observation by the teacher and time to observe were very necessary.

**Everyone felt that a good deal of attention** should be paid to the child's environment.

The use of t.v. and the introduction of videos etc. was seen as a great advantage if put to proper use and not simply as a passive experience without feedback from the child. Television, it was thought had led to a great deal of standardisation of the English language among children.

The discussions led to the following recommendations being made:

1. There was a great need for inservice and general training with regard to language development to
   (a) allow the evaluation of disadvantaged children's linguistic ability
   (b) help teachers in their understanding of disadvantaged children's language
   (c) help plan a linguistic programme to suit the children's needs
   (d) encourage the creation of an attitude of tolerance and appreciation of disadvantaged children's own language among teachers.

2. There was a need for the establishment of a curriculum development unit.

3. There should be an immediate reduction in pupil teacher ratio and the introduction of teachers' aides to the classroom.

4. Teachers at different levels should meet to establish a language development programme.

**Fionnuala Waldron, Chairperson**

**Brid Hennessy, Rapporteur**