

THE
THEORY OF TRANSITION EDUCATION
AND THE PRACTICE OF
VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND
TRAINING IN IRELAND

AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORK OF THE FIRST AND SECOND EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
ACTION PROGRAMMES ON THE TRANSITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM EDUCATION TO
ADULT AND WORKING LIFE AND AN EXAMINATION OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
CURRICULUM OF VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN
POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

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The work is dedicated to my wife, Linda, and to my son, Mark.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps we should begin by explaining why the work of the European Community (EC) funded programmes on transition from education to adult and working life are an appropriate subject for a doctoral dissertation.' The two programmes which will be described in detail in chapter one of this work consisted in some sixty main pilot projects and a number of subprojects throughout the European Community. These projects, well planned and funded, brought together many of the most able specialists in the field of curriculum studies in each country. Their aim was to improve 'policy and practice in the member States', in the field of 'transition education'.²

By transition education was meant the courses offered to all pupils in the process of leaving education to enter adult and working life. Of course, such a definition could include the entire range of second level students. In practice, the work of the two transition programmes came to focus on those who in the past had received least from the education system - early school leavers, the academically less able, school and learning rejectors, migrants, the handicapped, disadvantaged young women. Almost without exception, the projects concentrated on the task of developing programmes designed to meet the special needs of these groups.

In the late 1970s, increasing youth unemployment and consequent higher second level school retention rates led to the development of

alternative programmes both at junior cycle and at the post-compulsory stage. In my own early years in teaching I was closely involved with the development of the 'pre-employment' programme, a one-year post-Intermediate/Group Certificate course aimed at those who would leave school with few or no educational qualifications. In quick succession I was called upon to develop and teach courses in 'Communications', 'Social Studies', 'Preparation for Working Life' and 'Irish Studies'. I and the other members of the team involved were more or less given a free hand, both in terms of Departmental guidance and school support, and what emerged was largely our own invention. In later years, when 'pre-employment' became 'the vocational preparation and training programme' and was extended to all types of post primary schools, a series of articles, Department of Education in-service courses and a book led to much of what we had 'invented' becoming the basis of the course offered in many schools.³

From quite early on in the 'pre-employment' days, I felt that although the course was reasonably successful, particularly in employment terms, it was nonetheless failing to make a significant impact on many pupils. Our own surveys indicated that pupils enjoyed work experience and saw it as the best part of the programme. The other components - general studies and vocational studies - were regarded as tedious and 'too much like school'. However, when resources, timetabling and energy allowed, and a large part of the course could be organised around a project (such as making a radio documentary and a video, or researching, designing, building and marketing a prefabricated front porch), the level of pupil involvement and interest rose dramatically. It became increasingly

clear that unless the VPTP was redesigned in a way radically different from 'normal' school courses it would have little hope of either achieving its learning objectives in the short term or indeed of gaining the positive profile required to allow it to survive and flourish in the longer term.

These personal reservations about the type of approach prevailing in VPT and similar programmes were strengthened by the findings of various studies throughout the 1980s.⁴ For example, Pat Montague in his study of one VPTP concludes that 'product continued to dominate over process', 'traditional subjects and materials prevailed' and that little was new but 'some elements of content'.⁵ Michael O'Donovan is also critical of many aspects of VPT. He argues that poor pupil and teacher attitudes towards the course as it stands, together with unsatisfactory assessment and certification methods, may result in worsening rather than improving the prospects of those taking part.⁶ Diarmuid Leonard points out some of the reasons why more radical change is difficult to achieve in school based VPT: '...neither the school as an organisation nor the professional identity of second level teachers is ideally suited to key features of the course. Most of the school system (its organisation of knowledge and time, teacher identity, pupil study) is geared to quite opposite assumptions and practices'.⁷

In terms of the role of the VPTP as an alternative senior cycle programme, serious criticisms were also made. The Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) document, Senior Cycle: Developments and Direction, of November 1986, identifies the lack of adequate alternative

pathways at senior cycle, particularly for those not suited to academic curricula, and suggests a common framework of certification for all senior cycle programmes, including VPTP⁸. The National Economic and Social Council manpower policy report of 1985 is critical of the overlap at the education - training interface and the inefficient use of scarce resources, through duplication and lack of cooperation, between State agencies and the education service.⁹ The Department of Education's own survey of VPTP schools and participants found that pupils rated the non-work related elements of the programme very lowly. The same survey strongly criticised schools for the lack of initiative and imagination in the vocational studies area and for lack of effort in combating gender inequality.¹⁰ Most recently, in a national survey of employer attitudes to the qualifications of those leaving the education and training systems, both FAS and VPT courses 'elicited quite an amount of dissatisfied comment from the industrialists 'and only 12% of respondents gave a high rating to VPT courses.'¹¹ Finally my own survey research into current curriculum practice in VPTP in Irish post primary schools, reported in chapter twelve of this work, confirms many concerns about the ineffectiveness of the course.

The idea for this thesis emerged therefore from two sources. On the one hand, my own personal experience together with such research evidence as was available led me to doubt the effectiveness of much of what was being done in VPT programmes. On the other hand, the work of the two transition programmes appeared to present a possible opportunity to elaborate a coherent alternative approach which, if applied to VPT, might produce more satisfactory results.

The first ten chapters of the thesis contain a detailed analysis of the work of both transition programmes. This analysis is based primarily on the copious documentation produced by the central administration team of the programmes, based at IFAPLAN, an international sociological and educational research organisation located in Cologne and Brussels. Documentation produced by the individual projects, including reports from independent external evaluators, has also been widely drawn upon, together with such limited analyses and research as has been done by experts with no direct involvement in the programmes.

Chapter one examines the origins and organisation of the two action programmes and details the key areas of research undertaken by each project. Chapter two seeks to define a coherent conceptual framework to underpin the notion of 'transition education' as it emerges from the literature generated by the programmes. Chapter three elaborates the main proposals to emerge from the two programmes in the fields of methodology and course context.

Chapters four to six inclusive examine areas of curricular content and ways of implementing it by means of activity based learning strategies. Chapter four looks at work related learning and education for enterprise. Chapter five analyses approaches to guidance and information in the transition curriculum and also focuses on strategies for encouraging gender equality, while chapter six looks at active learning based initiatives in the field of social education and approaches to combating school failure and dropout.

Chapter seven focuses on appropriate modes of assessment and certification for alternative or non-mainstream courses. Chapters eight and nine examine approaches to the greater utilisation of the out-of-school environment for learning purposes. Chapter eight looks at structures for closer school - community liaison and chapter nine deals with inter-agency cooperation at the interface between education and training.

Chapter ten offers a summary of the key points of chapters one to nine and attempts to organise the various ideas and proposals into a coherent form. This concludes Part I of the thesis.

Part II consists in three chapters. Its purpose is to compare and contrast the type of transition curriculum developed in the course of the two EC transition programmes, and outlined in Part I, with the rationale and curriculum practice at present being applied to VPT in Irish post primary schools.

Chapter eleven examines the rationale and curriculum theory of VPT as described in the official Department of Education documentation and makes a comparison with the transition programme literature. Chapter twelve details the research methods employed in surveying schools operating VPTP with a view to establishing the current VPTP curriculum practice. Chapter thirteen then reports on the survey of one hundred Irish post primary schools offering a VPTP in the academic year 1987/88 and contrasts the picture of curriculum practice which emerges with the type of curriculum suggested by the experience of the two transition

programmes. The thesis ends with a conclusion which briefly summarises the main argument and suggests a possible synthesis of the conflicting curriculum theories and practices.

I will conclude this introduction by pointing out that certain areas of the research carried out by the two EC transition programmes will not be treated in any detail in this thesis. For example, initiatives in the area of educational provision for migrants and the handicapped and much of the staff development work have been omitted since they are somewhat outside of the direct focus of this work. For interested readers, I have written elsewhere about staff development and in-service training ideas generated by the pilot projects.¹⁰ Finally, it should be noted that the thesis will attempt to make sense of the work of the pilot projects seen as a whole. It will not attempt to focus in any great depth on any one project. For readers interested in the detailed study of the development of one project, the work of Tony Crooks will prove a fruitful source.¹³

INTRODUCTION NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. E.C. First Transition Programme, 1978-82; Second Transition Programme, 1983-87.
2. E.C. First Transition Programme, Policies for Transition, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1984), p. 7; I should point out here, particularly to Irish readers of this work, that the term "transition education" as used in this thesis is not equivalent to the "transition year option" operated in Irish post primary schools since the 1970s. The concept of transition education, as developed in the E.C. transition programmes, is concerned essentially with those pupils seeking to make the transition from education to adult and working life. The transition year option, on the other hand, has developed primarily as a one year programme for students making the transition from junior to senior cycle post primary education. Some excellent work has been done on the transition year option, most notably by Dr John Harris. (John W. Harris, "An Evaluation of School Based Curriculum Development", (University of Dublin, PhD dissertation, 1983)). An account of the current situation regarding the transition year option may be found in Eileen Doyle, "The Transition Year", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron (eds), Achievement and Aspiration: Curricular Issues in Irish Post Primary Education in the 1980s, (Dublin: Teachers Centre, St Patrick's College of Education, 1990).
3. See Kevin Williams and Gerry McNamara, The Vocational Preparation Course: An Educational Appraisal and Practical Guide, (Dublin: Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland, 1986).
4. Here I wish to make it clear that the reservations mentioned relate to curriculum - methodology, content, assessment and so on - and not to the very existence or purposes of the programmes themselves. I am well aware of the considerable literature attacking alternative programmes such as VPT on ideological grounds; alleging, for example, that such courses are "socialisation for low pay", or "technocratic as opposed to liberal education". For a full account of this position see, for example, Paul Willis, Learning to Labour, (Hampshire: Gower Publishing, 1977), Henry Giroux, Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling, (London: Falmer Press, 1981), I. Bates, J. Clarke, P. Cohen, R. Moore, P. Willis (eds), Schooling for the Dole, (London: Macmillan, 1984), Michael Apple, Ideology and Curriculum (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) and Peggy Geraghty, "Education for the Labour Market - A Critique" in Irish Educational Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1988, pp 118 to 130. I do not agree with this view, and have argued against it in some detail (see Gerry McNamara, "The Myth of Illiberality: Educational Theory and Curriculum Practice in Pre-Vocational Education", in Irish Educational Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1989, pp 99-116. However, I do not propose to repeat these well worn arguments again here.

5. Patrick Montague, "An Analysis of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in Ballymun Senior Comprehensive School", (University of Dublin, unpublished paper for the Higher Diploma in Education, 1983).
6. Michael A. O'Donovan, "Schooling and Employment: A Case Study of the VP and T Programme", (St Patrick's College Maynooth, unpublished thesis for the Master of Education degree, 1988).
7. Diarmuid Leonard, "The Principal and the Pre-Employment Course: An Educational Management Perspective", in Rostrum, Autumn 1984, p. 84.
8. Curriculum and Examinations Board, Senior Cycle : Development and Direction, (Dublin: Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1986); for the best account of the approach advocated by the CEB, see Aine Hyland, "The Curriculum and Examinations Board: a Retrospective View", in Gerry McNamara, Kevin Williams and Donald Herron (eds), Achievement and Aspiration: Curricular Initiatives in Irish Post Primary Education in the 1980s, (Dublin: Drumcondra Teachers Centre, 1990).
9. National Economic and Social Council, Manpower Policy in Ireland, (Dublin: NESCC, 1985), p. 84.
10. Department of Education, Vocational Preparation and Training, 1984/85, Programme Information (Dublin: Department of Education, 1986).
11. Reported in Christina Murphy, "School Leavers Ill Equipped for Work", Irish Times, August 10, 1990.
12. Gerry McNamara, "Teachers and Innovation: Pre- and In-Service Training Strategies from the First and Second European Action Programmes on Transition from Education to Adult and Working Life" (paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Association of Teacher Educators in Europe, August 1990, and due for publication in Ideas, Spring 1991).
13. J. A. Crooks, "A Participant Observation Study of the Factors which influenced the development of the City of Dublin Humanities Curriculum", (University of Dublin, Unpublished PhD thesis, 1985).

PART I

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE
FIRST AND SECOND
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMMES ON
THE TRANSITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM EDUCATION TO
ADULT AND WORKING LIFE

CHAPTER ONE

THE GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST AND SECOND TRANSITION PROGRAMMES

INTRODUCTION:

In December 1976, the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Education of the member States, meeting within the Council, considered a report by the Education Committee of the Community entitled "Preparation for Working Life and for Transition from Education to Work"¹. This report was drawn up in response to a Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education of February 9 1976 which requested an analysis of the employment problems of young people in each Community country and the trends and developments taking place in general education and vocational training². The resulting document consisted in two elements, reports from each member State and a background analysis of trends and possible remedial actions prepared by a group of education specialists³.

The reports of each member State are strikingly similar. The common themes of increasing youth unemployment in general and particular difficulties being experienced by certain categories of young people are constantly repeated. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the point.

Theme 1 - Increases in Unemployment

- (a) 'The number of unemployed young people in the Federal Republic of Germany has risen sharply in the last few years'⁴.

- (b) 'In 1975 in the Netherlands the average number of registered unemployed persons aged under 23 increased by 22,400 over 1974 to reach 59,000. The 62% increase exceeds the increase in the total number of registered unemployed which amounted to 44%'⁵.
- (c) '...it may be deduced that in Italy thirteen young persons are out of work for every 100 in employment...this phenomenon is spreading rapidly at an annual rate of 11%'⁶.

Theme 2 - Special Risk Categories

- (a) 'Young people without vocational training are most liable to employment risks, a low educational level not only increases the probability of becoming unemployed but also affects the chance of finding a place on a training course. More than two-thirds of young people who are unemployed in the Federal Republic of Germany have not completed any vocational training and about half of the young people who have not completed vocational training do not have any school leaving certificate either'⁷.
- (b) 'Girls are worse hit by unemployment among young persons than boys. Of the 115,800 young unemployed persons in the Federal Republic of Germany in September 1975, 60,000 were girls (52%); the unemployment rate for girls was 6.5% whereas for boys it was 5.2%'⁸.
- (c) 'Surveys in France confirm that young men and women who did not receive any vocational training whether at school or through apprenticeship are generally recruited for unskilled jobs without prospects for advancement in which they have to compete with foreign or handicapped workers forming a sort of secondary labour market. During periods of economic downturn they are the first to be affected'⁹.

In summary therefore, the reports of the member States confirmed that youth unemployment was steadily increasing throughout the Community and that certain categories of young people - those with little or no educational or training qualifications, girls, migrants and the handicapped - were experiencing higher rates of unemployment than the norm. In each country measures were being undertaken to alleviate these problems, including school-based vocational preparation courses, increased places in training agencies, work experience programmes and special help for the handicapped. However, the background analysis report by the Community Education Service team of experts pointed out that the response varied greatly in extent and effectiveness from country to country, and that therefore at Community level there appeared to be a role to be played in the encouragement of greater co-operation and more efficient transfer of experience between the member States. The case made for 'direct Community involvement in the fight against the growing problem of youth unemployment and the consequent need to consider new ways of preparing young people more adequately for their entry into adult and working life' was accepted by the Council and the Ministers of Education in December 1976¹⁰.

**1. THE FIRST EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME ON TRANSITION FROM
EDUCATION TO ADULT AND WORKING LIFE 1978-82:**

On 13 December 1976, the Council of the European Community and the Ministers of Education adopted a Resolution concerning 'measures to improve the preparation of young people for working life'¹¹. The measures outlined were divided into two categories, firstly, those (in Part I of the Resolution) to

be implemented within each of the (then) nine member States. To complement these measures and 'to assist in the development of policies at national level', Part II of the Resolution specified 'a wide range of activities to be implemented at Community level'¹².

Within the individual Member States, eight priority areas for action were specified:

- (a) the development of curricula and teaching methods designed to provide adequate preparation for working life in the course of general education and vocational training, and the formation of coordination and closer linkage between the two types of education;
- (b) the improvement of educational and vocational guidance for young people, including the development of a greater role for parents and teachers;
- (c) the provision of increased access to further education and training opportunities for all young people, but particularly for those who finish compulsory schooling with insufficient achievement and qualifications;
- (d) the development of compensatory strategies to improve educational provision for those young people who, for social or economic reasons or because of personal handicaps, are most at risk in times of high unemployment;
- (e) the improvement of pre- and in-service teacher training, to equip teachers to implement alternative curricula successfully;
- (f) the improvement of information gathering and dissemination at national level concerning education and the employment of young people;

- (g) the strengthening of inter-agency cooperation between bodies working in the fields of education, training and guidance;
- (h) experience in the areas mentioned in (a) - (g) to be exchanged and compared at Community level through the Education Committee¹³.

The implementation of this part of the Resolution within each member State has resulted in many interesting initiatives running parallel to those organised at Community level. However, since the focus of this thesis is primarily concerned with the outcomes of the two EC-sponsored transition programmes, developments at purely national level must unfortunately be omitted. For readers interested in further study in the area of national experiments and programmes, I include in footnote 14 a number of Community publications containing relevant information.

The main thrust of the Resolution concerned actions to be taken at Community level, specifically the establishment and implementation of a series of pilot projects focusing on six interrelated priority themes. Those priority themes were defined in the Resolution as follows:

- (i) investigation of the educational and training requirements of those young people leaving the education system who encounter problems in securing and in retaining employment;
- (ii) the problem of poor motivation among many young people and the measures which might be adopted to stimulate their interest and participation;
- (iii) the design and development of specific actions to
 - (a) ensure equal educational opportunities for girls,
 - (b) assist young migrants,
 - (c) promote adequate measures for target groups with special problems such as the young physically and mentally handicapped;
- (iv) the development of a continuing process of guidance and counselling peaking at the crucial periods of choice and with particular regard to collaboration between those responsible for education, guidance training and placement;

- (v) the improvement of vocational preparation in the final years of compulsory schooling and in the post-compulsory period, with particular reference to the promotion of cooperation between the education and employment sectors;
- (vi) the promotion of measures to improve the initial and in-service training of teachers so that they may more effectively prepare young people for working life¹⁵.

A number of other initiatives designed to further clarify the problem areas and aid the dissemination of outcomes were also included in the Resolution -

- (i) the preparation of reports further analysing
 - (a) the experience of member States in the coordination of education and other policy areas in relation to the less favoured regions of the Community, and
 - (b) the existing and planned provisions and measures under which young people may return to further study during the period following the end of compulsory schooling;
- (ii) the organisation of
 - (a) study visits/joint study programmes relating to vocational education and guidance, and
 - (b) workshops for teachers and trainers of teachers concerning the transition from education to working life¹⁶.

The First Action Programme 1978-1982: The Planning Phase:

During 1977, preparatory work on the planned series of pilot projects was carried out by a team of experts working on behalf of the European Commission Education Service in consultation with a liaison official or officials nominated by the Ministry of Education in each member State. A key objective of the Commission Education Service was to ensure both a geographical balance in the location of the projects and a balance between the level of experimentation devoted to each of the interrelated priority themes¹⁷. Also regarded as central was the need for experimentation with

the structures of education and training - that is, school organisation, liaison between the school and the community and between the school and other agencies - as well as matters pertaining to the curriculum¹⁸. Finally, the educational time-span to be investigated by the projects was to include 'the final years of compulsory education and the post-compulsory period'¹⁹.

The process of originating a pilot project began with a proposal from a sponsoring agency to the Ministry of Education in a particular country. The range of sponsoring agencies was extremely diverse. In some cases, it was a single institution such as the Efterskole (Continuation School) in Aesbaek, Denmark²⁰ and the Shannon Curriculum Development Unit in Ireland²¹. In others, it was a local education authority, for example, Herlev Commune in Denmark²², a regional education authority, for example, Strathclyde Regional Education Authority in Scotland, - or the national Ministry of Education, as in the case of the 'credit unit' project in Belgium²⁴. There were also instances of projects sponsored by private organisations, the North Mayo project in Ireland, sponsored by the Irish Foundation for Human Development, being a case in point²⁵.

The sponsoring agencies specified the objectives, proposed the methodologies and organisational framework, and where these were deemed to be satisfactory by the relevant Ministry of Education, final negotiation and planning occurred in consultation with the Commission Education Service experts. In most cases the projects accepted were new and specifically designed to explore one or more of the range of designated priority themes, but a number were suitable initiatives already underway, financed by local or national

authorities. Many projects were divided into subprojects, each working on the same overall problem or theme but 'applying different approaches and methodologies or operating in different socio-economic contexts'²⁶. Fifty percent of the cost of each project was grant-aided by the Community, the remainder being provided by the sponsoring agency, often assisted by the national Ministry of Education.

The geographical area covered by the projects also differed enormously. Some were limited to local communities or single institutions, while others covered wider geographical areas, such as a city or an entire region. Examples of the former include the 'learning spaces' project at the Nijmegen Institute for Applied Sociology in the Netherlands²⁷, while a good example of the latter was the Schullundheim project in the Federal Republic of Germany which was carried out in Schullundheimen (school hostels) throughout the entire country²⁸.

By the end of 1977, the main work of preparation had been completed and a first series of projects was approved by the Education Committee in November. A second and final series, bringing the total to twenty nine, was given the go-ahead in the Spring of 1978²⁹. As a result of the complexity of the planning and consultation programme involved in setting up each project, most did not enter their operational phase until the beginning of the 1978/79 academic year³⁰. Initially the projects were envisaged as being of three years' duration, but in the course of the programme it became clear that this was too brief a period to undertake effective innovation and subsequent evaluation, and the completion date was extended to July 1982³¹.

The First Transition Programme: Twenty Nine Pilot Projects

(Project Number, Location, Title and Main Objective)

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
1	Belgium/ 8 schools	Development of a flexible training system based on 'credit units'	To provide more flexible vocational training by breaking down programmes into 'credit units' taught on a modular basis and chosen by students in relation to interest and ability.
2	Belgium/ District of Charleroi	Action Research in the Educational and Cultural District	Integrated scheme to pool the resources of educational establishments within a local community.
3	Denmark/ 4 Sub-projects in various locations	Preparation for the adult and working world	Testing and developing schemes outside the normal compulsory school system for low achievers in their final year and for school dropouts.
4	Denmark/ International Continuation School, Tvino	Developing and testing an alternative, practically based curriculum for pupils from the age of 16	To develop a two year programme designed around practically based work and study tours to Asian countries.
5	Denmark/ Aarhus county	Project for contact between education and working life	To extend and improve vocational and educational counselling in the final years of secondary education by improving liaison between educational institutions, the working world and the counselling service.
6	F.R. Germany/ Witzenhausen Regional Vocational Training School	Integration of physically handicapped pupils	Social and vocational integration of physically handicapped pupils by having them take lessons with non-handicapped pupils.

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
7	F.R. Germany/ School Psychology Service & selected schools, City of Ludwigshafen	Cooperative guidance and counselling model	To develop pupil ability to make vocational decisions through improved pre-vocational curricula and guidance
8	F.R. Germany/ the Land of Baden/Wurtemberg	Cooperation between lower secondary and vocational training schools	To develop regular cooperation between lower secondary schools and vocational schools to ensure coordination of content, methods and organisation of courses.
9	F.R. Germany/ Schullundheimen (school hostels) throughout the Republic	Seminars in Schullundheimen on preparation for working life	To give pupils in secondary schools a first hand acquaintance with working life through job familiarisation and in-company training courses with follow up residential courses at a Schullundheim (school hostel).
10	F.R. Germany/ Fed. Inst. for Vocational Training, Berlin	Improvement in the information for young people making career choices	To analyse the work of vocational information centres and improve provision for information throughout the country.
11	F.R. Germany/ Pedagogical & Therapeutic Centre, Hanover.	Helping pupils who are maladjusted to integrate into school and working life	Developing an inter-disciplinary approach embracing media psychology and sociology to help maladjusted children.
12	France/ Chalon, Douai, Metz, Draigunan	In-service retraining of teachers of 'manual and technical education'	To train teachers in the skills required by the new secondary school subject 'manual and technical education'.
13	France/ 10 centres throughout the country, chosen by the Minister of Education	Integration into working life of 16-18 year olds who leave the school system without qualifications	To carry out actions outside the normal school system for young people without educational or training qualifications to promote their reintegration - in particular by means of job oriented practical work and general education.

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
14	France/ 6 Vocational Training Institutes	Improvement of vocational training in mechanical engineering	The provision of a more homogenous training, including an introduction to working life, for vocational students whose course have been largely theoretical hitherto.
15	Ireland/ Shannon region	Development Project on the interventions at school to aid the transition of adolescents to adult responsibility.	The development of new approaches in the curriculum to improve preparation for adult life in the final stages of compulsory schooling (12-15 years).
16	Ireland/ City of Dublin	Preparation for adult/working life	To design, implement and evaluate a curriculum to suit the needs of underachievers and in particular to fit them for working life.
17	Ireland/ North Mayo and North Sligo	Project in education for adult life	To introduce curricular interventions in schools designed to promote awareness of the functions of post primary education in a structurally weak agriculture region.
18	Italy/ 5 Sub- projects spread throughout the country	Motivation, social and occupational integration of unemployed and unqualified adolescents	To develop and try out new opportunities for education and training for young people who have left the school system without qualifications.
19	Italy/ 4 Sub- projects	Orientation of guidance and collaboration between schools and the working world	To establish a country-wide system (none now exists) of vocational guidance in Italy and to overcome the lack of co- operation between schools and the working world.
20	Italy/ 2 Sub- projects	In-service training of technical education teachers	To contribute through teacher training to the reform of curricula in compulsory education, changing the emphasis from largely humanistic and theoretical to a more balanced one including technological and practical components.

P. Location No.	Title	Main Objective
21 Italy/ 7 Sub- Projects in Northern and Central Italy	Alternation between training, work and transition	To provide real integration for pupils in secondary schools into working life and to explore opportunities for re-entry into education/training for those in employment.
22 Luxembourg/ 2 centres at Walferdenge and Esch/ Alzette	Investigation of educational methods for improving the entry into working life of young people not having vocational qualifications	To provide a voluntary guidance year for school-leavers without formal qualifications including intensive work with parents and cooperation with employers and trade unions.
23 Netherlands/ Nijmegen Institute for Applied Sociology	Learning Places	To develop courses and curricula through which 'alternation' of learning places inside and outside school will be investigated and methods for their coordination evolved.
24 UK/ 5 Sub- projects in London	The Bridging Course Project	To innovate a programme for the final year of compulsory education which matches the interests, qualities and abilities of pupils who have underachieved and helps them to bridge the gap to employment or further training.
25 UK/ City of Sheffield	Transition from school to working life project	To improve the preparation of young people entering employment and adult life by the coordination of contributions made by various branches of the Education Service.
26 UK/ Clydebank, Scotland	Transition from school to adult life	To develop an integrated curriculum for the non-academic pupils in secondary schools associated with outside activities in technical colleges and work experience.

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
27	UK/ 3 Local Ed. Authorities, Knowsley, Harringay & Bedfordshire, and N.I.E.C.	Career guidance Integration Project	To evaluate the effectiveness of the consultancy and training methods used by N.I.E.C. (National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling) in the development of guidance services within schools.
28	UK/ Bradford College	A research and development project for 16-19 year old Asian young people	To develop a curriculum geared to the needs of young unemployed Asian people in a further education college
29	UK/ Bridgend & Aberdare	Vocational preparation for mentally and physically retarded young people.	To enable groups of backward young people acquire through specialist training simple social, work and life skills. ³³²

In the case of each of the projects mentioned above, I have included only the objective defined as central in the original proposal. In fact almost every project undertook the exploration of a number of objectives based on the six priority theme areas stipulated by the European Council Resolution. Moreover, since a number of these priority themes were very broad and therefore open to a range of interpretation, project experimentation diverged and differed considerably even in cases where the titles might indicate similar actions. A number of common themes do however recur repeatedly throughout the different pilot projects. I shall return to these shortly in a section devoted to the results of the First Transition Programme.

The First Transition Programme: Project Evaluation:

To evaluate the research of the pilot projects and arrange for the exchange and dissemination of information and experience, a 'Central Animation and Evaluation team' (CAET) was established by the European Commission in 1978³³. The team consisted in four experienced educationalists with technical and administrative support provided by the German social research institute (IFAPLAN) in Cologne. The CAET was assisted by a team of 'national evaluators' in the member States appointed by the education authority concerned³⁴. The role of the national evaluators was to observe the course of each project as it progressed and regularly evaluate its development and outcomes. Most of the national evaluators were drawn from universities or institutes of higher education. The final tier of the evaluation process was internal evaluation within each individual project. This consisted of ongoing analyses, evaluation and reporting, usually by the project leader or coordinator, guided by the steering/management committee and monitored by the external evaluator.

As a result, the projects have generated three levels of evaluation material - (i) internal interim and final evaluation reports, (ii) external interim and final evaluation reports and (iii) CAET interim and final evaluation reports. The latter tend to consider the ideas and themes arising from the programme as a whole rather than the work of specific projects. In each member State, the final internal and external evaluation reports were published together in 'National Dossiers' which represent the best description of the work of the individual projects³⁵. The best analysis of the programme as a unit is contained in the final evaluation report prepared

by the CAET experts and published in three parts as follows: (i) Final Programme Report, Part A, Synthesis Report, (ii) Final Programme Report, Part B, Theme Reports- Work experience as a Valuable Learning Resource and Staff Development and (iii) Final Programme Report, Part C, Project Descriptions³⁶.

To disseminate information about the entire programme in a more easily accessible form, CAET produced a brochure, Project Information '79, containing a general outline of the objectives and approaches of the individual pilot projects, together with a quarterly journal, Newsletter, which reported on developments in progress³⁷. At the conclusion of the First Programme in 1982/1983, a series of reports concerning specific themes which had emerged as significant were prepared by CAET and disseminated free of charge to educational institutions of all levels throughout the Community³⁸.

Within the programme, the CAET created a series of 'networks' to enable direct exchanges of experience between projects to take place - 'colloquia for project directors, project staff, external evaluators and national liaison officials, focusing on problems and specific themes of common interest'³⁹. Exchange visits between those working on or with the projects - including student representatives in some cases - were also used to develop wider networks and greater dissemination of information. In the period from 1978-82, the Commission paid the expenses for more than 4000 such exchanges⁴⁰.

The First Transition Programme: Recurring Themes:

Within the framework of the six priority areas suggested for investigation, a wide range of themes, actions and ideas emerged from the First Transition programme. In later chapters of this work, the most significant of these innovations will be considered in detail. In this section, it is intended only to offer an overview of the main themes which tend to recur throughout the reports and evaluation documents of the First Programme.

Themes:

- 1 Actions to develop the educational and vocational skills of pupils underachieving in the present school system.

- 2 Actions designed to remotivate and reintegrate pupils who have rejected school or training.

- 3 Actions to develop alternative curricula for those still in the school system who are demotivated and apathetic.

- 4 Actions to improve curricular provision for the development of personal and social skills and attributes.

- 5 Actions to develop the use of the community as a learning resource.

- 6 The development and use of residential courses to reintegrate low achievers and school rejectors.

- 7 Introduction of new elements into the curriculum designed to improve knowledge of the world of work (not including work experience).
- 8 The use of work experience schemes within the educational programme.
- 9 Actions to develop joint courses or linking arrangements between general education and vocational training institutions and agencies.
- 10 Actions aimed at the development of entrepreneurial skills.
- 11 Actions to develop personal and vocational guidance and counselling.
- 12 New measures of assessment and certification.
- 13 Special measures for maladjusted young people, for slow learners and for physically handicapped pupils.
- 14 Actions to improve coordination and cooperation between agencies providing services for young people in transition from school to further education, training or employment.
- 15 Actions to develop new approaches to teacher training and staff development.

(Sources: The above was compiled from information contained in A Brief Description of the Pilot Projects of the First Transition Programme and Final Programme Report, Part C, Project Descriptions⁴¹)

The First Transition Programme: Conclusions:

In a final summary of the principal results of the First Transition Programme published in 1984 under the title Policies for Transition⁴², the CAET reduced the above sixteen themes to 'six action areas' in which 'significant developments of wider interest in the Community had been observed'⁴³. The six 'action areas' mentioned were

- (i) transition education: context, content and methods;
- (ii) guidance and counselling;
- (iii) assessment and certification;
- (iv) staff development;
- (v) involvement with the local community;
- (vi) a coordinated agency approach to transition⁴⁴.

Each of these areas (with the exception of staff development which, as explained in the Introduction, lies outside the remit of this work) will be considered in later chapters.

The overall view of the CAET in relation to the achievement of the entire programme was that it represented merely a beginning in the field of transition education research, rather than providing definitive conclusions on which future policy might be based. For example, with regard to the development and use of work experience schemes for educational purposes, the report concludes that while 'the first Transition Programme contributed to the analysis of some of the issues involved in this process', there is room for 'taking this analysis further'⁴⁵. Or again, with reference to assessment and certification, the report states that 'in the first Transition Programme some projects began the process of developing alternative or complementary assessment techniques'⁴⁶. The main thrust is

clear. The First Programme produced positive research gains and useful ideas. However, these would require further experimentation before being proved to be suitable for application to the broader educational systems of the member States. From this analysis of the outcomes of the first Transition Programme, the concept of a second such initiative emerged.

This is not to say that the first Programme had no impact at Community or member State level. For example, at Community level, the work of the projects in exploring new approaches to ensuring equality of opportunity for girls was recognised in a Resolution of the Ministers of Education in 1985⁴⁷. This Resolution contained plans for an 'action programme' to achieve 'gender equality' based to a large extent on recommendations arising from the first Transition Programme (and some early initiatives in the Second Programme). At member State level, the First Programme outcomes have had a considerable impact, particularly on the development of school-based vocational preparation programmes and special measures for early school leavers and the less academically able⁴⁸. In later chapters of this work, and particularly in chapter eleven, I shall consider in more detail the influence exerted by the First Transition Programme on educational provision in Irish post primary schools.

2. THE SECOND EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMME ON TRANSITION FROM
EDUCATION TO ADULT AND WORKING LIFE 1983-87:

On 12 July 1982, the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council adopted a Resolution which called for further action at Community level 'to assist member States to develop their policies for young people between fourteen and eighteen years of age'⁴⁹. Specifically, the Resolution provided for the establishment of a second 'action programme' to further develop provision for 'the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate their transition from education to adult and working life with special reference to the problem presented by youth unemployment'⁵⁰. Six key points or thematic areas are designated in the Resolution for special attention -

- (i) using the out-of-school environment as an educational resource;
- (ii) involving adults in the work of the school;
- (iii) the provision of improved guidance and counselling services;
- (iv) the development of forms of work experience;
- (v) new forms of certification and assessment;
- (vi) the development of staff in-service training related to these areas⁵¹.

In the process of establishing the second Transition Programme, the Education Service of the European Commission refined the above six themes into ten 'areas of activity' designed to 'facilitate analysis, comparison and reporting on the programme'⁵². The ten areas so designated are:

1 the development and use of work experience schemes in secondary
education,
2 equal opportunities for girls and young women,
3 guidance and youth information services,
4 staff development,
5 the integration of young migrants,
6 assessment and certification,
7 education for enterprise,
8 schools and social action,
9 curriculum development,
10 cooperation and partnership in a local/regional context (the
'district approach')⁵³.

In terms of planning and organisation, the second programme was structured similarly to its predecessor. The projects, eventually numbering thirty, were established by a process of consultation between the Commission's Education Service, national liaison officials from each member State and representatives of the schools, vocational training institutions, curriculum development units and other organisations submitting proposals⁵⁴. The projects eventually selected were fairly evenly distributed throughout the member States and achieved a geographical spread from Scotland to Sicily and from the West of Ireland to Greece. An attempt also appears to have been made to achieve a balance between the type of area in which projects were situated, with the majority being based in cities and declining industrial areas but a significant minority having a rural base⁵⁵.

The programme was planned to run from September 1983 to July 1986, but since many of the projects were not fully operational until September 1984, the concluding date was extended to July 1987⁵⁶. As in the case of the First Transition Programme, the projects were jointly funded by the Commission and the national/local authorities concerned, each paying fifty percent of the costs⁵⁷. The process of analysis and evaluation was again entrusted to a team of experts drawn from the IFAPLAN social research institute based in Cologne. The role of IFAPLAN was twofold:

- (i) to organise contacts and the exchange of ideas and staff between projects through inter-project visits and workshops, and
- (ii) to prepare reports on the work of the projects, analysed according to the themes or policy fields of the programme⁵⁸.

The projects selected varied considerably in size from a group of schools or training institutions to entire districts, provinces or countries. It is noticeable that whereas many of the First Programme projects were based in individual institutions, most of those in the second were area or district based and involved several institutions or agencies. This appears to have been a deliberate policy, followed for two main reasons. Firstly, it was felt that projects should be large enough 'to provide experience of collaboration between education and training bodies which is one of the most important aspects of the programme'⁵⁹. Secondly, it may perhaps have been designed as a response to criticisms of the First Programme concerning lack of realism in terms of the broader application of outcomes. Many of the initiatives developed in the course of the First Programme would require a considerable increase in resources to facilitate their widespread application. The Second Programme, operating with the available

resources allocated to more broadly based projects, and thus more thinly spread, might be expected to achieve results with a greater degree of general 'applicability'.

A second clear difference between the two programmes is that while the management of projects in the first sometimes remained in the hands of the project team or institution in which it was based, each project in the second was 'guided by a broadly based advisory or liaison group'⁶⁰. The purpose was to 'bring together official and in some places non-official representatives of services, agencies and bodies inside and outside education as well as representatives of the social partners and the local community', with the joint aims of 'helping to develop better education for pupils in transition and improving the value of education as a service to the local community'⁶¹. Again a second purpose though not explicitly stated appears to have been the maintenance of a sense of realism in the work of the projects and the consequent development of widely applicable initiatives.

The Second Action Programme: Thirty Pilot Projects
(Project Number, Location, Title and Main Objective)

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
1	Belgium/ Saint Ghislain	Harmonisation of the training systems in Saint Ghislain area	Introduction of a flexible modular training system for 14-18 year olds still at school full time or part time.
2	Belgium/ West Flanders and Limburg Province	Education in Alternance	To develop new courses of alternating training and work experience for young people up to 25 years, particularly the unemployed.

P. Location No.	Title	Main Objective
3 Denmark/ Municipality of Aalberg (many schools -over 3,500 pupils)	Education and vocational orientation aspects in transition	To improve the use of work experience, careers education and guidance.
4 Denmark/ Hvidovre (a suburb of Copenhagen)	Coordinated guidance of pupils in transition from school to further education and working life	Developing cooperation between guidance counsellors and other agencies providing services for young school leavers.
5 F.R. Germany/ areas in the cities of Mannheim and Weinheim	Promotion of the social and occupational integration of young Germans and migrants in the region	Coordination of all existing support facilities in the region to improve young migrants' access to vocational education and training.
6 F.R. Germany/ Berlin	German-Turkish leisure and cultural centre for young people	To encourage inter-cultural contact between Germans and Turks through theatre, music, literature, painting and photography.
7 F.R. Germany/ City and region of Kassel	Inter-agency coordination in the Kassel region	To promote cooperation between the employment offices, firms and lower secondary schools.
8 F.R. Germany/ Duisberg	Advice and support for young people with the aim of reducing youth unemployment	To develop guidance and vocational preparation for low attaining pupils before and after the end of compulsory education.
9 France/ 20 vocational schools in 6 regions	The contribution of work experience towards the personal development of young people and their integration into social & working life.	Assessment of the value of work experience for personal and social development and the improvement of work experience schemes.

P. Location No.	Title	Main Objective
10 France/ Venissieux (a large housing estate in the suburbs of Lyons)	School and post-school integration of marginal pupils	Improving the curriculum, guidance and social integration of low achievers.
11 France/ 60 information and guidance centres distributed throughout the country	Action research project to apply the experience of guidance personnel working in the information and guidance offices & other local offices to measures for young people aged 16-18 years	Reappraisal of the guidance process and its links with the curriculum of lower secondary schools.
12 France/ Creteil (disadvantaged suburbs of Paris)	Social and occupational integration of young migrants	The social and vocational integration of young migrants emphasising the value of bi-lingualism
13 Greece/ Athens and N.W. Greece	Career education and guidance	Development and testing of a new training programme for teachers of careers education and guidance and the development of regional centres to support the work.
14 Greece/ 6 rural areas with village cooperatives	AGRO I	To train unemployed graduates of upper secondary schools in management for jobs in agricultural cooperatives.
15 Greece/ various regions	Linking the comprehensive upper secondary school with its social, cultural and economic environment	To encourage increased participation by the local community in the work of the new comprehensive upper secondary schools.
16 Ireland/ Dublin (an inner city area)	Dublin inner city education project	Improved social and vocational preparation of young people with poor prospects of employment, including special courses for young women.

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
17	Ireland/ Galway city and south county Mayo	Project for the integrated provision of education	The development of 'integrated' education, emphasising the utilisation of the out-of-school environment.
18	Ireland/ Schools throughout the province of Munster	SPIRAL II	The development of new two year post-compulsory programmes, particularly for those unlikely to achieve well in the existing Leaving Certificate and including programmes for girls.
19	Italy/ Regio Calabria and Sardinia	TOURISM	To help pupils acquire business knowledge, particularly about cooperatives and the tourist industry & to retrain teachers for this work.
20	Italy/ the Provinces of Florence and Viterbo	Administrative organisation and management	To promote a greater awareness in schools of employment possibilities in the local economy & to introduce micro-computer techno-
21	Italy/ Provinces of Treviso and Avellino	Agriculture-food manufacturing industry	To improve the guidance and vocational training of young people by developing their knowledge of the local economy, particularly the food/ agricultural economy.
22	Italy/ the Commune of Modena and the area of Biella	Advanced technologies	The improvement of guidance and orientation towards job opportunities in advanced technologies.
23	Luxembourg	Experimental development of the new teacher function of 'transition tutor'	To improve the vocational and social guidance and integration of young people by developing a special relationship between them and a teacher in the role of 'transition tutor'
24	Netherlands/ Province of Zeeland	Project work experience	The development of a coordination centre to increase and improve work experience provision for pupils in secondary education & for teachers
25	Netherlands/ Rijnmond region including the city of Rotterdam	Work orientation location project	To improve the coordination of work experience placements and develop vocational guidance in the curriculum.

P. No.	Location	Title	Main Objective
26	UK/ Secondary schools of various types in Northern Ireland	Transition to adult and working life	School-based curriculum review and development for pupils in transition.
27	UK/ Manchester (7 schools in the inner city and suburbs)	Alternative curriculum strategies	To develop an alternative curriculum for pupils in 14-16 age group.
28	UK/ Glasgow (Castlemilk - a post-war housing estate)	The Castlemilk transition to adult life project	Curriculum development, improved guidance and community-based activities for all 14-16 year old pupils, especially under-achievers.
29	UK/ Powys (a rural county in mid Wales)	Powys rural enterprise project	To develop curricula with a special emphasis on business and craft job opportunities in a rural area.
30	UK/ Northamptonshire (a mixture of schools in a rural/industrial county)	Northamptonshire 14-16 curriculum project	Development of new curricula for 14-16 year old pupils with emphasis on community-based activities, school-parent cooperation and work experience ⁶²² .

Second Transition Programme: Distribution of the Ten Thematic Areas Among the Pilot Projects:

The 'main objective' of each project given in the above table represents only the principal thematic area pursued by that project. In fact, every project was expected to undertake research in more than one area and the table on page 38 indicates the extent to which themes received attention in the course of the Second Programme.

PILOT PROJECTS - THEMES

P. No.	1 Work Experience	2 Equal Opportunities	3 Guidance	4 Staff Development	5 Assessment & Certification	6 Migrants	7 Education for Enterprise	8 School & Social Action	9 Curriculum Development	10 Cooperation (District Approach)
B 1	*			*	*		*		*	*
B 2	*	*			*				*	
QK 3	*	*	*	*					*	*
QK 4	*	*	*	*		*			*	*
D 5		*	*	*		*		*		
D 6		*				*		*	*	
D 7	*		*	*		*		*		*
D 8	*		*	*		*		*		*
F 9	*			*	*					
F 10			*	*		*		*	*	
F 11	*	*	*	*		*	*			*
F 12	*	*	*	*		*		*		
GR 13			*	*						
GR 14	*						*		*	
GR 15	*		*	*				*		*
IRL 16	*	*	*	*	*			*	*	*
IRL 17	*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*
IRL 18	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*
I 19 a			*	*			*		*	
I 19 b	*		*	*			*		*	*
I 20 a	*		*	*			*		*	*
I 20 b			*	*			*		*	
I 21 a	*		*	*		*	*	*	*	*
I 22 a	*	*		*			*		*	*
I 22 b	*			*			*		*	*
L 23			*	*		*		*		*
NL 24	*								*	*
NL 25	*		*			*			*	*
UK 26			*	*	*			*	*	*
UK 27	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
UK 28	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*
UK 29	*			*	*		*	*	*	*
UK 30	*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*

Source: Second Transition Programme, Interim Report, p. 5.

The First and Second Transition Programmes: A Comparative Assessment:

The final report of the Second Programme, published in 1988, and a series of 'working documents' - ongoing theme-based assessments of progress in the various areas of research and development - were published throughout 1986, 1987 and 1988. The themes stressed in those documents represent continuity with the documents and reports of the First Transition Programme. For example, the titles of the working documents published in 1986/87 - Assessment and Certification, Education for Enterprise, Teacher Training, and The World of Work as a Learning Resource⁶³ - echo the main themes and the most important documents produced by the First Programme.

This is not to say that the project research of the Second Transition Programme has not deepened and broadened the level of information and understanding in these important fields. In fact, in each area the Second Programme documentation demonstrates refinements of techniques and procedures and indeed entirely new approaches of considerable value.

In particular the series of publications entitled Innovations⁶⁴, each of which contains a detailed account of the work of a particularly innovative pilot project, represents a very useful additional source of information. Innovations allows direct access as it were to the work of the projects themselves. Such access makes the tasks both of the researcher seeking to arrive at a realistic assessment of the achievement involved and the teacher in search of new ideas a great deal easier.

Nonetheless, the range of significant themes emerging from the second programme is, somewhat disappointingly, similar to that of the first. The

core chapters of Part I of this thesis, which deal with the development of active learning and teaching strategies, the use of work experience schemes, greater community involvement in the schools, inter-agency cooperation, new modes of assessment and guidance and information provision - all reflect concerns identified in the First Programme. No new theme of equal significance emerged from the Second Programme. In terms of curriculum philosophy, teaching methodology, course content and assessment, the emphasis has been largely on refining existing ideas, rather than on further innovation.

A further criticism which could be made of both programmes is a relative preoccupation with vocational preparation and an underemphasis on breadth and balance in the curriculum including preparation for adult life in general as much as for working life. The importance of general education and preparation for adult life in broad terms is acknowledged in transition theory - 'education for living and education as a preparation for work are parallel and complementary aims for educational institutions'⁶⁵, but the necessary balance has not often emerged in the projects.

This is a serious flaw in the work of both programmes. No matter what improvements are made in vocational preparation, unemployment remains a highly likely prospect, particularly for the less academically able, for whom transition education is primarily designed. While work related skills may or may not be of any use to such pupils after they leave school, we can be fairly certain that the skills, personal qualities and attributes associated with, for example, home-making, parenthood, citizenship and

leisure activities will be required by most people in the conduct of their adult lives. Yet even a cursory examination of the themes and objectives of each project outlined earlier in this chapter reveals how little attention preparation for adult as opposed to working life has received.

There is, admittedly, some signs that these shortcomings have been recognised, even if rather late in the day. For example, social education in the form of theme number eight, 'schools and social action', has managed to gain a grudging admittance to the research areas of the Second Programme⁶⁶. However, a number of projects in both programmes - for example, North Mayo and Clydebank in the First and Berlin and Castlemilk in the Second - have produced some interesting initiatives in areas such as personal development, social education and education in the arts.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

In December 1976, the Commission of the European Communities launched the 'First Transition Programme from Education to Adult and Working Life'. This programme consisted of twenty nine pilot projects situated throughout the Community and funded up to fifty percent of their costs by the Commission. The decision to launch the First Programme resulted from (i) the steadily increasing rate of youth unemployment throughout the Community and (ii) evidence which indicated that certain categories of young people - early school-leavers, the less academically able, the physically handicapped, girls with poor academic qualifications, and migrants - were affected more severely by unemployment than were other groups. The purpose of the

programme was also twofold:

- (i) to reduce levels of youth unemployment by improving vocational education and training provision in the member States and
- (ii) to experiment with curricular and structural initiatives which might be applied in the broader educational community, designed to improve provision for young people in the disadvantaged groups mentioned above.

The First Transition Programme ran from 1978 to 1982. Its most significant results were in the following areas: (i) course context, content and teaching methods, (ii) guidance and information for young people, (iii) assessment and certification, (iv) staff development, (v) school involvement with the community and (vi) improved cooperation between the agencies involved in the provision of transition services to young people. However, the final evaluation reports expressed the view that further refinement and development was required before the suggestions and initiatives that had emerged in each of these areas could be made the basis of educational policy in the member States.

In response, the EC commissioned a Second Transition Programme which ran from 1982 to 1987 and consisted in a further thirty pilot projects. The final evaluation reports and reports on specific aspects of the work were published during 1988 and 1989. These indicate that the principal outcomes of the Second Programme are largely similar to those of the first, principally in vocationally oriented initiatives such as work experience/education for enterprise, vocational guidance/information and school - community liaison designed mainly with a view to the improvement of vocational education and career choice. Other themes of the First Programme

such as teaching methodologies, assessment and staff retraining have also achieved high profile in the work of the Second Programme.

Finally, it is argued that while in the areas in which significant research has been undertaken many useful and valuable ideas have emerged, the projects have by and large failed to carry out their entire remit by neglecting issues such as social education, education in the practical aspects of living and education of the imagination through the arts. It can be argued that the philosophical framework of transition education which emerged in the course of the First Programme and which is discussed in detail in chapter two of this work implies a much broader conception of what constitutes adequate preparation for life and work than the objectives most pilot projects have attempted to attain.

CHAPTER ONE: NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Preparation for Working Life and for Transition from Education to Work, (Brussels: European Commission, 1976).
- 2 The full text of the Resolution is contained in Supplement 2/76 of the Bulletin of the European Communities.
- 3 Both reports are contained in Supplement 12/76 of the Bulletin of the European Communities.
- 4 Preparation for Working Life and for Transition from Education to Work (Reports by Member States), (Brussels: European Commission, 1976), Member State Report for the Federal Republic of Germany, p. 3. (This publication will hereafter be cited as Reports by Member States).
- 5 Reports by Member States, Netherlands, p. 1.
- 6 ibid., Italy, p. 3.
- 7 ibid., Federal Republic of Germany, p. 13.
- 8 ibid., Federal Republic of Germany, p. 17.
- 9 ibid., France, p. 3.
- 10 Preparation for Working Life and Transition from Education to Work. Background Analysis Report, (Brussels: European Commission, 1976), p. 20.
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- 17 A Brief Description of the Pilot Projects in the First Transition Programme (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1979), p. 3. (Hereafter cited as A Brief Description...)
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- 26 Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 5.
- 27 A Brief Description..., p. 101.
- 28 *ibid.*, p. 38.
- 29 Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 13.
- 30 A Brief Description..., p. 3.
- 31 *ibid.*, p. 3.
- 32 A full account of the work of each of these projects, together with contact addresses from which to obtain further information, can be found in First Transition Programme, Final Programme Report, Part C, Project Descriptions, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1983).
- 33 From Education to Working Life, p. 4.

- 34 *ibid.*, p. 5.
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- 36 First Transition Programme, Final Programme Report, Part A, Synthesis Report; Part B, Theme Reports: (i) Work Experience, (ii) Staff Development; Part C, Project Descriptions, (Brussels: IFAPLAN / Programme Information Office, 1983).
- 37 Copies of Project Information '79 and some numbers of Newsletter are still available from IFAPLAN - Gesellschaft Fur angewandte Sozialforschung und Planung, Stadtwald - Gurtel 33, D - 5000 Koln.
- 38 For a detailed list of all reports and documents arising from the First Transition Programme, see the Bibliography to this work.
- 39 From Education to Working Life, p. 5.
- 40 Final Programme Report, Part A, Synthesis Report, p. 13.
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- 42 First Transition Programme, Policies for Transition, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1984).
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- 45 Second Transition Programme, Interim Report, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1985), p. 7.
- 46 *ibid.*, p. 25.
- 47 The full text of the Resolution is contained in Supplement 6/85 of the Bulletin of the European Communities.
- 48 For a fuller analysis of the impact of the First Transition Programme on the development of the Vocational Preparation and Training Course in Ireland, see Kevin Williams and Gerry McNamara, The Vocational Preparation Course: An Educational Appraisal and Practical Guide, (Dublin: Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, 1985).
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- 54 Second Transition Programme, Teacher Training - Strategies from the Second Transition Programme, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1986).
- 55 For an account of each Pilot Project in the second Transition Programme, see Thirty Pilot Projects, pp 1- 125.
- 56 Second Transition Programme, The World of Work as a Learning Resource, (Brussels, IFAPLAN, 1986), p. 1.
- 57 Interim Report, p. 3. The cost to the Community Budget in 1984 was 5.3 million Ecus and a similar sum in 1985 and 1986. - Policies for Transition, p. 56.
- 58 Second Transition Programme, Education for Enterprise. An Interim Report, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1986), p. 3.
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- 60 *ibid.*, p. 55.
- 61 *ibid.*, p. 55.
- 62 Thirty Pilot Projects, pp 1-125; Interim Report, pp 53-62; a more complete account of the aims and methodologies of each project together with a contact address for further information is to be found in Thirty Pilot Projects.
- 63 For a full list of the documents produced in the course of the Second Transition Programme, see the Bibliography to this work.
- 64 Innovations, a series of short descriptions of developments in the field of young people's transition from education to adult and working life (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1987/88), Nos 1-39.
- 65 Education for Working Life, p. 17.
- 66 Interim Report, p. 33.

CHAPTER TWO

A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSITION EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the extent to which the literature of two transition programmes contains the basis of a framework for what one might term a coherent philosophy of transition education. It may be appropriate to begin by defining the concept of transition education in terms of the sense in which it is used in the literature produced by the two programmes on transition from school to adult and working life¹.

By transition education is meant the provision of a totally or partially new curriculum for young people in second level education. This new curriculum, it is suggested, might be appropriate for all second level pupils, but in the first instance, it is envisaged as urgently necessary for those in the final year of compulsory education who are unlikely to remain at school, those in the post-compulsory phase who are unsuited to traditional academically oriented education, and those in special risk categories². These categories of pupil are described as being in transition from the dependent world of the school to the independence of adult life and the special problems ascribed to this process are considerable -

They are faced with a bewildering array of choices, vocational, educational, political, economic and moral. And although young people themselves are often unaware of the need for preparation, guidance and counselling or unwilling to admit that it exists, it is at this point that these needs are most acute.

Our societies and economies are structured in such a way that many of the choices young people make at this time are almost irreversible. This is particularly true of educational and vocational choices...the hard fact remains that most people make their key career choice as they move from school into the labour market.

Finally, the transition phase is important because it is at this time that the vulnerability of the disadvantaged groups in society becomes more visible...when they begin to seek employment or further education outside school, girls, young migrants, disabled young people or young people without formal qualifications find how restricted their opportunities really are³.

The proposed transition curriculum must, therefore, attempt to facilitate a successful transfer from education to adult and working life by preparing students to overcome the difficulties inherent in the process. This can only be achieved by a curriculum designed to equip pupils with skills and attitudes appropriate to the needs of practical living in modern society and particularly those required to cope with employment and unemployment. The pupils most urgently in need of such preparation are those regarded as particularly ill served by traditional schooling, the non-academic low achievers, demotivated and alienated by persistent failure to master a curriculum which they find irrelevant to their own lives⁴.

It is explicitly stated in the transition programme literature that the principles and objectives of transition education 'are not based on a coherent theory but try to focus on the problems and needs of the individuals concerned'⁵. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse these concepts in the context of the transition literature with a view

to discovering the extent to which 'a coherent theory' which might logically underpin them does in fact exist.

1. CRITICISMS OF THE TRADITIONAL CURRICULUM:

The first premise of transition education is rooted in the perceived inadequacy of what might be termed the traditional academic curriculum to meet the needs of a significant and growing number of second level pupils⁶. In particular, the alleged failure of traditional schooling to equip pupils with the skills and attitudes required for adaptation to a rapidly changing economic and social situation is stressed. The reason for this failure is explicitly identified as the academic and theoretical nature of much of the traditional curriculum and its consequent inability to link the work of the school with the practical requirements of adult life in general and the world of work in particular. The following quotation is typical of a number of statements of this case in the transition literature:

the dominant thrust in most second level schooling has been academic - the acquisition of knowledge in a set of subjects, the choice of which has been made partly to 'transmit the culture' and partly to master the mathematical and scientific knowledge needed to study in universities...therefore a substantial proportion of pupils have rejected school or become apathetic since much of the subject matter they learn appears entirely irrelevant to them⁷.

This alleged failure of the curriculum to connect with the experience of the learner is further identified as the principal cause of the alienation and demotivation which is said to affect a substantial proportion of pupils in all the countries of the EC.

We are particularly concerned with those for whom traditional education has, broadly speaking, failed. They sit passively in classrooms under strict 'paternal authority' listening to and working on material of little intrinsic interest to them²⁸.

As a result three categories of pupils are identified, each demotivated and demoralised to a greater or lesser degree:

- (a) the school rejectors: those who actively reject education and are hostile to it, manifesting this by disruption in class, by truancy and by dropping out before the end of compulsory education or immediately that point is reached;
- (b) the apathetic: those who achieve little in school but are not disruptive;
- (c) the disillusioned: those who conform and achieve some success but who increasingly see their efforts as useless in view of growing unemployment²⁹.

These criticisms of the traditional curriculum and the consequent case made for an alternative approach raise two interesting questions which require clarification. The first is the extent to which transition education should be perceived as an alternative to the entire second level curriculum or simply as an extra dimension grafted onto the traditional system in the form of additional or alternative courses or subjects. The second is the categories of pupil for which transition education might be deemed to be appropriate. To an extent these issues

are never fully faced in the transition literature. The literature is biting in criticising traditional curricula, but implicit in the work of most projects and also, paradoxically, in much of the literature itself is the supposition that alternative courses along transition lines are just that - alternatives - and are designed to meet the needs of groups not served in the mainstream of education. At times a broader concept emerges -

the problem of transition should not be linked exclusively to the notion of risk groups. Evidence now suggests that a much wider range of young people experience severe problems in their transition to adult and working life. Project staff emphasised ...that the need for special provision would be considerably reduced if general provision of education was designed to meet the needs of *all* young people'^o.

If one accepts this view, the obvious solution is the introduction of an entirely new or significantly reformed curriculum for all post primary pupils. This new curriculum would be informed by the principles of transition education and would operate throughout the secondary cycle. This type of approach was adopted by a number of pilot projects in both transition programmes. The 'Actions Jeunes' project in France developed an alternative junior second level course, while in Germany and in Ireland the Berlin project and the Dublin 'Early School Leavers' project both experimented with making considerable alterations to the junior cycle secondary curriculum so that it would meet the needs of all pupils including the less academically able'¹. In the Second Transition Programme, a number of projects, including 'SPIRAL II' at Shannon, Ireland, piloted an entirely redesigned senior cycle programme'². In each case, however, it should be noted that 'alternative' remains the

operative word - the notion that such programmes might provide a basis for reformed curriculum applicable to all second level pupils has not emerged as a serious issue. This of course is largely due to resistance within the education systems themselves, but also, as I shall suggest in the Conclusion to this work, because the EC has not seriously proposed the implementation of transition education concepts in mainstream education in the member States.

Extensive reform leading to a common curriculum would have obvious advantages over the 'intervention' models now dominating. All pupils would be enabled to pursue a common curriculum throughout second level schooling, and the problems inherent in 'dual ethos' systems would be eliminated. There are some very slight indications that the influence of such thinking is now making itself felt in the wider educational community. For example, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in Ireland is implementing a revised common curriculum for all pupils at junior secondary level and the integration of all senior cycle courses into a coherent structure is being planned¹⁷.

However, resistance to change, and particularly change to the essentially linguistic/academic nature of the traditional mainstream post primary curriculum, runs very deep. For the foreseeable future the application of the most radical transition education ideas is likely to be largely confined to peripheral programmes for the less able. Most projects have focused their attention on 'special category' or risk groups of one type or another and the programme outcomes and potential applications are best understood in this context. It is in this context

and specifically in the development of school-based vocational preparation programmes that they are considered in this work.

2. THE PRINCIPLES OF TRANSITION EDUCATION:

Having established the essentially negative view of traditional curricula/schooling, we now turn to the proposed alternatives outlined in the transition literature. The analysis of the inadequacy of the traditional curriculum previously outlined clearly implied recognition of the need for significant change. To eliminate these inadequacies, it was argued, new curricula would have to have as their starting point the tasks of clearly and positively linking the work of the school to the practical needs of life in the community and in the workplace, and thereby reinteresting and remotivating disillusioned and alienated young people. These aims of the curriculum are expressed in the transition literature as follows.

1. To help young people gain and maintain motivation for learning; to achieve a basic understanding in young people of society and the world of work, both mechanisms and institutions: to develop the self-confidence, initiative and creativity that will allow young people to make informed and sensible educational and vocational decisions'⁴.
2. Education policies have hitherto maintained the central importance of a traditional curriculum through formal examinations whilst trying to reform the edges of the curriculum as a way of meeting young people's needs. Policies for transition need to reverse that process - to focus first and foremost on the needs of young people whilst at the same time providing necessary and relevant education and training'⁵.

3. 'Competencies' (a word used to define the range of skills, attitudes, knowledge and qualities necessary to cope in adult and working life), which are common to a wide range of vocational and life skills, must constitute the starting point of the transition curriculum. Learning experiences designed to impart these life, social and vocational skills and to enable pupils to see the relevance of such skills in a variety of contexts and situations are central to curricular reform¹⁶.
4. Negotiation: a negotiated learning contract should be a central principle in the development of transition education. This is the process by which the young person and the tutor discuss and arrive at an agreed plan for the learning content, organisation, methods and assessment of a particular programme.¹⁷
5. To substitute a new curriculum without changing radically the methods of learning and the 'social context' is of little value. Traditional 'passive' classroom learning must be abandoned since it is 'intrinsically demotivating', and has made impossible the development of essential personal and interpersonal competencies. 'Active learning' methodology must replace passive learning since the experiences required for the development of personal and interpersonal competencies are gained from doing things and interacting with people¹⁸.
6. Programmes of transition education must be flexible. The rigidity of the traditional subject-centred curriculum acts as a disincentive to learning since it does not allow movement between courses, or different rates of progress, or some areas of the course to be left open for gradual development through 'negotiation' with the student. To overcome these problems, transition courses should be organised on a 'modular basis', allowing for wide choice, movement between modules and the development of integrated and interdisciplinary studies to replace rigid categorisation of learning¹⁹.
7. Transition education must make the best use of all available resources. In particular since the thrust of transition education is to encourage greater linkage between the educational provision of the school and the competencies needed to survive in society and the world of work, the out-of-school environment must be fully developed as an educational resource. This involves the development of systemic links between the school and the community in order to promote coherence between the skills required for further training, for employment and to function effectively in society, and the learning activities being provided in the transition curriculum²⁰.

These ideas appear to me to be divisible into two categories which I shall call fundamental and contingent. Principles one, two, three and four are fundamental in that they seek to describe the conceptual parameters within which both the aims appropriate to transition education and the range of human experience and activity from which the content of a transition curriculum should be drawn, must be elaborated. These principles contain as it were the essence of transition education, that which makes the idea conceptually different to an interest-based or a child-centered curriculum. Principles five to seven inclusive on the other hand are prescriptions for strategies and methodologies designed to implement the theory contained in the fundamental principles. Therefore they are contingent in that they might be different or otherwise without altering the essential character of transition education. In the following sections of this chapter, I propose to concentrate on an analysis of those principles which I regard as fundamental. In later chapters on methodology, assessment and certification, and curriculum structure, I will examine the issues raised by the contingent principles.

The Principles of Transition Education - An Analysis:

I propose now to analyse those principles which I have categorised as fundamental in order to assess the extent to which they provide a rational basis on which to construct an alternative approach to the second level curriculum. Firstly, it must be pointed out that the

central theme of transition education, the notion of using the school to prepare young people to cope better with both work and everyday survival tasks, is not without its opponents. Some leading educational philosophers in the 'liberal' tradition, such as R.S. Peters, P.H. Hirst and Michael Oakeshott, conceive of the school as a place apart from the rest of life, fulfilling a specific function which might best be defined as the initiation of young people into the most important or 'superior' forms of knowledge²¹. These are named by Hirst as science, mathematics, philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, history and religion²². Philosophers of this tradition would oppose the practice of linking school too closely to the practical aspects of life and work, and would argue moreover that in attempting to do so we are appropriating to the school functions traditionally discharged by the family and the wider community. According to this line of argument, it is the employer's function to provide opportunities to learn work related skills, as it is the role of the family and the wider community to teach young people how to fend for themselves in matters such as sex education and human relationships.

There are several possible responses to this argument. If we accept just for a moment the basis of this approach - that school is a place apart from the rest of life and not primarily concerned with equipping young people with the skills needed for survival in society - we might still defend transition education on the grounds that where the family and society are unable or unwilling to provide learning opportunities for such skills, it then becomes the responsibility of the school to meet this need. And since the nature of modern society is so complex

that it is hard to imagine how any single family or community agency could be expected to provide systematic and structured instruction in the many areas of knowledge which bear on survival in contemporary society (think in this regard of areas like taxation and social welfare entitlements), the need for special provision becomes self-evident²³. Moreover, those categories of pupils - migrants, the handicapped, low achievers and school rejectors - for which transition education is essentially conceived are the most vulnerable and most at risk in our school systems and are the most conspicuous failures within the academic examination system. Transition education might therefore be seen as a final effort to offer these young people something in place of the traditional curriculum which for them at least has proved inadequate. These categories of pupils will typically be from social backgrounds where opportunities for acquiring both work and survival skills will be least likely to be available. If the school does not make good this deficiency, then no other agency will.

This argument would be accepted by even the sternest critics of the notion that the school should aim to prepare its clients for the 'practical aspects of living'. Oakeshott, for example, would accept that, while what he elegantly terms 'the language of practical experience' is of an order of knowledge not normally appropriate to the role of the school, there are occasions when the provision of such knowledge by schools is justified²⁴. The grounds for such provision are defined by Gerry Gaden as 'prudential', by which he means that it is in the interest of both the individual and of society at large that certain information on matters such as sex education should be made available to

young people²⁵. This 'prudential' argument appears to me to provide at the very least an adequate justification for the provision of transition education as an 'intervention' element designed to make good deficiencies in the mainstream academic curriculum: in other words, as a mechanism to provide young people with knowledge which society deems it 'prudential' for them to acquire and which they would be unlikely to encounter outside of the school. Making up deficiencies seems a narrow approach to curriculum provision.

A second criticism of the use of school as an instrument for teaching young people skills related to vocational roles is now often heard. It is based on the view that in the present economic climate school-based vocational preparation courses are futile and even in a sense dishonest in that they lead to expectations which will not be fulfilled²⁶. There are in my view two responses to this argument. It is certainly true that, as Breen for example suggests, any amount of new curricula in our schools will make no difference to the number of real jobs available²⁷. The only effect of such programmes at a time of high unemployment may be to alter the chances of one individual in relation to another of obtaining employment. However, it seems only fair on the grounds of social justice that those low achievers with little or no formal qualifications who have gained least from the traditional curriculum should be given an opportunity to undertake programmes designed to improve their employment prospects. Recent figures from the ESRI, NESC and the Youth Employment Agency all show clearly that length of time spent in full time education and school qualifications are vital factors in determining employment prospects²⁸. Those who leave school early

with no qualifications are at a severe disadvantage and while little research has been carried out to assess the impact of transition courses on success in obtaining employment, what there is suggests that such courses have a very positive impact on the employment prospects of such young people²⁹.

More importantly, criticisms like those of Wilks and Breen seem to me to be rooted in a misconception or at least an overly narrow interpretation of the purpose of transition education. If the principle thrust of such education was merely to train young people for specific vocational roles, I would be as stern an opponent of such ideas as Michael Oakeshott. However, the principles of transition education, on careful analysis, would appear to point firmly away from specific skills related to vocational roles and towards a broader more generously conceived curriculum concerned with knowledge, skills and attitudes applicable across the range of human experience. This interpretation of transition education is supported several times in the literature. For example,

work is a large and important part of life. At the same time a job is only one aspect of the individual's life. Education for living and education as a preparation for work are parallel and complementary aims for educational institutions³⁰.

This point is further illustrated by the negative attitudes expressed throughout the final programme report on the First Transition Programme to the inclusion of specific work-related skills in the curricula of pilot projects. The stress is placed firmly on the need for priority to be accorded to skills described as 'generalisable', meaning not related

to a specific vocational role but flexible enough to be adapted for use in many such roles³¹. Pilot projects which appeared to place too much emphasis on specific work-related training are criticised on the grounds that such 'detailed training is not appropriate to transition education, is unlikely to produce flexible and adaptable people and most importantly is unwise in practical terms since specific skills can become redundant in such a short space of time'³². Generalisable skills, on the other hand, are designed to enhance manual dexterity, ability to handle a wide range of tools and machinery, creative capacity, adaptability, initiative and flexibility for further training. It is argued that to the greatest extent possible such skills should be developed through exposure to a wide range of activities, useful in terms of the individual's ability to survive in society and also providing 'tasters' of different types of work to enable pupils to make more informed career decisions.

Individual Needs and Curriculum Determination:

Transition education is not therefore by its own account merely concerned with either making up for the deficiencies of the academic curriculum or preparing young people for entry to specific types of work, but has a broader justification. It is to this we now turn our attention. The central thrust of transition education as developed in the programme literature might best be defined as the creation of a curriculum determined principally by considerations of usefulness and

value to the individual learner. In this context, the terms usefulness and value must be understood in an extrinsic rather than an intrinsic sense. By this I mean that what is of use and value to the learner is to be judged in terms of the knowledge, skills and qualities (collectively termed competencies) which a person is likely to require to function effectively in society, rather than by considerations related to any intrinsic worth which a particular subject might be said to possess. Accordingly, when the most necessary competencies have been defined, the content of the curriculum will consist in the learning experiences designed to initiate the pupil into them. Thus the basis of curriculum determination is to be the initiation of the learner into competencies which he is judged to 'need' to cope adequately with life and work.

However despite the stress placed on pupil 'needs', transition philosophy should not be seen as child or interest-centered in the sense meant by philosophers such as John Dewey or P.S. Wilson.³⁴ The starting point of transition education is not the 'interests' of the student, but rather his 'needs'. 'Policies for transition should ...focus first and foremost on the *needs* of young people while at the same time providing necessary and relevant education and training³⁵.' The full context makes it clear that these 'needs' will not be those identified by the child but rather be determined by the collective wisdom of society, as represented by the curriculum planners and the teacher.

Transition education must first determine which skills and competencies can be realistically acquired by young people at different stages of development and ...develop learning situations which enable them to see the relevance of such skills.

This appears to mean that while programmes must be as interesting and relevant as possible, they are child-centered only in the sense that the starting point is the perceived needs of the individual but not his felt needs. This distinction between 'perceived needs', determined by some outside agency and 'felt needs', articulated by the individual learner, is crucial. A curriculum based on the latter would be very close to Wilson's interest-centered approach, and this is clearly not intended to be the case. Transition education places forms of knowledge determined by extrinsic rather than intrinsic considerations at the centre of the educational engagement. - It is this different view of how the forms of knowledge which are most educationally appropriate should be chosen rather than any commitment to the importance of the child's felt needs or interests which differentiates transition education from traditional 'liberal' education.

The nature and educational value of a curriculum founded on this basis - identifying and meeting the perceived needs of the learner - will of course depend on the needs identified as appropriate. There is a significant danger that the needs of the learner could be very narrowly construed to suit a particular political ideology, for example, the learner could be said to only need to know a specific vocational skill.

However a recurrent theme in the transition literature is criticism of unduly narrow curricula which have dominated schooling to date. It should follow that the transition curriculum will take a different approach. Each aspect of human experience, the intellectual/academic,

personal/social, physical/manual and aesthetic/artistic, as well as the vocational, is stated to have a contribution to make to the range of competencies required for the practical and vocational aspects of living and therefore each should be represented in the curriculum. Consequently, the learning experiences provided should seek to expose the pupil in a meaningful way to the greatest possible range of human investigation and activity and will attempt to promote a genuinely balanced education.

To summarise, then, transition principles would appear to imply a curriculum (1) which would be determined by the perceived needs of the individual, defined in terms of utility and value in coping with the practical concerns of adult life and work; (2) these needs would be defined by the teacher/curriculum designer, guided by the accumulated wisdom of experience and in response to the changing demands of life and work; (3) the content of the curriculum would be designed to expose the pupil to learning experiences drawn from all the categories of human activity and enquiry; (4) in order to ensure exposure to an adequate range of experiences and skills, a broad, generously conceived curriculum would be required.

3. PROBLEMS WITH THE TRANSITION PRINCIPLES:

(1) Motivation:

It appears to be taken for granted in the transition literature that the introduction of a curriculum based on 'needs' will automatically solve the problem of pupil motivation, but this is not necessarily so at all. As R.F. Dearden points out, 'the statement that X needs Y carries no implication at all that X wants Y²⁷.' The teacher/curriculum designer indeed can formulate all sorts of 'need statements' for his pupils without any progress towards either awareness of their needs or acceptance of them by the children. Thus 'the motivational problem in teaching is a problem precisely because children are regarded as needing something which they cannot be brought to want or to be interested in²⁸'. This problem arises in the transition literature because of the tendency to conjoin the terms needs and interests, as in the following:

young people need and want to develop useful competencies that will enable them to cope more effectively in adult life and make them more employable²⁹.

It is somehow assumed that because the curriculum planner determines that it is in the student's interest to know something that the student will automatically come to be interested in that something. However, as those with experience of teaching the 'hard to reach' will readily testify, this assumption is unwarranted. Those pupils who are deeply alienated from school and demotivated by social deprivation and/or academic failure can prove as resistant to sex education or pop music as to calculus or quantum theory. Of course, the extent to which any

change in the curriculum, however radical, can influence motivation is open to overestimation. On the other hand, no one could deny that curriculum is a major element in pupil demotivation and one moreover that does fall within the control of the educational authorities.

Something more seems to me to be required than a merely needs-centered curriculum if the problem of demotivation is to be solved. Certainly, a curriculum which stresses the practical application in the adult world of the learning activities pursued in school should have some motivational advantages over traditional curricula. Also, many of the methodological and structural suggestions raised in the course of the first and second series of pilot projects should help in this regard. For example, a 'change of context' out of the school environment has been shown to be an effective means of remotivating school rejectors, while other strategies, such as 'negotiation' with the students and the use of more 'active learning' methods, have also proved useful⁴⁰. However, none of these innovations should obscure the fact that, since the transition curriculum is envisaged as being determined by considerations other than the interests of the pupils, the problem of motivation is likely to remain an acute one.

The solution may lie in the direction of a compromise curriculum based largely on perceived needs but partly on interests. Such an approach is elaborated in the work of Gerry Gaden⁴¹. Gaden argues that while a compulsory core curriculum is necessary in order to teach indispensable skills such as literacy and numeracy, 'together with some historical, geographical and other knowledge of fairly direct relevance to

participation in political and social life'⁴², another element is also required. He calls this 'specialisation' and argues that a significant proportion of school time, perhaps one quarter, should be devoted to it. What is involved is the pursuit by each individual of an activity chosen by him or herself. Gaden is not speaking of 'quick superficial exposure' to this activity but a serious long term 'acquaintanceship' with it. This kind of learning he calls 'internalising the spirit of an activity' through grasping its 'purposes and values', and it can only come about through a deep 'immersion into' the activity⁴³. The purpose of pursuing such a specialisation is the development in the pupil of a sense of achievement through his gaining 'a measure of acknowledged success' and a sense of 'making his own' of some activity with a tradition in the life of the community. Without such a sense of achievement, Gaden concludes, pupils and in particular low achievers will continue to leave school 'without a sense of having learnt anything of significant value to themselves'⁴⁴. The case for specialisation as an integral component of a broader curriculum is in my view compelling and one which transition education could profitably examine. Unless genuine account is taken of pupil interests (as opposed to needs) as a component of the curriculum, alternative programmes will be unlikely to solve the problem of poor pupil motivation.

(2) 'Negotiation':

The fourth principle of transition education states that 'a negotiated learning contract', through which the 'young people and the tutor discuss and arrive at an agreed plan for the learning context, organisation, methods and assessment of a particular programme', should be central to the transition curriculum⁴⁵. Interpreted to mean that the pupil should be consulted about the methodologies and strategies to be pursued in the process of implementing the programme, this principle seems important. However there are limits to its application not developed in the transition literature. Clearly, if the aims, objectives and content of transition education were to be open to 'negotiation' in any serious way, it would be impossible to articulate a set of curriculum objectives in anything but the most provisional fashion prior to acquaintance with the particular children. However, as I have already pointed out, principles one to three above spell out the parameters within which the aims and content of transition education should be developed. Moreover, as the next section of this chapter will illustrate, a wide-ranging and specific set of terminal objectives deemed appropriate to transition education is posited in the Final Programme Report of the First Transition Programme⁴⁶. It is clear then that the general aims, content and terminal objectives of transition education have already been elaborated without direct consultation with those who are to be the subjects of these decisions.

Is negotiation as an important principle therefore just rhetoric? Perhaps it need not be, if an element similar to the specialisation already mentioned were to be accepted as an integral part of the

transition curriculum alongside the core element governed by predetermined aims and objectives. Specialisation would involve genuine negotiation between teacher and student since the pupil would be free to choose an area of interest to himself for special studies and the aims, content and objectives of his work would thus not be predetermined but negotiable. An appreciation of the need for some flexibility along these lines is evident in the literature.

Leaving some areas to be developed as a course proceeds is also important because young people may then participate in making decisions about their own learning'⁴⁷.

In practice, the pilot projects seem only to have been able to offer limited opportunity for child-chosen, as opposed to teacher-directed, special study or project work. This is probably due at least partly to the constraints in terms of resources inherent in any school curriculum, but it is unfortunate nonetheless since it overlooks the close relationship which exists between an element of choice and improved student motivation.

(3) Justification of Curriculum Content:

A final problem is created by the tension which seems to exist between two of the central thrusts of transition education. A curriculum based on considerations of extrinsic value and perceived needs will require all content to be justified unambiguously in terms of its utility in improving the learner's capacity to cope with the problems and

requirements of life and work. At the same time, transition education seeks to promote equality of emphasis on the different categories of human activity including the artistic/aesthetic and emotional/affective. A difficulty arises when one attempts to justify on utilitarian grounds artistic pursuits such as painting or drama. It would be impossible to establish the relevance of such activities purely in terms of the competencies required for life and work except perhaps by arguing that they enhance practical manual skills. However, such a justification does not cover areas such as literature and also does less than justice to the value of artistic and creative pursuits.

This tension is not discussed or even acknowledged in the transition literature. The difficulty might be resolved by a broader definition of what constitutes extrinsic value and perceived needs in the personal and social realms. In these fields, purely instrumental or functional aims are inappropriate, and desired competencies such as self-confidence and flexibility are developed more through the quality of educational experience than by means of merely instructional considerations. Therefore it becomes possible to argue that the perceived needs of the learner in the realm of personal and interpersonal competencies can only be satisfied in the context of a curriculum generously conceived and based on content representative of the fullest possible range of human experience and expression. The extrinsic value of an activity in terms of achieving desired competencies would remain the principal determining factor in curriculum design, while acknowledging that the pursuit of goals such as increased creative capacity requires a generous interpretation of the notions of value and usefulness. Whether because

of difficulties of justification or other reasons, it is most noticeable that personal education and education in the arts played a small role in the work of the majority of projects.

4. THE OBJECTIVES OF TRANSITION EDUCATION:

In this section, I propose to clarify the specific achievements which it is envisaged a curriculum based on the principles of transition education should enable students to attain. These desired achievements are set out in the literature as the objectives of transition education.

Transition education theory is concerned with identifying the skills, abilities, attitudes and knowledge necessary to cope adequately in the adult world into which the individual pupil is in the process of transition. These competencies, once identified, become central to the transition curriculum and the initiation of pupils into them can be described as the general or overall aim of transition education. It follows that to establish individual and specific objectives, the desired competencies must be analysed and broken down into achievements defined closely enough to be measurable. This process is attempted in the transition literature and a range of objectives elaborated within the framework of three distinct categories of competencies is offered as the outcome.

(1) Individual or personal competencies

- self knowledge - strengths and weaknesses, mental and physical
- self confidence and autonomy
- ability to accept and use criticism
- initiative
- logical capacity - decision making, problem solving
- living with emotions
- understanding and development of physical and health capacities
- development of manual skills

(2) Interpersonal competences

- understanding of and feeling for others
- ability to discipline oneself to accept the rules of a group or organisation
- ability to co-operate with others in a common task
- ability to articulate ideas in words and to communicate, to listen, explain, argue, read and write

(3) Understanding and Knowledge

- understanding of numbers and basic mathematics
- understanding and knowledge of existing kinds of work and of the organisation of industry, commerce and administration, and of possible developments in the future, especially in areas such as information technology and the kinds of personal and interpersonal competencies needed therein.
- understanding and knowledge of the alternate forms and patterns of human activity that might replace 'work', and of leisure activities
- understanding and knowledge of the nature of personal and family relationships
- understanding and knowledge of society as a whole and the individual's role in it.⁴⁹

The problem with many of these objectives is obvious. Hirst states that 'for it to be of any value we must analyse objectives detailed enough for us to judge how to promote them... and detailed enough for us to be able to judge when the pupils have reached them'⁴³. A similar view is expressed by J.P. White: 'any new curriculum must be aimed at changing pupils in some ways. Whether or not it succeeds can only be determined by observing pupil behaviour... a curriculum without behaviourally tested objectives cannot be evaluated'⁴⁴. Padraig Hogan summarises this view of objectives in the following terms: 'if educational aims are to have any practical force, they must be stated in simple and incisive terms'⁴⁵.

And be measureable, he might well have added. Many of the objectives on the above list fail the tests of simplicity, incisiveness and measurability. I will argue later that to an extent it is inappropriate to think in terms of attempting to measure personal qualities such as, say, cooperativeness and initiative. However, goals in those areas of skills and knowledge which are capable of objective measurement need to be much more closely discriminated than is the case here. In defence of those who drew up these objectives, it should be said that it would be very difficult if not impossible to establish specific objective norms applicable throughout the entire EC for all the different categories of pupils in the transition process. However, it is hard to offer any defence of objectives stated in terms such as 'self knowledge - strengths and weaknesses, mental and physical', or 'understanding and knowledge of society as a whole and the individual's role in it', which are so broad and imprecise as to be open to virtually infinite

interpretation. Such 'objectives' are of course entirely valueless to practitioners attempting to define appropriate curriculum content, and provide opponents of transition education with plausible evidence to argue that such alternative curricula are just so much rhetoric. This tendency towards vagueness can best be reversed by more clearly defining the particular skills and knowledge to be acquired and by positing specific measurable objectives in areas such as literacy, numeracy, manual skills, knowledge of the world of work and so on.

However only about half of the objectives listed above fall into the skills/knowledge categories which lend themselves fairly readily to specific definition and measurement. The others are concerned with personal qualities and attitudes such as initiative, cooperativeness, decision making capacity and so on. The problems associated with the measurement of such intangibles are considerable, and indeed many educational philosophers would argue that it makes little sense to speak of measurement in this connection at all. The case is well put by John Kleinig.

Because the development of curricula in contemporary schooling is so closely bound up with 'measurement', objectives need to be expressed in some 'measurable' form. This however invites serious distortion. Although educationally valuable learning can be expected to have some behavioral expression it is not constituted by this or that behavioral outcome but by understanding. Of course understanding manifests itself in behaviour but the particular behaviour which is indicative of understanding is neither sufficient to constitute that understanding, nor (generally) sufficiently specific for the standard techniques of 'measurement' to provide a valid or reliable indication of the level of understanding attained⁵².

For these reasons, many educational thinkers and practising teachers are deeply suspicious of test instruments which purport to empirically measure attitudinal modification in young people. Years of experience of attempting to grade pupils on a scale of 1 to 10 on some quality such as initiative or self-confidence has led to doubt about both the validity and value of such exercises. There are several reasons for this. For example, there is evidence to suggest that pupils who score badly on a school measurement of, say, cooperativeness do far better on a similar test returned by a work experience employer. It then becomes clear that cooperativeness is not a quality which a person shows at all times. It depends very much on the nature and interest of the task being undertaken at the time of testing.

A second difficulty is the relative lack of personal contact between students and teachers which a subject-based second level curriculum promotes. The teacher is expected to judge personal qualities in individuals he barely knows and such guesswork is then used both to assess pupils and to evaluate the curriculum. Finally, it is arguable that attitudinal modification by its very nature is unlikely to take place to any significantly measurable degree in the space of one year or even two. Many months or years may elapse before student behaviour changes appreciably, by which time other factors will be candidates for responsibility. The curriculum therefore should not be evaluated in terms of its alleged success or failure in improving or changing pupil attitudes and personal qualities during their time at school. Allowance must be made for a conception of education which would focus on the

ongoing developments of qualities and insights in the post-school period as a result of exposure at school to certain learning experiences.

Thus there may well be an argument for two types of objectives to be accepted in transition education, those capable of specific determination and measurement and those no less desirable but not susceptible to empirical analysis. A number of curriculum theorists have sought to define such a dual system of objectives. For example, I.K. Davies calls them 'specific' objectives, that is, empirically measurable skills and knowledge, and 'general' objectives, that is, concerned with both the quality of the educational experience and what we hope to achieve by it⁵³. This second category is more closely defined by E.W. Eisner, who calls such objectives 'expressive' (as opposed to 'instructional').

An expressive objective does not specify the behaviour the student is to acquire after having engaged in one or more learning activities. An expressive objective describes an educational encounter: it identifies a situation in which children are to work, a problem with which they are to cope, a task in which they are to engage but it does not specify what... they are to learn⁵⁴.

It appears to me that it is only in terms of such 'expressive' objectives that sensible goals can be articulated in the field of personal qualities and interpersonal competencies. Rather than say therefore that the objective is for example to develop initiative or self-understanding as if these qualities were quantifiable, it makes more sense to say that through use of X curricular content or Y teaching

methodology, it is likely that the pupil will come to have an enhanced sense of initiative or a deeper understanding of his own emotions.

This approach seems acceptable and probably approximates to what teachers operating in the area of transition education do in practice. When a teacher uses in class a film or a story designed to make pupils more aware of the trauma of unemployment or the plight of the hungry in the Third World, he/she does not expect to change the views and attitudes of the children in some immediately measurable way. It is enough that the teacher should genuinely seek to promote these changes through the provision of learning experiences designed for this purpose, without the necessity of having to demonstrate in some spurious way that the goal has been reached. Demands for measurement of attainment in such areas are in conflict with the notion of education as essentially a process of growth which does not terminate at a specific point or time.

There is one other aspect of the objectives of transition education which deserves brief comment, namely the disjunction discernible between the theory and the specific objectives supposedly based upon it. Despite criticisms of the traditional curriculum as over-narrow, and arguments that all aspects of human activity and experience should receive recognition in any alternative curricula, a number of key areas such as the artistic/aesthetic/craft field appear to have received inadequate attention in the formulation of specific transition objectives. There remains a tendency to overstress the cognitive aspects of education and undervalue the affective, despite theoretical assertions to the contrary.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

In this chapter, I have analysed the transition literature with a view to establishing the principal theoretical implications contained in that body of documentation. I begin by giving an account of the criticisms of traditional curricula offered in the transition literature. I then proceed to analyse the alternative offered, which I call the theory of transition education. My analysis is offered under two main headings - the principles of transition education and objectives of transition education.

The transition literature identifies two major shortcomings in the traditional/academic curriculum: that (a) such a curriculum does not prepare pupils adequately to cope with the social, practical and vocational aspects of adult life, and (b) it fails to motivate a significant percentage of pupils, because of a lack of relevance to the needs, interests and experiences of young people.

To remedy these problems, an alternative approach to curriculum determination is suggested. The fundamental principles on which the transition literature would propose to base this alternative curriculum are as follows.

- (1) Extrinsic rather than intrinsic considerations should be the central factor in curriculum determination. Accordingly, the aims and content of transition education would be justified primarily in terms of use and value to the pupil in adult and working life.
- (2) The criteria by which what would be of use and value would be identified are the perceived needs of the individual pupil as

opposed to his felt needs or interests. Perceived needs would be determined by the teacher/curriculum designer through analysis and definition of the most important competencies required by the individual to cope in adult and working life.

- (3) The traditional curriculum was unduly narrow in that it stressed the academic and literary aspects of human experience to the virtual exclusion of other elements - artistic, social, manual, etc. - of equal educational importance. To redress the balance, the transition curriculum would seek to ensure adequate exposure to the broadest possible range of human endeavour and inquiry.
- (4) Pupils would have a voice in the formulation of the curriculum through a process of negotiation.

A number of significant problems, which do not appear to be addressed by these principles, are then examined. Firstly, it is suggested that a curriculum based on *perceived needs* will not be likely to solve problems of pupil interest and motivation. Secondly, it is argued that negotiation, described in the literature as a 'central principle', is incompatible with a curriculum based on predetermined aims. As a solution to both of these problems I propose that room be left in the transition curriculum to allow for student specialisation in one or more areas of activity chosen by the learner. Amended thus, the transition curriculum would be *primarily* based on perceived needs and predetermined aims, but partly based on felt needs or pupil interests. Finally, it is pointed out that there is a high level of incompatibility between a curriculum which stresses the central importance of justifying all activities in terms of extrinsic value and one which emphasises exposure

to all the categories of human activity and experience. Yet the transition curriculum seeks to do both. The solution to this dilemma may lie in the recognition that personal and social qualities and attitudes can only be fostered by learning experiences generously and imaginatively conceived in an environment not entirely governed by purely instrumental considerations.

The final portion of the chapter is devoted to a consideration of the objectives of transition education. These are outlined and critically appraised. It is argued that in the case of competencies appropriate to empirical measurement, objectives are not sufficiently discriminated. In areas such as personal and interpersonal skills, where I believe the notion of measurement is somewhat less appropriate, a case is made for the establishment of expressive aims evaluated in terms of the quality of the learning experiences offered rather than terminal outcomes. Finally, it is suggested that in terms of the fundamental principles of transition education, inadequate recognition is afforded to artistic and social/personal elements in the formulation of the objectives.

CHAPTER TWO: NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Final Programme Report, Part A, pp 7-12.
3. Policies for Transition, p. 2.
4. Education for Transition: the Curriculum Challenge, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1984) p. 4.
5. From Education to Working Life, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1980) p. 17.
6. *ibid.*, p. 5.
7. Education for Transition: the Curriculum Challenge, pp 4-5.
8. *ibid.*, p. 4.
9. *ibid.*, pp 4-5.
10. Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 22.
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12. For an account of the work of the projects of the Second Transition Programme, see Thirty Pilot Projects, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1984) and Transition Education for the 90s, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1988).
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27. Richard Breen, Education and the Labour Market: Work and Unemployment Among Recent Cohorts of Irish School Leavers, (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, 1984), p. 136.
28. *ibid.*, p. 123; Manpower Policy in Ireland, (Dublin: National Economic and Social Council, 1985); Transition from School to Work: the Situation of the 1981/1982 School-Leavers in late 1984, (Dublin: Youth Employment Agency, 1986), p. 3.
29. Jerome Morrissey, "Some observations on the Provision and Administration of Courses in the Senior College, Ballyfermot" in Compass, (Vol. 14, No. 2), 1985, p. 72.
30. From Education to Working Life, p. 17.
31. Policies for Transition, pp 46-59.
32. Final Programme Report, Parts A and C.
33. From Transition to Working Life, p. 61; for a fuller account of the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic value in formulating educational aims and curriculum content, see John White, The Aims of Education Restated, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1982), chapters 2 and 3.
34. For the most articulate exposition of the case for 'interest centered' education, see P.S. Wilson, Interests and Discipline in Education, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 67.
35. Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 21.

36. *ibid.*, p. 25.
37. R.F. Dearden, "'Needs' in Education" in R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst, R.S. Peters, eds, Education and the Development of Reason. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 54.
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40. Alternative contexts and methodologies and the results achieved thereby are outlined in the subsequent chapters of this work..
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42. "The case for specialisation", p. 53.
43. *ibid.*, p. 49.
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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXT IN TRANSITION EDUCATION

SECTION A TEACHING METHODOLOGIES AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

1 INTRODUCTION:

In the previous chapter it emerged that the central philosophical thrust of transition theory involved the identification and elaboration of the essential educational needs of the learner and the provision of curricula designed to fulfil those needs. In this context, needs should be understood in terms of 'the knowledge, skills and personal qualities which a person might be expected to need in order to function effectively in the adult world in general and in the world of work in particular'. The three types of needs mentioned - knowledge, skills and personal qualities - are collectively termed 'competencies' and thus the main aim of transition education can be stated as that of identifying the most important competencies and helping each young person to acquire them².

The nature of this philosophy and its associated educational objectives should in theory render the transition curriculum markedly different from traditional academic education. The purpose of traditional schooling was, according to the transition literature, to achieve success in examinations based largely on 'recall of factual information' gleaned for the most part from 'theoretical school lessons'³. According to transition theory, this approach represents a subversion of the educational engagement. But how precisely would transition curricula be different? In the following

chapters, I shall discuss the more important curricular ideas which have emerged from the two transition programmes. However, my analysis of the literature has led me to the view that the most important element of transition education theory is to be found in the area of methodology. It is in many ways an underlying theme or unifying thread which informs each aspect of the proposed curricula. This theme can be summarised thus - in curriculum reform, content and structure are less important to significant change than are teaching methods and learning strategies. Without the latter, the former are meaningless.

Specifically, transition theory suggests that only through the introduction of teaching and learning methodologies based on the principle of 'active learning' can the competencies which are central to the aims and objectives of transition education be acquired by the pupil. In fact, 'active learning' constitutes a sine qua non in the theory of transition education. Therefore, in the following sections, I shall examine more closely the term 'active learning' and consider the concomitant developments in learning strategies and teaching skills which its implementation requires.

2 ACTIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGY:

The Case for 'Active Learning':

Before proceeding to examine what the transition literature has to say about 'active learning' I want to express my reservations about the term itself. The notion of 'active learning' is of course logically absurd, since there could not possibly be any other sort of learning. Similarly,

the converse term used in the literature, viz. 'passive learning' is also a logical nonsense. However, both terms, together with equally dubious concepts such as 'experiential learning', are used throughout the transition literature and indeed have become commonplace in educational debate in general. What is meant can be more sensibly defined as follows: learning best takes place when the learner actively participates in experiences of a practically-based nature, as opposed to passively observing lessons which are largely theoretical in content. To use the celebrated distinction elaborated by Gilbert Ryle, 'children should come to know that by firstly coming to know how' and then engaging in critical reflection. It is in this sense that I shall be using the term active learning in what follows.

The transition literature is uncompromising in placing active learning at the heart of curricular reform and justifies this emphasis on a number of grounds. Firstly, it is argued that the evidence of the transition programmes demonstrates the centrality of method as opposed to content in the adequate preparation of young people for life and work.

The Programme showed conclusively that the key to successful courses lay in the methods used. In preparing young people for adult life the knowledge content - at least in the form it is usually offered to them - is less important than experiences which are aimed at the development of personal and interpersonal competencies. This experience is gained from doing things and interacting with people. In other words, *learning methods not content are of most importance*⁴.

(My italics)

The crucial importance allotted to learning methods in transition education is a function of the type of competencies which are deemed to be needed by

young people. For example, competencies in the realm of personal development such as maturity, or in the realm of social skills such as ability to cooperate with others, or in the realm of logical ability such as problem solving, are said not to be susceptible to acquisition through traditional didactic teaching and learning strategies. An alternative methodology is therefore essential - 'most of these competencies can be learned only through experiences of situations; they cannot be taught - they are learned through action, not through absorption'⁵. Any curriculum reform implemented without regard to the central importance of methodology could not therefore result in the acquisition of the required competencies and would be of little benefit - 'to substitute a new curriculum however appropriate its content seems to be without changing radically the methods of learning and the social content is of little value'⁶.

The traditional methods of teaching/learning which are said to be so much in need of reform are characterised in the following terms.

Traditional, passive, classroom learning has proved of limited value. Apart from being intrinsically demotivating - above all to the 'school rejectors' - it has made impossible the development of the essential personal and interpersonal competencies⁷.

This 'limited value' arises, it is suggested, from a number of factors. Firstly, curricula organised according to traditional forms of knowledge tend to be more concerned with the epistemological integrity of each subject than with either its relevance to the needs of the pupil or to the development of interdisciplinary connections. Secondly, the inflexible timetable structures and the large number of staff in contact with each

student - which are often characteristics of traditional curricula - inhibit the growth of relationships between pupil and teacher which are adequate to develop personal qualities such as initiative or self-confidence. Finally and most importantly, the requirements of particular subjects and the pressures created by public examinations place a stress on forms of teaching and learning (primarily 'authoritarian and didactic teaching and rote learning and memorising to facilitate factual recall') which are inimical to the development of the appropriate competencies²³. In short, all 'attempts to develop a fundamentally new curriculum were hindered by the single subject approach of the existing curriculum'²⁴.

The transition alternative offered in place of 'outmoded traditional passive classroom learning' is active learning based, in the classroom ('on the occasions when class teaching is appropriate and these may be relatively few'), or where possible in the broader community²⁵. In devising a course based on active learning methods, the curriculum developer is advised to 'no longer begin from the question what should be taught?' Rather the first question to be asked should be 'what situations can we create that will lead to the development of initiative, cooperativeness and self confidence, etc.'²⁶. The only logical answer, it is suggested, is situations in which opportunities are offered to the learner to take part in activities which allow scope for the utilisation of initiative and cooperativeness and in consequence enhance self-confidence. These criteria can be satisfied only when 'learning takes place through personal involvement in purposeful activities', since without 'experience of the activity coupled with reflection upon it, the 'internalisation' of the desired competencies will not be achieved'²⁷.

It should be pointed out at this stage that these distinctions between active and passive learning and between theoretical and experiential learning are by no means new. For example, in Experience and Education¹³ published in 1938, John Dewey offered the final and most complete defence of arguments which he had first made in 'My Pedagogic Creed'¹⁴ in 1897. In essence, his 'principles of interaction and continuity', without which he believed no experience could be truly educational, require the use of practical activities and exclude traditional subjects unless they provide opportunities for problem solving¹⁵. Dewey believed in 'education of, by and for experience'¹⁶ and that the role of the teacher was to create 'that environment which will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught to create a worthwhile experience'¹⁷. The language of 'a negotiated curriculum', 'experience-based learning', 'process of enquiry' and 'the teacher as facilitator of learning' so widely used in the transition literature is highly characteristic of Dewey's work.

Thus far I have concerned myself primarily with defining the concept of active learning as it is elaborated in the transition literature. I have pointed out its central position in transition theory and traced its origins in the sophisticated philosophical tradition associated with John Dewey. However, in practical terms, active learning means nothing without appropriate strategies for its implementation. We must now turn to a consideration of associated learning methodologies developed in the course of the two Transition Programmes.

Active Learning Methodology:

The transition literature isolates three interconnected methodological approaches central to an active learning-based curriculum. These are: (i) the project method, (ii) interdisciplinary or integrated studies and (iii) individualised or small group learning. The essential connection between active learning and these methods is clearly spelled out.

Active learning is only possible if it is organised with individual students or small groups. In practice 'projects' whether individual or group become an essential part of the method²⁸.

We need to pause here to make clear the implications of this statement. What is being suggested is that the subject centered structure on which most secondary school curricula are based is inappropriate to transition education. Transition courses should largely or entirely eliminate separate subjects, and replace them with one or a number of integrated interdisciplinary projects subdivided into 'modular course units' and taught or 'mediated' through enquiry/experience-based and individual and group work. This approach also implies, although it is not fully teased out, the use of 'open classroom' techniques such as integrated days, flexible timetabling arrangements and team teaching. These represent, in the context of current secondary school organisation, quite radical suggestions.

The Project Method:

The project approach was used widely in the pilot projects. Many projects found that an essential part of the process of remotivating alienated or uninterested pupils was to deal with them as individuals if possible, or at a minimum in small groups. For example, the Bradford Project¹⁹ in the UK identified

four factors necessary to overcome the traditional passivity of students - (1) quality of staff-student relationship, (2) students' role in decision making, (3) cooperative rather than competitive learning and (4) 'individualism'. Individual tutorials formed an essential part of the method²⁰.

The project team discovered that, in practice, each of these elements, but particularly the final one, could only be achieved by allowing pupils to follow, to an extent, their own interests and to proceed at their own pace²¹. The Bradford Project and a similar one at Clydebank, Scotland both concluded that 'only a project or "assignment-led" approach' organised on an interdisciplinary model, together with small staff/student working groups and personal tutoring can meet these requirements²².

A second advantage offered by the project method is that it places pupils in 'situations of autonomy'²³. Without autonomy, competencies such as initiative make no sense, since one can only practice initiative in any real way if one is granted a degree of 'freedom from restriction'. The "Action Jeunes" project in France was therefore built around 'individualised learning by objectives, centered on the young person's needs and difficulties'²⁴. In practice, this meant that 'individual project work, group experience (cooperative craft work, sports and video

making) and work experience away from the base' were the methodologies employed²⁵. The personal responsibility required of each pupil by these methods was found to be a vital ingredient in their 'de-alienation and re-integration into school and society'²⁶.

A third aspect of the project-centered strategy is the range of learning experiences and framework for integrated or interdisciplinary studies which their utilisation offers. A constant theme in the transition literature is the artificial limitations which adherence to a subject based curriculum places upon the relevance of the learning experiences offered to the student. Students are unable to see the logical connections between, say, mathematics and market research, or art and design and product production, because a single subject approach does not encourage such connections.

Many projects sought to resolve this problem by developing modular courses across subject barriers in the form of 'assignment led learning involving several disciplines'. An example is to be found in the Ludwigshafen Project in Germany²⁷, where all the elements of the programme were integrated into a production or community-work project²⁸.

The stages of, for example, a typical 'production project' indicate the range of learning experiences and the level of both subject integration and 'cross discipline fertilisation' which such an approach can develop.

Stage 1 - Advance planning - market inquiries, interviews, testing and comparing products, word and data processing.

Stage 2 - Decision making - kind of product, production methods, availability of material, credit possibilities, marketing.

- Stage 3 - Planning - product design, product testing, company organisation, division of tasks, preparatory work experience.
- Stage 4 - Action - Production, book keeping, stock taking, distribution.
- Stage 5 - Reflection - analysis of achievement - successes and failures²².

Usually a particular project represented only one element of the programme. In most cases it ran alongside other projects, for example, a community project where the emphasis was on social education, childcare and art/crafts and language development. An example is the Strathclyde 'Social and Vocational Skills' course described as 'cross curricular', based on three interlinked themes, home, community and work, using experience-based learning²³.

A third somewhat different approach to the project method is a course developed entirely around a project involving study of a town or region. An example is the Rethymno Project in Greece which involved the study of the town of Rethymno under such headings as history, architecture and art, music, culture, newspapers, trade and tourism, modern life and facilities for young people²⁴. The key feature in each case is that traditional subjects no longer exist separately but are integrated into one or more projects which enhances their relevance to the pupils.

A final important advantage offered by a project-centered approach is that it places the emphasis on the methods of learning as opposed to the outcome in the form of 'traditional lists of facts and information'²⁵. Thus it is in sympathy with the transition idea that what is most necessary for the acquisition of desired competencies is the process of learning as opposed

to the content or product of the knowledge acquired - 'learning methods not content are of the most importance'³³.

In consequence of the emphasis in the projects, the ideal model of the teaching role offered in the transition literature is defined as 'co-explorer', 'critical friend', and 'facilitator of learning experiences'. These roles are said to require an array of additional teaching skills and these will be discussed in the next section of this chapter³⁴.

The view that active learning methods are central to curriculum reform, particularly for the less able, is now supported by some important empirical research. Professor Manfred Harbig, reporting the results of extensive research in the US and West Germany, suggests that a higher correlation of instructional quality to cognitive and behavioural outcomes is now well established. Among the elements of instructional quality with the highest correlation to positive outcomes Professor Harbig places 'personalised co-operative endeavours of one type or another such as co-operative group and project work.' Further, his research indicated that modular courses of short duration (6-8 weeks) with opportunities to correct failure quickly significantly enhance learner motivation.³⁵

We have now seen that the implementation of transition theory is deemed to be possible only in the context of active learning and that this in turn implies the utilisation of programmes largely organised on a project-centered, integrated and individualised/small group basis. However, the adoption of these active learning strategies represents not only a challenge to the traditional role of the teacher but also to the skills

that must be brought to bear in teaching. It is to the implications of active learning strategies for the skills which teachers will be required to possess that I now wish to turn.

3. TEACHING SKILLS:

The 'gradual transfer of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student' recommended in the transition literature will involve the adoption of alternative pedagogic methods to the 'didactic and authoritarian modes of teaching characteristic of traditional curricula'³⁴⁵.

Active Teaching and Learning Methods:

The First Transition Programme Final Programme Report contains a sub- or 'special theme' report on staff development³⁴⁷. There were only two such reports (the other on work experience) and this is a good indication of the extent to which teacher training and retraining came to be perceived as crucial to the development of transition education.

This report argues that the adoption of the active learning strategies already discussed requires a range of teaching skills far greater than those necessary to implement more traditional, subject-centered, classroom-based curricula. These new skills, it is suggested, can be isolated by

means of analysing active learning strategies in action and can then be acquired by staff through appropriate pre and in-service training. The report goes on to identify the main areas in which additional skills are required and finally offers a fairly detailed account of those considered to be most important.

The first category of additional skills identified is in the area of curriculum development. Active learning involves a significant departure from traditional, well-defined subjects to the development of programmes of integrated studies. Therefore the role of the teacher as curriculum developer will be much greater than heretofore, as will the related skills required. For example, the teacher will be actively involved

in considering ways of working out the philosophy of a programme for young people, selecting the approach appropriate in the circumstances, establishing guidelines for the content of the programme, developing the learning/teaching situations to be generated and initiating modes of assessing the progress achieved, all of which involves team work, pooling of ideas, sharing of experience and careful thought³².

In addition, the teacher must play a role in 'the development of appropriate materials and the introduction of new institutional policies where required'³³.

Secondly, within the programme which he or she has helped to develop, the teacher will require other new skills. He or she will have to work as part of a team, responsible for the organisation of activities and experiences which will almost certainly be new. For example, 'a spell with responsibility for audiovisual methods may be followed by another as

organiser of residential periods, or acting as a negotiator for work experience placements'. Finally, having developed 'the necessary personal qualities, he or she can be considered for leadership of the team'⁴⁰. The organisation of appropriate learning situations and experiences, in particular those designed to utilise the out-of-school environment, also requires new skills - 'an extensive knowledge of the local environment, the skill to identify potential learning situations, a real understanding of the working world and some knowledge of the home and social backgrounds of the young people'⁴¹.

If many of the skills above appear primarily organisational in nature, purely pedagogic skills are not neglected. Active learning situations cannot, it is suggested, be handled by a 'chalk and talk' approach, but require skills in areas such as group organisation and animation, developing individual learning activities, project and survey planning, enquiry/discovery methods, simulations, games, discussion development and facilitation, brainstorming, role play, negotiation with learners, and so on⁴². The exercise of these 'student-centred skills' must logically, it is argued, involve teachers in the use of yet further new skills such as creative questioning, the introduction of pupils to research and enquiry methodologies, reflection and action upon data and experience, and so forth.

The examples given above of 'skills necessary for the successful implementation of transition education schemes'⁴³ represent only a fraction of the formidable array mentioned throughout the staff development document. In order to reduce them to more manageable proportions, the

report concluded by identifying the chief categories of skills which should form the basis for teacher training and retraining. These are:

- 1 the ability to plan and implement integrated programmes involving close inter-staff cooperation, including team teaching;
- 2 the use of participative teaching/learning methods and the ability to design experience-based approaches;
- 3 the counselling of and negotiating with learners about their programmes;
- 4 the use of resource-based learning and teaching workshops;
- 5 the construction and use of profile records of attainment;
- 6 the ability to take part in group design and evaluation of the curriculum;
- 7 language and numeracy development;
- 8 the ability to work against a check list rather than through a syllabus, emphasising the process of learning as well as covering content;
- 9 the planning and operating of residential periods and work experience placements;
- 10 the development of new approaches to vocational work based on the broad skills area rather than on the demands of particular employment⁴⁴.

Within each of these categories, more detailed check lists of basic skills and subskills are identified.

In some cases this process of identification is carried to extreme lengths. For example, in the publication Inventory of Recruitment Criteria and Training Needs of Staff of Youth Programmes, which formed the basis for the skill categories in the Staff Development report, the author specifies 'knowledge of self and development of own attitudes and capacities' and

'knowledge and understanding of society' as being among the vital skill needs of transition staff⁴⁷. The notion that such meaningless terminology has anything to do with the idea of a skill represents a misuse of the term and confuses skills with knowledge, personal qualities and attitudes in a most alarming way.

The strong emphasis in the transition literature on the importance of teacher skills has resulted in charges that transition theory tends to see teaching and learning in a narrowly behaviourist way. Critics have suggested that to stress skills to this extent may result in the teacher coming to be perceived as 'a craftsman, one who plies a trade analagous to that of a plumber or farmer'⁴⁸. Richard Smith is one critic whose position is fairly representative of others'⁴⁷. Smith does not deny the necessity of teaching skills as such, but argues that they are inseparable from the other aspects of the activity of teaching. The analogy he cites is that of driving a car. It makes no sense, he argues, for the learner driver to be told not to worry about looking out for pedestrians but to concentrate on changing the gears. The two elements are logically inseparable parts of the activity of driving. This is undeniable, but the point Smith misses is that it is possible and indeed sensible to practice changing the gears on a closed road or in the driveway before venturing out in public. Mastery of the gears, a skill which can be attained in isolation from watching for pedestrians will allow more attention to be paid to looking out for dangers on the public road. In the same way, mastery of teaching techniques will allow the teacher greater opportunity to develop what Gerry Gaden describes as the 'professional aspects' of teaching - commitment to the subject and care for one's pupils⁴⁸.

While the skills and 'professional' components of teaching are inseparable in terms of defining the nature of the activity, it is perfectly possible to isolate necessary pedagogic skills and train teachers in their implementation. Therefore the emphasis on skills in the transition literature, while over-elaborated on occasion, is largely justified. It acknowledges the vital connection between pedagogic techniques and curriculum reform and correctly identifies the lack of adequate skills training which most teachers receive in pre and in-service education. Indeed, many of the skills so identified are indispensable to all teachers regardless of the type of curriculum within which they are operating.

Moreover as we shall see in the next section, skills do not dominate the transition literature on teaching to the exclusion of all else. The most important of the professional aspects of teaching identified by Gaden, namely the relationship between teacher and learner, is given a great deal of attention in the course of both transition programmes and is regarded as being of equal importance to skills in the introduction of active learning methodology. It is to the role of teacher - pupil relationships in the implementation of active learning that we must now turn.

SECTION B THE CONTEXTS OF TRANSITION EDUCATION

1 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT:

The social context of education refers to the nature of the relationships which young people experience in school. These relationships are defined to include not only the formal and informal interaction between themselves and the staff but also, interestingly, 'those they observe between the staff themselves'⁴².

Traditionally, it is argued, staff/pupil relationships and indeed inter-staff relationships were largely authoritarian in nature, conditioned by the 'academic, examination-centered nature of the curriculum and by the training and expectations of teachers'⁵⁰. This is not to say that warm and genuine personal relationships never developed between pupil and teacher, but rather that due to the style of teaching adopted such relationships tended to be the exception rather than the norm.

The effectiveness of transition education in the goal of encouraging personal development and autonomy is suggested in the literature to depend to a large degree upon changing the nature of the student - teacher relationship.

Relationships with the young people that are open, perceptive and mutually supportive are fundamental to effective work with...those who have low motivation for learning and often for personal development⁵¹.

This crucial significance is attached to the role of 'social context' for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the development of important personal competencies, heavily stressed in transition education - 'self confidence, self knowledge and autonomy'⁵² - is, it is suggested, likely to take place only 'in a social atmosphere of comparative equality between staff and student', including the provision of opportunity for the learner to 'take responsibility for his own learning by involvement in decision making that affects him'⁵³.

Secondly, the teaching methodologies and learning strategies which are perceived, as we have seen, to be central to transition thinking are only fully operable in the context of a changed relationship between pupil and teacher - 'a different social environment is also helpful...for the methodology necessary for achieving many of the desired competencies'⁵⁴. A third consideration is the level of alienation and demotivation often found among pupils on transition or vocational preparation courses. These feelings usually stem from a record of academic failure but are often compounded by resistance to authoritarian teaching styles. This point is made in the final evaluation report of the Danish First Programme pilot project⁵⁷, which emphasises on several occasions the importance of the physical and social environment for certain groups of young people:

they become tired of school without necessarily being tired of learning but their interest can be reawakened through environmental changes and changed working situations⁵⁶.

However the difficulty of translating the ideal of relationships that are 'open, perceptive and mutually supportive' into practice is considerable. Firstly, many teachers would argue that all genuinely professional educators seek to develop such relationships as a matter of course.

Secondly, as the final evaluation report of the Clydebank Project points out, the strain of teaching in an atmosphere of relative equality can, if, for example, 'a particularly disruptive group come together' lead to a 'pressure cooker effect' on staff and eventually to teacher 'burn out'⁵⁷. Exhortations and rhetoric are therefore of little value unless they are accompanied by specific suggestions for action. A number of such suggestions are offered in the transition literature.

Strategies for the Improvement of the Social Context:

(i). Staff Reflection, Autonomy and Participation:

In the Inner London Education Authority project⁵⁸, the first step in the development of more 'normal' pupil/teacher relationships is reported as the reshaping of teacher attitudes to the problem. This reshaping did not occur spontaneously but had to be encouraged through 'aided reflection on their experience of what they were already doing'⁵⁹. This process of 'reflexive learning' was structured in the form of meetings and discussions led by experienced teachers from other projects and by psychologists. The staff group were invited to consider the extent to which their style of teaching which they themselves characterised as 'benevolent authoritarianism' might inhibit the development of autonomy and self sufficiency among the pupils⁶⁰. The contradictions between teaching styles and course objectives which emerged resulted, it is suggested, in the group becoming aware of how they

might be reinforcing the students' dependence on authority by making decisions for them, by acting on their behalf, by showing them an apparently powerful staff group deliberating on their progress⁶¹.

The eventual outcome of this process of reflection and discussion was, according to the evaluators, that the staff moved forward to 'promoting actively the independence of the group of unemployed young people with whom they were working'⁶². Whether the practical results were as significant as the quotation above implies is impossible to judge. Nonetheless, if any significant alteration in teaching styles will occur only where staff are convinced of the need for change, 'reflexive learning' clearly represents a logical and necessary first step.

Of course, teacher reflection, discussion and subsequent action makes sense only in the context of a degree of genuine staff autonomy and responsibility. Interestingly and somewhat originally, the transition literature recognises the absurdity of expecting teachers who themselves enjoy no autonomy or real responsibility for decision making to develop programmes which will enhance such attributes and skills in their pupils⁶³. To provide an opportunity for genuine staff input, it proved necessary in many projects both that the curriculum to be implemented was flexible enough to allow real choices to be made and that formal consultative procedures be established.

A number of possible structures to facilitate teacher participation emerge from the transition programmes. Firstly, the majority of pilot projects appear to have made efforts to involve the staff in course pre-planning, curriculum development and ongoing evaluation. This usually involved regular meetings both before and during the project, and the timetabling was planned accordingly. In a school context this would require at the

very least that the staff involved in teaching the transition programme would meet before the commencement of the course, be timetabled to be free simultaneously for one period per week and that there would be enough flexibility to allow for longer meetings occasionally.

In most projects, the leader acted as organiser and facilitator of staff input but the experience of the two programmes indicates that in a school situation this task could best be divided into two. The first role would be that of course coordinator - perhaps entitled 'curriculum development officer' - whose task would be to engage the cooperation of the teachers in the development of appropriate teaching strategies, course content and assessment methodology⁶⁴. The operation of this role in one pilot project will be examined in more detail later in this chapter.

The other suggested role is that of staff development officer⁶⁵. The tasks involved are of two kinds. The role involves the facilitation of staff reflection and discussion of the type mentioned above designed to lead to a reappraisal of teaching styles and methods in the light of course objectives. It also involves the encouragement of staff in identifying the additional skills and resources required to implement the new curricula and the arrangement of the necessary in-service training and resource allocation⁶⁶. To fulfil this role, the person appointed would require training in the skills of management and group dynamics and the position would, it is argued, require adequate status and management support to be effective⁶⁷.

Clearly, teachers appointed to each of these positions would have to be facilitated by a reduction in class contact hours and be permitted paid training leave in the first instance. Nonetheless, the cost of implementing these ideas is, as Damien Hannon shows in the context of the Irish education system, surprisingly modest⁵³.

(ii) Staff Skills: The second specific requirement for the realisation of more relaxed and open relationships between staff and students is identified in the transition literature as adequate teacher skills, particularly in the development of interpersonal relationships.

For the staff the individualised relationship makes demands that are very different from those of an authoritarian situation which in fact retards rather than promotes the personal growth of young people. Instead of being able to rely on magisterial imposition, the youth worker must employ skill in inter-personal relations⁵⁴.

This point is also stressed in an evaluation study of the effectiveness of course tutors in one transition project. It concludes that teachers 'need better preparation for the role, including skills in handling groups and in forming relationships'⁵⁵. The truth of these statements will be admitted by most practising teachers. It is undoubtedly much easier to teach when one is fully 'in control' of a class. Allowing a more informal and relaxed atmosphere to develop is a step into the unknown which few teachers believe they have been equipped to handle.

The specific personal and inter-personal skills and subskills which would enable teachers to feel secure in a more relaxed relationship with pupils are, as I have indicated, defined in detail in the final programme reports⁷¹. To equip teachers with these skills, greatly improved pre and in-service training, together with the concept of a staff development officer, is strongly recommended in the Staff Development Report⁷.

(iii) Negotiation:

The strategies discussed above refer primarily to the attributes and skills of the individual teacher, but the notion of improved social context is considered also to involve a structural or organisational dimension. More open and supportive relationships between staff and pupils, desirable as they are, would, it is argued, be more symbolic than real unless the changed environment also involved a genuine role for the pupil in the making of key decisions concerning his own learning. This role is defined in the literature as 'negotiation' or 'negotiated learning' and is one of the principal themes to emerge from the transition programmes.

The concept of a negotiated learning contract should be a central principle in the development of vocational preparation programmes and wherever possible within compulsory education programmes. Involving young people in the decisions that affect them is valuable for personal development as well as being a powerful motivating factor⁷³.

The mechanism for producing 'a negotiated learning contract' is described as follows: 'negotiating a learning contract is the process by which the

young person and the tutor discuss and arrive at an agreed plan for the learning content, organisation, methods and assessment of a particular programme'⁷⁴.

Not surprisingly, however, the suggestion that a learning contract could be negotiated with each individual young person is not reflected in the experience of the pilot projects. With the exception perhaps of the 'Action Jeunes' First Programme project in France, which had a particularly favourable pupil/teacher ratio, negotiation usually took place with the entire class group⁷⁵. (Due to the financial supports involved, this would not usually number more than 15-18). Examples of this form of consultation appear frequently in the pilot project reports, usually accompanied by favourable comment by evaluators, teachers and the students themselves. For example, in the Bradford Project in the UK, the staff team and the students devoted every Friday afternoon to a joint review of what had taken place during the previous few days and to planning the programme for the following week. The meetings were chaired by one of the pupils with another acting as secretary and the impact on student motivation is reported as 'very significant'⁷⁴.

The extent to which general group meetings of the type practised at Bradford and in many other projects really enabled the students to enjoy a significant input into the programme is hard to judge. In some cases, such as the Gifford⁷⁶ project in France, where the setting was other than a school, the curriculum was flexible enough to allow not only the activities but even the timetable for the following week to be decided through negotiation⁷⁷. Within the confines of a largely school-based programme,

the range of decision which could be left to negotiation would obviously be more limited. Nonetheless, significant issues - for example, the issues, speakers and visits to be included as part of a social studies module, the type of assessment, ongoing, terminal, oral or written, to be employed - were the subject of negotiation in many projects based in schools. In the Castlemilk Second Programme project in Scotland, the pupils signed a 'negotiated contract' with the tutor. This involved agreeing to a non-negotiable compulsory core but allowed for the pupils to 'negotiate' the other elements of the course from a range of possible alternatives.⁷³.

To an extent, the symbolic value of consultation and negotiation may be more important than the scope for real decision making which it involves. Where negotiation was employed, even within the limited confines of a school programme, student reaction invariably appears to have been positive. The following is fairly typical - 'the difference between the ... scheme and school is that you can speak your mind and not be told you are wrong and you are treated as adults. We discussed things more often and were allowed to make our own decisions instead of being told what to do'⁷⁴. The reaction of project evaluators to 'negotiated learning' is also generally positive, for example, as follows - 'Particularly valuable was the increase in motivation and commitment of the young people; in part this was due to the relaxed adult/student relationships, the emphasis on student participation in decision making and their increased autonomy'⁷⁵. The evidence suggests, therefore, that some form of negotiation or consultation is a potentially valuable element of transition programmes not only because it involves the development of decision making skills but

perhaps more importantly because it allows the pupils to feel more respected and more like adults.

(iv) The Transition Tutor:

A second organisational initiative designed to improve the social context of transition courses is the concept of the transition tutor. Two projects in particular, a First Programme project at Clydebank in Scotland and the Second Programme project in Luxembourg, have emphasised the development of a broader role to be undertaken by one teacher of each class group²²

The idea of the transition tutor grew out of a recognition that in most school contexts, pupils pursuing a vocational preparation or transition course would probably be taught by as many teachers as those pursuing traditional academic programmes. In these circumstances, improved teacher attitudes and skills and the use of techniques such as negotiation, while hopefully improving the general social context, could not be expected to facilitate the formation of significant personal relationships between individual students and staff. The length of contact time between each teacher and the group together with the pressure of numbers effectively limited the relationship which could be formed. Therefore, since it is argued in the transition literature that such relationships represent 'a key factor in successful transition', clearly another strategy to promote their growth is required²³. The transition tutor is an interesting attempt to meet this need.

In the Clydebank project, a particular teacher was designated as the 'transition tutor' of each group consisting on average of 15-16 pupils. The transition tutor was timetabled to take the group for about one third of their class time. However, as well as class teacher, the transition tutor also acted as course leader, guidance counsellor, work experience organiser and supervisor and person who liaised with parents and with other institutions (training agencies and job placement agencies, for example) relevant to the young person's transition to adult and working life. In creating so broad a role, the project team 'sought to compensate for a fragmented timetable, achieve affective as well as cognitive goals and forge better links between schools, colleges, careers and other agencies'⁴.

In an account of his experience as transition tutor - in one school involved in the Clydebank Project - Transition Tutor: a teacher's account of the role - George Roberts divides the role into two significant elements. The first he designates as the 'broker's role' because it involves the forging and improving of links between the pupils and the community - 'cultivating links and negotiating access to the external agencies relevant to the pupils' post school experiences including local firms, further education colleges, the Careers Office, YTS projects and training workshops, and community education services'⁵. To develop these links, the transition tutor was given a reduced teaching load amounting to some 10-12 class periods per week. This allowed him, for example, not only to obtain work experience placements related to the interests of individual pupils but also to visit each one regularly in the workplace. Such visits are important, as Roberts relates, to employers and pupils, both of whom

can become difficult if they believe that work experience merely represents 'dumping' pupils in a convenient place for a period⁶⁶.

A second initiative of the 'broker' type which the generous time allocation allowed the transition tutor to develop was the use of retired or unemployed people with particular skills to provide courses for the pupils. Contact was established with potential tutors in such areas as photography, macrame and weight training and thus pupils were introduced to a range of practical and leisure skills which could not be provided from school resources and one or other of which usually managed to 'strike a chord' with pupils however recalcitrant they might have been in the ordinary way⁶⁷.

It is interesting to note that both work experience and the use of community skills or 'community based learning' are central themes in the transition literature. However, it is nowhere sufficiently stressed that without a teacher role such as the transition tutor, which places the organisational responsibility on a particular individual and provides adequate time for that person to undertake the task, such approaches are, in the context of the average school, impossible to operate effectively. The 'broker' model of the transition tutor role developed on the Clydebank project indicates how such initiatives can be satisfactorily developed in a school setting.

The second important element of the transition tutor's function is described by Roberts as the 'anchor role'⁶⁸. By this he means that through longer class contact - 12 periods per week in this case - and because he

was perceived as course leader and organiser of out-of-school activities, the transition tutor became the 'most important point of reference i.e. anchor' within the school for the group members⁸⁹. The accuracy of this assertion is confirmed by the external evaluators' reports which found that 90% of the pupils identified more with the transition tutor than with any other staff member and were more likely to turn to him for advice and guidance than to the guidance counsellor⁹⁰.

Roberts believes that this was so not only because he actually spent longer with the pupils than any other teacher but also that because of his involvement in out-of-school activities, such as work experience or leisure outings, the pupils were able to see him as a 'three dimensional figure', came to know him personally and developed as he did 'a greater degree of mutual respect'⁹¹. He offers a number of examples of the way pupils began to confide in him - for example, a girl who had left home asked him for help and after 'contact with her parents, her guidance teacher, her friends, step-father and the Senior Community Education worker', he succeeded in persuading her to go back to her parents. As Roberts points out, this represents 'a network of contacts hitherto outside my experience in teaching but perhaps an inevitable corollary of the role of transition tutor'⁹².

From this and other examples, it would appear that the transition tutor role organised along these lines is capable of facilitating the level of staff/pupil relationship defined in the literature as central to the success of transition courses. This is the view of both Roberts - 'I found the role to be enormously worthwhile both in terms of pupil and teacher

development'³³ - and the external evaluators - 'pupil evidence suggests beneficial changes in relationships often did occur; more trusting, better understanding, more consensual'³⁴.

There are of course problems associated with the transition tutor role - the external evaluation report identifies lack of adequate teacher skills and preparation in areas such as local knowledge and contacts, handling of groups and forming relationships, lack of support and understanding from school authorities and the danger of 'a threatening pressure-cooker effect' from too much contact with one group, particularly a difficult or disruptive one³⁵. Notwithstanding these problems, the Report concluded that in terms of improving the social context of programmes the transition tutor idea was particularly valuable and in consequence the 'benefits of the idea clearly outweighed the costs'³⁶.

(v) The Curriculum Coordinator:

A final structural initiative developed to enable the effective implementation of a cross-curricular theme-based programme involved the new role of curriculum coordinator. The new curriculum has far-reaching consequences for teachers. Traditionally they are used to working largely on their own, teaching a single subject, within a framework of 40 - 50 minute class periods. They tend therefore to require considerable help to adjust to being part of a team, implementing a theme-based modular programme. In such a structure the teachers must act as a team and this requires a team leader. Team leadership is essentially the role of the

curriculum coordinator and it is suggested that a curriculum conceived along the lines advanced in transition theory could not operate without such a role. A curriculum coordinator is central to the implementation of a transition curriculum.

The role of the curriculum coordinator, as developed for example in the Manchester Second Programme project²⁷, is a broad one. The coordinator was responsible for the planning and organisation of the programme, for leading the teaching team - by ensuring through regular meetings adequate cooperation, clear tasks for each member, and by introducing those involved to team-teaching methods - for the development and production of theme-based teaching materials, for the utilisation of the course budget, and for the provision of in-service training for the team.²⁸

In order to carry out these functions, course coordinators were themselves offered in-service training centered around methods of supporting and guiding teachers. To enable them to carry out the role, coordinators were given an extra salary allowance and were relieved of regular teaching duties for one half of their working week.

Finally, the outcome of the Manchester Project would imply that the role of the curriculum coordinator was both successful and necessary. The key idea of the project was to develop 'teacher teams with a unity of purpose and philosophy and it was found that a coordinator was essential to take on the role of team leader'²⁹

Undoubtedly there is some overlap between the roles of transition tutor and curriculum coordinator. However, there does appear to be two separate functions involved. The transition tutor's main function is that of undertaking greater pastoral responsibility for a particular group of pupils, while the curriculum coordinator's primary function is curriculum development and evaluation and team leadership for an entire programme. It is possible to envisage these roles being carried out by the one person where the number of pupils taking the transition programme is very small. However, the central point is that both the implementation of a radically new curriculum and the development of an improved social context in which to operate cannot be achieved unless a particular member or members of staff are given the responsibility, time and resources to make it happen. Thus the two roles either jointly or separately are central to the development of genuinely innovative transition programmes.

The strategies discussed above refer to the development of improved social context, but the concept of context as it is dealt with in the transition literature has a second dimension - the physical. It is this dimension which we will now examine.

(2) THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT:

The term physical context as used in the transition literature refers to the institutions, buildings and learning spaces within buildings in which transition courses are offered¹⁰⁰. Whether the target group is one made up of 'school rejectors' who have become alienated and are dropping out of

school early or 'learning rejectors' demotivated by failure but still willing to attend school, the evidence of the transition programmes appears to indicate that alternative courses are more effective in new surroundings - 'experience has shown that a new physical context makes remotivation simpler'¹⁰¹. The reasons offered are as follows. Firstly, since 'school rejectors' became alienated from school in school, courses designed to 'recapture' them into the education system would obviously stand a better chance of success if offered in surroundings which 'resemble an educational institute as little as possible'¹⁰². Secondly, where 'learning rejectors' are the target, a change in physical context even within the school can, by physically illustrating the different nature of the programme, remotivate the pupils.

Moreover, it also noted that a changed physical context is essential in order to implement much of transition learning theory and methodology. Projects, individual or small group work, vocational studies, video and film viewing and making and so on are largely impossible while 'imprisoned in the traditional classroom and classroom furniture'¹⁰³. An alternative physical context is therefore important for both psychological and practical reasons.

Many projects, particularly in the First Transition Programme, worked on developing programmes for school rejectors and early dropouts. For example, the Action Jeunes project in France consisted in a network of small-group courses for delinquent and largely illiterate school dropouts. The courses were mostly situated in converted houses, flats or rooms in social centres and were on occasion residential or part residential¹⁰⁴.

Entirely residential courses aimed at a similar clientele and often associated with specific vocational training - the Danish Project at Aabaek, based in a farm and fishing school, is a good example - were also found to be effective in dealing with the particular problems posed by such target groups¹⁰⁶. The potential impact of intensive small group residential courses on 'problem' pupils is indicated by the final evaluation report of the Størstrøm project in Denmark.

The value of removing low achievers from the context of failure in school to a completely different educational context with new interpersonal relationships and greater possibility of success was made very clear in this project. It also served to demonstrate the capacity for development and success of the so-called school failures¹⁰⁶.

Physical Context in School-Based Courses:

The evidence of the two transition programmes points to three ways in which significant improvement in the physical context of school based courses can be achieved. The first is the provision of specially adapted accommodation within the school, the second is cooperation with technological/vocational education institutes, training agencies, community centres, etc. which would allow one or more elements of a school-based programme to be conducted in a setting outside its base institution and the third is the use of short residential periods to facilitate group learning and improved staff - pupil relationships¹⁰⁷.

School Accomodation:

The demands of transition education in terms of teaching and learning strategies required those projects which were school-based to develop as far as possible alternative learning spaces¹⁰⁸. Traditional classroom layout and furniture makes, it is suggested, 'anything which could be described as active learning very difficult'¹⁰⁹. Active learning strategies of the types discussed earlier in this chapter involve 'more talking and general noise than normal classroom techniques' and therefore the 'learning space' should be as isolated as possible from the other teaching areas¹¹⁰. This was achieved in various ways by different projects - through the use of outside facilities belonging to local health boards, education authorities and so on, through the use of surplus buildings such as prefabs no longer required by the school or the use of a particular room or group of rooms within the school buildings. Such arrangements are not of course always possible, particularly in schools with several groups of transition pupils, but even under those circumstances it should usually be possible at least to allot a particular room for the use of each group. The transition programme evidence suggests that at a minimum a base area, be it of one classroom and one practical work room, is a necessary prerequisite for the development of the group cohesion and the social context appropriate to transition education¹¹¹.

Within the 'base area' the requirements of project, group and individual work demand considerable modification to traditional classroom facilities. For example, 'movable tables that can be combined in various ways will be needed together with filing and storage space for learning materials and for students' storage of their work'¹¹². Also, for effective individual

and group work, it is desirable that the base area can be subdivided into separate learning spaces by the use of temporary or mobile partitions and for film, video and radio work 'accessible audio/visual spaces are desirable if not essential'¹³. Since most transition programmes contain a considerable emphasis on work experience and vocational studies, both of which may have to be provided within the school in the form of a controlled work simulation or mini-company scheme, schools will also have to be able to provide suitable workshop areas. In some cases, additional or converted practical areas were provided for schools involved in pilot projects to meet these needs but more realistically the solution often lay in cooperation between schools and other institutions.

One pilot project in particular, the Manchester Second Programme project¹⁴, devoted considerable resources to the development of what were described as 'classrooms for active learning' - i.e. bases appropriate to transition style courses. These classrooms were designated 'multi-skills bases' and were developed in each of the nineteen schools in the project¹⁵. In effect, the 'multi-skills bases' which emerged 'mirrored good class rooms in primary schools', both in layout and stocking and in the way pupils could choose between activities. The design and flexibility of layout and furniture allowed for both class teaching and individual/project work, and the evaluation suggests that such a base area can contribute significantly to class cooperation and cohesion while at the same time allowing pupils the freedom to pursue their own interests and develop autonomy and initiative¹⁶.

A Change of Context through Joint or Cooperative Courses - 'Alternation':

Another effective method of providing adequate teaching and learning facilities while at the same time automatically deriving the benefits inherent in a change of context was developed in the work of a number of projects. This took the form of joint courses between schools and technical/vocational institutes or other agencies. This approach is referred to in the literature as 'alternation'.

An example is provided by the First Transition Programme Inner London Education Authority 'Bridging Course' project¹¹⁷. The objective of the project was 'to develop courses based in secondary schools but involving technical colleges in order to remotivate low achieving young people'¹¹⁸. To achieve this a number of 'consortia' were established, each consisting of two traditional secondary schools and a technical college or vocational school. Joint courses were created based on two days weekly being spent in the technical/vocational institution and three days in the school¹¹⁹. A committee comprising teachers and instructors from each institution and a project coordinator from the local curriculum development unit oversaw the planning of the programme. The success of this project, as described by the external evaluators, illustrates two key interrelated advantages of changing the physical context in this way -

particularly noticeable was the increase in motivation and commitment of the young people in part due to the relaxed adult/student relationships and in part to the students' interest in aspects of the course. For the latter, the 'tasters' in which students experienced various workshop and commercial activities in the colleges, which were beyond the resources of the schools to provide, were particularly fruitful¹²⁰.

In the Clydebank project in Scotland, the value of simply changing the physical context through the use of facilities external to the school emerged as an accidental by-product of another element of the programme. Since the school P.E. facilities could not be made available for the entire time block devoted to leisure activities in the transition project, the course coordinator arranged the use of a local leisure centre as an alternative. The transition tutor noticed that the more relaxed and informal attitude of the out-of-school location had a marked effect on the demeanour of the pupils and to take advantage of this, transferred the remainder of the social education component to the leisure centre. Talks given by the police, the consumer advice service, adult education officers and so on took place with speakers and pupils 'seated in comfortable armchairs, with the pupils in a semi-circle in close proximity to the speaker'¹²¹. This arrangement created a feeling among the pupils that 'rather than being talked to, issues were being discussed with them' and therefore debate 'more prolonged and intensive than is often the case with similar groups in a class-based situation' ensued¹²². Reportedly, the guest speakers invariably remarked on how receptive the group appeared to be and attributed this to the 'lack of an institutionalised atmosphere which in their experience had often meant...groups cowed into sullen attention by teaching staff or else restless and inattentive since this was just another body who had come to lecture them'¹²³.

A third example of the beneficial use of external accomodation as a remotivating agent is provided by the 'Learning Place' Second Transition Programme project in Venissieux, France¹²⁴. This project brought together

teachers, parents, youth and social workers to provide a 'drop-in centre' in a local community hall which provided help for pupils with homework, learning difficulties and personal problems. The centre's out-of-school atmosphere attracted back pupils who had abandoned schooling and reportedly was successful in reintegrating them into the educational process'²⁵.

It would appear from the above experiences that the benefits derived from a sensible sharing of facilities between different types of schools or between schools and other training, educational or community institutions could be made widely available throughout the education system without creating significant pressures on limited resources.

Residential Periods:

A number of projects tried a third approach to the question of physical context namely the use of short residential periods, during which staff and pupils live and work together, in a hostel, hotel or other suitable place. A good example is provided by the 'Schullundheim' First Programme project in Germany'²⁶. This project involved twenty-three 'school residential hostels' throughout the country providing one or two week residential periods to be used 'to enable young people to reflect as a group, for guidance counselling and for follow-up activities to the students' work experience'²⁷. Each class with its teacher or transition tutor lived and worked in a hostel, usually situated outside their home region 'in social conditions quite different from school'²⁸. During their residential period, the students pursued a programme of work including 'catering for

the whole hostel, role play and dramatisations, and discussion of work and school experience in groups and individually with counsellors'¹²⁹. These activities were supplemented by inviting outside speakers to meet the group and by arranging visits to work sites and other places of interest in the area. The importance of a well planned programme of work which will clearly designate the experience as a learning exercise rather than a holiday, is stressed in the project report'¹³⁰.

The results of the project are described by the evaluators as 'generally positive', with young people 'gaining in self-confidence and in self-knowledge as well as in understanding of others'¹³¹. Another positive aspect noted is the improved staff-pupil social context which can be generated through residential periods - 'short periods of living together are particularly valuable for developing trust and relationships'¹³². Overall, the evaluation report takes the view that 'the Schullundheim project demonstrates the value of residential periods for the personal development of young people', a finding that has been confirmed by several other pilot projects'¹³³. In the light of these positive outcomes, the report recommends that ways should be explored 'of using such residential periods as an integrated part of the school curriculum' and within Germany it is hoped at least partly to achieve this objective by providing a residential period for each pupil taking the school subject Arbeitslehre (preparation for working life)¹³⁴.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

In this chapter it has been pointed out that the philosophy of transition education implies a curriculum significantly different from the traditional academic norm. Part of this difference will be expressed in the form of alternative content but according to the literature a more significant part will take the form of innovations in teaching methodologies and learning strategies. The most crucial of these innovations involves placing active learning at the heart of transition education. By their very nature, it is argued, many of the competencies and skills stressed in transition theory 'cannot be taught - they are learned through action not through absorption'. In short, therefore, the replacement of didactic classroom teaching by active learning methods represents the most important single element in the literature on transition education.

Three related methodological approaches to the introduction of active learning based curricula are discussed. They are the project method, interdisciplinary or integrated studies and individualised or small group learning. The advantages of these approaches as described in the transition literature is outlined and examples of each in operation in various projects are given.

The use of the methodologies described require it is suggested a much wider range of teaching skills than were commonly needed in traditional schooling. These new skills are exhaustively defined in the literature. This analysis of the key teaching skills demanded to cope with the complexities of transition teaching is a valid and valuable one. Skills in areas such as project organisation, group work, role play, the organisation

of individual learning, strategic discussion leadership, the development of relationships and so on, are undoubtedly necessary for good transition course teaching and indeed to an extent for all teaching. The idea that such skills can be isolated and teachers systematically assisted to acquire them seems, despite arguments to the contrary, to be justified. However, placing such emphasis on skills could, as some critics suggest, invite a dangerous tendency to see teaching in purely behavioural terms as a craft or trade consisting of various techniques to be mastered, rather than as a professional activity requiring care for the integrity of the work and the well-being of the learner. However the transition literature appears successfully to avoid this danger by stressing that teaching styles and the teacher/pupil relationship is of equal significance to teaching skills in the development of transition education.

Teaching style and the pupil/teacher relationship are discussed in the transition literature in terms of the 'social context' of courses. The argument advanced here is that since transition education seeks to remotivate the apathetic and to encourage the acquisition of personal attributes such as initiative and self-confidence, an entirely different social context is appropriate to such education than that which commonly obtained in more traditional schooling. This altered social context should be reflected not only in a more open, supportive and equal relationship between staff and students, but also through the granting to young people of the opportunity to be consulted and to make at least some of the decisions concerning their own learning. Moreover, it is recognised that such relationships and the freedom to make decisions by discussion or 'negotiation' makes sense only where the teacher has also been 'liberated'

from the traditional authoritarian power structures within the school and has been offered a significant voice in the development of the curricula to be implemented.

The creation of improved social context in transition education has been undertaken in four principle ways in the course of the projects . The first is through structures designed to assist staff to reflect together on the nature of the relationships with their pupils which they have tended to encourage in the past and to see that this, even where it might be defined as the most benevolent form of authoritarianism, is incompatible with the goals of transition education. This process, it is argued, must be systematically organised by a trained staff member acting as Staff Development Officer, with the assistance of outside experts with experience in developing more open relationships with young people - experienced transition teachers, and youth and social workers, for example.

A second factor said to be vital to improved social context is teaching skills. The techniques of group discussion, and leadership, relationship formation, and the confidence which flow from their possession enable teachers to cope with a more relaxed teaching environment. Thirdly, if social context is to mean anything significant, it must, it is argued, be more than merely symbolic. Through a structured processes of negotiation, the students should be given a role in making decisions which concern their own learning. Finally, it is argued that the implementation of structured negotiation and the formation of the significant personal relationships between staff and students, so emphasised in the transition literature,

requires the development of a new teaching role, that of transition tutor. An account of how this role was developed on a number of projects is given.

A second facet of the problem of 'context' is that of 'physical context', defined in terms of the environment, including institution, learning space, furniture and facilities most conducive to successful transition courses. The evidence of the first and second transition programmes would appear to indicate that a contextual change, completely or partly out of the school environment, or even within the school itself, can be a significant element in the achievement of the goals of transition education, particularly in relation to school and learning rejectors. Various initiatives designed to achieve alternative physical contexts appropriate to transition learning are summarised under three broad categories - alternative or re-equipped accommodation in schools, joint or cooperative courses between different types of educational and non-educational institutions and short residential periods. These are recognised as offering particularly valuable educational advantages, while being easily applicable throughout transition education in the broad school system.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORK-RELATED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND EDUCATION FOR ENTERPRISE

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most striking developments to have taken place in the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes is the extent to which work experience has come to be perceived not only as an integral component of transition education courses - 'experience of work schemes should be integrated into the curriculum as part of all courses preparing young people for adult and working life' - but also the growing acceptance that it 'can make a powerful contribution to the learning and development of *all* young people, even those pursuing a more academic education'. This development is not, perhaps, surprising. The December 1976 Resolution of the Council of the European Community which established the First Transition Programme placed great stress on the necessity for considering 'new ways of preparing young people better for their entry into working and adult life', a process for which the world of work would seem the most obvious and readily available resource².

The Council Resolution mentioned above was based on a report entitled Preparation for Working Life and for Transition from Education to Work. Reports by Member States. 1976, which summarised many of the developments and the continuing shortcomings in vocational preparation in the member States.³ A point repeatedly made in this report was the

need for forms of educational provision which could bridge the gulf between the theoretical nature of much of the school curriculum and the practical requirements of the world of work. The use of various forms of work experience and work simulation to achieve this objective was already a feature in many Member States⁴ and the further development of such methods through experimentation and evaluation became a logical focus of the First Transition Programme. Among the 'priority themes' of that programme was 'the improvement of vocational preparation in the final years of compulsory schooling and in the post-compulsory period particularly by the promotion of cooperation between the education and employment sectors'.⁵ In response the majority of the projects in the First Transition Programme experimented with the development of 'transition learning experiences based on work experience in various forms'.⁶

1. THE CASE FOR WORK EXPERIENCE:

(a) Curriculum Relevance:

A key criticism of traditional schooling which has deeply influenced the development of transition education is the assertion that the curriculum lacks relevance to the needs and interests of young people.⁷ In contrast, transition theory seeks to emphasise the need for greater relevance. The point stressed is that because of artificial distinctions between school and work, knowledge and skills, theory and practice, which an entirely school-based curriculum tends to encourage, many pupils fail to see the connections between their classroom work and

the application of that work in the real world. As a result, they become 'apathetic if not only hostile towards education'.¹³

The most effective way of bridging 'this gap between the values and experience normally part of traditional education and those current in the adult world of work', and thereby to demonstrate the relevance of what is taught in school, is, it is argued, through exposing young people in a formal and planned way to adult roles in the community - 'it is within a general philosophy of the use of the outside world for learning situations that experience of work is most important'.¹⁴ In this context, work experience provides a useful tool in the implementation of a central objective of transition education, namely, 'the motivation of students to achieve an understanding of some important connections between society, work and education, through the provision of relevant curricula, which make explicit these connections'.¹⁵ Having made these connections, the pupil should come to see the relevance of what he is required to learn and thereby be remotivated in his pursuit of the task.

(b) The Acquisition of Work-Related Social Skills:

A second objective of work experience schemes is the acquisition of useful practical and social skills and positive attitudes to work. The skills required are divided into the following categories.

1. Practical vocational skills, such as manual dexterity, familiarity with work and safety routines, literacy and numeracy, practical maths, experiences with a wide range of machinery and tools, some knowledge of information technology.

2. Work related personal skills and qualities such as neatness, punctuality, creativity, initiative, self reliance, responsibility, reliability.
3. Work related interpersonal skills, for example cooperativeness, communication skills, self-confidence and social ease.
4. Non-work related personal and interpersonal qualities, for example, compassion, sensitivity, tolerance'.

A large part of the case for work experience depends on the argument that all or most of these skills are capable of greater development in the broader educational environment of the world of work than within the more theoretical and dependent framework of the school - 'an expanded learning environment that is more conducive to the growth of adolescents from the dependence of childhood to adult responsibility'.¹² In the traditional school setting, it is argued, pupils were exposed to an artificial relationship of an authoritarian nature with their adult contacts and were offered little opportunity to make decisions, exercise initiative and so on. The role of work experience in this scenario is to introduce an element of realism into learning situations - 'it is through this method that learning situations reflecting the real world can be provided' - and to provide a range of contacts with the adult world involving diverse opportunities which it is not within the scope of the school to offer.'¹³

Also it is argued that the learning of such skills 'in the artificial environment of the school' presents problems of 'transfer' to the real world and that this problem is best solved through learning in real situations.

Though basic competencies can be taught by conventional academic methods their relevance and thus the motivation to acquire them can be much enhanced by teaching them through

this kind (work experience - experiential learning) of learning situation. Similarly, essential logical competencies such as problem solving or decision making can be taught through academic study, but they are not easily transferred to actual life. When learnt as part of real situations the problem of transfer does not exist.¹⁴

Critics of this argument point out that generations of pupils appear to have learned enough at school without any involvement in work experience schemes to manage adequately in the world of work.¹⁵ However, it must be recognised that in recent years this view has been subject to challenge. A growing clamour has arisen from politicians, from industry, and from parents, teachers and pupils, to the effect that traditional schooling does not, in fact, prepare young people adequately for the practical problems of life and work, and does not do enough to link the work of the school to the needs of the learner and of society.¹⁶ Also, such empirical research as has been carried out into the effectiveness of work experience schemes indicates that teachers, pupils and employers all take the view that such experience does indeed have a positive impact on the development of valuable qualities such as maturity, reliability and self-confidence.¹⁷ The extent to which work experience is becoming part of broader education in many countries appears to bear out this view.

(c) Education for Change:

A third objective of work experience schemes refers to the modes of learning with which young people should be equipped to enable them to respond to a rapidly changing social and vocational environment. Too

often, we are told, students have been given knowledge, facts and theories instead of what they need: the skills to seek out and use relevant knowledge for themselves - 'learning how to learn'. To remedy this problem, it is argued that the emphasis should be placed on the process rather than the product of learning. 'Students must be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, and through the development of enquiry skills, and problem solving and decision making capacity, become flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances'.¹⁹ Through such processes, the development of personal qualities such as self-confidence and initiative will also be facilitated.

Work experience is by its nature an appropriate strategy around which active learning processes can be organised, since what is being learnt is closely associated with the practical activities of organising and enquiring into the experience. Recognising these possibilities, most of the projects in the First Transition Programme and all of those in the Second Programme have included an element of work experience or work simulation in their activities.¹⁹ In the broader educational community, new vocational preparation programmes invariably include a similar element. In short, work experience in some form has assumed a position of central significance in the provision of alternative curricula designed to meet the needs of the non-academic, potential early school leaver.²⁰

2. WORK EXPERIENCE METHODOLOGIES:

The various methods of operating work experience in the pilot projects can be sub-divided into the following categories:

1. work experience based on observation and enquiry placements;
2. work experience based on direct participataion in real work situations;
3. participation in work simulation or 'controlled work' schemes;
4. participation in 'alternative' work situations.

A fifth connected development has been efforts to improve teacher knowledge of the world of work by providing work experience for teachers outside of the schools.

The method chosen in each project tended to reflect the particular overall aims of that project and of course the local situation in terms of work experience placements available, student interests and so on. In many cases, combinations of the above were used to provide different learning situations and such combinations can be very valuable in overcoming the in-built shortcomings of each approach. For example, one long period of 'direct participation' experience in a particular work situation can provide a deep insight into that particular type of work but may be of little help in career choice and may be misleading in terms of the problems to be encountered in the world of work in general.²¹ On the other hand, short periods in a number of work placements may give a good idea of what each type of work entails but little realistic indication of the personal and interpersonal skills required in the workplace in the medium and longer term.²²

(1) Work Experience Based on Observation and Enquiry Placements:

In this type of work experience, the main learning arises from observation and enquiry into the activities of organisations and particular workers. Such schemes may be based on visits to work places, short periods in work places, visits to individual workers in the community, or demonstrations and talks in school by personnel from outside.²³ Apart from providing 'tasters' of a range of different work situations, this type of work experience can be valuable both in terms of the development of techniques of enquiry, such as interviewing and recording, together with the development of the necessary self-confidence and skills in interpersonal relations to put the techniques into practice.

In-depth preparation on the part of the teacher was found in many projects to be essential for this type of approach. The student must be given a detailed 'briefing and debriefing' on the type of work into which he is to enquire and the specific information which he is expected to find and record. 'Any work experience will provide learning for the participant. It is the follow-up however that determines how much is gained from the experience',²⁴

An account of the range of school-based activities which might be appropriate as a counterpart to this type of work experience has been developed by the P.I.P.E. project in Galway, Ireland, part of the Second Transition Programme. It includes such areas as job search skills, job matching and career choice, information on local industry and job opportunities, job application and interview skills.²⁵ This type of

follow-up programme is described in the literature as preparation for working life.

In order to facilitate such school-based follow-up, a formalised means of recording information learned is required. This is usually in the form of a 'work experience diary', which, it is recommended, 'should not be used during the working hours themselves as it immediately demonstrates to the young person that s/he is still at school'.²⁶ Instead, the recording should be done as homework based on the observations of that day's work visit and then followed up in school time. It is suggested that written recording should be 'kept to a minimum', in particular for those pupils who do not find writing 'a normal mode of expression'.²⁷

Many projects in both transition programmes adopted the observation and enquiry mode of work experience. For example, in the 'SPIRAL I' project at the Shannon Curriculum Development Unit, Ireland, a major component of the programme was entitled Community Based Learning, and was based on the use of skilled members of the community acting as tutors to the students.²⁸ On occasion, the tutors came into the school to teach such skills as swimming or first aid to individual students who had chosen to learn them. Students also visited members of the community in their work places in order to observe the various skills which their job entailed, and where the student felt that s/he wished to learn more about a particular profession or trade, a longer period of observation and enquiry could be arranged.²⁹

Another project which organised work experience along these lines was the Powys Rural Enterprise Project in Wales. The scheme was entitled 'work shadowing' and involved a student spending one or a number of days with an employee going about his or her work. Among the careers studied were the police, nursing, engineering/metalwork and allied trades.³⁰ The response from the students to this type of work experience was very positive - the following is typical of pupil comments recorded in work experience diaries and quoted in Internal Evaluation Studies of the project.

I have always been interested in speech therapy, but I was never certain what it actually involved. This changed when the speech therapist...kindly allowed me to attend her clinic on an observation visit. I saw for the first time the caring attitude that was needed and the ability to get on well with people of all ages...I think that work shadowing is essential before pursuing any career.³¹

The main advantage of this type of work experience lies primarily in the range of job placements which it allows each pupil to sample. This breadth of experience can be very valuable in guiding vocational decisions and also in remotivating pupils with respect to their school work by providing a specific vocational goal at which to aim. Also, the tasks of observing and enquiring into a range of careers require the development of many practical skills and personal qualities, as well as the capacity for self-directed learning and research. Perhaps most important of all, meeting the large numbers of adult strangers which this type of work experience implies, and having to work with and talk to a broad range of people, plays a significant role in the development

of personal and interpersonal skills such as self-confidence, initiative and cooperativeness.³²

(ii) Work Experience Based on Direct Participation in Real Work Situations:

In this type of approach the main learning arises from full participation in a real work situation and experiencing directly 'the disciplines, satisfactions and dissatisfactions associated with work in general and the specific skills and competencies required to perform that particular job'.³³

For this type of experience to be significant in terms of student learning, sufficient time must be spent in one workplace to allow the young person really to feel part of it - perhaps one or two days per week over a term or a 'block release' of two or three weeks. This of course limits the number of such experiences that can be undertaken to perhaps two or three placements per year. Therefore, since the 'taster' element involved is not normally as extensive as in observation schemes, it requires an extra input from the tutor and the school guidance staff to make up for this missing experience. On the other hand, since the experience of each student in a particular work situation is longer and deeper, the outcome can often be more fruitful in terms of material for class discussion and analysis. In order to make the best use of these learning opportunities, some projects found it useful to set aside

continuous class periods, equivalent perhaps to one afternoon, for follow-up work. Since class discussion is 'rarely fertile and often disastrous', it is suggested that a more planned and structured approach might be adopted³⁴. An example is provided by the 'Schullundheim' project in West Germany, where a residential period as a follow up to work experience was experimented with.

On the first two days, an exchange of reactions to the experience of work took place among the young people. In addition, they all gave, with the help of their recorded exercises and questionnaires, a short report of their findings in the work. The following actions then occurred. Conflicts in the firm were portrayed through role play and reports, photographs, drawings and work pieces were assembled for an exhibition...³⁵

A major issue in this type of work experience is the quality of placements available. Many project evaluation reports contain criticisms of direct participation work experience schemes, particularly where such schemes were not adequately structured and monitored. Among these criticisms the following themes tend to recur most often: lack of adequate student choice, through weak placement or shortage of suitable work places, repetitive work of a low skill content resulting in little opportunity for learning and poor student motivation, and inadequate supervision of pupils in the work place either as a result of poor timetabling not allowing for sufficient teacher visits to the students, and/or the unwillingness of employers to compile a work record/profile on the pupils working in their firms.³⁵

This last criticism is particularly important for a number of reasons. One of the main benefits of work experience can be the motivation and confidence resulting from assessment by adults other than teachers, and particularly by employers. For many pupils, this presents an opportunity to escape from a record of constant failure, and thus develop a more positive self image. In some cases, these problems arose simply through poor planning and organisation at school, while in others the difficulty was simply a shortage of suitable placements. The latter raises an issue ignored in the literature on work experience. There appears to be a strong case for inducing or requiring employers to provide adequate placements, including supervision and some training, since much of the pressure for improved vocational preparation has come in fact from industry. Without some such scheme the number and quality of placements is unlikely to keep pace with growing demand and low quality placements will bring work experience into disrepute by raising questions about exploitation and superficiality. This problem has been recognised by the Dutch government which has published a booklet, 'Work Experience Agreement', laying down conditions to be met by both schools and the provider of work experience. The provision of work experience placements and the fulfilment of certain obligations by the provider will become an 'obligation in the near future'³⁷.

(iii) Controlled Work/Work Simulation Schemes:

'A controlled work simulation method is one in which a school, college or local education authority sets up an artificial work situation incorporating the planning, production, and selling and delivery of a

product or service'.³⁸ This approach became known as the mini-company or mini-cooperative.

The learning in such simulated schemes can be very broad, through direct experience of a wide range of activities, including the planning and setting-up process with its attendant opportunities for decision making, discussion and interpersonal communication; the production process or organisation of the planned service, which provides for direct exploration of the practical skills of design and manufacture, together with opportunities to develop personal qualities such as initiative, work discipline and cooperative action; and, finally, the selling and delivery process, stressing vocational skills in the advertising, research and customer service areas and interpersonal communication skills.

Perhaps the best example of the mini-company approach is that developed in the 'SPIRAL I' First Programme project at Shannon Curriculum Development Unit, Ireland.³⁹ For this type of project to work, the whole process has to develop a degree of realism which satisfies those taking part. The Shannon experience discovered that by and large teachers did not have adequate skills and experience to achieve the required level of realism, and therefore the use of industrial/business advisors from outside the school proved an essential pre-requisite.⁴⁰ However, as the project progressed, it became apparent that such occasional advice and preparation was not adequate, and resources had to be made available for the appointment of an industrial advisor to the project team on a permanent basis.⁴¹ The role of the advisor however

'is not to offer advice or suggestions or still less to make judgements', but rather to be available as a resource person supplying information and guidance on a 'need to know' basis.⁴² The decisions regarding the product, production methods, financing, management selection, etc. must remain with the students if real experience of these adult roles is to be obtained.

A particular advantage of a cooperative or mini-company work simulation scheme is the opportunity it presents to integrate various subjects into the project and thereby increase their relevance to the pupils. Awareness of the value of such competencies as a good command of written language, or the ability to speak well and confidently, can be greatly enhanced by the experience of selling the mini-company product on the open market. As the pupil comes to see that language and communication skills are central to the world of work, subject teachers can plan the introduction of relevant work in these areas 'so that it supports and draws upon the renewed desire to learn'.⁴³

It is interesting that the trend in the Second Programme has been towards mini-company/mini-cooperative schemes as opposed to other forms of work experience. This shift appears to reflect the realisation that small cooperatives based on local economic traditions or needs represent a more practical hope for fulltime employment, particularly in less developed regions.

The mini-company was usually only one element of the project, but some pilot projects organised the entire content of the course around a

single business enterprise. For example, in the Giffard First Programme project in France⁴⁴, the pupils involved tended to be of low academic ability, alienated from school and hostile to traditional forms of teaching and learning. In an effort to reintegrate these pupils, basic skills of literacy and numeracy were taught entirely via involvement in practical activities. For example,

through the manufacture of bracelets, belts and bags in the leather workshop, they learned to use a ruler, compass, set square, to make measurements, trace and cut out; it was necessary to make careful calculations.⁴⁵

The final evaluation report on the Giffard project stresses the success of this approach in relation to a particular category of pupil, the school rejector. 'The project demonstrated the value of its methods with the target group concerned. Its findings have contributed...to the development of policy and of actions on a national scale for such young people'.⁴⁶ This type of programme, entirely based on experiential learning through a work simulation project, has made an impact on the development of schemes designed to provide second-chance education for early school dropouts throughout the EC.

(iv) Work Experience in 'Alternative' Work Situations:

This type of work experience has largely centred around non-paid community care/service projects.⁴⁷ In terms of the work undertaken and the range of learning experiences to be derived therefrom, it compares favourably with other forms of work experience, while at the same time

possessing other educational advantages. Apart from making pupils more acutely aware of the problems and needs of their own communities and particularly the less privileged sectors, community service provides an opportunity for the reintegration of alienated and rebellious young people and in many cases an outlet for continued involvement in non-paid but socially valuable work after the completion of the transition course.

Many pilot projects experimented with community service, including the provision of entertainment or refreshments for old people, house maintenance and decoration for the elderly poor, playground and childcare facilities, the compilation of directories of community services, recreational outlets and so forth. For example, in the 'Practical Education For Living' First Programme project in inner city Dublin, work experience was organised around the provision and equipment of a community play centre.

The centre was poorly equipped and it seemed appropriate that the class be active in the provision of basic play equipment such as slides or seesaws. The students met the parents and children and took note of the children's size and the space available for the completed play units. Back in the workshop, many design alternatives were discussed leading to the final choice of equipment to be manufactured⁴⁸.

This type of project not only provides a practical and social education for students but can also open up the school to the surrounding population, breaking down barriers and developing a new role as an important community asset.

A similar very successful approach was taken by the 'Young Scot' First Programme project in Edinburgh. The community service undertaken was the production of an information directory aimed at the young people of the locality. So successful was the project and so great the demand that other schools became involved and the directory, entitled 'Young Scot', was expanded to include the entire country. Another Scottish project at Castlemilk has combined observation and direct experience forms of work experience with a community service theme by providing opportunities for pupils to work with local statutory and voluntary organisations in the care provision area⁴⁹

(v) Work Experience for Teachers:

An interesting development in work experience methodology which has emerged during the Second Programme deserves brief mention and that is the idea of providing work experience for teachers⁵⁰. Two projects in particular, the 'COA' project in Zeeland, Holland (Contact Contra Onderungs-Arbeit, or School - Employment Liaison Centres)⁵¹, and the 'Field Experience for Teachers' project in Greece⁵², have taken the initiative in this area. The rationale is as follows. Since few teachers have much if any experience of work outside of the schools, and in particular little knowledge of industry, projects felt that pupil work experience could only achieve its full potential in the context of similar experience for their teachers, especially those engaged in the school-based elements of the work preparation programme and in vocational guidance. Therefore, the Dutch project set out to provide

three days' work experience, initially for teachers of vocational subjects and careers education teachers.⁵⁴³ The response of teachers to the scheme was very positive, with 90% indicating that they would wish to take part again and 87% stating that they had learned something of value.⁵⁴⁴ The scheme is now being extended to the other provinces of Holland.

Work Experience - Evaluators' Views:

By and large, project evaluations based their estimation of the value of work experience on the views of the young people, tutors and employers involved, rather than on empirical studies of learning outcomes. The response obtained was generally positive. The following comments from external evaluations based on interviews with teachers, pupils and employers are broadly typical.

Work Experience often has a powerful impact on pupils. It helps pupils mature. It provides active and relevant learning situations to most pupils. Staff comment was generally favourable and work experience was generally popular with school pupils, though some girls regarded it as irrelevant.⁵⁵

Work experience (organised on a community service basis) resulted in an increase in self esteem/independence, in participation in group work and discussion and an improvement in attitude to others.⁵⁶

The students demonstrated a growth in maturity and a more positive attitude towards vocational education (Storstrøm Project, Denmark).⁵⁷

Work experience often has a powerful impact on pupils. The pupils' reports on their own work experience indicated that 87% felt 'more confident', 90% felt they had 'better

relations with adults' and 73% 'felt more important' as a result of their work experience (Clydebank Project).⁵⁰

Away from their customary surroundings, students were able to see the relevance of some school subjects via practical activities. The students' self confidence grew and the supremacy of academic learning was punctured and in addition they became more motivated towards school.⁵¹

Teachers did believe that the experience was particularly beneficial for giving pupils a sense of achievement.⁵⁰

Overall, it is fair to say that evaluators appear convinced of the benefits of experiential learning based on work experience/simulation. Even in cases where the implementation of this approach came in for criticism from an organisational perspective - on the grounds of, for example, weak placement control and management of experiential learning, with curriculum integration still a problem - policy recommendations invariably included the extension of similar schemes to the broader educational community⁵¹.

3. EDUCATION FOR ENTERPRISE:

During the course of the Second Transition Programme, the concept of 'education for enterprise' emerged as a major theme in transition education, closely associated with, but separate from, the goals and methods of work experience. It is described as an approach 'designed to change pupils' passive expectation of employment into a more dynamic attitude directed to finding or creating one's own job, through an introduction to the world of business, self-employment and small firms⁵².

Its origins are to be found in the First Transition Programme and particularly in the work of two pilot projects: those at Shannon, Ireland and Strathclyde, Scotland⁶³. In both cases, the development of sophisticated mini-company or business-in-school schemes proved to be of considerable value in promoting a number of the key goals of transition education. The success of these initiatives led the European Community Education Committee to hold a workshop on their implications (at Strasbourg, April 1985) and encouraged many of the Second Transition Programme pilot projects to experiment with similar methods⁶⁴. Education for enterprise, as the methodology has become known, was included as one of the 'theme areas' of the Second Programme⁶⁵.

The broad educational goal of education for enterprise is described as that of 'encouraging youngsters to use initiative and to stimulate them to think imaginatively about their future'⁶⁶. This is very general. In practice, however, pilot projects developing education for enterprise programmes have established more precise goals, specifically

1. to close the gap between education and the working world;
2. in the light of the lack of opportunities for 'dependent employment' - that is, employment in traditional fields such as large manufacturing - to encourage pupils to think in terms of other forms of employment, self employment, cottage industries, cooperative and even voluntary work;
3. to equip pupils with practical skills (design, marketing, etc.) and experience useful in creating their own employment opportunities;
4. to develop personal qualities and attitudes such as initiative, imagination and flexibility required to seek out or create employment in an era in which full employment may well be a thing of the past;
5. through study of the local and regional economy to make pupils aware of the possibilities for small industries, self-employment, even black economy employment which may exist in their own areas⁶⁷.

The emphasis placed on each of these goals varies from project to project, as do the methods employed in achieving them. However, it is broadly true that in most cases a school-based simulated business or cooperative venture has formed the basis of the education for enterprise element. Also it has become common during the Second Transition Programme to use the mini-company project as both a vehicle for the study of employment possibilities, particularly self-employment, in the local area and where possible to relate the school project to economic activities - crafts, cottage industries and so on - already established or with a tradition in the region⁶⁸. In practice, therefore, education for enterprise is usually school-based, revolves around a mini-company type project, is used to make pupils aware of the economic realities and possibilities of their own areas and seeks to introduce the idea of individual self-employment or the establishment of a small enterprise.

Some projects have gone further than this in that other aspects of the curriculum have been integrated into education for enterprise. Preparation for working life in the form of job search and application, interview techniques, educational and vocational guidance, work experience and vocational studies are examples⁶⁹. In fact, a number of projects have integrated the entire curriculum within the framework of an education for enterprise scheme⁷⁰. Whether it represents a fully integrated curriculum or merely one element of a broader course, education for enterprise, because it is invariably project-based, provides an opportunity for an active or experiential learning methodology ideally suited to transition programmes.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

Work experience/work simulation schemes have become a central theme of transition education. This is so because from both a theoretical and practical point of view, such methodologies appear to fulfil many of the aims inherent in transition education principles. They help to promote experiential learning of an active nature; they establish connections between school, society and the world of work; they provide realistic and relevant learning experiences through which competencies required by young people for work and for day-to-day living can be acquired; they allow for the practical application of the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom and they expose the pupil to a range of activities and opportunities for learning drawn from a broader spectrum of human experience and endeavour than is possible in the context of an entirely school-based programme.

In terms of specific educational objectives, the outcomes posited for work experience/work simulation methodologies can be summarised as follows:

1. the enhancement of practical work-related skills and knowledge - including specific vocational skills, information enabling more informed vocational choices and decisions, and a more realistic understanding of the disciplines involved in work;
2. the encouragement of personal motivation - helping young people to recognise the skills and competencies which they require and increasing their motivation to acquire them;
3. the facilitation of the acquisition of personal and interpersonal qualities and skills of both a work-related and general social

nature. For example, initiative, self-confidence, cooperativeness, consideration for others, and so on.

4. the acquisition of alternative modes of learning - such as observation, enquiry, self-directed investigation and recording of knowledge - designed to improve flexibility and adaptability.

In the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes, a wide range of work experience formulae have been experimented with. These can be condensed into the following broad categories:

1. work experience based on observation and enquiry;
2. work experience based on participation in real work situations;
3. participation in work simulation or controlled work schemes;
4. participation in alternative/non-paid work situations;
5. work experience for teachers.

The next five sections of the chapter consider the advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches and cite examples of how each of them was implemented in practice. The question of the extent to which these various forms of work experience were successful in achieving the aims and objectives is then examined. Such evidence as exists consists largely of non-empirical reports by evaluators based on their own perceptions and on those of the students and teachers involved, elicited by way of interviews and questionnaires. The outcome of this research, together with that of such empirical studies as have been undertaken - for example, into the success of work experience as a mechanism for facilitating the entry into employment of

young people of low educational attainment - is very positive. These positive perceptions are further strengthened by the extent to which work experience in one form or another has become an integral part of transition education schemes throughout the European Community and is now beginning to play an increasing role in the 'mainstream' second level curriculum.

The chapter concludes by considering education for enterprise as a component of transition courses. This approach has emerged largely in the course of the Second Programme, usually in the form of a mini-company or cooperative, operated within the school and integrating other subject areas of the curriculum. As well as disciplines such as Mathematics, Communications, Arts, Crafts and Design, the education for enterprise component usually provides the framework for studies in such areas as the opportunities provided by the local economy, job search and job acquisition skills, ideas and skills for self-employment and careers education/ vocational guidance.

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CHAPTER FIVE

GUIDANCE, INFORMATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE TRANSITION CURRICULUM

1. GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Introduction:

Development of the provision of guidance and information services for young people in the process of transition from school to work has received considerable attention in the course of the First and Second European Transition Programmes. The theme of guidance formed one of the key priority areas of the First Transition Programme and has remained in the forefront of the activities in more than two thirds of the pilot projects of the Second Programme¹. In particular, the role of guidance and information has come to be perceived as of special importance in efforts to improve educational provision for the underachiever, the less academically able and the early school-leaver.

In the transition literature, the traditional approach of guidance is said to have tended to emphasise the provision of information about different careers and the counselling of individuals in their choice of occupation². Such guidance was concentrated largely at the very end of compulsory education or in the post-compulsory stage, when such choices are usually made. For the pupil of low academic ability or the early school-leaver, such guidance was of little value since he/she might not in fact receive it at all and also because counselling of a much broader nature would be required to tackle the deep-seated problems of such groups.

The view that the process of guidance and counselling should span a wider age group than at present, and that the aims to be pursued should not simply begin and end with career guidance and orientation, has informed the work of the pilot projects experimenting in this area - 'guidance should begin early in the individual's life and should be provided continuously over the entire period leading up to vocational choice and the transition from school to working life³. The objective of many of the projects working in this field has been to broaden the concept of guidance to include 'not only information, advice and preparation for vocational and educational choices but also to help young people with their social and occupational integration' and with the task of finding out and testing their own skills⁴.

Each project, influenced by the needs of its own clientele and by the system of guidance and counselling operating in the particular country, chose a particular approach to the achievement of this goal. However, a synthesis of their combined experiences suggests four major elements, each of which would appear to comprise a necessary component of an effective, education-based system of guidance and counselling. These are:

- (i) the integration of guidance into the broader school curriculum;
- (ii) use and availability of comprehensive and accessible information, particularly local information;
- (iii) extensive 'client-centered' counselling;
- (iv) involvement of parents and the local community⁵.

(1) The Integration of Guidance into the Broader School Curriculum:

The final report of the First Transition Programme comes to the conclusion that 'career lessons are ineffective if planned and executed in isolation from the rest of the curriculum'. Consequently, it is argued that the guidance process must move 'from the periphery of the curriculum to the heart of the learning process' and establish for itself 'a firm foothold' from which major goals such as 'pupil self-awareness and knowledge, skills in decision making, and knowledge and understanding of the world of work and the role of work in adult life' can be achieved⁶. In this interpretation, guidance and counselling is perceived not only as a central element of the 'core curriculum' appropriate to transition education courses but also to the mainstream second level curriculum. The growing role of guidance in the curriculum is, it is claimed, gradually being recognised in many educational systems. For example, 'guidance and orientation' has now become accepted as a central part of the school curriculum in Italy and subjects relating to guidance and work preparation, supplemented by the more traditional school subjects, form an important component for pupils of all abilities⁷.

The integration of guidance into the broader curriculum has been attempted in three different ways in the course of the First and Second Programmes. Firstly and most successfully, many pilot projects have approached the task of improving students' knowledge of the world of work and informing vocational and educational choices by the use of work experience together with a connected, school-based subject, designated perhaps 'preparation for working life' or 'education for enterprise'. The development of this approach has been one of

the main achievements of the transition experimentation and the methodology involved has been explored in detail in chapter four. Here it is only necessary to add that guidance based around the work experience of the pupils and the problems which they encounter in the workplace provided an integrated framework described in the final EC report on guidance as 'successful and beneficial'.⁸

This, it is argued, is because, in the context of work experience, both the practical issues of vocational guidance and the social, personal and interpersonal problems addressed by student counselling arise in a concrete way which invests the guidance process with a relevance in the pupils' eyes often lacking in the more theoretical school environment. At the same time, guidance and counselling integrated in this way into preparation for work/work experience, while being allocated substantial time, avoids the organisational and psychological difficulties associated with attempted integration into the entire curriculum. Moreover, vocational guidance as a component of education for enterprise in the form of a mini-company or mini-cooperative tends to acquire an added dimension because of its emphasis on the attitudes of young people towards business and because, unusually, it directs careers education towards the aim of self-employment.

An 'integrated multi pronged' approach to guidance has been promoted in the Castlemilk Project in Scotland⁹, and to an extent in the Manchester Project in England¹⁰. This means, in fact, that the entire project programme is largely determined by the requirements of guidance - broadly conceived to include all

aspects of vocational preparation and personal counselling - including a social education programme'¹. The courses or subjects included in such programmes tend therefore to be dominated by issues related to employment or unemployment. For instance, the Castlemilk curriculum concentrates on areas such as:

- vocational preparation modules
- social education
- work experience/simulated job interviews
- leisure activities
- youth information services
- careers information'².

The third approach to the integration of guidance into the curriculum consists in what the First Transition Programme final report describes as the 'involvement of the skills, experiences and understanding relevant to transition, formally and informally, throughout the range of the school's activities and subjects'³. Guidance and counselling is to be 'mediated' through each of the subjects in the curriculum and all staff must be encouraged 'to see their own subjects in terms of their vocational relevance'. A number of projects operated along these lines, the most ambitious being the 'NICER' project in England'⁴. The method employed was an external team which analysed the nature and quality of existing careers work in each school and worked with staff on the integration of guidance into the various parts of the curriculum'⁵.

The reported results were disappointing: 'the project...highlighted the organisational and psychological difficulties in implementation'⁶. The organisational difficulties stemmed largely from the problems of coordinating

guidance work which was spread across the entire curriculum and monitoring the effectiveness of such work. The guidance teacher acted as coordinator or facilitator and undertook the tasks of co-ordination and monitoring, but the scepticism and suspicion of colleagues made it difficult unless he/she had 'sufficient expertise and status to influence colleagues and to identify and encourage cross curriculum initiatives'⁷. The 'psychological difficulties' mentioned above appear to refer to teacher opposition to the notion that their subjects might have any relevance at all to transition work in the areas of guidance and counselling⁸.

Overall the evidence would suggest that the most effective model of guidance integration emerging from the two programmes appears to be one organised around a related part of the curriculum - for example, work experience / education for enterprise combined with adequate timetable allowance for school based follow-up work. This type of approach is being widely adopted as an element of most courses for the less academically able.

Teacher Role - Continuity and Partnership in Guidance Provision:

Apart from the central proposal of integrating guidance into elements of the curriculum, three other initiatives of interest in the guidance field have emerged from the pilot projects. The first of these, the creation of a personal and vocational guidance role for a non-specialist staff member operating in close contact with each transition group, is described in detail in the chapter

three section entitled 'The Transition Tutor' and is also considered briefly in the guidance context later in this chapter.

Continuity of Guidance Beyond School:

The second initiative of interest is the idea of providing continuity of guidance beyond school, particularly for high risk pupils - early school-leavers and the lowly qualified who in general are the least likely to enter post-school training or obtain work. These young people tend to be difficult to contact once they have left school and are usually the least likely to make use of manpower agencies, employment centres and so forth¹⁹.

A potential answer suggested to the problems posed by this group is guidance continuity beyond school and the provision of second chance opportunity for those unable to make their own way. An example of this approach is to be found in the Luxembourg Second Programme Project²⁰, which used both guidance specialists employed part-time in the school and part-time outside in the community and a network of locally-based social/youth workers²¹. These maintained contact with the young people until they reached nineteen years of age or entered full-time work or training, and cooperated with the providers of post-school opportunities to seek suitable placements for their clients. The results of this approach are reported as being very positive. The costs are fairly modest since schools rather than the manpower agencies or special 'recapture' networks take responsibility for keeping a check on their own high

risk leavers. This system is also likely to be more comprehensive, since those who never register with manpower services and often become lost in the system are followed up more systematically by their schools²³.

Coordination of Guidance Activities:

The third guidance initiative of interest is closely connected to continuity as discussed above. Essentially it involves more systematic and formalised cooperation between school guidance and the other partners in the guidance process²³. Some projects explored the establishment of local 'inter-service task forces' to coordinate and develop guidance activities²⁴. An example is the 'Youthteam' project at Hvidovre, Denmark²⁵, which brought together on a regular basis representatives of the local schools' guidance counsellors, the Youth Employment and Training Agencies, Social Welfare and the State Employment Service. The Youthteam provided a coherent package of services of each agency, which allowed the school counsellor to provide information and access to them all and did not require the young person to wander from one to the other seeking assistance. This approach has now been extended to other areas of Denmark²⁶. A second method of improving liaison was developed in a number of the German projects. Here a teacher per school was given a reduced teaching load and designated a 'contact teacher'. His/her role was to obtain information about opportunities available in vocational schools, training agencies and technological institutes and to try to arrange cooperation, including improved guidance designed to eliminate or reduce sex stereotyping and to widen the

vocational aspirations and choices of girls, perhaps leading to joint modular courses between such agencies and their own schools²⁷.

(ii) Use and Availability of Information:

Closely associated with the problem of improved guidance counselling is the question of adequate and effective information provision for young people. This is dealt with in detail in the second section of this chapter.

(iii) Client-Centered Counselling:

An important factor in the development of effective guidance and counselling is the level and duration of the personal contact between counsellor and pupil. Usually, the only personal or vocational counselling which a young person can expect to receive is one or two interviews with a career guidance teacher, perhaps preceded by one or two class-group sessions. Since even this level of contact is usually on a voluntary basis and confined to those approaching school leaving age or in post-compulsory education, a significant number of pupils may never receive any attention. This type of service is criticised in the transition literature - 'it cannot justify the label of counselling' at all²⁸. The guidance counsellor is handicapped by a lack of knowledge of the individual students and the consequent absence of any personal rapport makes meaningful counselling impossible. Moreover, in most cases the same personnel are required

to carry out both counselling for personal problems and counselling for careers advice - two roles 'not necessarily best carried out by the same person'²⁹ - and this dual role further diminishes the chance of achieving anything in one or two short interviews.

Two types of solution have been tried by First and Second Programme pilot projects. In the Sheffield Project in England³⁰, extra Career Service Counsellors or Youth Welfare Officers were appointed to work with a number of schools. Their role was basically to liaise with the school guidance counsellors, and to undertake certain aspects of the work - career guidance in the case of the Careers Service Counsellors and home/school liaison in difficult cases in the case of the Welfare Officers - which would leave more time for school counsellors to deal with personal guidance³¹. Naturally such provision proved to be very expensive even when, as in the Sheffield case, it was aimed at a limited clientele - low achievers in the 14-16 age group. Another problem with this approach is the resultant increase in the number of counsellors / guidance personnel with which the young person is faced. The school counsellor, the external Career Service Officer, the Youth Welfare Officer, all new faces offering different aspects of guidance and, while increasing the time that each pupil can be given, making 'the development and maintenance of an open relationship between counsellor and student more difficult'³². The division of responsibility between the vocational and personal aspects of guidance does not therefore, in my view, constitute a satisfactory alternative.

The second and perhaps more realistic approach was the development of the 'transition tutor' model, in the Clydebank Project in Scotland³³. The transition tutor concept is a wide one which has already been discussed in chapter three³⁴. Specifically in relation to guidance and counselling, the benefit of the system is the close rapport which can be built up between the tutor and the class group. Since the transition tutor deals with all aspects of the programme being pursued by his students, and is timetabled for long contact hours with them, 'beneficial changes in relationships in which there was more trust, understanding and consensus usually occurred'³⁵. The final evaluation report indicates that '90% of project students identified the transition tutor as the person they knew best in school, as opposed to subject teachers, guidance staff, etc.'³⁶. Moreover, there 'was clear evidence that the transition tutor was more often used as a guidance resort than the formal guidance system'³⁷.

The transition tutor model thus established a key prerequisite for effective counselling in that it is client-centered in the real meaning of the term. The tutor has the opportunity to establish a relationship with each student and develops a level of knowledge regarding his/her personal circumstances and problems and a realistic appraisal of his/her vocational possibilities. The problems are however considerable. Firstly, the transition tutor is usually a subject teacher, with no specific skills or knowledge in either vocational or personal guidance. Secondly, the adoption of an effective system of transition tutors, even for each group in a transition year programme (let alone in the entire school), has implications for resources and timetabling.

However, even adopted on a limited scale, as in the case of the Clydebank Project, those directly involved as tutors and the external evaluation team felt that 'though their role was demanding and costly in time and money...the benefits far outweighed the costs'³⁸. It is possible to envisage a situation where the transition tutor - equipped with some training in the development of personal and group relationships, mediating vocational guidance and information provided by the school counsellor (acting in the role of resource person) and timetabled for monitoring work experience, seeing students privately and liaising with parents and other professional services - could provide a client-centered guidance and counselling service of the best possible type. Any other suggested model, lacking the vital ingredient of a significant quality of relationship between counsellor and client, appears to be flawed.

(iv) Involvement of Parents and the Local Community in the Guidance Process:

Despite the emphasis placed on guidance and counselling in the transition literature, it is admitted that the 'existing evidence indicates that the counselling system has a comparatively minor influence on the choice of job'³⁹. Much more influential on these decisions are parents, relations, friends and peers. Therefore, it is suggested that if guidance is to be effective it must ensure 'that the key figures who influence the decisions of young people have the necessary attitudes, information and advice'⁴⁰. To achieve this goal, parents and other influential groups must somehow be involved in the guidance process.

The problem, however, is how to motivate parents to take an active part, to find out more about possible jobs, training opportunities etc. and thus be enabled to encourage their children to consider positively as wide a range of choices as possible. Most pilot projects in both transition programmes have made the involvement of parents and the community in general a key objective. By and large, however, the success of actions taken to involve parents, relations and friends 'has been comparatively limited, particularly in relation to the parents of the unqualified school-leaver group'⁴¹. Various projects have produced special information leaflets for parents, held regular 'active rather than passive' parent - teacher meetings, and involved parents in joint committees with staff to discuss aspects of the programme.⁴² What emerges is the necessity for a coordinated and coherent approach to parent/community involvement: the one project which has developed a comprehensive model along these lines is the 'SPIRAL I' First Programme project at Shannon, Ireland⁴³. The methodology developed in the course of that project is described in detail in chapter eight, 'School - Community Liaison'. Here it suffices to say that the structures evolved appear appropriate for use in the greater involvement of parents in the guidance process.

A largely untapped source of local job/training information and guidance lies in parents, employers, workers and the local community in general. Of course the development of work experience as an integral part of most transition and pre-vocational courses (particularly where the employers are given a role in the assessment of pupils) has involved employers to a much larger extent in the guidance and counselling processes. Also innovative schemes, such as the use of

local workers to act as 'skills tutors' in school-based courses, as pioneered in the Shannon Project⁴⁴, has improved the possibilities for the exploration of the community as a source of information and advice for pupils. Nonetheless, the more systematic use of local sources to collate information would be of tremendous value to school guidance counsellors often faced with the unavailability of such material. Useful work in this regard has been done in the 'Guidance and Orientation' First Programme project in Italy⁴⁵, where the project teams have built up, in conjunction with local employers, databanks of information to augment the material available to teachers⁴⁶. Such information would be particularly valuable in countries such as Ireland, where the paucity of local as opposed to national information represents a major gap in the present guidance system.

The Coordination of Guidance Agencies and the Promotion of Cooperation with Schools:

Coordination between the different agencies having roles at the interface between education, training and employment was a central theme of the First Transition Programme and in the absence of adequate progress in the matter remained a major concern of the Second Programme⁴⁷. In the guidance and information areas, the overlap and duplication between the agencies themselves and between them and the school is of particular importance. Most countries are said to suffer from a situation where

one service gives general advice and information, another helps place those that come to them, a third looks after the problems of young employed in a district, various private or voluntary agencies may help, and industry and training authorities often have their own recruiting and information sections⁴⁹.

Despite, or more likely because of this range of services, 'guidance and orientation is far from effective' and a 'complete lack of coordination and cooperation exists among these services and between them and the schools'⁴⁹.

The solutions attempted lie in the direction of greater coordination and coherence between the various agencies involved. Several projects concentrated in developing multi-agency or multi-disciplinary models of organisation in order to try to bridge the gaps. The level of success has however been limited, except perhaps in the most restricted and local of contexts, largely because each sector in the 'transition business' wishes to defend and extend its area of operations. The entire question of streamlining the transition process through forms of inter-agency cooperation - at national and regional as well as local levels - is admitted to be of central significance. Without such streamlining, costly duplication, undermining the effectiveness not only of guidance and information services will continue. The necessity for centralised policy decisions to impose the coherence required and a closer examination of the models upon which inter-agency cooperation might be successfully based are therefore examined in detail in chapter nine of this work.

2. INFORMATION PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TRANSITION:

The provision of comprehensive and assessable information and advice for young people in transition is identified as the second key element in the development of an effective system of guidance and counselling⁵⁰. However, for many professionals in the field aware of what is admitted in the transition literature to be 'the comparative ineffectiveness of much careers service work', well coordinated and accessible information would in fact be the first priority⁵¹. Young people are often faced with guidance and information services and placement and advice services, both inside and outside the school, which are of little value to them. Many, particularly the low achievers and education rejectors, never understand the value of these services since they see them as 'bureaucratic, impersonal and distant from the realities of their everyday lives and needs'⁵². They are reluctant to seek information from such sources and, even where they do so, the format and language, the interviews and forms may well be beyond their level of understanding.

The evidence to support such a negative view of existing services is very strong. For example, the Berlin First Programme project⁵³ demonstrated that modern and sophisticated information centres often make little impact on the young people at which they are aimed, and that the lower the level of educational achievement of the clientele the less utilisation is likely to be made of the centre⁵⁴. In Ireland, surveys show that among early school dropouts and those with little or no educational qualifications, the level of knowledge regarding the services available and even the numbers bothering to register as unemployed is startlingly low⁵⁵. In Scotland, research carried out

by the Scottish Community Education Council has shown that most young people are unaware of the services, facilities and opportunities which are available to them and that more than fifty percent of sixteen year olds in Scotland have no contact with further education and training⁵⁶.

In the light of these findings, a number of pilot projects of the First Transition Programme concentrated their efforts in the area of youth information and guidance services. The outcome, in terms of new approaches and spin-offs, has been significant⁵⁷. The first step suggested is the identification of reasons why the services provided at present do not seem able to achieve the desired objectives. Some of these include items already mentioned - the number of providing organisations involved, the level of coordination between these various agencies and the education system, the provision of information in a form that is not always easily comprehensible and assimilable, particularly for the early school-leaver and the impersonal nature of the professional service provided⁵⁸. Other factors encountered include the limited nature of the information given - often consisting simply of scant details regarding jobs, pay and hours of work and usually of a national rather than a local nature - and the difficulty many young people, educated through the traditional process of passive reception of information, face in adapting to a situation of having to find from a variety of sources what they themselves need.⁵⁹

To solve these problems, the 'Young Scot' project⁶⁰ and other initiatives which have taken their lead from it developed what might be termed a philosophy of

youth information which is gradually coming to inform the entire field. The basic argument presented is that solutions to the individual problems outlined above are not in themselves enough. Clearly, greater coordination between agencies, comprehensive information (including, as well as employment opportunities, details on training, housing, health, recreation, legal problems, starting a group of some kind and voluntary work), more emphasis on local opportunities and activities, and so on, are desirable. However, on their own, such developments may have little impact on the level of utilisation of information and advice, mainly because outside agencies, however efficient, are still deciding on what their clients' needs are. The 'Young Scot' experience indicates that

the quality and effectiveness of advice and guidance is significantly improved where it is offered not in a 'professional' interview relationship but as an element of the situation in which a young person is actively engaged. Hence the strong emphasis on 'active information' in the sense of trying to offer opportunities to young people to become actively involved rather than simply giving out material⁶¹.

The central element in the 'Young Scot' approach was therefore youth involvement at all stages of the information process - identifying the information needs of their peers, developing appropriate media (at first a booklet, but later videos and local radio programmes) in terms of both content and style, distributing the product, organising opportunities for young people to offer feedback and, finally, developing a Youth Enquiry Service, with local information points, partly staffed by young unemployed people to provide an informal atmosphere in which young people could meet and discuss problems⁶².

The success of the initiative was considerable. A second 'Young Scot' information booklet followed in 1983, similar national schemes were undertaken in Denmark and Italy and many similar local schemes are described in INFO-ACTION '85. Youth Initiatives in the European Community, published by the Commission in 1986⁶³. This success is attributed by its organisers to the breadth of information provided and the fact that it 'looked at young people's needs through their own eyes and not that of a professional depersonalised service'⁶⁴. Other important reasons for success include the fact that content and design were in the hands of young people themselves, and that through adequate funding, distribution and the use of other media such as local radio, more young people could be reached in a way which traditional 'centre bound' information agencies have usually failed to emulate. The 'Young Scot' project, being organised on a national level, did retain one major drawback, however: overemphasis on national rather than local information. This problem has been resolved in Denmark, where the national booklet 'Ung Abz' is being followed by the preparation of local supplements⁶⁵.

3. MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE TRANSITION CURRICULUM:

An interesting aspect of the development of a broader and more integrated concept of guidance has been the creation of new courses designed to eliminate or reduce sex stereotyping and to widen the vocational aspirations and choices of girls. These courses are referred to as 'gender equality compensation

courses' and aim to raise the educational and employment aspirations of girls and to make them aware of the possibility of careers in occupations not traditionally entered by women. I include 'gender equality' in this chapter since guidance is perhaps the key element in any effort to improve access and opportunity for girls in the education system.

Despite general provision throughout the EC for equal treatment in education and training, the Action Handbook on gender equality states that

girls still tend to make 'traditional' educational and vocational choices, opting for general as opposed to technical education, pure sciences as opposed to applied sciences, short vocational courses as opposed to technical education. In short, they restrict themselves to a very narrow range of careers, many of which offer poor employment prospects.⁶⁶

The latest evidence indicates that these tendencies result more from 'social expectations and inner orientation' than from lack of innate ability or the unavailability of access and opportunity (although the latter remains a significant factor in many cases).⁶⁷ It is clear, therefore, that sustained and effective guidance and counselling has a major role to play in the reversal of this 'inner orientation' and this is reflected in those projects where the development of 'compensation' or 'familiarisation' courses for girls was a central objective.⁶⁸

Among the guidance elements included in courses designed to enhance gender equality, the following have proved of particular use:

- careers programmes including the study of discrimination in employment against women;
- vocational guidance designed to alter pre-conceived notions of what is 'appropriate' for men and women and to concentrate on the actual skills and training required in different fields - the provision of examples on film or in newspaper articles of women working successfully in non-traditional employment is useful here;
- introducing courses in practical and technical subjects to be taken by all students entering a programme so that girls can gain some experience of these areas before decisions are made;
- work experience and work observation for girls in firms specialising in technology/electronics and other non-traditional fields of female employment;
- the elimination of sex role stereotyping from teaching materials and the study of examples of such stereotyping in the media.⁶⁹

The pilot project evidence indicates that progress in this area appears to be relatively difficult. Attitudes and practices will not change quickly and of course elements outside the direct control of the education system may be particularly slow to respond. For example, in relation to the question of work experience for girls, there are indications of considerable difficulty (in Ireland at least) in persuading employers to take females into traditionally male dominated work areas. Some evidence also suggests that boys appear to

respond better than girls to efforts to interest them in non traditional subject areas - cooking/catering, for example⁷⁰.

In the course of the Second Transition Programme, a number of projects developed programmes to encourage gender equality through new approaches to guidance and curriculum content. The aims pursued in each project were somewhat similar and included

- (1) enabling girls to explore their attitudes to work opportunities;
- (2) broadening their thinking on what constitutes a suitable female occupation;
- (3) impressing upon them the link between subject choice and career opportunities;
- (4) increasing their self-confidence and educational self-image.⁷¹

To achieve these aims the projects involved - the 'Equal Opportunities Programme' in Manchester⁷², the 'Girls' Programme' in Castlemilk, Glasgow⁷³, and the 'Why Not?' course in Shannon⁷⁴ - developed extensive gender equality programmes aimed not only at the girls involved but in some cases at employers, parents, teachers and male students. A feature of these projects is the extensive materials including videos which each has produced and which are now in wide use in schools. The courses developed included such elements as classroom analyses of curriculum material and the media, assertiveness training for women teachers and girls including role play, anti-sexist workshops for men, 'tasters' and work experience in non traditional vocational areas for girls, and analysis of traditional sex roles within the family⁷⁵.

A high degree of success in maintaining pupil interest is claimed by the report on the Glasgow Project. It is stated that 92% of the girls involved thought the course worth doing and 90% thought it should have been longer. It is interesting and perhaps revealing, however, that only 15% of the girls asked for work experience placements in non-traditional areas as a result of the programme.⁷⁶

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

In relation to the provision of effective guidance and information services, the pilot projects involved identified four key elements, essential to success:

- (i) the integration of guidance into the curriculum;
- (ii) the provision of accessible and comprehensive information to young people;
- (iii) client-centered counselling;
- (iv) community involvement.

A number of models designed to integrate guidance into the curriculum were developed - integration through work experience supported by a school-based programme of preparation for working life, integration through the organisation of the entire curriculum around guidance and work preparation and, finally, integration of a guidance element into each subject area in the curriculum. These are described in detail and advantages and disadvantages discussed. Only

the first mentioned methodology appears to be both successful and capable of implementation in the broader educational community.

The provision of accessible, accurate and comprehensive information to young people is regarded in the transition literature as being of crucial importance. Despite, or perhaps even because of the plethora of information agencies active in the field, many young people, particularly those of low academic ability, are reported unwilling or unable to make use of the services provided at present and remain unaware of whatever options are open to them. Such initiatives as the 'Young Scot' information project demonstrate that the level of utilisation among young people of guidance and information services can be improved if certain conditions prevail. Important among these conditions are: local information available locally, the involvement of young people in deciding on the needs of the users, the layout and format of the material and the provision of advice and counselling and back up services, and the use of varying media such as video and local radio to reach all potential users.

The provision of adequate client-centered counselling within the education system was not achieved in the course of any pilot project. Even in the context of generous resources, the staffing and timetabling structure required to allow trained counsellors adequate time to develop relationships with each individual pupil were impossible to achieve. However, the 'transition tutor' model is reported to have achieved many of the goals of a client-centered counselling system and may represent the best way forward. The 'transition tutor' is a development of the traditional form teacher role, but with

additional class contact time devoted to work preparation/vocational guidance/work experience supervision and some timetabled non class contact time to deal with student problems and to liaise with parents and employers. It is desirable that teachers undertaking such a role would be given some in-service training in guidance, group dynamics and so forth, and fully trained guidance teachers would act both as resource teachers in the area of vocational information, and as counsellors to those with serious problems. It is argued that only through some methodology along these lines can an effective, ongoing and systematic guidance service for all pupils in school be developed.

The important role of parents and the community in guiding and advising young people is recognised in the work of a number of projects. However, the difficulties inherent in achieving the goal of greater parental / community involvement are considerable and have become a major theme of the transition programme experiments. Various possible structures for the involvement of parents and the broader community in a systematic way in the guidance and other processes of the school deserve detailed attention and are discussed in chapter eight of this work. The issue of coordination and cooperation between the different agencies delivering education, training and guidance services has proved very intractable, with continuing competition, duplication and overlap. Again, the importance of this problem and the various solutions emerging require detailed treatment and are discussed in chapter nine.

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that in the field of guidance, the two transition programmes established beyond doubt the unsatisfactory nature of

present provision. The solutions suggested in the guidance and information area, particularly the integration of guidance into the curriculum in the form of a subject closely associated with a work experience element, the involvement of young people in the provision of locally-based information services and the development of the transition tutor model, all appear to possess considerable merit and to be capable of implementation in the broader school community.

17. *ibid.*, p. 44; some of the negative responses to the teacher as 'transition tutor' are amusing and are to be found in George Roberts, Transition Tutor: A teacher's account of the role, (Glasgow: Clydebank Department of Education, 1983).
18. Policies for Transition, p. 24.
19. Second Transition Programme, Transition Education for the 90s, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1988), p. 26.
20. Second Programme Project No. 23.
21. Innovations, No. 20, 1987.
22. Second Programme Project No. 23, Luxembourg, Initial Report, (Luxembourg: Ministry of Education, 1986).
23. Transition Education for the 90s, January 1988, p. 27.
24. *ibid.*, p. 29.
25. Second Programme Project No. 4.
26. Innovations, No. 8, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1987).
27. Innovations, No. 30.
28. Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 41.
29. From Education to Working Life, p. 113.
30. First Transition Programme Project No. 25.
31. Final Programme Report, Part C, p. 97.
32. Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 42.
33. First Transition Programme Project No. 26.
34. For a full account of how the system works, see George Roberts, Transition Tutor: A teacher's account of the role, (Glasgow: Clydebank Department of Education, 1983).
35. *ibid.*; Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 42; Stronach and Weir, Once upon a timetable, Final Evaluation Report, Clydebank EEC Project, pp 51-52.
36. Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 42.
37. *ibid.*, p. 42.
38. *ibid.*, p. 42; Stronach and Weir, Once Upon a Timetable, p. 51.
39. From Education to Working Life, p. 113.

40. *ibid.*, p.108.
41. *ibid.*, p. 116.
42. *ibid.*, p. 117.
43. First Transition Programme Project No. 15.
44. First Transition Programme Project No. 15.
45. First Transition Programme Project No. 19.
46. First Programme Report, Part C, p.60.
47. Second Transition Programme, Thirty Pilot Projects. Short descriptions of the 30 Pilot Projects in the European Community's Second Transition Programme, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1984).
48. From Education to Working Life, p. 118.
49. *ibid.*, p. 118.
50. Final Programme Report, Part C. Project Descriptions, p. 103.
51. From Education to Working Life, p. 111.
52. Policies for Transition, p. 125.
53. First Transition Programme Project No. 10.
54. Ulrick J. Kledzick and Heiko Stefans, "Arbeitslehre", (unpublished research paper, Technische Universitat Berlin, 1985).
55. Richard Breen, Education and the Labour Market: Work and Unemployment Among Recent Cohorts of Irish School Leavers, (Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute, 1984), p. 145.
56. Final Programme Report, Part C. Project Descriptions, p. 110.
57. Perhaps the most successful of these experiments was the Young Scot project in Scotland (First Transition Programme Project No. 30), followed by the Chieti Project in Italy (First Transition Programme Project No. 19) and the Aarhus Project in Denmark (First Transition Programme Project No. 5). The spin-off effects include further experimentation in the Second Transition Programme and many parallel projects in various countries. Many of these developments are described in two publications of the European Communities devoted to Youth Information: (i) Youth Information, (Brussels: European Commission, 1985) and (ii) Info Action '85. Youth Initiatives in the European Community, (Brussels: European Commission, 1986).
58. From Education to Working Life, pp 111-14.
59. Youth Information, pp 7-8.

60. First Transition Programme Project No. 30.
61. Youth Information, p. 11.
62. Final Programme Report, Part A, p. 41.
63. Info Action '85. Youth Initiatives in the European Community, p. 6.
64. ibid., p. 6.
65. ibid., p. 15.
66. Action Handbook: How to implement gender equality, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1985), p. 5. Hereafter cited as How to implement gender equality.
67. ibid., p. 35.
68. For example, Second Transition Programme Projects 3, 17 and 18.
69. How to implement gender equality, p. 63.
70. J.G. O'Shea, "The Organisation of a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme" in The Secondary Teacher, Vol 14, No. 2, 1985, p. 29.
71. Innovations, No. 31.
72. Innovations, No. 34.
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CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL FAILURE

INTRODUCTION:

As I have pointed out in chapter one, a significant weakness of the First Transition Programme was the relative neglect of the areas of social and personal education in the work of most of the pilot projects. Despite the fact that the overall aims of the programme appeared to stress equally preparation for working and for adult life, the vocational thrust of the outcomes overshadowed the social and personal domain almost entirely'. Perhaps this is not so surprising. After all the First Programme was inaugurated primarily as a response to increasing youth unemployment. Moreover its philosophy was clearly influenced by theories then widely prevalent. These postulated the thesis that school systems, by basing programmes more closely on the needs of industry and by providing more 'relevant' education, could make young people more employable and thus reduce levels of unemployment. As a result, 'vocationally relevant' education (in the form of concentration on basic skills, work experience, mini-companies, vocational guidance and more employer-oriented assessment systems), naturally assumed a dominant role in the programme.

However, during the First Programme, the rationale of courses dominated by vocational preparation - particularly those aimed primarily at the less academically able - began to be challenged by a number of projects². As the ever-increasing provision of vocational preparation was only matched by ever-increasing rates of youth unemployment, the

fallacy that 'relevant' education could, unaided, produce jobs was exposed. Consequently, when worklessness was as likely an outcome to transition education as employment, it seemed to some project teams to make more sense to concentrate to a greater degree on areas which would be worthwhile for all young people regardless of their future vocational status.

For example, it was argued, the vast majority of pupils will become parents, will inhabit a local community and will be members of a national body politic. Yet citizenship, parenthood and community membership were among the many neglected themes in the early approaches to transition education. Realisation of this problem produced a gradual change of emphasis in certain projects, particularly and predictably those in areas worst affected by continuing high levels of youth unemployment. In these projects, the initial rationale gradually shifted from a concept of transition education primarily as vocational preparation to one more concerned with personal development. This process is well documented in the external evaluation reports on the Clydebank First Transition Programme Project in Scotland, which by the middle of year two suggests that

here for the first time was the embryonic 'me' curriculum with its stress on self-worth, self-realisation and personal development. If 'work' could not act as a curricular foundation then the 'self' would have to do. Work for your 'self' became the new curriculum³.

As a result of the thinking of Clydebank and a number of other projects, the twin themes of socialisation and self-worth and the issue of

educational disadvantage began to make some impact on the transition literature and became acceptable areas for experimentation in the Second Transition Programme⁴.

This shift was neither complete nor unambiguous, but it has resulted in a much greater number of Second Programme projects in which personal development emerged as a principal consideration. In turn the evaluation documentation of the Second Programme - for example, the Final Evaluation Report and the Innovations series which details the work of particularly interesting projects - reflects this change. The themes of social education and the role of schools in combating problems such as drug abuse, illiteracy and early school dropout, is at last accorded a significant element of recognition⁵.

Social education:

My account of the development of interesting approaches to the provision of social education will consist in two elements. Firstly, I will look at those projects which tackled the problems of student socialisation and personal development by means of structured programmes of social education, centered on a range of appropriate topics or issues. Secondly, I propose to examine a small number of projects which sought to achieve the same goals through very imaginative, if more indirect, means - for example, by encouraging student self-awareness through meditation, or through creative involvement in the arts. At the outset, however, it might be useful to define the term social education.

In social education the emphasis is placed on identifying and teaching what might be of use and value to the person, in social and cultural terms, and thereby making a positive contribution to the quality of his personal, as opposed to his vocational, life. This of course is a broad definition but the concept of social education is by its nature not amenable to clearcut, unambiguous description.

Part of social education must be utilitarian and involves improving the skills and increasing the knowledge necessary to cope with the tasks of practical survival in society. It could be defined as education in the practical aspects of living and could encompass such areas as budgeting, home maintenance, information on substance abuse, and so on. The second aim is concerned with the personal development of the student and could be described as education in the social and cultural aspects of life. This latter aim can be usefully subdivided into two distinct objectives - (i) to improve the quality of the young person's relationship with those in his immediate circle of human contacts and with the wider community and (ii) to bring the student to a greater involvement with and appreciation of his personal and cultural environment. Most pilot projects which attended to these aims sought to achieve them through structured topic/theme based programmes addressing the issues individually.

1. FORMAL SOCIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

To a large extent the social education programmes developed by various pilot projects are little different in content to similar courses which have evolved in many schools in recent years. In both cases the aims and objectives tend to be of a similar nature to those outlined above and in consequence the range of topics, issues and themes which comprise the programmes also tend to be common to most of them. However, one important element of difference does emerge. Most social education courses evolved within the curricula of traditional schools tend to conform to the classroom-based, information-centered approach common to other school subjects. However, in the pilot projects, the emphasis, in accordance with the overall methodology of transition education, is placed on socialisation through experiential learning. A good and typical example of such a programme is provided by the Castlemilk Second Programme project, 'Social Skills Course', in Scotland⁶.

The social skills course of the Castlemilk project was designed as a two year programme for pupils of all abilities in the 14-16 age group. It required four to six hours per week, including a half day to allow for visits and placements. The central course aim was defined as

placing human values, personal relations, community service and preparation for adult roles such as worker, home-maker and consumer, more centrally in students' learning and in the life of the school⁷.

As part of this process, the students 'are given as much power as possible in deciding the content of the course'⁸. Within this overall aim, a series of objectives are elaborated as follows:

- (i) to develop the practical social skills needed for adult life;
- (ii) to provide pupils with the opportunity to apply these skills in a variety of settings;
- (iii) to develop an awareness of the needs of others in the community and to enhance appreciativeness of the contribution which people can make to their community;
- (iv) to enhance such personal qualities as self-awareness, self-respect, confidence and initiative.
- (v) to foster a positive attitude to cooperation and team work³.

In pursuit of these objectives, a series of topics grouped around three central themes - Home, Community and Work - were developed. The topics specified for the theme of Home, for example, included

finding and furnishing a home - involving visits to Council houses, the housing office and furniture shops; safety in the home - involving talks from police and fire services and a basic first aid course; cooking basic meals; money management - involving shopping, advice on nutrition, visit to a credit union; and relationships in the home, involving a child care course, visits to nurseries and playgroups, care for the elderly and visits to old people¹⁰.

For the Community theme, some of the topics covered included the local community - talks from and visits to community groups and local health and advice centres; running a community event - planning and organising a fund raising project for a community enterprise; local politics - involving visiting the local Council, talks from local politicians; leisure - including visits to local sports clubs and facilities, a survey of sporting organisations in the area and an introduction to leisure activities within a reasonable distance¹¹.

None of these themes or topics are of course original. Most schools' social education programmes cover some or all of them. It is however, as with much of transition education, the active learning methodology used to deal with each topic, rather than the content, that is of significance. There is little use of traditional classroom learning in the Castlemilk course. Each element of the programme involves an outing, project, visit or speaker. The students are actively involved in learning by experience, largely based in the out-of-school environment and mediated through such techniques as group work, research and discovery, discussion, role play, drama, surveys, and so on¹³.

Interestingly and somewhat unusually, the Castlemilk project seeks to define clearly and to test the learning outcomes achieved by the pupils in the course of their social education programme. The project defined twenty eight learning outcomes, specified in terms of 'what the pupils can do', which are amenable to realistic testing. Among the skills defined and tested are the following: 'interpret and complete a form, use a common domestic appliance, use banking facilities, shop for the family or school using cash'¹³.

The point here is that the students involved, in contrast to most of their peers undergoing such programmes, are provided with specific measurable targets to achieve and are tested accordingly. This does not mean that socialisation and personal growth do not take place. Rather it indicates that while such intangibles are themselves largely unmeasurable and thus their realisation has to be taken on trust, a skills-based programme subject to testing provides a framework and

motivation for learning which should lead to the enhancement of the personal and social attributes desired. The Castlemilk approach to social education in terms both of the nature of the curriculum and the skills-centered nature of the outcomes to be tested may well represent an improved model for school-based programmes in this area.

2. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO SOCIAL EDUCATION:

A number of projects in both transition programmes experimented with interesting and imaginative alternative approaches to achieving the social education aims. By alternative, I mean other than through a structured, topic-based approach of the type outlined in the preceding section. Two interesting examples of such alternative methodology are provided by the North Mayo/Sligo 'Education for Development Project' in the First Transition Programme and the Berlin 'Youth and Culture Project' in the Second Transition Programme¹⁵.

The North Mayo Project - Centering, Imaging and Movement:

One of the first projects implicitly to challenge the dominant work preparation rationale of the First Transition Programme was North Mayo. As early as the planning stages in late 1978 the suggestion was made that an alternative perspective on life and work to that being commonly adopted was required.

We cannot find answers to this frightening problem (unemployment) while we continue to ask the wrong questions. The dilemma is made worse by the way in which we are construing reality. Since the nation's wealth is produced by less than one sixth of the population, the distribution of that wealth for the survival of all seems to be more relevant than job creation. We can't have enough jobs. What will we do with our time? How will we live? We have to find alternatives for those ousted from jobs'⁶.

The 'alternatives' envisaged by the project team revolved around the development in a personal rather than vocational sense of the 'attributes of self-awareness, creativity and capacity for open relationships in both teachers and pupils'. Thus social and personal education as opposed to vocational preparation became the dominant goal of the project. 'The project is about self-awareness, with relationships as a particular theme'¹⁷.

To achieve these objects, the project experimented with a series of innovative and original 'interventions', the key theme of which can be summarised as self-awareness through meditation exercises. These interventions were designed either to be integrated at the beginning of more traditional subject lessons in order to improve the 'learning readiness' of pupils or as a separate component of the school curriculum incorporated into the areas of social and physical education. The interventions developed were identified 'with the aid of experienced practitioners in affective education and were chosen from three 'generic areas' - Orientation Activities (also called Centering), Imaging and Movement'¹⁸. Each was seen in terms of 'providing access to ways of learning complementary to those already in use in the school'¹⁹.

(a) Orientation Activities - Centering:

This is defined as a 'range of classroom meditational activities to help students achieve a frame of mind conducive to creative work'²⁰. Evaluation reports of the project suggest that this technique also renders students 'more sensitive, increases their powers of perception, improves complex eye-hand coordination, and enhances the young person's self image leading to greater self-confidence and self direction in learning'²⁴. Many examples of 'centering exercises' are offered in the final evaluation report. One will be adequate to illustrate the nature of the technique.

Body Awareness Exercise

- (a) Instructions: - Teacher ensures (i) no interruptions will take place, (ii) blinds are drawn to block out excessive sunlight, (iii) the students are seated in a circle.
- (b) The teacher then instructs the pupils (the dots represent pauses between instructions):
Sit upright but relaxed.....Allow your hands to rest lightly on the desk before you.....Close or open your eyes whichever you choose...
Now bring your attention to your feet and, as you do, allow the muscles there to loosen up and to relax the tension that might be there.....
Pay attention now to the muscles in your legs and allow them to relax also.....
(the process is repeated up through the body)
And now relax your mind.....let go of all thoughts and just pay attention to the feeling of relaxation that pervades your whole body.....
And now when you are ready bring your attention back into this room²².

The final evaluation report concludes that despite some cynicism about these exercises, most teachers who took them seriously reported improved concentration and improved discipline in their classes²³.

(b) Imaging:

Imaging is a term applied to thinking in images. The main thrust of the project's work in this area involved developing lessons which 'incorporated the process of imagistic thinking'²⁴. For example, the exploration of a poem became a 'complete experience for each student'. Not only did the pupils read the poem and analyse it, they 'also "saw" it in their minds, experienced it through the senses and emotionally, and then engaged in a variety of expressive forms designed to help them fully integrate the experience'²⁵. The technique can also be used with many other forms of creative activity such as writing and art, and even, the evaluation report suggests, in mathematics and science.

(c) Movement:

The work of the project in this regard falls into two different though related areas. The first is the use of body movement as a form of expression - 'movement, mime, or dance provide opportunities for them to explore and express thoughts and feelings in a safe and stress-free environment'²⁶. Also role play situations, games and playlets involving movement were devised 'to enable students to explore trust and cooperation as essential components of interpersonal relationships'²⁷. The second area of the project's work in relation to body movement broke new ground. It consisted in the development of special exercises - 'psycho-physical exercises' - to stimulate learning abilities through the development of body awareness and enhanced mind/body integration.

The exercises were designed to help students 'feel less stressed and more relaxed with better body posture and improved self image'²⁸.

Evaluation of these Interventions:

While the Mayo project as a whole ran into problems, both as a result of lacking a clear direction and also because (ironically) of tensions within the staff, the evaluation report is very positive in relation to the three interventions mentioned above.

The outcomes of these exercises have been positive and encouraging. Teachers noted a favourable alteration in classroom atmosphere and observed increased concentration and attention of students during subsequent lessons. This latter change was particularly noticeable in the case of a remedial group, within which endemic discipline problems were greatly reduced²⁹.

It would appear therefore that these innovative techniques, drawn from the neglected field of affective education, could have the potential to make a significant impact on the effectiveness of social education courses or perhaps of schooling in general. The evidence also suggests that these techniques may have a special role to play in the socialisation and personal development of remedial and less academically able and/or disruptive pupils.

The Berlin Youth and Culture Centre:

A different but equally imaginative approach to socialisation and personal development was taken by Berlin Project in the Second Transition Programme³⁰. The project decided to conduct its social education component through the medium of the arts. It established the 'Jugend und Kulturzentrum' (Youth and Culture Centre) to enable classes from schools in the project catchment area to spend a week on various kinds of art activities. The culture centre used 'painting, music, theatre, literature, sculpture, photography, video-making and engraving to stimulate young people's self-confidence, to give them a taste of success and to cope better with some of the socio-economic disadvantages from which they suffer³¹.

The underlying rationale of the centre was twofold. Firstly, it aimed to use artistic activity to develop the self-confidence and creativity of the pupils, to improve the quality of their lives and to assist them in the 'process of discovering their own identity'³². All of these goals could probably be achieved by a school-based programme of social education through artistic activity. The project, however, also wished to derive the motivational advantages inherent in providing a change of physical context for the learners. It was felt that the centre, being a 'third place' - that is, outside of school and home - and providing a 'third choice', art rather than the traditional curriculum or usual out-of-school activities, would stimulate young people out of their routine and normal roles and

encourage them to express their personality and to see themselves, their teachers and their classmates in a

different light. The centre is therefore organised quite differently from the rhythm of normal school life with inter-disciplinary activities such as theatre and set manufacture, small group work and free choice of activities²³³.

The Berlin youth and culture centre has proved to be a considerable success and similar projects have begun to appear in other parts of Germany. Funding is provided by local authorities, sponsoring firms and groups of schools acting cooperatively, and it would seem that the relatively modest cost of such centres - the staff are usually the pupils' own teachers supported by an art teacher and local artists or craftspersons on a voluntary or part-time basis - should allow the idea to spread to other countries.

However, even in the absence of an out-of-school centre, it seems that the principle of using artistic activity to develop desirable personal and social qualities in pupils is a valid one, which can be implemented within the broader school context. In fact, it is very possible that a transition course or social education programme that does not allow pupils access to meaningful aesthetic and artistic endeavour is failing to meet the basic criteria of such programmes in that a central and vital area of human experience and fulfilment is being ignored.

3. SCHOOL FAILURE AND EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE:

Measures to combat school failure and associated problems such as illiteracy, delinquency and drug abuse which often stem from personal, social or economic disadvantage have been given quite extensive consideration in the course of the Second Transition Programme.

As continuation rates in secondary schooling continue to rise throughout the EC and youth unemployment shows no signs of diminishing, the problem of increasing numbers of young people in the education system who are unsuited to traditional academic curricula has become more acute. These pupils are often trapped in a vicious circle in which lack of positive experience or recognised success leads to apathy or rejection of learning at school and destroys the motivation for any further education. As a result, delinquency, early school dropout, unemployment, illiteracy, drug abuse and many other serious personal and social problems may arise, and expensive and often ineffective 'recovery' or 'reintegration' programmes must be provided by the state.

It is now widely recognised that where at all possible it is the school system which offers the cheapest and most effective method of dealing with these issues and that in most cases the period of compulsory education provides the only realistic opportunity for diagnoses and remedial action. Therefore education systems throughout the Community are being forced to pay more serious attention to these problems. A number of projects in the Second Programme have piloted practical approaches to supporting young people at risk of 'failure' by whatever standards apply in their particular school milieu. The experience of

these projects can provide valuable guidelines to the provision of successful school-based interventions for such pupils applicable in the broader educational system.

Risk Group Identification and Curriculum Reform:

Several projects report that a necessary first step in combating school failure and early drop out is the identification of those pupils who are most at risk. These include students who leave school before reaching the end of compulsory schooling or before completing their state examinations or who are considered unlikely to do well should they remain on to take those examinations.

The Dublin Inner City 'Early School Leavers Project' was concerned to develop a set of criteria through which target groups for 'special intervention measures' could be identified as early as possible³⁴. Students were closely monitored and 'assessed on criteria covering the following areas - age, school attendance record, achievement in school relative to ability, attitude and behaviour in school. Other factors such as family background and tradition vis-a-vis early leaving, employment ambition and prospects, family pressures and peer group pressures should also be taken into account by the teaching staff'³⁵.

A number of other projects - Mannheim³⁶ and Duisberg³⁷, for example - trained and appointed a particular member of staff to act as 'contact'

or liaison teacher with the task of identifying potential dropouts as early as possible and developing in consultation with the class teachers, guidance counsellors and other youth services a social counselling and vocational guidance programme tailored to the individual young person³³³. The success of this initiative indicates that all schools with a significant dropout problem should be permitted to appoint and have trained a teacher with the necessary skills to do this work.

In the Dublin 'Early School Leavers' project, pupils who presented 'danger signs' on a number of the criteria specified were selected for alternative junior cycle second level programmes with the emphasis on the development of 'social and vocational skills, through practical learning'. Depending on the needs of the pupil, the alternative course offered was (i) non-examination - where the content is independent of examination requirements and is entirely planned by the teachers, (ii) limited examination - with a reduced examination subject load, together with a programme of non-examination subjects and activities and (iii) intervention programme - normal subjects to examination level, but with a number of significant alterations in the teaching methodologies utilised - projects, small group work and individual learning programmes, for example⁴⁴. Each course was designed specifically for the group involved, but contained 'a balanced input' from three skill areas: Communication Skills - including English, Maths, Art; Personal and Social Skills - including Guidance, Social and Health Education and Religion ; and Practical Skills - including Home Economics and Work Experience. Part of each alternative course was based in 'third place'

or 'out centres' called 'work exploration centres' where classes went on block release to carry out a practical project away from the school environment and to experience such activities as work simulations, community service, drama and group catering.

Other projects dealing with the problems of disadvantaged potential early school leavers also placed stress on 'third place' measures - that is the provision of a learning situation outside of the traditional classroom or home environment. Two examples already considered in some detail in the section of Chapter III entitled **The Physical Context of Transition Education** are the 'multi-skills base area' developed withing schools in the Manchester project⁴² and the 'lieu apprendre' - an informal after school neighbourhood centre to help disadvantaged pupils with homework and other problems - established by the Vennissieux Project⁴³ in France.

The experience of these projects indicates that alternative curricula for the educationally disadvantaged require flexibility not only in the organisation of content and the physical surroundings but also in administrative arrangements such as timetabling and in the teaching methodologies employed. New curricula for such pupils developed in the course of the Second Transition Programme invariably involved 'the full armoury of experience-based learning, inside the school and outside, in industry or the local community'⁴⁴. This in turn required programmes organised using a system of units of work or 'modules'⁴⁵. A module may refer to an aspect of a particular subject, or to the development of a particular practical ability or skill, but in each case the objectives,

methods and learning outcomes will be specific and different. Clearly to accommodate such a system the timetable must allow for varied lengths of time to be spent on the items on the programme, for longer and shorter blocks of class time, for opportunities for learning outside the school and for the cooperation and planning which each individual teacher and the staff group involved must undertake. In practice this means, as the Dublin Project has shown, that timetabling and resources must be organised and allocated to special class groups independently of the 'mainstream' groups in the school. Of course, schools can only do this in the context of extra resources to be allocated to such groups, but in the light of the high costs of programmes to reintegrate dropouts after they leave the system and the almost certainty of long term unemployment for such young people, this money appears to represent a sound investment.

Finally, it is stressed in the transition literature that all programmes designed for risk groups are only likely to be successful if the following principles are applied⁴⁶. They should be based on active learning methodologies, involve the development of more appropriate social and physical contexts, seek to utilise the out of school environment and the active participation of parents, the community, employers and other agencies, employ ongoing modes of assessment which can measure a wide range of pupil achievement, provide broadly recognised certification, develop an adequate system of personal and vocational guidance, and access to necessary information and, most importantly, be founded on a philosophy which places the needs of the pupils involved above all other considerations in determining the

content of the curriculum⁴⁷. Thus, while one can reasonably claim that the two transition programmes have paid inadequate attention to the specific issue of educational disadvantage and its associated problems, it is also true that the general outcomes do provide a theoretical and practical framework within which appropriate school-based courses for pupils in high risk groups can be developed.

'Recovery' programmes:

Although outside the main focus of this thesis, project work on recovery programmes deserves a brief mention. Developing useful approaches to the 'recovery' of early school-leavers was a central focus of a number of projects. These involved 'the provision outside of the schools of opportunities to assist young people in social and vocational reintegration'⁴⁸. Usually the groups met at a 'neutral' venue such as a refurbished flat or warehouse and the project team included social workers, guidance counsellors as well as teachers. However, some of the projects in question contain much of interest to those involved with the organisation of recovery or reintegration programmes, and an introduction to their work is to be found in the Second Programme Final Programme Report, pp 43-45.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

Social and personal education, as opposed to vocational preparation, was a relatively neglected theme in the First Transition Programme. This was to and extent to be expected since the problem of unemployment was very much the pre-eminent motivating factor in its establishment. However, during the First Programme, the incongruity of overemphasising vocational preparation in the education of pupils very likely to be unemployed became apparent and within a number of projects the emphasis shifted considerably. This shift became more obvious in the course of the Second Transition Programme, with the emergence of social/personal education, special curricula for disadvantaged young people, and measures to combat problems such as illiteracy being assigned a more significant if still somewhat disappointing position.

In the field of social education, two basic types of programme were developed by those pilot projects which took up the theme. Firstly, projects such as those at Castlemilk in Scotland based their programmes on a topic-centered approach which endeavoured to deal with social and personal issues in a formal, structured and comprehensive manner. In this, projects like Castlemilk reflect an approach to social education which is common in the broader school system and thus in terms of content are unexceptional. However, the importance of Castlemilk and similar projects lies in the methodology employed. The topics and themes were developed almost entirely through experiential learning in the form of activity-based modules involving visits, outings, speakers and projects. Very little was done in the traditional classroom setting.

The second approach to social education involved the achievement of the desired aims and objectives through indirect methodologies. I offer an account of two of these projects: the North Mayo project - which sought to encourage socialisation and personal development through meditative exercises such as 'centering', 'imaging' and 'movement' - and the Berlin project - which endeavoured to achieve similar objectives through creative artistic activity. These projects are important for a number of reasons. The results of the Mayo project in terms of improved pupil attention and behaviour, in particular among remedial and low achieving groups, warrants serious consideration and perhaps further experimentation on a broader scale. The Berlin project emphasises the educational value of artistic endeavour, a point largely overlooked in the transition literature, and confirms the crucial place which such activity should occupy in a balanced curriculum. The projects collectively illustrate how the broad and intangible goals of socialisation and personal development can be achieved in imaginative and worthwhile ways, by tapping the special skills or interests which a particular staff member may possess.

The specific question of educational disadvantage, school failure and drop out was tackled by a small number of projects. Among these was the Dublin 'Inner City Education' project, which developed a comprehensive set of criteria through which potential early school-leavers could be identified and remedial action instigated. The remedial action consisted in various levels of 'intervention' into the curriculum being pursued by the pupil, depending on the needs of each individual. Curricula were developed for programmes entirely outside of the public

examination system, for programmes part-public examination and part special course and for programmes entirely within the public examination system, but with substantially altered teaching methodology. A significant aspect of the Dublin and indeed other alternative curricula for the potential early school leaver was the extensive use of 'third place' learning involving elements of the programme taking place in centres other than the school.

In fact, the importance accorded to a change of physical context in the provision of alternative curricula for the educationally disadvantaged is representative of the way in which many of the key themes of general transition theory and practice emerged as particularly vital in improving the position of high risk groups of students. Programmes for the disadvantaged invariably proved successful only when developed in the context of experience-based learning, alternative physical context, improved social context involving more open and relaxed teacher - pupil relationships, active parent and community involvement, more flexible modes of assessment, and improved guidance, counselling and information. Indeed, it is fair to say that the theory and practice of transition education, as it emerges from the two transition programmes, provides a comprehensive and coherent model or blueprint around which appropriate 'intervention' courses to aid the disadvantaged potential early school-leaver in the broader education system could well be fashioned. This represents one of the most significant achievements of the entire EC transition experimentation.

CHAPTER SIX NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For example, the six areas in which progress described as being 'of wider interest in the Community' was made in the First Transition Programme were: (i) Transition Education - context, content and method, (ii) Guidance and Counselling, (iii) Assessment and Certification, (iv) Staff Development, (v) Involvement with the Local Community and (vi) a Coordinated Agency Approach to Transition. Policies for Transition. (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1984), p. 7.
2. The emergence of this fundamental reappraisal in one project is well documented in the final external evaluation Report of the Clydebank Project in Scotland. Ian Stronach and A.D. Weir, Once Upon a Timetable, (Glasgow: Strathclyde Education Authority, 1983).
3. *ibid.*, p. 12.
4. Included among the ten thematic or policy areas for consideration by projects in the Second Transition Programme was 'Schools and Social Action' and, less specific but providing an opportunity for work in the social education field, 'Curriculum Development'. Second Transition Programme, Interim Report, p. 4.
5. Second Transition Programme, Final Programme Report, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1987); Second Transition Programme, Innovations, (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1987), Nos 1-39 inclusive.
6. Second Transition Programme, Project No. 28.
7. Innovations, no. 21, p. 1.
8. *ibid.*, p. 1.
9. *ibid.*, p. 2.
10. *ibid.*, pp 2-3.
11. *ibid.*, pp 2-3.
12. *ibid.*, pp 3-4.
13. *ibid.*, p. 4.
14. First Transition Programme, Project No. 17.
15. Second Transition Programme, Project No. 6.
16. "Report on the North Mayo/Sligo Pilot Project - Education for Development" in Preparation of Young People for Work and Facilitation of their Transition from Education to Working Life. National Dossier on European Community Pilot Projects, Ireland, 1979-80, (Dublin: Government Publications, 1984), pp 389-390.

17. *ibid.*, p. 401.
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CHAPTER SEVEN

Modes of Assessment and Certification for Transition Programmes

SECTION A. ASSESSMENT

NEW APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT IN TRANSITION EDUCATION PROGRAMMES:

In the course of the First Transition Programme, the question of how to provide appropriate methods of assessment to suit new curriculum developments emerged as an important issue¹. The Ministers' Resolution of 13 December 1976 which set up the programme did not include assessment as a priority theme². However during the development of the three year programme its central importance gradually became clear in a large number of the pilot projects. Researchers and teachers found that 'they needed new kinds of assessment to fit the wider curriculum they were developing to suit their students'³. Existing forms of testing, particularly formal, traditional examinations, began to be perceived as 'just not suitable' to the new approach inherent in transition education theory⁴.

By the end of the First Transition Programme, assessment was considered to be one of the six 'action areas' in which significant developments of wider interest in the Community had been achieved⁵. However, it was accepted that considerable further research was required in order to produce forms of assessment which would be useful to the broader educational system in terms of both credibility and reliability. Therefore, in the planning of the Second Transition Programme, further

work in the area of assessment was designated a 'priority theme' and projects in Ireland, Great Britain, France and Belgium have undertaken experimentation in this area⁶.

I propose to examine the three most significant approaches to the development of new types of assessment to emerge in the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes - profiling, personal records of achievement and the use of 'credit units' based on separate learning modules. However, before moving on to this task I think it appropriate to mention briefly the arguments on which the case for new forms of assessment is based, namely that more traditional approaches, i.e. terminal examinations, are inadequate and inappropriate in the context of transition education.

Traditional Examination Systems and Transition Theory:

A study of the traditional, formal, externally-based examination system in Great Britain, funded by the First Transition Programme, and entitled Helpful Servants or Demanding Master?⁷, has been influential in formulating an anti-examination ethos in European transition thinking. The criticisms of terminal examinations offered in this report bring together curricular, sociological, psychological and philosophical objections to the traditional public examinations which have been gathering momentum for several decades. These criticisms include problems of comparability and reliability, the fact that such systems are usually norm-based with consequent 'artificial' failure rates built

in, the costs involved and the tendency of such examinations to dominate the school curriculum and ethos. Also mentioned in the report is the issue of using once-off examinations as a selection mechanism for important prizes in life, and finally the competitive instinct encouraged by such vital examinations.

For these reasons, the First Action Programme Final Programme Report makes clear that formal academic examinations and particularly systems of norm-referenced assessment cannot be regarded as compatible with many of the central aims of transition education. In the first place such systems are alleged to be 'accepted as one of the main factors in causing demotivation, under-achievement and rejection of school'²⁹ and one of the purposes of developing transition education is the elimination or at least reduction of the causes of such alienation. Other areas of incompatibility between transition theory and the use of formal terminal examinations are identified as follows.

1. Examinations only assess a small part of learning achievement, a limited range of academic skills and knowledge. They are therefore an unsuitable tool for the assessment of programmes which wish to place emphasis not merely on academic learning but on the acquisition of desirable personal and interpersonal skills and qualities.
2. Examinations have come to exert control over the organisation and content of school curricula and in consequence the curriculum has come to be dominated by academic learning. Therefore the stranglehold of examinations must be broken if new curricula designed to broaden the educational experiences provided for the learner are to be introduced.
3. Failure in school/state examinations limits access to both employment and continuing educational opportunities, while it is the aim of transition education to increase access to these benefits

particularly for the non-academic pupil. Moreover since school leaving certificates are often 'poor predictors of success for future employment training or even success in further academic education', such a limited form of assessment as examinations is an unfair way of selecting those who should be granted access to these opportunities².

A major theme emerging from the First Transition Programme was therefore the development of more adequate assessment models, in harmony with the principles of transition education, and designed to

provide a more rounded picture of a particular student based on observation over a period of time and referring to a wide range of basic personal and practical skills as well as recording student achievements¹⁰.

New Approaches to Assessment in Transition Education:

In developing such new approaches, pilot projects were encouraged to base their work on the principle of assessment as a formative educational tool, rather than a summative process - 'an aid to the learning process and not a constraint'¹¹. The specific objectives to be achieved by individual projects working on new modes of assessment emerged gradually and were defined in terms of the overall aims of transition education -

- (i) to assess learning achievement across the whole range of competencies;

- (ii) to identify a young person's strengths and individual problems and weaknesses;
- (iii) to motivate young people to improve their own performance;
- (iv) to supply data for records to inform parents of a young person's progress;
- (v) to organise young people into learning groups;
- (vi) to provide information for educational and employment decisions;
- (vii) to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods/materials and the effectiveness of the school/college and the quality of the service it provides¹².

A number of pilot projects undertook considerable experimentation in the area of assessment, and the outcome in terms of new approaches to the problem can, as I have previously mentioned, be categorised into three closely connected types: profiling, personal records of achievement and the use of modular assessment based on credit units of work.

Profiling:

A student profile is defined as a 'systematic document which gives the reader an accurate and rounded picture of a student based on observations over a period of time and referring to a wide range of qualities not purely academic'¹³. The profile approach can be used to bring together many areas of pupil attainment including 'achievement in school subjects, examination results, cognitive skills, practical

skills, personal qualities, social skills and interests, and leisure activity'¹⁴.

For example, in the Dublin 'Early School Leavers' project'¹⁵, the teacher maintained an ongoing profile of each student's progress under two main headings, Basic Skills and Personal Skills. Students were rated on a scale of 1 to 10 according to criteria agreed upon and circulated to each teacher. The system was designed to be an integral part of the entire project programme and in particular to emphasise the development of personal and social skills. The assessment of a student in the area of personal qualities such as reliability and perseverance was carried out on a criteria rather than a norm referenced basis. That is to say, different levels of achievement in the various qualities desired were described by a series of criteria and the student assessed according to how well he or she performed according to the criteria. For example, a score 'of 4, 5 or 6 indicates that the student is sometimes but not regularly good at using the skill'¹⁶. In addition, the teacher could add a comment on the pupil's level of attainment of the particular quality or skill in question.

This method of assessment is designed for use in measuring the widest possible range of skills from the practical/cognitive to the personal and social. However it is important to note, both in view of criticisms of the subjective or arbitrary nature of teacher judgements on certain of these skills and the lack of specific information provided regarding the degree of skill mastery, that it is suggested in the transition literature that a wide range of techniques should be used to arrive at

the assessment given. In other words, while judgements on such personal qualities as initiative may be of doubtful validity given the difficulty of measuring such concepts, areas of the curriculum which lend themselves to objective testing ought to be 'examined' in more precise ways. For example, cognitive skills such as numeracy or competencies, and practical skills such as the ability to use a certain tool ought to be subject to ongoing, continuous assessment. This assessment, it is suggested, can be carried out by a variety of methods including oral, practical and written tests, graded objective tests, standardised tests, traditional end-of-term examinations, and so on.

This type of specific and detailed assessment of practical/cognitive skills is, it is argued, not in conflict with the 'transition ethics' as long as

- (i) it forms only part of the overall assessment, and other skills both personal and social are also assessed, and
- (ii) the type of assessment used to examine progress in the cognitive/practical skills area is criteria-referenced or ipsative (where the yardstick or standard against which students are measured is their own previous performance) and thus does not involve ranking students in order of merit or failing large numbers of them¹⁷.

Detailed and reliable assessment is required, it is suggested, if the final student profile is to be of use in the broader community and particularly to employers. The latter tend to be critical of the profiling system on two grounds. Firstly, that it tends to provide too much information to be easily assimilated and secondly, that it is not

specific enough with regard to 'the degree to which the person is capable of performing these functions...and where the weaknesses are'¹⁸. The first of these problems is difficult to eliminate without destroying the value of profiling. The second can only be resolved by the use of a range of ongoing assessment techniques, including examinations, in order to reach a clear judgement in relation to the level of mastery achieved by the student of specific practical/cognitive skills.

The Evaluation of Profiling:

The two most extensive evaluations of profile systems of assessment developed by pilot projects are those of the Dublin 'Early School Leavers' project in Ireland¹⁹ and the Clydebank Project in Scotland²⁰. Both reports contain largely positive findings. The positive findings noted can be summarised as follows:

- (i) a profile system is preferable to the traditional normative assessment method in that it is more 'personal, discriminating, informative and motivating', and is perceived to be so by both teachers and pupils²¹;
- (ii) such a system encourages a broader appraisal of pupils;
- (iii) it ensures that each pupil leaves the school with a positive record of his/her educational experience;
- (iv) a student profile provides useful information for employers, whose reaction to the system (when used in addition to examination results) was generally favourable²²; for example, a study carried out by the Inner London Education

Authority, 'Bridging Course' project²³, into employer attitudes to profiles, found that 'employers will continue to use the established certificates and qualifications...but also want more information on the courses students have taken, their personal qualities, their attitude to work, timekeeping and attendance records and their involvement in out-of-school activities'²⁴.

Personal Records of Achievement:

The personal record of achievement is quite similar in format to the profile system, except that the final assessment of educational attainment is based on a wider input. Specifically, not only the teacher but also perhaps the pupil, the work experience employer and even the parents can be given the opportunity to contribute to the final profile.

The most interesting aspect of this method of assessment is the role allotted to the individual pupil in judging his/her own performance. A number of advantages to giving the pupil a say in the assessment process are suggested in the literature. For example, such active participation in the process and product of her own education must, it is argued, have positive effects on motivation and interest, and on developing in the pupil a greater sense of involvement in her own learning. By forcing young people to reflect in a more structured way on their

learning experiences, the process of identifying strengths and weaknesses, skills and attitudes, progress and future needs will be enhanced. In short, the undertaking of such self-assessment should require the pupil to take more responsibility for her own learning:

self assessment is a learning process in itself. It is a good way to help young people develop the confidence to talk about themselves and their experience in a mature and thoughtful way...and to discuss their progress, weaknesses, strengths and expectations²⁵.

Most pilot projects which involved work experience included a form of self assessment in that pupils were required to keep records - log books, progress sheets, diaries etc. - of their experience, to be used in follow-up analysis and discussion.

These same pilot projects also involved employers in the assessment process, and found such involvement provided an immense contribution to pupil motivation: 'pupils usually take employer assessments very seriously'²⁶. Thus work experience provides an ideal opportunity for self assessment by the pupils and also for involving an outside agency - the employer - whose views are of particular interest to young people.

A number of projects went a little further with the notion of personal assessment by dividing the entire programme into units subject to pupil self analysis. The Sheffield Project in the UK²⁷, for example, developed the 'record of personal experience'.

The Record of Personal Experience is a cumulative record scheme designed for 14-16 year old pupils, particularly the

less able. Pupils are provided with a loose leaf file in which a personal record can be completed during the last two years in school. On leaving school the file becomes the pupil's own property and can be presented to prospective employers at job interviews²⁸.

The record includes all the different types of activity undertaken and each has a space in which adults (teacher, employer, parents, etc.) can insert signature/comments. The record itself is a three stage document, requiring entries under the headings of interest in the work, the type of work done and a self-chosen task connected with the work. Performance on each part of the course - attendance, craftsmanship, creative work, physical skills, service to others, level of interest, etc. - must be assessed by the pupil. The rationale of the system is defined by its inventors as requiring 'that every item is freely chosen by the pupils and the resulting records expressed in their own words'²⁹.

The Advantages of Personal Records of Achievement:

The positive aspects of this approach to assessment, described in the final evaluation reports of such projects as Sheffield³⁰ and Clydebank³¹, are similar to those referred to previously in the case of profiling. However a number of additional items are mentioned.

1. 'Multi verdict systems allow a kind of jury system validation, across evaluers and situations' and this allows a broader 'general picture' of the individual pupil to emerge³².
2. Both teachers and pupils appear to feel that pupil involvement in assessment is of motivational value³³.

3. The involvement of outside agencies and particularly employers invests the whole procedure with greater seriousness and importance in the eyes of pupils. It is also interesting to note that the picture of the student emerging from employer assessment can be very different and often more positive than that of his teachers, and thus a more complete view of each individual may well be possible³⁴.
4. Assessment carried out by pupils of their own learning experiences invariably throws a good deal of light on their view of the programme being presented to them and the extent to which it is meeting their needs. Thus self-assessment can offer 'validation of the course and can be used to modify and improve as required'³⁵.

Credit Units and Learning Modules:

To an extent it is incorrect to describe credit units and modular courses as a type of assessment at all. They more accurately represent the form of course organisation which must be adopted if other new assessment methodologies such as those already described are to function effectively. Ongoing assessment, student profiling and personal records of achievement can only be carried out effectively if the entire course content is structured in modular units, each containing specific aims and objectives, tasks to be undertaken, and testing and evaluation of outcomes. In the process of developing new approaches to assessment, many projects found that the development of self-contained, flexible units which could be individually assessed was a necessary first step.

Moreover, a modular course structure also meets two other key goals of transition education theory in the area of assessment and accreditation:

- (i) the development of flexible education systems, allowing pupils to progress at different rates according to their abilities, to change their educational and vocational direction more easily and to build up qualifications through obtaining 'credits' for units of work covered²⁵, not only in school, but also in vocational education institutions, further education colleges, etc²⁷;
- (ii) the facilitation of European integration through the development of modular structures which, in terms of achievement and of knowledge and skills acquired, can be considered equivalent throughout the member States.

The best example of this approach to assessment is provided by the 'Utilities Capitalisables' (Certification by Credit Units) First Transition Programme project in Belgium²⁸. The aim was the development and definition of a series of key qualifications in terms of cognitive, practical and personal skills that could then be used to build credit unit systems of a flexible type. These might then be acquired in a piecemeal fashion as the learner required, whether in school, vocational institutes, part-time education or industry²⁹. The knowledge and skills required by the learner were divided into modules and if necessary into submodules. Each module or submodule was composed of a number of units and, after the completion of each unit, a certificate of assessment was issued. Progress to further units depended on adequate achievement in those already taken and the completion of a given set of units

represented a module of the course, for which a certificate of qualification was issued⁴⁰.

The Advantages Claimed for Credit Unit/Modular Assessment Procedures:

1. Such a system is very flexible and provides for student mobility and varying degrees of ability and speed of progress. It also moves away from the 'traditional conception of successive education cycles' and allows for 'variation and mobility between full and part-time education and education and training'⁴¹.
2. Such an approach takes into account formerly acquired skills and knowledge and seeks to build on these in a logical sequence. Because of the flexibility of the system and the regular testing and assessment at the end of units, reinforcement of knowledge and skill improvement can be applied as required.
3. The system allows those of low ability to acquire 'some key qualifications' and ensures that they complete the course having mastered at least some basic units⁴².
4. Because the units and modules are clearly defined and assessed individually, employers can be given an accurate idea of exactly what a person can do in terms of practical and cognitive skills. Such clarity is often absent from the Profile system and has resulted in some criticism from employers and other end users.

The Achievement of the First and Second Transition Programmes in the Area of Assessment:

In the summary of the main results of the First Transition Programme published as Policies for Transition, assessment is, as I have pointed out, presented as one of the six 'action areas' in which 'significant developments of wider interest in the EC had been observed in the Programme'⁴³. Specifically, it is suggested that a consensus has emerged on four basic principles which should underpin assessment practices in transition courses. These are described in detail in the Final Programme Report as follows⁴⁴.

1. 'Assessment should be an integral part of the learning process'⁴⁵; once learning goals have been established, assessment should be used to provide the necessary feedback to students and teachers to 'identify strengths and weaknesses' and to 'adjust learning strategies'⁴⁵
2. 'Assessment methods should be in harmony with the ethos of the programme'⁴⁶. It is not appropriate that programmes which aim 'to develop independence, initiative and motivation be assessed on norm referenced tests of attainment which rank young people as pass or fail'⁴⁷.
3. 'The goals of assessment should be the same as the goal of vocational preparation and transition education'⁴⁸. Vocational preparation and transition education aim to develop 'a balanced range of social and vocational skills and competencies'. Therefore, assessment within these programmes should similarly assess 'a balanced range of social and vocational skills and competencies'⁴⁹.

4. 'Assessment should involve young people as well as staff in planning and evaluating course activities'. If young people are to be involved in 'active learning', and if 'negotiation' is to be a basic principle of transition education, it follows that they should be able to play a major role in making decisions about the goals of learning and in carrying out the agreed assessment procedures⁴³.

In terms of defining an appropriate theory of assessment, the achievement of both Transition Programmes is considerable. The theory elaborated is closely in accord with the overall principles and objectives of transition education. With regard to the assessment procedures through which these concepts might be realised, valuable work has been done, but problems remain. The three methodologies which have emerged present many advantages but also a number of difficulties. This is recognised to some extent in the Final Programme Report of the First Transition Programme which highlights 'two significant areas for further development of assessment practice - (i) the development of new strategies for organising assessment and (ii) the development of techniques to assess and certify a much wider range of experiences and competencies'⁵⁰. Some of the specific problems which give rise to the necessity for such 'further development' are briefly mentioned - 'assessment of social and personal competencies extremely subjective and haphazard', the problem of how such information, even if it could be objectively assessed, 'should be used and by whom', and the difficulty of recording information and assessments in ways that are any less judgemental than traditional examination results⁵¹.

To attempt to resolve these issues, assessment was designated one of the ten thematic or policy areas to be pursued by the Second Transition Programme, but the Interim Report and Final Reports on this programme define the area as being among those 'still needing further work and experiment'⁵².

SECTION B. CERTIFICATION

A Note on Certification:

It is argued in the transition literature that the development of new courses and modes of assessment will quickly founder if forms of certification acceptable to higher educational institutions, training agencies, employers and the community at large are not provided for the pupils involved. In the majority of the pilot projects of the First and Second Transition Programmes, curriculum development was the central theme and the problem of certification was not considered critical.

Most projects produced school/institution-based certificates for their students, the value of which was largely local and depended on factors such as relationships built up with employers, training agencies and so on. The Second Transition Programme, however, tended to concentrate more on the development of new programmes designed to be introduced eventually to the broader school community, for example, the alternative

Senior Cycle Certificate piloted at the 'SPIRAL II' project in Shannon, Ireland⁵³. Such projects were, therefore, usually organised on a regional or national basis rather than in single institutions and thus the problem of adequate certification became acute in the course of the Second Programme⁷³.

It is obviously essential that the certification from such widely available courses should be recognised by employers and attract credit from training bodies and institutions of further education. Since accreditation produced by a school or group of schools and not validated by a reputable outside agency is unlikely to meet these criteria, a new approach was required. The solution which has emerged is the provision of certificates validated by an independent or group of independent examining bodies which will then be recognised by training agencies and, hopefully, by employers.

In two of the Irish projects of the Second Programme, the Department of Education acted as the validation and certifying body. In the case of the City of Dublin 'Early School Leavers' project⁵⁵, the Department has accepted satisfactory completion of elements of the programme, assessed according to agreed criteria, as the equivalent of public examination results at Intermediate or Group Certificate level⁵⁶. At the 'SPIRAL II' Project in Shannon, an alternative Senior Cycle Certificate, of equal value to the Leaving Certificate, validated and recognised by the Department of Education, was available to pupils on completion of the programme⁵⁷.

A more complex approach has been adopted by a number of the projects throughout Europe. For example, the 'ACS' project in Manchester⁵² has developed a 'letter of credit' system for unit accreditation, validated by the Northern Examining Association. Over 300 units in the different institutions taking part in the project have been validated and it is proposed that, eventually, rather than the traditional two year examination courses, pupils will be able to accumulate credits for each unit successfully completed and be certified accordingly. They can then move on to units of greater difficulty in the same field or compile credits for units in other disciplines. Their final certification will describe the units successfully completed at different 'levels of achievement' and it is hoped indicate the extent of ability and experience in that particular subject or area. By this means, it will be possible to organise courses on a modular basis and provide pupils with evidence of success in shorter units than those of two year subject-based courses. Moreover, it is claimed that the certification provided will 'offer accreditation to all pupils in a form that does not label their level of ability as in the present grading system but which gives credit for what they can actually achieve'⁵³. This approach has the added advantage that the number and level of units certified as completed satisfactorily, and even the range of units undertaken, will give employers a precise idea of exactly what the pupil is capable of doing in a particular discipline and also where the aptitude and interest of the individual is strongest.

Other examples of the development of certification procedures along these lines include the Northamptonshire Project in the United

Kingdom⁶⁰, where the certificates are validated by the City and Guilds of London Institute, the Castlemilk Project in Scotland⁶⁰, validated by the Strathclyde Education Authority and recognised as acceptable within the Scottish Standard Grade Examinations, and the Saint Ghislain Project in Belgium⁶², where the assessment and certification of modular learning units is carried out in conjunction with various Higher Institutes of Technical Education and is recognised as meeting entry requirements to certain courses in those institutions⁶³.

Despite these experiments, adequate certification of new programmes remains a significant problem. The Second Transition Programme report on assessment remarks that fear of declining standards seems to be 'working at the expense of active support for the development and widening of courses and certificates to suit the full range of pupil ability'⁶⁴. This can be seen in the way that, in most countries, special measures introduced to provide new types of vocational preparation for early school leavers have suffered from exclusion from the existing systems of certification. This, as we shall see in chapter eleven, applies very much in Ireland and there must be considerable doubt as to whether new programmes, no matter how excellent the content and methodology may be, are of any significant value to young people without nationally validated and widely accepted certification.

terminal examinations are required. These alternatives must meet certain conditions in order to be consistent with the principles of transition education. These conditions are defined as follows:

- (i) assessment must be an integral part of the learning process;
- (ii) assessment should be in harmony with the ethos of the course;
- (iii) assessment should consider a balanced range of social and practical skills;
- (iv) assessment should involve the young people being assessed.

Three alternative approaches to meeting these criteria have emerged:

(i) profiling, (ii) personal records of achievement and (iii) a system of credits based on modular course units. The first and second of these options are somewhat similar in that both consist in ongoing methods of assessment designed to produce a 'systematic document' giving a rounded picture of the individual's achievement in a wide range of practical and social skills. The personal record of achievement differs from the profile only in that the input is more widely based. That is to say, not only teachers but also pupils, employers and in some cases parents make a contribution to the assessment. It is important to note that no objection is raised to the use of examinations to measure the level of acquisition of knowledge and practical skills as long as the final assessment includes credit for personal attributes and qualities and personal and interpersonal skills. The third method of assessment developed - modular courses with credits for units completed - is largely an organisational framework within which profiling, personal records of achievement and other school-based ongoing assessment methods

can be introduced. This approach also has the important advantage of allowing some flexibility in rates of student progress and in mobility from course to course and between education and training.

Formal evaluation reports from the projects involved conclude that these methodologies possess considerable advantages. They are described as being 'more personal, discriminating and informative', allowing for a broadly-based appraisal of each student, providing each pupil with a positive record of achievement at the end of his or her schooling and finally helping employers to get a clearer picture of the full range of skills and qualities possessed by job applicants.

In the area of certification, the direction of the Second Programme was very much towards the development of new courses and curricula to be utilised eventually by the broader school community. Therefore, the issues of certification and accreditation emerged as significant. The solution adopted involves the validation of courses and programmes (according to agreed criteria) by external agencies at national or regional level. Certificates therefore acquire a national or regional currency, recognised by employers/education/training organisations, and the problems associated with school-based or local certification are removed. Such a development is urgently necessary in the case of pre-vocational courses in Ireland such as the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY AS A LEARNING RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION:

In the search for the suitable experiential learning opportunities central to the curriculum theory of transition education, the potential of the world outside of school as an educational resource has emerged as a central theme of both transition programmes. Much of the irrelevance to certain young people of the traditional school curriculum is alleged in the transition literature to arise from the unnatural isolation of school subjects and activities from their context in the outside world. The development of practical and relevant courses for such young people must therefore, it is argued, focus on activities involving community-based learning - examples include work experience, 'shadowing' adults in their daily work, voluntary work with young or old, carrying out surveys, interviews, making radio or video programmes, joint courses with training or other agencies, utilising community facilities for elements of the programme, and so on.

However it gradually emerged that such a radical departure from traditional practice required not only a change of attitudes within schools but also specially created liaison structures to facilitate cooperation. This chapter will examine the structures that have emerged from the work of the pilot projects and indicate at least some of the significant areas of school - community cooperation which have been pioneered.

1. SCHOOL - COMMUNITY LIAISON:

Many of the First Transition Programme projects included among their objectives the task of improving the relationships between school and the wider community'. The approach adopted was to create structures which could act as a bridge between the schools and their local communities. As the First Transition Programme Final Programme Report puts it -

for many young people the local community forms the framework of their daily lives, and so schools need to bring the community into the school in the same way they have tried to bring industry and commerce into the classroom. It is equally important that teachers and pupils go out into the community and make use of the informal learning which can occur away from the classroom².

Involvement with the local community is, it is argued, a two way process, including on the one hand young people and their teachers in the life of the community - using the opportunities and situations that exist as a resource for learning - and on the other hand involving people from the local community as a resource for activities based in school.

Liaison Networks:

Pilot projects which have made effective use of the educational opportunities offered by the local community either through work experience, community-based projects or other school/community link schemes appear to owe their success to the creation of effective liaison

between the institution concerned and the community in which it is situated³. Local school - community liaison has been shown by project outcomes to depend on the systematic development of a 'network' of links between all the sectors represented in a particular community. Without such networks full cooperation with the local community is difficult to achieve and the potential of the community as an educational resource cannot be exploited.

The first step towards beneficial cooperation seems it is argued to lie in developing mutual awareness. Most schools do not appear to perceive the value of their community as a potentially rich resource for learning; equally, the values of the local community are often very different to those of the school. Communities, it is suggested, often find it difficult to see the relevance of school, and therefore are reluctant to be involved in its activities even where such opportunity is offered to the school. Yet it is in these areas, where high dropout rates and high levels of unemployment necessitate the early development of survival skills, that most effort is needed to bridge the gap between schools and the local community. Developing liaison networks between the school and the community where the values of one are alien to those of the other is clearly more difficult than in areas where the values of the community coincide with the values of the school. However, several pilot projects have shown that results can be achieved in the most unpromising of circumstances, given commitment and resources⁴.

Among the pilot projects which undertook the task of developing a local liaison group, perhaps the most successful was the Shannon Project in

Ireland⁶. The results of this initiative offer a great deal of experience on the establishment, support and maintenance of local liaison groups, and a closer look at the outcomes of this experiment might provide a useful illustration of the problems - and some solutions to them - to be encountered in extending the notion of school - community liaison to the wider school community.

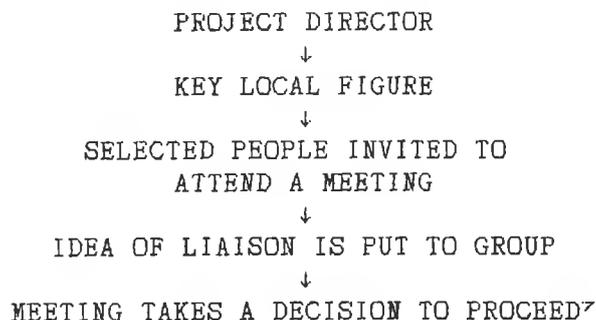
The Shannon Project and Local Liaison Groups:

From the outset, the Shannon Project ('SPIRAL') saw closer cooperation between the school and the community as one of its major aims.

The project aimed ... to devise procedures that would enable parents to make a more positive contribution to the adolescents' transition from the juvenile dependence of school to adult responsibility; to actively involve employers, trade unions and community agencies in assisting this transition⁶.

The strategy employed in establishing a local liaison group was as follows. The Project Director consulted with one key individual in the local community - in this case, the Chief Executive of the Co. Clare Vocational Education Committee. As a result of these meetings, a list of likely key members was drawn up. These would include representatives of business, the local industrial development company, trade unions, Chamber of Commerce, and so on. These individuals were invited to a meeting and the Director explained the work of the projects and the role envisaged for local liaison groups. They were then invited to form a

local liaison group and to call a public meeting so that parents and other interested members of the community could take part. The strategy of the project in the establishment of local liaison groups can be summarised as follows.



In all, four liaison groups were established by the above process in the first instance. The final External Evaluation Report indicates that there were major difficulties in the early development of the groups. This, it is suggested, was because the objectives of the local liaison scheme were presented to the early members 'in rather general terms'⁸. Since most of the members were new to this type of involvement, a lack of clarity about the aims and objectives of the work to be undertaken meant an over-reliance on the Project Director for guidance and a lack of initiative on the part of the groups. Even after two years of operation, less than fifty percent of the members of one local liaison group felt that their group was clear about its objectives⁹. A similar pattern is reported from other pilot projects which established such networks.

The First Transition Programme Final Programme Report suggests that however desirable the goal of community involvement in schools, evidence

from the pilot projects shows that outsiders are only prepared to devote time and energy to the groups if they have:

1. a clear understanding of the purpose of their involvement;
2. target goals and tasks that are achievable;
3. a continuous planning/action review takes place¹⁰.

Another aspect of the Shannon Project approach to the establishment of local liaison groups which the final External Evaluation Report felt could be improved upon was the 'top down' model employed by 'SPIRAL I' in the initial stages'. This seems to have been a significant factor in the vagueness felt by many participants concerning the purpose of the groups and also contributed to the degree of over-dependence on 'SPIRAL' for guidance and leadership. Subsequent evidence suggests that a more 'painstakingly democratic' approach should have been adopted in order to produce more self-reliant and self-directed groups.

Liaison Groups - Two Models:

In the course of the 'SPIRAL I' project two different models of local liaison networks emerged.

1. The *school oriented* model where the network is centered on a specific school and geared to meet the particular needs of its students as perceived by the school authorities.
2. The *community oriented* or *District Approach* model where the network is centered on an area encompassing a number of schools

and geared to meet the needs of all the young people in the area¹².

Both of these models have advantages and disadvantages which the Shannon experience illustrates. It appears to be easier to establish and maintain a school-oriented liaison network, since specific sectors which must be represented on a local liaison group if it is to be effective - parents and teachers, for example - tend to be interested only in working for the school with which they are personally involved. However, there is a danger that such a network may over-concentrate on the young people in the school who are least in need of support, the most able, for example, and not give enough time to early school-leavers and dropouts. This is because it tends to be the parents of the better motivated pupils who involve themselves in this type of activity. Another problem with the single school approach is the potential lack of experienced professionals in the education or labour areas to act as a 'core group' which can animate and maintain the liaison group, and also that the group will not be large enough to absorb inevitable changes in personnel while at the same time achieving and maintaining group cohesion.

The community-oriented network, i.e. dealing with a specific area rather than one institution, appears from the Shannon Project evidence to be the more effective in a number of ways. It can call on a greater scope of expertise. For example, the school contact committee established by the Second Programme project at Aalborg in Denmark included representation of the following: employers' organisations and trade unions, the state, county and city public services, post compulsory

education institutions, the employment service, the Health and Welfare Department, pupils, teachers, the local education authority, head teachers and school counsellors and psychologists. It was therefore more effective in supporting young people who had left school but who had not established themselves as working adults in employment; most importantly, because of its broader base it was more likely to receive the funding and support from a statutory body that would allow long term stability and devel¹³. For. For example, the Co. Clare Vocational Education Committee established a statutory subcommittee to maintain the local liaison groups in existence after the conclusion of the 'SPIRAL' project¹⁴. Finally, an area-oriented model is better placed to provide a certain amount of training for members of core groups in facilitation and interpersonal skills and to provide an administrative structure without which the maintenance of momentum is problematic.

The Development of School - Community Liaison:

The final External Evaluation Report on 'SPIRAL I' remarks that 'the establishment of a human network is complex and situational; it takes time'¹⁴. Part of the early difficulty lay, it is reported, in the slowness of the project team to appreciate the potential of the structures they were creating. 'At this time [after one year] the project team's perception of local liaison as a simple bridging group gradually changed to that of a very complicated network activated by a core group'¹⁵. Another difficulty lay in the expectations and perceptions of each other which handicapped the different sectors

involved. Parents, employers, teachers and trade unionists often have such mutual distrust and such rigid expectations of the school as playing the pre-eminent role in education that they may form a barrier to change rather than encouraging innovation. Despite these problems, the evaluation reports of the Shannon Project make it clear that the benefits of community involvement, both in terms of broadening the range of the curriculum and indeed in giving the community some meaningful input into school activities, make the further development of school - community liaison desirable¹⁷. The report concludes by recommending:

1. that local liaison networks be established as an essential support for schools so that they may use the wider community effectively as part of the educational process;
2. that, depending on particular circumstances, either a local or a regional facilitator be appointed for the animation and maintenance of local liaison networks;
3. that local liaison networks be established in a number of selected areas throughout the country¹⁸.

The Second Transition Programme set out to build on the most fruitful areas of progress identified by the first series of projects. High on the priority list was further research on

- the use of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource for young people and their teachers;
- the involvement of adults, including parents, employers and trade unionists, in activities taking place within the school and the continuation, with a range of social groups, of a dialogue concerning the role of schools in enabling young people to gain the basic understanding and skills needed for adult life¹⁹.

Many of the pilot projects in the Second Transition Programme have taken up these challenges, and new roles and functions for school - community liaison groups have been researched and developed²⁰. However, the basic structures developed by the 'SPIRAL I' Shannon Project have been employed widely and as yet do not appear to have been bettered.

The benefits of systematic liaison between school and community have become more widely recognised and the extension of the process to the wider school community has been taken much further in several European countries than in Ireland²¹. For example, the Evaluation Report on one project in France comments as follows on situations where structured liaison has been developed.

Already school - community liaison has allowed three sections of the community, parents, teachers and pupils, to get to know each other all over again and their institutions, school and business, to stop staring at each other in a hostile manner [en chien de faience] and to try and work together on the same task; it is not a bad start²².

The Role and Functions of Local Liaison Groups:

School - community interaction and local liaison groups are not an end in themselves. Their function, as developed in the pilot projects, is to extend the curriculum by offering students real settings in which to learn and develop skills and to extend the range and types of contacts between young people and adults. Their success must be measured by the

extra dimensions which their activities can add to the range of educational experiences provided for young people making the transition from school to adult and working life.

Activities which projects developed entirely or partly through systematic cooperation with other sectors in the community can be considered under the following broad headings:

1. utilising the local community directly as an educational resource;
2. providing work experience, work exploration, work simulation, and 'tasters' of different types of employment outside and inside the school;
3. using the expertise of members of the local community to broaden the range of courses and experiences available within school;
4. involving parents through outreach activities;
5. cooperating with other educational, training and community agencies to provide joint courses or other forms of activities for pupils²³.

In the next section, some of these initiatives are considered in more detail.

2. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AS AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE:

Community-Based Learning:

An interesting example of the use of the community as an additional learning environment is provided by the 'community based learning' (CBL) element of the 'SPIRAL I' First Programme project based at Shannon, Ireland. CBL was one of the main 'interventions' developed by the

project team in fulfilment of the primary objective of the entire project, namely 'to enable the school, the home and the community in general to cooperate in the creation of an expanded learning environment that would be more conducive to the growth of adolescents from the dependence of childhood to adolescent responsibility'²⁴.

The two distinctive characteristics of the 'community based learning' programme were that (i) CBL students spent 15-20 hours each week out in their local community using the resources of that community to acquire the skills necessary for 'a happy, creative and productive life', and (ii) each student followed an individualised learning programme tailored to meet his or her needs, goals, learning skills and abilities²⁵. What was innovative about this approach was the use of members of the community to teach skills which pupils wished to acquire but which were not available in the school system. This was achieved by the use of three learning/teaching strategies.

(a) Career Explorations - These were three to five day student work encounters with people in the community undertaking tasks designed by a skilled person to give a realistic notion of the type of work which his or her particular trade or skill involved. The purpose was to enable students to learn realistically under the guidance of a trained person about a specific job and to relate that learning to their interests and abilities.

(b) Learning Ventures - A learning venture consisted of a number of activities built around the work of an adult in the community - the student visited this adult for three hours each day over an extended

period of time. This enabled the student, having decided through career explorations where his or her aptitudes and interests lay, to obtain a more prolonged exposure to a particular job and to receive the rudiments of elementary training in a specific skill. In both (a) and (b), the member of the community who provided the learning experiences for the students was called a 'tutor'. The tutor made a major input to the work undertaken by the students during their hours in school so that there was the closest possible connection between the practical skills being imparted and the theoretical learning of the students.

- (c) **Competencies** - The third aspect of community-based learning was the acquisition of skills or 'competencies' considered by the local community (represented by the school - community liaison group) to be essential for adults to function effectively in society. These skills, which varied from the interpersonal skills of language and communication to the practical skills of first aid, swimming and D.I.Y., were acquired both within the school and in the broader community as described in (a) and (b) above. The students were required to demonstrate their competency in the various skills to the satisfaction of community members called 'certifiers' with proven expertise in these skills²⁶.

The outside team of final evaluators report a very positive response to community-based learning from the project team, the students and tutors/certifiers drawn from the community. Among the comments of teachers involved in the programme and reported in the Final Evaluation Report were the following:

I am very enthusiastic about CBL ... it makes teaching exciting.

It gives a chance to mature to those who would otherwise leave school²⁷.

More importantly, perhaps, the views of tutors and certifiers were equally enthusiastic, with tutors 'quite frequently lamenting the absence of such a programme in their own school days'²⁸. Parents were also by and large in favour of CBL, and in fact parental and staff pressure forced a number of schools to continue to offer the programme after the financial resources of the project were withdrawn²⁹. In view of the aims of the programme, some of the responses given by parents of CBL students in a questionnaire are interesting. The majority of parents felt that their children had 'thrived on the responsibility and had become easier to deal with'. Most also felt that the students had conquered fear of the phone and of meeting new people and that they had developed a much greater capacity to analyse problems and experiences. On the negative side, some parents felt that CBL gave too much freedom to the individual and had resulted in students becoming overconfident, cheeky and unlikely to be willing to return to the restrictions of courses based entirely in the classroom³⁰.

Work Experience, Work Exploration, Work Simulation and 'Tasters' of Employment:

The use of work experience in transition education has already been considered in detail in chapter four of this work. However with regard to the effective planning and organisation of work experience

placements, a number of brief points need to be made in the context of school community liaison.

The achievement of a coherent approach to work experience in terms of maximum utilisation of learning possibilities through adequate preparation, placement and follow-up proved to be beyond the scope of most institutions acting alone. Among the tasks identified by the First Transition Programme Final Programme Report which require to be carried out in order to make work experience an effective educational instrument, the following have emerged as particularly important.

1. Clear learning goals need to be established.
2. Teachers require in-service training in order (a) to equip them with adequate knowledge of the world of industry and commerce and (b) training in group dynamics for follow-up discussion and group work in order to facilitate reflection by the students on their experience at work.
3. Schools require a range of specialists to prepare pupils to make the most of their work placements.
4. Schools require a wide range of work experience placements if they are to be able to even attempt to match the interests and aspirations of their students with a work experience placement.
5. The production of a range of materials for 'briefing and debriefing', suitable for students of different aptitudes and interests.
6. Final evaluation must be thorough and systematic³¹.

It is clear from the experience of many projects that individual schools do not possess the resources, staff or structural flexibility to undertake these tasks effectively. Where a single institution attempted

to do so, the results were often disappointing. For example, the Final Evaluation Report on the Clydebank Project cites the following shortcomings in schemes run by individual institutions:

1. weak placement choice and control and poor management of experimental learning;
2. severe difficulties in finding suitable placements;
3. curricular integration a major problem³².

To rectify these problems a number of projects experimented with liaison groups operating at district and regional level and containing multi-disciplinary expertise. In the Frascati Project in central Italy the arranging of work experience was preceded by a year's preparatory work undertaken by an inter-disciplinary team drawn from educational institutions, 'caring' agencies, employers, trade unions and community representatives³³. The team included social scientists, educationalists and industrial and training specialists and carried out an investigation of the possibilities of local industry as an educational environment. The team obtained detailed information on the number and type of placements each firm could make available, the hours, training opportunities, pay, promotion prospects to be expected, and even the range of interpersonal relationships, physical and psychological conditions and health hazards pertaining to each firm. Detailed discussions were carried out with management, ~~and~~ the organisation of work placements and the information acquired was circulated to the schools. The team was also responsible for the preparation of a

syllabus and teaching materials to be used with the students before their placements began³⁴.

As a result, each school had the necessary background information to make informed decisions matching pupil interest and aspiration to available work experience openings. The information also provided a basis on which to decide the way visits might best be arranged, the sort of questions the students might set out to answer and what school-based follow-up activities would be most appropriate. The team of experts/advisors also held in-service training courses for the staffs of the schools to help them use the visits fruitfully. In fact, both teacher education and parental involvement were seen as important aspects of the work of the multi-disciplinary team³⁷.

Not surprisingly, other projects which experimented with the creation of a similar system of liaison and organisation found the results more satisfactory than those which attempted to go it alone. For example, in the Netherlands the the result of the project in which an 'interdisciplinary team of consultants planned and developed work experience as an integral part of the curriculum' was

the creation of a firm basis for extending and making the best use of work experience in vocational and related courses. Programmes, procedures and materials have been produced for wide distribution to teachers and students³⁶.

In Italy, at both Frascati and Milan, the results of the pilot projects have led to the extension of school/work liaison groups to the entire province³⁷.

It is interesting that the outcome of these experiments in new liaison structures between the school and the world of work are also making a considerable impact on national and regional policy directions in Community countries. For example, in the Netherlands the Government has established at regional level a system of 'education/business contact centres' (COAS - Contact Centra Onderwijs Arbeid)³⁸. These provide a focus for coordination, consultation and the flow of information between schools, businesses, local authorities and other parties concerned with the education, training and employment of young people. In France, a national task force on 'school/business relations' has been set up to 'broaden the impact of experiments conducted in this field,' and a programme for the provision of liaison between schools and firms was set up in 1985³⁹.

An alternative, more localised approach to school/industry liaison also developed by pilot projects is 'twinning'. 'Twinning' arises from the Sheffield Project in England⁴⁰. The schools involved 'twinned' with local companies; this meant that contacts were made at various levels between personnel in both organisations, and there were staff exchanges with specialists from industry helping to prepare pupils for work experience and teachers having some work experience in the firm. Because of these contacts students on work experience tended to be better prepared and parents saw the process as part of a coherent

career-education course. The close cooperation involved in twinning also allowed better supervision of work experience with more visits by teachers to students on the job, and tended to encourage the firm to take a greater interest in individual students.

Using the Expertise of Members of the Local Community to Broaden the Range of Learning Experiences Available Within Schools:

Earlier in this chapter some of the ways in which pilot projects have experimented with using the community as a learning resource through sending students *out* into the community to develop new skills were discussed (community-based learning). In this section I want to examine means of using the local community to influence learning *within* the school.

This concept, of course, is not new. For example, schools have for years brought in speakers to address pupils on specific topics and have used outside experts for tasks such as the provision of 'mock' interviews. However, two approaches developed on the First Transition Programme contain scope for extending such contacts and making them more extensive.

The first of these is the idea of involving expert and non-expert members of the community in the formulation of the curriculum. The second is the use of outside specialists made available for a specific period of time to develop and oversee new elements in the curriculum

such as the establishment of a 'mini company', the skills for which may not be available among the teaching staff. Each of these approaches can only be undertaken successfully through *formal* liaison groups since the range of contacts, planning facilities, structural alterations and flexibility required, as well as the continuity for consistent implementation and evaluation cannot be achieved on an *ad hoc* basis by individual institutions.

The role of non-educationalists in the formulation of relevant curricula, in particular of work-related courses, was recognised in the Belgian projects⁴¹. In the Flemish-speaking project, a major objective was to 'update the syllabus content of individual subjects in line with the needs of modern technology, to adapt materials to student needs and abilities and to adjust teaching methods to allow individualised learning and continuous assessment'⁴². The vehicle for these changes was a series of committees with representatives from industry, the universities, the national examining authority, teachers and inspectors. These committees reviewed the course syllabuses, attempting to focus them more on practice, and 'casting them into modules suitable for use in a credit unit system'⁴³.

Another example of the benefits of local involvement in curriculum development is provided by the Bradford First Transition Programme project in England⁴⁴. An advisory committee including representatives of local employers, unions, the careers service, youth and welfare service and parents played an active part in helping the project team to devise the goals of the project. Members of the committee, together

with the four members of staff and representatives of the students then planned the programme jointly, and reviewed it at regular Friday meetings where they went over the work of the previous week and planned for the future⁴⁵. By this process of continuous evaluation and evolution the aims of the project were kept constantly in mind and the content of the syllabus could be rectified in response to student needs. A similar, if less formal approach, was adopted by the Shannon Project in Ireland. In that case 'tutors' who were providing learning opportunities for students in the community were closely consulted about the school-based programmes being pursued. This enabled the theoretical and practical elements of the course to be harmonised⁴⁶.

The idea of the 'mini-company' or school-based 'work simulation' programme is one which was developed in several pilot projects and has now become part of the general curriculum for transition courses as part of education for enterprise⁴⁷. However, as in the case of work experience outside the school, the level of resources and expertise available in a single institution is usually not adequate to obtain the maximum benefit in terms of student learning. In order to work satisfactorily a simulated work situation must contain the whole process of setting up an industry, raising capital, obtaining grants, planning production and sales, actually producing a product, marketing it and developing a strategy for controlling the whole process.

All this requires help from personnel with business experience, not usually found in schools but common in industry and vocational education institutes. It requires close liaison between schools and local

industry, or schools and local vocational educational institutes, as well as considerable flexibility on both sides if it is to be possible to exchange or loan personnel to provide special expertise for a particular project. Where such conditions existed, as in the 'CARPI' First Programme project in Italy, which drew heavily on visiting specialists as teachers of certain modules, the experience of work simulation can be a positive one for the students⁴². Where such cooperation and flexibility is lacking, as in the Clydebank Project, serious deficiencies tend to emerge, such as the following.

The industrial/business world was unrepresented, through leaving all aspects of the business advisor role to the teacher, and therefore pupils failed to carry through the role of Manager. As a result the mini-company was generally less attractive to pupils than other aspects of the school day⁴³.

It is clear from these criticisms that the realism which is a vital part of work simulation and a mini-company can only be achieved through integration between staff with specialist skills in the business/industrial field and school staffs, and that this can only occur where formal processes of liaison and planning allow for such integration.

Involving Parents Through 'Outreach Activities':

The value of much closer cooperation between parents and the school and the need for specific steps to encourage this process is a theme pursued

by a number of Second Programme projects. The role of parents in supporting adolescent learning and motivation is widely stressed, particularly in relation to risk groups such as potential school dropouts, and so on. Methods developed by projects to draw parents and the community in general into closer contact with the school have become known as 'outreach' activities.

A generally recognised first step in many project reports is to convince school staffs of the importance of greater cooperation with parents and the community. A clear school policy together with staff meetings on the subject and perhaps in-service courses may be indispensable in this regard. The next step is for the school to project an image of wishing to create a partnership with parents⁵⁰. To do this, parents must first be better informed about the school and be encouraged to come in, firstly to discuss their own children and later hopefully to play a larger role in the school's activities.

To attract parents in the first place, a number of ideas are proposed - schools should supply parents with well-written and attractive publicity material, and should reach the community through local media - newspapers, radio, and so on⁵¹. Another method suggested is the making and lending to parents of videos about the school's activities. When parents do venture in, specific arrangements for receiving them should be in place. An interview room with informal furniture, refreshments and perhaps displays of pupils' work might be made available and staff, both professional and administrative, given some training in meeting parents and putting them at ease⁵². Regular social occasions run

jointly by the school staff and parents' associations should also be used to attract parents into the school.

Despite such efforts, there are always likely to be parents who will not come to the school of their own volition. Often these are the parents that most need to be contacted, and home visits may be the best way of reaching them. A number of projects developed a role of 'school - home liaison person', or community tutor, or allowed time for the group 'transition tutor' to carry out this function⁵³. On occasion other parents were used to establish the initial contact⁵⁴.

Once involved, the range of assistance which parents can contribute to the school is considerable. Apart altogether from fundraising, parents with their varying skills and interests can broaden the range of learning opportunities available. For example, the Northamptonshire, England, Second Programme project, which had as a major objective the increased involvement of parents in the transition courses, reports the following areas of parent participation⁵⁵.

1. Supervision of community placements.
2. Developing links with a local college of further education.
3. Planning with bankers, industrialists, trade unionists and teachers an enterprise activity for a mini-company project.
4. Leading a group of pupils and teachers on a week's residential hill walking.
5. Offering courses in the school in knitting, jewellery making, brick laying, farming and forestry.

6. Encouraging other parents to come into the school, explaining new courses to them and helping them decide on choices for their children to follow⁵⁵.

Similarly, the Second Programme project at Shannon, Ireland⁵⁷ developed a talent bank or resource list of volunteers in the community who were available to help school activities in many ways⁵⁸. In the Venissieux Second Programme project in France⁵⁹, the parents in association with the school developed a 'lieu apprendre' - a drop-in learning room in the community centre - where pupils came to do homework, seek advice and so on. Parents were involved as helpers and resource persons working closely with teachers⁶⁰.

The range of 'outreach' activities undertaken by various projects and the degree of success achieved appears significant. It has long been a commonplace of educational literature that parental involvement was an important motivational factor in young peoples' learning, but little was done to bring it about in practice. The work of the two transition programmes has produced a great deal of practical experience and many simple ideas which are well within the scope of every school to adopt.

School Cooperation with Other Agencies:

This aspect of school - community liaison is considered in detail in chapter nine.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

In this chapter it has been pointed out that the evidence of the pilot projects indicates that a major objective of the transition curriculum - the establishment of systematic linkage between theory and practice, knowing that and knowing how - can best be achieved through the development of programmes based on experiential learning. The pilot projects have shown that the development of such programmes depends to a large extent on broadening the educational environment, so that experiential learning based in the community and the world of work becomes a central part of the curriculum. The evidence of the First and Second Transition Programmes indicates that full advantage of the learning opportunities available in the out-of-school environment can only be taken in the context of systematic liaison links between the school and the community.

Several projects set out to create such systematic liaison structures. Some were based on purely localised initiatives involving a single school with an informal network of external people willing to lend their skills and their time to help. Others developed much more formalised structures embracing entire regions - 'the district approach' - involving many groups and in some areas including a statutory basis and administrative back-up. Both of these approaches have advantages, but in general it appears that the district approach is more successful since the range of expertise available and the tasks which can be tackled may well be beyond the resources of individual schools. However, such liaison networks require funding and the cooperation of

many agencies, and until this becomes more widespread single school liaison networks are a useful and probably more realistic alternative.

The range of activities which can be undertaken by a liaison network once established are considerable. For example, in this chapter we have considered their role in relation to (i) providing opportunities for learning outside the school - 'community-based learning', (ii) developing contacts and placements for work experience, (iii) establishing links between a school and an industry or training agency - 'twinning', (iv) recruiting adults willing to share their skills by teaching courses within the school or by advising on the operation of a project or mini-company, and (v) developing methods of involving parents in the activities of the school.

Effective school - community liaison can not only break down traditional barriers and suspicions but also open a range of opportunities and activities which can greatly enhance the learning provided by the school without requiring a massive injection of resources. The work of the two transition programmes in this area appears to have generated experience and ideas useful to the development of effective transition programmes and of significant potential value to all aspects of school activity.

CHAPTER EIGHT NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. First Transition Programme, Final Programme Report, p. 60.
 2. ibid., p. 61.
 3. Policies for Transition, p. 42.
 4. First Programme projects which experimented with school - community liaison networks include Project No. 15, Shannon, Ireland; Project No. 19, Trento, Italy; Project No. 28, Bradford, U.K.
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CHAPTER NINE

INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INTRODUCTION:

The increase in youth unemployment and the consequent necessity of improving educational and training provision, particularly for the non-academic early school-leaver, were largely responsible for the EC transition programmes. This has also resulted in many other initiatives in both the educational and manpower training fields. However, these developments tend not to have been governed by any overall strategy and the interface between education and training is now characterised by a lack of coordination, and a degree of overlap and duplication, with consequent dissipation of effort and resources. Education and training services for young people in the process of transition have, as the transition literature points out, become 'fragmented between different agencies usually working in parallel with little coordination'.

In some EC countries, general and vocational education comes under one government ministry; in others, under separate administrative responsibilities. In some countries, models of vocational training are found which are carried out entirely within firms, ranging from limited work initiation schemes to complete training programmes, generally with little correlation with state vocational education systems². In other countries - for example, Belgium, France and Italy - youth vocational education and training is provided mainly by means of fulltime

programmes within the educational system at the post- compulsory stage. In addition, various types of overlapping systems exist, such as the German apprenticeship model which is based on the concept of close coordination between educational institutes and the firm providing the training in the workplace, or the FÁS apprenticeship model in Ireland where the training agency provides both education and training, with limited on-the-job experience³. On top of all these systems, a plethora of special training/education/work experience schemes for the young early school-leaver and unemployed person have emerged in recent years. In Ireland, for example, there are school-based Vocational Preparation and Training courses, Foundation and Community Youth Training programmes offered by the state training agency, FÁS, the Work Experience programme provided by its placement service, and numerous other schemes run by local authorities and voluntary agencies⁴.

In all of these systems, administration and responsibility for decision making tend to be both strongly centralised and divided among several authorities⁵. Strong centralisation represents an obstacle to the setting up of flexible local and regional programmes designed to meet specific needs within the education and training sectors. As a result, the transition process may prove less than efficient and the range of actions which can be taken to improve the situation is often 'too strictly bound to general regulations which do not appear appropriate in all individual cases'⁶. On other occasions, possible opportunities for remedial measures may not be taken by local schools, training centres, etc. because they do not have the necessary powers and flexibility.

It is now being recognised that what is required are structures which allow largely decentralised decision making capable of facilitating the planning and implementation of initiatives in response to local possibilities and requirements. Clearly, there will be limits to such flexibility in that it must be coordinated in an overall framework of education and training which is coherently planned and implemented at national/regional level.

From the work of many pilot projects it appears that the question of the rationalisation of education and training services to form coherent elements of one consistent system is closely connected to the problem of diversification of overall control over planning and decision making. Only where the overall responsibility lies with one authority for both general education and vocational education and training does it appear that adequate cooperation and coordination between the sectors can be guaranteed. Priorities for the different systems can be harmonised, and unnecessary and divisive competition for resources be eliminated. Change and innovation in the relationship between education and training should, as a result of a unified central system, 'be less inhibited by the diverging interests of too many different decision makers'.

A third, equally significant problem arising from duplication and overlap at the education - training interface is the limit and extent of the curricula appropriate to each sector. In most EC countries, the dividing line between the provision of 'education' as opposed to 'training' is blurred. Thus schools providing vocational preparation courses often venture into the realm of quite specific, vocationally-

oriented skills training while training agencies and manpower services provide 'foundation' courses concerned primarily with basic educational skills such as literacy and numeracy²³. There is little attempt at coordination between the curricula provided and equally little justification offered for what is arguably inappropriate utilisation of both the school and training sectors. The result is a lack of cohesion between the qualifications and competencies which are or ought to be provided by schools and those appropriate to training and manpower services. Measures designed to remedy this problem have it is suggested tended to founder because of the competition which results from 'parallel initiatives controlled under separate administrative frameworks and financed by different authorities, while pursuing largely similar objectives'²⁴.

Clearly, the waste of resources, the duplication of effort and the overlap of services inherent in systems working in parallel with little coordination represents a major problem. Some of the pilot projects of both transition programmes set out to explore a variety of approaches to the development of new patterns of cooperation and coordination at national, regional and local level. A number of interesting experiments emerged which appear to offer possible models for local and regional rationalisation of structures conducive to a more efficient utilisation of resources and effort. However, at national level the picture was less satisfactory. The barriers proved more difficult to break down and the lack of the necessary power to impose decisions on education and training agencies and authorities resulted in slow progress. The

outcome of the First Programme in terms of the development of practical approaches to cooperation is summarised as follows.

Since new patterns of cooperation and coordination at national level take some time to develop the experience of the pilot projects suggests that more rapid progress can be made at regional or local level. It is within a local context that pilot projects have helped to clarify conditions and strategies to achieve cooperation and coordination¹⁰.

The Second Transition Programme 1983-1987 continued the task of seeking solutions to the problems of duplication and competition between the agencies involved in various aspects of the transition process.

Perhaps the most ambitious dimension of the Second Transition Programme concerns cooperation between those responsible for education and training and all other services and bodies concerned with young people in a local/regional context. The Second Programme has emphasised the educational value of schools' involvement with the local community and coordination between education and other agencies/services at the local level¹¹.

The cumulative work of the two transition programmes has identified the principles involved in developing closer cooperation and partnership and also possible structures through which this might be achieved.

A COORDINATED AGENCY APPROACH TO TRANSITION:

1. A Coordinated Agency Approach to Transition - Principles:

The following 'guiding principles' for the development of more effective methods of coordination are identified in the transition literature.

1. The development of effective inter-agency cooperation is a necessary precondition for the successful introduction of many of the most desirable curriculum innovations identified by the transition programmes¹². For example, the development of courses designed to utilise the community as a learning resource, the effective organisation of work experience and school-based experiential learning methodologies and the provision of comprehensive guidance and information services are all dependent on cooperation and coordination between the educational and other agencies involved in the transition process.

2. In the early stages cooperation and partnership are best attempted at local/regional level as 'unrealistic and overambitious expectations of what can be achieved in terms of joint national projects can lead to complete failure'¹³. Initially, therefore, the emphasis should be placed on 'identifying comparatively simple, manageable common tasks that are non-controversial rather than attempting inter-institutional discussion of principles for cooperation with little scope for practical application'¹⁴.

Principle 2 appears to be a function of the relative failure of the transition programmes to achieve any major breakthroughs in terms of eliminating barriers at national level. There are strict limits to what

can be achieved at local level without coherence and rationalisation in the arena of national policy, and progress at this higher level is therefore a precondition for effective local action.

3. 'Appropriate arrangements to ensure a flow of information and regular exchange of experience between the potential cooperating agencies must be established. Examples of such arrangements include 'working parties, committees and workshops, temporary exchange of staff and joint visits to institutions and projects'¹⁵. However, such arrangements need some formal structuring so that they are not simply abandoned as early enthusiasm wanes. The most successful approach is the appointment of a 'promoter for the coordination process' responsible for reinforcing the arrangements'¹⁶. The 'promoter' may be a person on secondment or made available at certain times by one of the organisations involved and jointly funded by all the cooperating agencies. Where this is not possible, a steering committee including a liaison person representing each organisation can provide an alternative method of encouraging the coordination process. Experience has shown, however, that it is easy to create too many new structures and these can later prove to be 'cumbersome and counter-productive'¹⁷.

4. It is clear that 'effective cooperation and coordination appear to depend less on formal structures than on attitudes and motivation'¹⁸.

A Coordinated Agency Approach to Transition - Structures:

Throughout the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes, various structures designed to encourage inter-agency cooperation at district or regional level have developed. For ease of description, these structures can be divided into three basic models: (i) the outside task force, (ii) a multi-disciplinary team and (iii) the multi-agency model²⁰.

(i) Outside task force:

Before the establishment of any cooperative structures between the agencies in a particular district, it proved useful to obtain the guidance of a task force drawn from an outside agency or group of agencies with previous experience in the organisation of local partnership and coordination²⁰. The objectives of the task force would be to identify the main issues, including perhaps

- (a) the agencies, services and institutions which need to be brought together in a coordinated approach;
- (b) the identification and development of successful examples of cooperation and coordination already in existence between the agencies dealing with young people;
- (c) the types of structure most suited to bring together the different partners in a particular district;
- (d) the chief barriers to successful coordination - structural, legal, professional - and the most effective strategies in overcoming such obstacles;
- (e) the establishment of staff development strategies designed to encourage positive attitudes to cooperation²¹.

An example of the 'task force' system in operation is provided by the Italian project 'Orientation and Guidance' based in Tuscany²². An 'animation and research team' drawn from various education, training and social service agencies in the region organised the establishment of links between parents, teachers, industry and regional organisations in each district included in the project area²³.

(ii) A Multi-Disciplinary Team:

Such a team may contain, for example, teachers, parents, representatives of industry and training agencies, social and youth workers and clergy. It is usually based in a single educational institution and is designed to improve the learning resources of that institution and its links with other agencies²⁴. The work which the team might undertake varies considerably. In the Frascati Project in Italy²⁵, for example, the role of the team was to link the school with local industry to improve careers guidance and work experience provision²⁶. At the Shannon Project in Ireland²⁷, the team organised the use of skilled people in the local community as special tutors in the schools²⁸. Another example of the value of such a group to an individual school and its locality is provided by the Venissieux Project in France²⁹. Venissieux is a disadvantaged suburb of Lyons with high rates of unemployment, truancy and early school-leaving. In an attempt to reintegrate as many young people as possible, a 'lieu apprendre' or 'drop-in learning place' was established by the multi-disciplinary team (including teachers, parents, social and youth workers) attached to the Paul Elouard College, a local

comprehensive school. The 'lieu apprendre' is an informal after-school neighbourhood centre, is open each evening and staffed by at least one person drawn from each of the cooperating groups mentioned. The centre helps young people with homework, personal problems, careers information and so on and has 'played an important part in helping some of the young people who might otherwise have dropped out'³⁰.

In fact, some form of multi-disciplinary team, whether a steering committee for the entire project or to organise particular elements of the curriculum, became a central feature of virtually all the Second Programme pilot projects and, as the Shannon and Venissieux experiences demonstrate, represents an initiative which could usefully be developed in the context of each individual school.

(iii) Multi-Agency model:

The multi-agency model differs from the multi-disciplinary team in that its purpose is to operate at district or regional level in order to eliminate duplication and competition between the various agencies and to develop joint initiatives where possible. In some cases, projects sought to bring together people working in all youth care services - education, manpower, training, social welfare, employment and careers - while in others the stress was on linkage between two agencies, for example, educational institutions and training workshops³¹. An example of the former type of multi-agency model is provided by the Ludwigshafen Project in Germany³², which developed the 'kooperationskreis' (cooperation council)³³. This brought together all the agencies in the

field of helping young people to choose and get jobs with the objective of making each 'clearer about the work of the others, to divide tasks more efficiently between them and to develop spontaneous and informal contacts between agencies'³⁴. Such a general set of objectives led to difficulties and it was only when specific tasks were established - for example, providing practical workshop training and experience in technical institutes for pupils from special schools and developing a guide to assist young people to assess themselves and help them with vocational choices - that real progress was made. The conclusion of the project was that multi-agency cooperation worked best when specific objectives were established, and although the process was not 'without initial problems the cooperation council has proved to be useful and will probably continue'³⁵.

The experience of the First Transition Programme Inner London Education Authority 'Bridging Course' project³⁶ emphasises the effectiveness of multi-agency models of cooperation where the desired objectives are clearly thought out and a small number of agencies is involved. The aim of the 'Bridging Course' project was to develop programmes for low achieving pupils, based primarily in secondary schools but involving training periods in technical colleges³⁷. Consortia were established, each consisting of two secondary schools and a technical college. Each consortium worked out a joint course, through a committee of teachers from each establishment 'supported by the relevant hierarchy, the education authority inspectorate and a project coordinator based in a curriculum development unit'. The latter 'provided stimulus, help and organised the consortium meetings and in-service training weekends'.³⁸

The resulting joint programmes proved to be extremely successful and are 'now influencing other developments by the authority'³².

This project's work is particularly important because the 'feasibility and value of school - technical college cooperation has been solidly established' by its success³³. The impact in terms of pupil motivation of the change of context and change in social relationships involved in courses based partly outside the school has become apparent in many projects of the two transition programmes and the development of a successful model for the extension of such programmes should prove of general interest. Equally important is the more efficient use of scarce resources which could emerge from this type of cooperation.

Inter-Agency Cooperation - Some Problems:

Two significant problems associated with the question of inter-agency cooperation have not been addressed by the EC transition programmes. Firstly, there is the question of coherence and coordination of policy between agencies at national as distinct from regional or district levels. Secondly, there is the difficulty of overlap and duplication at the interface between the responsibilities of the different authorities and agencies.

The former problem has been clearly recognised in the transition literature - 'projects emphasise that partnership and improved cooperation at the top level are preconditions for effective cooperation

at the school level: if there is incoherence about the value to be attached to alternate curricula, for example, or lack of progression between special measures, resulting from national policies, the school/teachers cannot be expected to correct it'.⁴¹.

It is made clear that without rationalisation in national policies, local initiatives of the type described in this chapter must be of limited effectiveness. Perhaps it was outside the remit of programmes concentrating on mainly local/regional projects to attempt to influence national policies and thus limited local achievement is the best that could be hoped for. Nevertheless, only firm policy decisions at national level can open the way for the successful rationalisation and coordination of local and regional services.

Outside the realm of the transition programmes, several EC countries have begun the process of rationalising their educational, training and welfare services for young people. Perhaps the best example is provided by the French system. In 1980, Professor Bertrand Schwartz wrote a report, commissioned by the Prime Minister, entitled L'Insertion professionnelle et sociale des Jeunes⁴². The report was strongly influenced by the success of the 'Action Jeunes' First Transition Programme pilot project⁴³. It recommended the provision of rationalised and integrated local centres for young people capable of dealing with a range of issues from education and training needs to job placement, health services and housing⁴⁴. Professor Schwartz makes it clear that such local task forces could only operate successfully if the overlap and competition between the agencies involved was eliminated at national

level⁴⁵. Accordingly, in the autumn of 1981, the 'interministerial office for the social and occupational integration of young people in difficulty' was set up to act as a central coordinating body for the various public authorities responsible for the provision of services for those in the 16-25 age group⁴⁶. In particular, the role of the interministerial office was to clear the way for the creation of integrated, locally-based task forces, called 'missions locales' which would provide a full range of services for young people and be operated on a cross-agency basis⁴⁷.

Since 1981, the 'missions locales' have been established throughout France, each one dealing with about 4,000 young people and staffed by 15-20 workers drawn from the different agencies involved in the system. The 'missions locales' idea has been very successful and is gradually being extended to every region in France. This, in Professor Schwartz's view, is largely because successful inter-agency coordination has been achieved and this has occurred primarily as a result of the imposition of coherent policies and joint planning on the agencies concerned by a central authority with adequate power⁴⁸.

The second major unresolved obstacle to the improvement of inter-agency cooperation and coordination is the lack of clear definition between the different roles each sector should play, particularly at the interface between education and training. Again this issue is primarily a matter of national policy for each EC country and lies beyond the scope of the transition programmes. Moreover, since many of the projects involved not just schools, but also the training agencies, technical colleges and

welfare agencies, there was understandably a limit to the extent to which duplication could be criticised.

However, an attempt is made in the transition literature to define to some extent where the education - training interface should be drawn. The primary objective of such a definition is 'the elimination of wasteful duplication and the development of a coherent process of transition' in which school-based vocational preparation and specific vocational skills training are envisaged as complementary parts of a coherent process, with the former provided through the schools and the latter the responsibility of the training agencies⁴⁹. It is argued that except for those who have rejected school entirely, the education system is the appropriate arena in which the basic skills of literacy and numeracy should be taught, together with some general education and non-skill specific vocational training, while more specialised vocational skills are best left to training agencies. School-based courses should not be 'too skill specific in content and should be designed not only to prepare students for entry to the world of work but also to facilitate progression to more advanced forms of skills training'⁵⁰.

The value of such a coherent education/training system, involving a logical progression from school-based courses to those provided by technical colleges and training agencies, has become accepted in some EC countries. For example, in Germany, Denmark and Belgium, school-based vocational preparation courses are perceived as foundation years, consisting in general education, communication skills and personal development, together with training of a practical but general nature

designed to improve manipulative skills. These courses are designed to lead to further, more skill-specific training and, to this end, the manpower services and training agencies are closely involved in developing the curricula⁵¹.

In other countries, no such rationalisation has taken place, and the overlap and duplication of the interface between education and training continues to increase. In Ireland, for example, the National Economic and Social Council report for 1985 expresses concern at the fact that the 'social' i.e. non-skill element in FÁS training programmes has become very substantial. The report recommends that this trend should be reversed in order that FÁS can fulfil its primary function, 'the provision of training in those skills which the economy requires'⁵². The same report also expresses reservations at the addition by the Youth Employment Agency of a general education component to its work experience programmes⁵³. Clearly a coherent strategy for future development is required and the recommendations of the transition programme reports and subsequent developments in France, Germany and Denmark may provide a suitable model for development.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

The wasteful duplication and overlap between the different agencies providing services for young people in transition is now recognised. To eliminate this problem and also to make possible the implementation of many of the alternative approaches to the curriculum suggested by the pilot projects, both transition programmes have sought to develop new patterns and models of inter-agency cooperation and coordination at national, regional and local levels.

The results of this experimentation have been satisfactory at the district level, but far less so in the context of rationalisation and the achievement of coherence at national level. In relation to the 'district approach' to inter-agency cooperation, three models have been successfully established.

1. An outside task force drawn from the cooperating agencies and having experience of previous joint schemes or initiatives, sent in to a particular district to identify possible areas of coordination and partnership and to establish structures to make this possible.
2. A multi-disciplinary team, drawn from a range of cooperating agencies and sent in to an individual institution such as a school or training college, to identify problems, work with staff and establish contacts between that institution and others providing youth services.
3. A multi-agency model, bringing together representatives of each agency at district/local level to work out a plan to eliminate competition and develop joint initiatives.

Two major problems remain unresolved, however. Despite the initiatives mentioned above, little of real substance can be achieved unless and until rationalisation and coherence is imposed on the competing agencies at national level. Only then can clear guidelines, such as those adopted in France, where an interministerial authority at the highest level of government dictates policy and priorities, resulting in an effective system of integrated local guidance/advice centres staffed and operated by all the agencies in the field (missions locales), be provided.

The second problem is the continuing tendency towards overlap and duplication in the range of services provided by the different agencies. This issue is particularly acute at the interface between education and training, with the school system seeking to provide more and more skill-specific vocational training while training agencies seek to develop courses in basic education and personal development. The transition programmes have done little to clarify the frontiers between the services and programmes appropriate to each sector. Nonetheless, the primacy of the school in the provision of basic education (including general skill training and work experience), and the need for a coherent progression from school-based courses to vocational skills courses in training agencies, has become recognised in many European countries. In others, however, this process of clarification is not taking place and wasteful duplication and inappropriate utilisation of both the education and training systems continues to be a matter of concern.

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CHAPTER TEN

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND TRANSITION PROGRAMMES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the strands which have emerged from the previous nine chapters of this work in order to produce a coherent account of the achievements and failures of the First and Second Transition Programmes. In the following chapters this account will be compared and contrasted with the structure and curriculum of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme Type I currently on offer in Irish post primary schools. For the present chapter, however, the work of the EC pilot projects will be analysed on its own merits and conclusions will be drawn with reference to the educational and practical value of the outcomes produced.

1. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMMES AND THE NATURE OF THE PROJECTS:

The objectives of the First Transition Programme, defined in terms of six priority themes, were dominated by relatively narrow vocational considerations. In this they were strongly influenced by the current of vocationalism which swept EC education systems in the late 1970s'. The basis of this philosophy - essentially, that improved work preparation in schools could alleviate youth unemployment, particularly among less academically able school-leavers - was accepted at EC decision-making

level. In consequence, the twenty nine pilot projects concerned themselves almost exclusively with initiatives in the field of vocational preparation, such as assessment procedures useful to employers and inter-agency cooperation at the education/training interface. Therefore results in these fields constituted the central products of the First Programme².

The positive achievements in these fields should not be underestimated. In each of them, initiatives of considerable value have emerged, and these will be reviewed later in this chapter. Nonetheless, the essentially one-dimensional nature of much of the work of the First Programme has had a number of negative implications.

The most obvious difficulty is the relative neglect of less vocationally relevant elements of the curriculum - one can think in this regard of social and political education, artistic and aesthetic education and perhaps communications/language education. From this failure to treat curriculum reform in a broad context, the perception has arisen that transition education is primarily designed to meet the needs of 'special cases' of one type or another - the less able, the alienated/school rejectors, the handicapped and so forth. In effect, the outcome, despite protestations to the contrary, is not a set of reforms designed to create a common second level curriculum capable of meeting the needs of all pupils. Rather it consists in 'interventions' - additional or alternative courses - for particular 'risk' groups. The danger of further pushing such risk groups into the ghetto through such courses is briefly alluded to in the transition literature, as indeed is the

necessity to reform traditional academic curricula, yet the nettle of a common curriculum based on transition education philosophy is not grasped. The vocational focus of the First Programme has also tended to vindicate criticisms of alternative curricula for the less academically inclined. Critics have been able to argue - with some justification - that their view of such programmes as largely constituting socialisation for failure, unemployment or low paid work has been confirmed by the initiatives produced³.

It should be noted that not all First Programme projects followed the vocational stereotype. The more thoughtful quickly perceived the contradiction inherent in overemphasising vocational preparation at a time of mass youth unemployment. Such projects attempted to develop a more rounded and complete curriculum stressing personal development and social education. The work of some of these projects - together with a gradually changing climate in which increased vocational preparation did nothing to halt the rise of youth unemployment - had a noticeable effect on the development and outcomes of the Second Programme⁴.

The Second Programme claimed to recognise that education for living and education for work are 'parallel and complementary' and the inclusion of such items as 'school and socialisation', 'equal opportunities' and 'curriculum development' among the priority themes indicated some degree of commitment to this view. Other developments in the Second Programme, particularly the tendency towards groups of schools or entire regions as the basis for projects as opposed to single institutions, also gave hope of more unified and widely applicable outcomes.

Other indications of a departure from rigid vocationalism towards a more broadly based approach include the emergence of community service as an alternative to traditional work experience in a number of projects, an increased emphasis on personal as opposed to vocational guidance, some work on social and leisure education, parent involvement in roles other than providing work experience or vocational skills, mini-cooperatives in place of mini-companies, and in one case (Berlin) a significant role for the arts in education⁵.

By and large, however, the trend away from vocationalism has been limited. Very few projects have attempted to develop broad educational programmes with a balanced curriculum containing elements of general and social education as well as vocational preparation. The excellent alternative Senior Certificate developed by the 'SPIRAL II' project in Ireland is unfortunately more the exception than the rule.

Therefore the same problems identified with the First Programme re-emerge in modified form in the Second. (1) The emphasis remains largely on work-related and vocational preparation themes; (2) the target groups are essentially 'high risk categories' and the solution offered is alternative programmes as opposed to broader curriculum reforms; and (3) the alternative programmes developed, although constructed upon a philosophical foundation stressing breadth of experience and involving significant methodological and contextual reforms, are seriously flawed in content. Personal and social education, aesthetic education, arts/crafts and communications/language skills are seriously under-represented.

What emerges is less a blueprint for a balanced transition curriculum than a series of initiatives in methodology, context, structure and assessment. Nonetheless, the achievements in these individual areas are interesting and useful and have a role to play in the development of effective transition courses in the wider school community. It is to a summary of the achievements in each of these areas that we now turn.

2. TRANSITION EDUCATION THEORY - A COHERENT PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION?:

My analysis and interpretation of the conceptual framework of transition education theory leads to the following conclusions.

In rejecting as a foundation for the curriculum the initiation of young people into particular forms of knowledge alleged to be of superior intrinsic value, transition theory does not offer an alternative based upon the felt needs and interests of individual pupils. Rather the emphasis is placed on the perceived needs of young people, defined in terms of the competencies - skills, attitudes and knowledge - deemed to be required to cope effectively in adult and working life.

However, while arguing for an alternative curriculum based largely on a philosophy of needs and relevance, the transition literature criticises tendencies towards concentration on some areas of human experience and the exclusion of others. It is argued that the concept of needs must be generously interpreted to include the widest spectrum of human

experience and endeavour. Such areas as personal and social education, education in the practical aspects of living and artistic and aesthetic experience, often neglected in traditional curricula, are at least in theory given a central position in the transition literature. The inclusion of educational experiences drawn from these fields as part of effective transition programmes is urged and it is argued that the concept of needs must be broad enough to include these areas⁶⁵.

As I have indicated, this generous interpretation of needs and relevance is seldom reflected in the curricula developed by the individual pilot projects. However, the theory itself, stressing the social and personal needs of the individual, as well as his or her vocational needs, may well represent a defensible educational philosophy on which to build and in that regard can be considered a significant achievement of the EC transition programmes.

There is an element of the conceptual framework offered for transition education which requires further development and elaboration. Improvement in pupil motivation through the provision of more relevant and needs-based learning experiences is the central aim of transition education. It is argued that this may be achieved through the concept defined as negotiation - allowing the individual learner to negotiate his or her learning experiences with the teacher. This concept of negotiation is a useful and interesting one, but is perhaps not adequately worked out in the literature. A better philosophical and practical framework for the involvement of the pupil in his or her own learning is offered in the work of Gerry Gaden⁷. The concept employed

by Gaden is defined as specialisation, which involves an opportunity for pupils to negotiate parts of the curriculum and to pursue their own felt needs or interests to a significant degree. Fully developed as in Gaden's work, the theory of specialisation would add a valuable third dimension to the twin concepts of perceived needs and breadth of experience which form the basis for curriculum determination in transition philosophy.

3. LEARNING METHODS AND COURSE CONTEXT: THE KEYS TO TRANSITION EDUCATION⁶

The transition literature unambiguously places learning methods at the centre of curriculum reform. It is argued that new programmes which continue to be organised and taught in traditional ways will not achieve transition aims, no matter how innovative the content. Essentially this view is based on two premises.

- (1) The main target groups for transition education programmes are likely to have been demotivated by subject-centered, classroom-based 'passive' learning situations. To remotivate such pupils, a change of learning method is necessary.
- (2) Many of the competencies which transition theory identifies as being of most importance to young people, such as initiative, enterprise, self-confidence and interpersonal skills, are more likely to be acquired in the context of active learning methodology.

This model of teaching and learning has major implications not only for the methods to be employed but also for teacher skills, for school organisation and for resources in general. The learning theory is worked out in considerable detail in the literature, but it must be said that the level of reorganisation of schools and the resources needed to implement these reforms are not adequately defined and may not be fully recognised.

The implementation of active learning methods involves, according to the literature, three connected teaching strategies: project work, integrated interdisciplinary studies and group/individual work. The successful transition programme is envisaged as consisting in

- (a) one or a number of projects within which formerly discrete subjects are integrated,
- (b) involving opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively and
- (c) elements of the programme to be 'negotiated' between tutor and student.

It is further argued that to encourage flexibility and to allow for regular pupil success through retesting, the projects developed should be modular in nature and subject to continuous assessment. Moreover, projects should involve as much learning as possible in the out-of-school environment and therefore require very flexible timetabling arrangements, facilitators with time and resources and team teaching.

The case made in the transition literature for the methods outlined above is a strong one. One can hardly dissent from the view that pupils demotivated and alienated by traditional school curricula require

significantly different learning experiences and teaching approaches. The evidence of the pilot projects, and indeed many similar projects, does tend to prove that experiential learning methods are the most effective approach to alternative programmes, particularly for risk group categories of pupils.

In order to implement methodological reform, the literature recognises the importance of equipping teachers with a much wider range of skills than those generally acquired in current pre and in-service training. These skills, it is argued, may be identified, defined and taught to teachers through appropriate in-service training provision. The case made in this regard is also a good one.

Much valuable work in identifying advanced and complex teaching skills - in such areas as curriculum planning and development, group work, negotiation, guidance and counselling - is presented in the transition literature. Several approaches to better in-service provision are also elaborated²³. Overall, the transition literature, while avoiding the trap of seeing teaching as the mechanistic exercise of programmed responses, places a fully justified emphasis on the importance of both pedagogic and interpersonal skills. The clarity of this position is a useful addition to the current debate on the role of skills training in teacher education and represents another significant achievement of the programmes.

The Social and Physical Context:

New methodology and the skills necessary to implement it are closely followed in importance by the case made that new curricula requires new contexts in which to operate successfully. These contexts are defined as the social and the physical.

In terms of social context, it is argued that the failure and alienation of many pupils can be attributed to some extent to their rejection of the essentially authoritarian atmosphere of traditional schooling. To reintegrate such pupils and also to create conditions in which valued competencies such as creativity and initiative can flourish, an alternative set of social relationships is required. These relationships should reflect those associated with the adult world rather than the school.

The achievement of the ideal social relationships defined above is not easy and this is recognised in the literature. Nonetheless, a number of strategies designed to improve social context are identified from the work of the pilot projects and suggested as appropriate in the wider school community.

Firstly, it is suggested that improved staff-student relationships require a reappraisal of attitudes by the staff involved. A first step suggested is preparatory, and ongoing staff meetings directed specifically towards the question of teaching styles and aided by inputs from professionals trained to develop the desired social context with young people - such as social workers, youth leaders and guidance

counsellors. To initiate this process and further its development, the creation of two new teacher roles is suggested: (i) a curriculum development officer to assist in identifying appropriate course objectives and in developing content and methodology, and (ii) a staff development officer to facilitate staff reflection and self appraisal and to design and initiate appropriate in-service training.

The identification of these roles and their definition in terms of responsibilities is another valuable contribution of the transition programmes. Also of value and of considerable originality is the suggestion that an improved staff - student relationship depends to an extent on the degree of autonomy given to staff in terms of programme planning and management. It is clearly recognised that an atmosphere of authoritarian relationships between management and staff is likely to preclude the development of both positive attitudes and the freedom to implement change at the staff - student interface. A well defined and influential role for the teaching team in the planning and management of transition programmes is therefore considered essential to improved social context.

The above initiatives concentrated on the problem of social context from the point of view of staff retraining and participation. The corollary of this in terms of pupil participation is provided by the concept of negotiation. In theory, this would involve the negotiation of an 'agreed learning contract' between the programme coordinator and each individual student. In practice it more usually involved a range of options from which students could choose or a range of activities within

the confines of an integrated project in which they might specialise. Significantly, negotiation as employed in most projects involved giving the students a say in decision making in matters concerning not only their own learning but also the management of the programme. This was achieved through various mechanisms such as weekly general meetings of staff and students and/or student representation on course steering committees.

The response of students to negotiation implemented as above was very positive. Programme evaluators were invariably impressed by the improved student attitudes and social relationships generated by negotiation. Moreover, it is noticeable that these advantages also accrued where institutional structures and low resources left very little of real substance open to negotiation. It would appear therefore that the 'process' rather than the 'product' of negotiation (provided that there is flexibility for some 'product' even if limited) is what counts with students, and that therefore the concept is one that could be of value even within the confines of a largely school-based programme.

The final initiative in the field of social context was the development of the 'transition tutor' role. This grew out of a recognition that while the steps already outlined could improve staff - student social context on a group basis, the development of a more genuinely personal and relaxed relationship between a teacher and individual pupils would require the creation of a specific teacher role geared towards that objective. The 'transition tutor' concept involved the designation and

training of a staff member to become responsible for the care and guidance of each transition group. Among the responsibilities undertaken by transition tutors were class teaching, work experience supervision, parent liaison, personal and vocational guidance. Clearly the implementation of this role involves further training, reduced class teaching time and probably an extra salary allowance for the staff members involved, but its value in terms of improved social context and pupil satisfaction emerge strongly from those projects which developed it.

The achievements of the two transition programmes in the field of social context amount then to the following. Firstly, the very idea that social relationships within the school both between management and staff and between staff and pupils have a significant role to play in the development of successful alternative programmes is a contribution to reform. Secondly, the development of a number of mechanisms through which improved social context might be encouraged is also an achievement of importance. In particular, the elaboration of three distinct teacher roles - transition tutor, staff development officer and curriculum development officer - probably represent a necessary minimum condition for successful in-school programme development. Just as valuable perhaps is the importance accorded to both teacher and student participation in significant decision making, and the consequent development of negotiation as a working concept. In terms of improved social context through the creation of a more mature and responsible environment for young people, negotiation may well be one of the most significant legacies of the transition research.

Improved social context was, in the work of many pilot projects, generated by a change in the environment or physical context in which all or part of the programme was conducted. So striking was the impact of changed physical context that experimentation in the area became a major theme in the work of several projects. In the case of deeply alienated young people, it emerged that a complete change of environment, away from the school surroundings, was a necessary condition for successful courses. A wide variety of accommodation, from training centres and workshops to converted houses and community centres was used, and where possible fully residential courses or courses with a significant residential element proved particularly effective.

Providing a change of physical context also proved of great value in the case of school-based transition programmes. The outcomes in this regard can be divided into two areas. Firstly, the provision of a 'base area' designed for and used exclusively by the transition group yielded excellent results. In terms of self image, status within the school and class cohesion, an area specially set aside for the group had a positive impact. Also, it has become clear that in practice active learning methodology as advocated in the transition literature requires more flexible accommodation and equipment than is usually available in traditional second level schools, and in the absence of such accommodation traditional methods quickly re-emerge. Thus the 'multi-skills base area', with the flexibility of a primary school learning space and equipped for project and group work, has emerged as an important transition education concept.

Also important is the potential for course development and student remotivation arising from an idea termed 'alternation'. Essentially this involves changing the physical context by means of the development of joint or cooperative courses between schools of different types, between schools and training agencies, between schools and community agencies or between schools and employers. The possibilities of alternation appear very great. Particularly successful were projects involving consortia of schools, technical colleges and training agencies providing flexible modules available to 'transition' students from different schools on a rotating basis. Such interchangeable modules make the best use of scarce resources and provide maximum choice for students, while automatically deriving the benefits inherent in altering both the social and physical context of the programmes. Models of such 'alternation' schemes developed by various pilot projects may well contain major potential for the wider education/training community.

Methodology and context are central in transition theory and represent a major element of the transition programmes' achievement. The question of course content is not given the same emphasis but is addressed to some extent. It is to the achievements and failures in this area that we now turn our attention.

4. WORK EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION FOR ENTERPRISE IN TRANSITION EDUCATION: 10

If, as I have earlier suggested, too much of the emphasis of both transition programmes has been placed on the narrow vocational field, one must at least acknowledge that interesting initiatives have emerged as a result. In particular, the status of work experience as a valuable tool - making school-based programmes more relevant and activity-based, while also closing the gap between education and the world of work - has made a major impact. Work experience has now become accepted as an integral component of all school-based transition programmes and has also become quite widely used with pupils pursuing more traditional academic courses in education systems throughout the EC. Likewise, education for enterprise (an initiative of the Second Programme) - usually as a mini-company / cooperative, integrating various subjects and general preparation for working life - has begun to play a major role in many transition programmes and to appear on the curriculum of more traditional courses of study.

In the process of developing approaches to work experience and education for enterprise, both programmes have done valuable work by identifying and defining differing aims and objectives and differing methods of achieving them. Four distinct methodologies of work experience provision can be discerned in the project reports - observation or vocational 'taster' work experience, participation work experience, work simulation in the form of a mini-company project in schools and an 'alternative' work experience in the form of non-commercial community service work.

The literature is careful to take no sides in the debate over the value of 'cooperative/non-commercial' work experience as opposed to work experience in business which emerged in some projects. For example, the rationale which has prompted the emergence of the mini-cooperative as the dominant type of work simulation in the Second Programme, particularly in disadvantaged regions, is reported but receives little comment. Equally there is no suggestion that on broad educational grounds, work experience of a community service type should where at all possible form at least part of the total work experience programme offered to pupils. Also, the emphasis arising from a number of projects, again usually in areas of high unemployment, on skills useful for small scale self-employment, perhaps even in the 'black economy', and informal job search skills, is not reflected in the official transition literature. In short, much of the more radical work in the whole work experience area, often carried out by projects in areas of widespread social deprivation, can only be found in the documents produced by those projects themselves.

Another instance of what can only be interpreted as political caution is the failure to make firm recommendations regarding government action in the area of employer responsibility in the provision of adequate work experience placements. It is clear that the extension of work experience will require a realistic number of placements and that the effectiveness of such schemes will depend ultimately on the quality of these placements. Clear evidence emerging from the projects in countries such as the Netherlands and West Germany indicates that the only realistic approach to this problem is state sponsored, but locally

or regionally organised liaison groups with staff and resources. Most importantly, these liaison systems require powers to encourage or even compel employers to provide placements involving relevant work at an acceptable level, supervision, some training and an input into assessment. The transition literature largely ignores the question of the provision of suitable placements in large numbers and shows little concern about issues such as the quality of work given to pupils and lack of supervision and assessment. The onus for solving these problems appears to be left largely on individual schools.

On the positive side, one can argue that in helping to establish work experience as an important component of transition education, and by encouraging experimentation with different approaches, the transition programmes have helped to change the face of vocational preparation in schools, and have also had perhaps their greatest impact on the mainstream curriculum.

Education for enterprise is founded upon the premise that the school system in most countries does not adequately prepare young people for working life and does little to encourage the initiative required to create opportunities for self employment. Education for enterprise as elaborated in the transition literature provides a framework designed to address this problem through active learning methods characteristic of transition education. It is suggested that learning about, for example, the local economy, about business and self-employment, about job search skills and information technology, should not be undertaken as a traditionally taught subject but rather integrated into an active

learning situation based on a mini-company or cooperative. It is further suggested that other 'traditional' subjects such as business studies, art and design, language and communications might also be integrated into education for enterprise. Finally, education for enterprise is envisaged as one element of a programme of preparation for work involving out-of-school work experience, work shadowing, visits to enterprises, talks by entrepreneurs and training sessions by volunteer adults with useful skills.

Various projects have developed interesting models of education for enterprise, for example the Shannon mini-company, the mini-cooperative or 'territorio' approach of several Italian projects and the 'Arbeitslehre' project in West Germany which has developed an education for enterprise course which it is hoped will be offered to all pupils in second level schools.

The value of the transition programme achievement in the area of work experience / education for enterprise is illustrated by the extent to which the methods developed have become significant in transition education and are impacting on the broader educational community.

5. GUIDANCE, INFORMATION AND GENDER EQUALITY: 11

In the field of guidance and counselling, a number of useful ideas emerge from the transition programmes. Most importantly, there is a clear recognition of the relative failure of current guidance approaches to reach the less able and those in high risk categories. This, it is argued, is because guidance - where it is provided at all - often stands completely apart from other elements of the curriculum and also because present structures make the development of appropriate relationships between counsellor and client very difficult. Solutions to the first problem are offered through attempts to integrate guidance into other elements of the programme such as work experience / education for enterprise, thereby making it more relevant to the pupils involved.

The second difficulty, that of counsellor/client relationship, was approached in two ways. Firstly, the demarcation between personal and vocational guidance was eliminated where possible. It was recognised that since a guidance counsellor in a large school cannot hope to establish a closer working relationship with most of the pupils, effective personal and vocational guidance could only be achieved through the development of the 'transition tutor' role. This involved ordinary class teachers receiving some training in guidance and counselling and appropriate timetabling and other resources in order to develop a close relationship with a small group of students. In this structure, the specialist guidance teacher provides resources and support. Only through this method was it found to be possible to provide a counselling service which could be said to be client-centered to any significant degree.

Two other guidance initiatives of interest also emerged. The idea of continuity of guidance beyond school for early school leavers and other risk groups was experimented with in the course of a number of projects. The outcomes indicate that continuing guidance can best be achieved by the schools themselves rather than by outside agencies. Particularly useful were arrangements whereby school guidance counsellors could devote some of their time to maintaining contact with former pupils. This work was most effective when operated side by side with a community-based guidance and information service staffed by appropriately trained young workers from similar backgrounds and experience to the clients. Such workers operating on an informal basis from local community centres, flats etc. were able to reach clients unwilling to deal with school or other institutional agencies.

The final initiative in the guidance field involved efforts at greater cooperation between the agencies involved, and particularly the evolution of a more active role for parents in the guidance of their children. Progress in this area was often difficult, since many of the agencies involved appeared to be in competition. In some cases, however, successful one-stop shop approaches were achieved. These involved representatives from each agency in the field coming together to cooperate in developing comprehensive and accessible guidance packages which could both inform the client about the services of each and also facilitate the agencies acting together to provide solutions for individuals with a range of employment, health and educational problems. Moves to involve parents to a greater extent in the guidance

of their children is one aspect of the development of greater community cooperation and liaison with the schools.

Closely connected to the issue of guidance is the problem of provision of accessible and comprehensive information to young people in transition and particularly to those in the various risk groups. The problems in the information provision area are fragmentation of services, failure to reach those in need and information presented in inaccessible, unattractive formats. The solutions suggested involved partnership and cooperation between the providing agencies and, most importantly, locally-centered, locally-staffed services working very closely with young people and developing appropriate mixed media information formats. It emerged clearly from the work of several projects that those most in need of information are seldom reached effectively by institutional agencies or national information campaigns. Only locally decentralised structures which operate in close proximity to the young people concerned have any prospect of being able to find solutions to the multi-faceted problems often facing an individual young person. Projects which involved young people in decision making regarding the type of information required by their peers and the appropriate modes of delivery of such information were able to make some impact on the 'information gap' widely identified as a serious problem in the field of youth work.

In relation to gender equality, the most significant achievement of the two transition programmes may well be the prominence which has been given to the issue throughout the decade of experimentation. The

elimination of sex role stereotyping through the development of courses designed to encourage gender equality has been central to the work of the transition programmes since the beginning and has made an impact on the policy and practice of virtually every project. Each aspect of the transition curriculum - work experience, education for enterprise, social education, guidance and information - has been influenced by concerns in the area of gender equality and most projects have developed specific programmes designed to encourage new attitudes not only among female pupils but also among teachers, parents, employers and male students. It is probably true to say that no other aspect of transition programme activity has generated such a wide and valuable range of literature and curriculum materials.

Moreover, it must be assumed that the work of the two transition programmes in the area of gender equality has played a significant role in influencing EC and individual member State policy and in moving gender equality to the centre of the educational debate in many countries. Finally, it must regrettably be said that the evidence of project evaluations would appear to indicate very slow progress in eliminating traditional preferences and biases in such fields as vocational choice and work experience in non-traditional jobs. Perhaps, however, it is to be expected that progress would be slow at first but that the work of the projects in promoting gender equality will have a gradually accelerating impact on developments in the wider school community.

6. SOCIAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL FAILURE:¹²

Social education, school failure and disadvantage were neglected themes in the First Transition Programme but received greater attention in the course of the Second. This shift in emphasis was most pronounced in projects operating in high unemployment regions where preparation for adult and community life made more sense than purely vocational preparation.

Programmes of social education emerging from the transition programmes are of two types. Firstly, there are those based on themes and issues - marriage, drug abuse, housing etc., and, secondly, those based on the more affective domain - socialisation through art, meditation and so forth. None of the former appear to have been particularly original in content but in line with transition theory they emphasised active learning methodologies such as visits, speakers, debates, surveys, interviews and involvement with social work and voluntary organisations. There was little traditional classroom learning involved.

A number of projects approached social education through the affective domain. The work of these projects is particularly interesting in that some of the methods employed - meditation exercises, movement, dance and creative art, for example, which are grossly neglected in mainstream education, appear to have significant potential, particularly with the demotivated, underachievers and low ability pupils. More work in this field would be interesting and perhaps fruitful. In terms of outcomes applicable in the wider school community one can perhaps envisage social education programmes involving information and experience components but

also stressing to a far greater extent than hitherto the affective aspects of personal and social development.

Tackling school failure and early dropout was the particular remit of a number of projects. The initiatives emerging from these can be summarised as follows.

- (1) Early identification of risk pupils through reference to a set of indicators. The training of a specific teacher to identify risk pupils and plan solutions to their problems proved very successful in a number of projects.
- (2) Appropriate alternative curricula for these pupils either within or outside the public examination system and involving modular course structures, learning through practical activity, and practical tutoring.
- (3) Improved guidance and counselling including continuity of guidance beyond compulsory schooling.
- (4) Improved physical and social context, including 'third place' provision - facilities outside the school which have a remedial education/training character.
- (5) More flexible modes of assessment involving formal recognition of the achievements of all pupils and appropriate certification allowing for progress to further education or training.

The achievement of the two transition programmes in the area of school drop out and failure is to establish a framework within which schools and education systems could plan and develop approaches and programmes capable of making an impact on this most intractable of problems. What

seems clear is that resources spent on the implementation of programmes based on the above principles at school level are both more likely to succeed and be more cost effective than 'reintegration', 'recovery' or 'safety net' programmes provided by other agencies after students have dropped out of school.

7. ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION:³

Assessment and certification became major issues in the course of the First Transition Programme and received significant attention during the Second. This occurred because it became evident during the First Programme that reform in the methods of assessment was an integral part of curricular reform. In short, it emerged that new programmes, particularly those for early school-leavers, would be less effective unless traditional formal terminal written examinations could be replaced by modes of assessment which were continuous, flexible and capable of measuring achievements other than the purely academic. Equally it became clear that new programmes, however innovative the curriculum content and methodology, were likely to be of little value to the clientele unless they received broadly recognised and valued certification.

The new modes of assessment experimented with during the First and Second Programmes were profiling and records of achievement. Both of these involve the following principles - (1) recognition of many kinds

of pupil achievement, (ii) provision of motivation for pupils through opportunity for early diagnoses of problems and reappraisal, (iii) enabling schools to identify ways of improving the curriculum, and (iv) giving all pupils a document recording their successes which could be presented to future employers, training agencies, and others.

In most projects, profile contents would indicate achievements in school subjects, internal and external examination results, and teacher assessment of cognitive skills, practical skills, personal qualities and social skills as well as an account of pupil interests and leisure activities. It is stressed in the literature that the results, grades and even teacher opinions included in the profile should be based on as wide a range of examination and testing procedures as possible, including written examinations, oral and aural tests, standardised tests, interviews, projects and assignments. The results of whatever type of test are employed should, it is suggested, be criterion-referenced or ipsative and not norm-referenced.

Records of achievement are very similar to profiles. Projects employing a record of achievement approach to assessment stress that the sources from which the final profile is drawn up ought to be extremely wide. For example, records of achievement in many projects attempted to allow the pupils an agreed input into the assessment procedure and also to call upon work experience employers and even on occasion parents to contribute. This wider contribution base appears from project results to have advantages over the teacher-only profile. Students consulted about judgements of their work often proved to be both objective and

critical and of course such consultations help to involve the learner in a greater degree of responsibility for his or her own work. Employer opinions often meant a great deal both to pupils and to other end users and tended to make a big impact on the motivation of learners.

In general, it appears that profiling and records of achievement operating in tandem with modular courses have proven invaluable in successful transition programmes. These methods are now making a significant impact on the broader school community. In many EC countries, vocational preparation and other special education programmes operate modes of assessment based entirely on profiles and records of achievement. The use of these methods, together with traditional examinations or even in place of them, is becoming increasingly a feature of mainstream education in several countries. The response of employers and other end users of profiles has also been positive. This is because a well-constructed profile gives a broader picture of the individual involved than any list of examination results can and also provides a useful 'script' on which to base interviews.

Of course, profiling and records of achievement predate the two EC transition programmes and are therefore strictly speaking not results of those programmes. However the two programmes have established the crucial importance of alternative modes of assessment in developing successful alternative courses. Also, the work of the programmes has added considerably to the methodology of profiling in such areas as the design of records of achievement.

Problems, of course, remain. For example, critics argue that profiles involving judgements of personal qualities are subjective, may not be honest because pupils and employers may get to see them, are time-consuming to produce and tend to be somewhat bland because of the necessity to synthesise the large quantity of input often involved. No doubt there is some truth in these claims, but the advantages of more flexible modes of assessment appear to outweigh the disadvantages and it appears that profiles and records of achievement will come to play an increasing role in assessment throughout the EC school systems.

Less considerable is the level of achievement in the area of certification of new courses. The importance of widely accepted and valued certification was only realised well into the Second Transition Programme, and then only in a number of individual projects. Some of these projects then managed to obtain national or regional validation for their courses while others undertook advertising campaigns among the public and employers to increase the value of purely school/project-based certification.

However, it is now widely accepted that only nationally or regionally validated certification, which is accepted for entry purposes to certain further education/training courses, is an acceptable end product to transition courses. Such courses, however good they may be, which do not carry widely acknowledged certification, are unfair to the pupils involved in that they are unlikely to improve their life and employment prospects. Moreover, the absence of such certification will certainly make the courses less prestigious and less attractive to young people

and defeat the aim of encouraging them to stay in school longer and achieve higher levels of qualification.

Perhaps because it came too late in the work of the transition programmes, transition thinking along these lines has had little impact on national policy and practice in the member States. Consequently, new vocational preparation courses in many countries have suffered from exclusion from the existing system of certification or from any credible alternatives. The future for many such courses has been placed in jeopardy, and some excellent programmes have been undermined in the eyes of pupils, teachers, employers and parents.

8. SCHOOL - COMMUNITY LIAISON AND INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION:¹⁴

Two of the most consistent themes of the transition programmes have been the extension of available learning experiences by use of the out-of-school environment as an educational resource and the closer involvement of parents in school activities. A spin-off of these endeavours has been the development of mechanisms for systematic school - community liaison. It emerged from the work of the pilot projects that the out-of-school environment could only be successfully utilised as a learning resource in the context of support structures which could develop interactive working relationships between schools and their communities. Likewise, parental involvement could best be facilitated through improved school - community liaison.

Two types of liaison structures emerged - single school liaison committees designed to develop out-of-school opportunities for the pupils of one school and the 'district approach' liaison involving a number of schools, together with representatives of other state agencies, industry and local interests. The former more simple type of structure is within the scope of individual schools to establish and an increasing number, particularly those involved in or influenced by pilot projects, have done so. The latter requires planning and resources at regional and national level. This is also beginning to become available. For example, in the Netherlands each province now has a 'COA' - school / employment liaison centre, designed to organise work experience and guidance at a regional level, while in France a national level liaison structure to encourage twinning arrangements between schools and industries has been established¹⁵.

The range of activities undertaken by liaison structures can be enormous. Among the obvious are the organisation and supervision of work experience placements, assistance with vocational guidance and preparation for work, job placement, information provision for pupils, fundraising, and planning and evaluating mini-company/mini-cooperative projects in schools. A number of other interesting roles were developed by liaison committees established in various pilot projects - for example, the organisation of out-of-school learning places or 'drop in' centres where pupils can do homework or get advice, the creation of 'twinning' arrangements between firms and schools, improved relationships including joint courses and shared facilities between schools and other institutions - training agencies or technical college,

for example - and the recruitment of skilled members of the community to provide instruction in the area of expertise either within the school or out in the community'⁶.

A final aspect of school - community liaison which has received particular attention from a number of projects and from which useful ideas have emerged is 'outreach' activities aimed at the development of home - school links. Among these ideas are better and more accessible information for parents about the school, including videos, advertising of school courses and achievements in local media, a special reception area for parents visiting the school, regular informal social occasions involving pupils as well as parents and including displays of pupils' work, some training in dealing with parents for teachers and administrative staff and the development of the role of 'liaison tutor' to oversee the above initiatives and to conduct home visits where other methods fail to get parents to come in.

The importance attached to systematic school - community liaison and to greater parental involvement and the structures developed to further these goals are among the most significant achievement of the transition programmes. Already, as I have indicated, formalised liaison at local, regional or national level is becoming an integral part of some educational systems. As the potential of such liaison for broadening the curriculum becomes more widely recognised, this process will accelerate.

With regard to home - school links and better public relations with the community at large, it is praiseworthy that efforts have been made by several pilot projects to attract parents into the schools and to allow them to play a significant role. The suggestions made in this area are simple and practical and could be implemented to some degree by most schools.

Inter-Agency Cooperation at the Interface Between Education and Training:¹⁷

The prevalence of overlap, duplication and lack of coherence which characterises the education/training interface in many EC countries is recognised in the transition literature. The importance to transition courses of eliminating this problem and establishing clear demarcation between them became a significant theme of the Second Transition Programme.

Defining the roles of education and training institutions and establishing the recognition of transition courses for entry to training are tasks for national governments, and essentially the transition programmes could do no more than define the priorities in these areas. The effect of the recommendations made has varied from country to country. In Ireland, as we shall see in the next two chapters, the education/training interface has become more rather than less blurred and no satisfactory relationship between school-based transition courses and training has been established.

The second prong of activity in the field of inter-agency cooperation concentrated on local and regional initiatives. These were designed to facilitate joint courses, exchange of facilities and staff, and so on. In most cases, they involved the establishment of inter-agency teams or task forces which were able to plan and develop joint initiatives at district level. This type of informal local cooperation was very successful in extending the range of learning activities available to the schools while avoiding the competition endemic to relations between agencies at national level. Such locally-based task forces would appear to be very useful and can be established on a fairly informal basis without any major commitment of resources.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

This chapter has sought to define and bring together the principal outcomes of the two EC transition programmes. Very briefly, these can be reduced under their various headings as follows.

1. Philosophy of the Transition Curriculum:

- (a) The curriculum to be based on the perceived needs of the learner, in the form of the competencies - skills, knowledge and qualities - required to succeed in adult and working life;

- (b) the curriculum to be broadly-based, drawing upon a wide range of experiences and activities, and not confined to academic study or indeed preparation for work;
- (c) an element of pupil involvement in decision making through the process of negotiation.

2. The Methodology and Context of the Transition Curriculum:

- (a) Transition courses to be based on the principles of active learning, with as much as possible taking place outside of the formal classroom setting;
- (b) active learning to be implemented in the form of project work, interdisciplinary studies, individual and small group learning; to facilitate these methods, courses to be modular in nature and the role of curriculum coordinator to be developed to encourage their adoption;
- (c) a more adult social context between pupil and teacher to be striven for. Specifically, this should involve an element of student input into course management, negotiation on aspects of the curriculum and the development of a special role of transition tutor so that a close relationship between the group and at least one teacher can be encouraged;
- (d) the physical context of transition courses to be as different as possible from normal school; specifically suggested is the use of the out-of-school environment as much as possible and within the school a base area for the transition group equipped for project and group activity, and informally furnished.

3. The Content of the Transition Curriculum:

- (a) A greater utilisation of the world outside school as a learning resource to be achieved through the use of work experience and community / voluntary work; adequate placements involving student choice, and in some projects specified employer responsibilities and regular supervision; work experience to be followed by school-based briefing and debriefing and by education for enterprise in the form of a mini-company or mini-cooperative;
- (b) vocational and personal guidance to assume a more central role in the curriculum and to be integrated into other elements of the curriculum, preferably the education for enterprise / preparation for work component;
- (c) more effective information provision in a form accessible to young people to become a priority; this goal to be achieved by streamlining information provision into a 'one-stop shop', localising the information provided and involving young people as information providers to their peers;
- (d) gender equality to be a central objective of transition programmes and to be achieved through specific, 'compensation' courses for girls, boys, teachers and parents, through work experience for girls in non-traditional areas and through vocational and personal guidance;
- (e) social education to be a central part of transition education, involving active learning based on community work placements, surveys, visits, etc., as well as information programmes in

health and social issues and socialisation through other techniques including the arts and meditation/physical education.

4. The Out-of-School Environment and School - Community Liaison:

- (a) In order to facilitate use of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource, effective liaison between school and the community to be developed; this can be achieved in the form of a liaison group attached to each school or by means of a more formal structure embracing a district or region; among the roles which liaison groups can carry out are work experience organisation, establishing a mini-company project, twinning with industries, cooperation with appropriate agencies and creating opportunities for greater parent involvement in transition courses;
- (b) to further extend the range of out-of-school activities, to develop joint courses and the reciprocal use of facilities and to clear up ambiguities at the interface between education and training; national, regional and local liaison between the education and training services to be strengthened.

5. Assessment and Certification:

- (a) Assessment of transition courses to be flexible and ongoing; modular courses to be assessed by student profiles and records of achievement involving inputs from teachers but also employers, and perhaps parents and the pupils themselves; each pupil to get on completion of the course a record of the work done and their positive achievements; the profiles and records

of achievement to provide information not just on academic results but on skills learned and personal qualities displayed;

(b) certification to be validated by reputable agencies other than the school, preferably at regional or national level, and employers, training agencies and end users to be encouraged to respect and accept transition course certification.

These points represent a synthesis of the main outcomes of the fifty nine pilot projects of the two transition programmes. Although there is little empirical research to validate the conclusion that any or all of these measures are necessary for successful transition/vocational preparation courses, the evidence of the projects, the opinions of the evaluators and perhaps above all the fact that these themes recur in so many projects, seem to indicate their importance. Therefore the extent to which these policies and practices are being implemented represents a reasonable yardstick by which to judge the quality of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme on offer in Irish schools. In the following chapters I will examine the influence of the above outcomes on the policy and planning of the Department of Education in relation to the VPT programme and in subsequent chapters I will report on an empirical study designed to establish the extent to which schools have been willing or able to adopt these approaches in the construction of their VPT courses.

CHAPTER TEN NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For an account of this process and the way in which it has progressed throughout the 1980s, see Jon Langlo and Kevin Lillis (eds), Vocationalizing Education. An international perspective. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988).
2. EC, First Action Programme, Final Programme Report, Part A.
3. For the most recent repetition of these arguments, see Kathleen Lynch, The Hidden Curriculum. (Lewes: The Falmer Press, 1989).
4. EC, Second Action Programme, Final Programme Report. (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1988).
5. For accounts of the initiatives of individual projects in the second programme, see EC, Second Transition Programme, Innovations Nos 1-39.
6. For a full analysis of the philosophy of transition education as it is developed in the literature generated by the two programmes, see chapter two of this work.
7. T.G. Gaden, "On the Participants' Identification with his Activity and the Value of Specialization in Post Primary Education", (PhD dissertation, National University of Ireland, 1985).
8. For a full account of the work of the two transition programmes in these fields, see chapter three of this work.
9. EC, Second Transition Programme, Teacher Training Strategies from the Second Transition Programme. (Brussels: IFAPLAN, 1986).
10. For an account of developments and initiatives in this area in the course of the transition programmes, see chapter four of this work.
11. For an account of developments and initiatives in this area in the course of the transition programmes, see chapter five of this work.
12. For an account of developments and initiatives in this area in the course of the transition programmes, see chapter six of this work.
13. For an account of developments and initiatives in this area in the course of the transition programmes, see chapter seven of this work.
14. For an account of developments and initiatives in this area in the course of the transition programmes, see chapter eight of this work.

15. EC, Second Transition Programme, Transition Education for the 90s.
(Brussels, IFAPLAN, 1989), pp 18-19.
16. Second Transition Programme, Innovations. Nos 1 - 39
17. See chapter nine of this work.

PART II

THE RATIONALE AND CURRICULUM OF THE
VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME
IN IRISH POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

Part I of this work attempted to isolate and define the key curricular initiatives in the field of transition education developed in the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes. In a sense the purpose of this exercise was to obtain a picture of what might be described as the 'European ideal' in terms of the provision of alternative programmes, perhaps for all pupils, but certainly for those least well served by a traditional academic course. The most significant elements of this ideal, as I perceive them, are drawn together in chapter ten.

Part II of this work will endeavour to do two things. Firstly, it will examine the curriculum theory and practice outlined by the Irish Department of Education to underpin the establishment of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, type I. This programme, set up in 1984, purported to be a response to pressures and needs within Ireland arising from growing youth unemployment and the clear necessity for alternative pathways within the education system. However, these pressures and needs were of course not just an Irish but a EC-wide phenomenon. They were responsible for the establishment of the First and Second Transition Programmes, for demands from the EC for action from the member States and for the provision of funds through the European Social Fund to undertake new initiatives. Therefore, VPTP I, although operating only in Ireland, must be viewed in a EC-wide context. Its establishment owed much to both EC pressure for improved education and

training for early school-leavers and to European Social Fund (ESF) monies. Consequently, as we shall see, see the official rhetoric surrounding it sought very clearly to place it within the framework of the 'EC transition ideal' and to suggest that curriculum practice would be influenced by the first EC transition programmes then just concluded. What we wish to examine in Part II of this work is the extent to which VPTP I has or has not succeeded in turning the initiatives of the two transition programmes into concrete curricular action. In the light of the result of this assessment, we will evaluate the level of effectiveness of VPTP I as a transition education programme.

Secondly, by examining the extent to which the EC ideal has translated into Irish practice in the case of VPTP I, we will also hope to achieve a further goal. I wish to throw some light on the process whereby strategic planning and curriculum experimentation at a broad international level is incorporated or not as the case may be into initiatives at national and later at school level. Chapter eleven will examine the national picture, in terms of the response of the central educational authorities in Ireland to the EC transition experience. Chapter thirteen will seek to measure the extent to which the EC transition experience, mediated through the Irish policy makers, is finally translated into action in the schools.

What we hope to discover, therefore, is more than just whether the two EC transition programmes have significantly influenced VPTP I in Ireland, although this is our primary aim. However, in a broader sense we hope also to evaluate the process of international to national to local transfer of key curricular concepts and the extent to which, as it were, elements may be lost in translation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND PREPARATION PROGRAMME: RATIONALE AND CURRICULUM THEORY

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter of the dissertation will focus on the post-Group/Intermediate Certificate Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP I) introduced into Irish second level schools in 1984. The origins, establishment and underlying rationale of the programme will be described and the curriculum as outlined by the Department of Education will be analysed. The overall purpose of this chapter is to compare the official thinking with regard to VPTP in terms of both curriculum theory and practice with the theory and practice of transition education as developed in the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes. The following chapter will then consider the actual implementation of the VPTP in the schools in the light of the curriculum initiatives produced by the pilot projects of the two transition programmes.

The staggering rise in unemployment, and particularly in youth unemployment, which has occurred throughout the EC in the past decade has generated various initiatives to combat the crisis'. The resources of the European Social Fund (ESF) have been greatly increased and several Resolutions of the Council of Ministers of the Community have provided a framework within which these funds may be made available. These responses have largely centered on the supply side of the labour

market and specifically on increased provision of vocational training, work experience and temporary employment schemes.

The Council of Ministers' Resolution of 11 July 1983 is of particular importance in that it laid down specific measures to assist young people affected by the economic conditions. Member States were directed to

...do their utmost to ensure that all young people who so wish and particularly those without educational or vocational qualifications can benefit over a period of at least six months and if possible one year following full-time compulsory education from a full-time programme involving basic training and/or an initial work experience to prepare them for an occupation².

This directive formed the basis of the 'social guarantee' policy. Unemployed young people became the main target of the European Social Fund which was to devote 75% of its resources to the training or employment of the under twenty-fives. All of Ireland was categorised as a priority area for the ESF funding³. In effect, the 'social guarantee' policy represented an effort to coordinate provision for the most disadvantaged school-leavers. Its core object was to put in place a system whereby all young people with few or no qualifications who remained unemployed for a minimum period after leaving school would be offered a place on a relevant training or work experience programme. The process of implementing the guarantee began in September 1985 in respect of the young people who had left school in the 1984/85 school year.

Within Ireland, the economic crisis and other factors had already resulted in several initiatives in the years before the European Council Resolution of 1983. For example, the manpower and training agencies had developed a series of programmes based on different combinations of temporary employment, work experience, vocational training and general education⁴. In Vocational and Community/Comprehensive post primary schools, the Department of Education established in 1977 a 'pre-employment' programme including work experience, vocational preparation and general education. The introduction of the 'social guarantee' policy and the availability of ESF funding from 1983 onwards allowed for the expansion of these provisions. In 1984, the pre-employment programme was for the first time made available to all post primary schools, and the students taking the programme were paid an allowance of some £30 per month. It was renamed the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP) and was deemed to fulfil the State's responsibilities under the social guarantee.

The increase in total numbers of pupils taking the programme and schools offering it was dramatic - by 1984/85, there were 15,807 pupils in 380 schools involved in the VPTP. By 1985/86, the figures were 414 schools and 18,960 pupils, and the figures for 1986/87 were 440 schools and 19,935 pupils. The figures for subsequent years up to 1990/91 are given in chapter thirteen⁵.

In the context of this thesis, it is important to note that by no means all of the pupils mentioned above as taking part in VPTP were drawn from the less able, potential early school-leaver group. Rather surprisingly

in view of the stated purpose of the European Social Fund monies which underpinned the VPTP, the Department made the programme available as a post-Leaving Certificate option. From 1984 on, these post-Leaving Certificate students made up a significant proportion of the total VPTP population. For example, in 1984/85, forty six percent of the cohort were post Leaving Certificate and, as figures for subsequent years given in chapter thirteen show, this element of VPTP continued to grow due to a shortage of third level places in the late 1980s. The programme offered to these pupils is very different from the post-Intermediate / Group Certificate VPTP. It is more vocational in nature, and naturally less concerned with general education. This programme became designated as VPTP 2 and is now more usually called a Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) course. It is important to note that the discussion of VPTP in the remainder of this chapter and, indeed, thesis, refers to VPTP type I - that is, the post-Intermediate / Group Certificate programme aimed at low achievers and early school-leavers.

VPTP: Establishment:

Any account of the establishment of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme must begin with some reference to its predecessor - the pre-employment course introduced in 1977. This is because, despite promises to the contrary, little of substance other than the name was altered when pre-employment became VPTP in 1984.

In April 1977, the Department of Education circulated a document to all vocational, comprehensive and community schools inviting applications from those wishing to run a pre-employment course. Voluntary secondary schools were not invited to participate. The guidelines set out by the Department stated that the pre-employment courses were designed for pupils

...who would ordinarily leave school to seek employment on attaining the school leaving age, but who failing to get employment would return to school to attend a course specifically aimed at assisting them in their efforts to secure a job⁶.

The general aim of the course as described in the Department guidelines was that of 'bridging the gap between the values and experiences normally part of a traditional education and those current in the adult world of work'⁷. The focus was clearly upon vocational preparation, and the inculcation of work-related practical skills was the primary consideration in the programme formulation.

However, despite the undoubted vocational emphasis, the pre-employment course was not entirely perceived as training rather than education. The Department's guidelines specified three broad areas to be included in the course - technical studies, work experience and general studies. Technical studies modules were offered in areas such as motor engineering, general light engineering, building construction, retailing and office and secretarial training. The work experience element of the programme was to involve the pupils being placed in local industry

throughout the school year for one day a week where their progress would be supervised and monitored by a course coordinator²³.

Included under the heading of general studies were the subjects Mathematics, Physical Education, Communications, Social Studies, Industrial Studies and Irish Studies. The orientation given to these subjects in the Departmental guidelines was clearly different to that obtaining in the traditional academic certificate programmes. They were to be taught in a more practical, less theoretical way, with the main aim being defined as improving the basic skills of pupils in the areas of literacy and numeracy and generally enhancing their ability to cope with everyday and working life. The programme also placed a certain amount of importance on the 'personal and social development' of young people²⁴. About eighty schools offered pre-employment courses in the first year of its existence and the following year, 1978, the number rose to about 120 schools. The figure remained at this level until 1984²⁵.

The extension of the pre-employment programme into all second level schools was the next major step in the development of transition education in Ireland. The 1983 Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the European Community previously referred to provided an injection of money to the ESF in order to facilitate the provision of full-time, one or two year courses which would prepare school-leavers, particularly those with poor qualifications, for entry to the world of work.

The Irish Department of Education submitted a proposal for funding for a 'new' school-based vocational preparation programme. The programme, according to the Department of Education, would have two functions. It would act as

...both a terminal programme for those making the transition from school to working life and as part of an alternative senior cycle programme for those for whom the existing programme is not suitable¹¹.

The new course outline was accepted by the European Commission and was awarded grant aid from the European Social Fund. The Department of Education issued a circular to all second level schools inviting them to participate in the new Vocational Preparation and Training Programme which would begin in September 1984. For the first time, voluntary secondary schools were permitted to offer the course.

The existing pre-employment programme had been a popular one. Over 45% of eligible schools had offered it, and a survey of voluntary secondary school principals revealed that over 60% of them were interested in providing the programme¹². For this reason, and also perhaps because of the relative haste with which the new programme was drawn up, the VPTP, despite the new title and its availability to voluntary secondary schools within the free education system, contained only minor modifications and expansions of the existing pre-employment programme.

The revised programme proved even more popular than its predecessor, with a surprisingly high take-up rate among voluntary secondary

schools¹³. This phenomenon may be viewed as a reflection of the wider range of student abilities for which these schools have had to cater in consequence of the present recession. Also perhaps it is as a result of a greater appreciation of the needs of these less able pupils and the unsuitability of existing provision to meet them. The extent to which the allowance of £300 per annum payable to the participating pupils has attracted candidates to the programme is hard to judge, but it is likely to have provided a number of pupils with a further incentive to remain in school.

In the academic year 1986/87, a total of 440 post primary schools received sanction to run a VPTP of either type 1 or type 2, or both. Of these, 172 were secondary schools, 227 were vocational schools and 41 were community/comprehensive schools. Close to 20,000 pupils were taking part in the programme¹⁴. This level of school participation demonstrates beyond doubt that there was a widely felt need in many schools for programmes of this kind.

Several other factors have contributed to the expansion of the VPTP type 1. An extensive piece of research carried out by the Department of Education in 1985/86 reveals that the programme has been assisted by a belief on the part of school principals that participation was a significant help to young people in obtaining employment. In the survey, more than 80% of school principals believed this to be so¹⁵. The same survey appears to offer considerable justification for this view, in that 63% of participants were in employment six months after the end of the programme. A further 14% were on further vocational

training programmes and 6% had returned to full-time education. Only 17% of those surveyed were unemployed¹⁵. This outcome compares quite well with the status of those who had completed the Leaving Certificate six months previously and is dramatically superior to that of pupils who left school with limited or no educational qualifications. Since the majority of participants in VPTP should, at least in theory, be drawn from the latter group, the enhancement of their employment prospects which involvement in the programmes generates would at first glance appear to be extremely significant. However, a closer look at the same survey reveals that nearly half (46%) of the participants in the VPTP are 18 years of age or older, have completed the Leaving Certificate, and are in fact taking a VPTP 2, while only 5% have no final educational qualifications whatever¹⁷. The survey makes no effort to distinguish between the employment outcomes of VPTP 1 and VPTP 2. These figures render the evidence of enhanced employment prospects for the less able very tenuous and indeed raise many questions about how resources intended by the European Commission to be aimed primarily at the least educationally favoured groups are being used in practice.

School principals' support for VPTP may also be influenced by the fact that the programme is well funded and thus can ease the overall financial situation of the school. In the case of voluntary secondary schools, normal *per capita* grants are paid in respect of pupils attending VPTP courses. In addition, these grants are augmented by the payment of a special grant of £125 per annum per pupil in respect of materials, equipment and other expenses associated with the running cost of the course.

It is probable that national budgetary considerations have also played a role in the growth of VPTP. An increase in the numbers participating in the programme fulfils a dual purpose in that it brings about an inflow of EC funds to Ireland while education and training provision for less qualified school-leavers is expanded. As VPTP involves an element of work experience, the Department of Education is also able to draw on monies collected through the Youth Employment Levy, a 1% levy on all income which is used to fund expenditure on employment, training, work experience and job creation programmes for young people. In 1984, the Department of Education received £25.5 million from this levy and received £28 million in 1985¹³.

The growth of VPTP, then, may partly reflect the fact that it is underwritten by the European Community and therefore suits the interests of both the Department of Education and the individual schools. The financial inducements to participate also no doubt play a part in making the programme popular among young people. However, the Department of Education survey quoted above indicates that in the case of both schools and students the over-riding factor which has encouraged the expansion of the programme is its vocational orientation and its work experience element. These elements appeal strongly to young people who are frustrated by traditional schooling, have poor employment prospects and welcome any introduction, however partial, to the world of work. However, the extent to which the needs of these young people are in fact met by the programme offered requires a great deal of further consideration.

1. VPTP: UNDERLYING RATIONALE:

The official thinking which underpinned the establishment of the VPTP in 1984 is contained in the Department of Education document Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme (Vocational Preparation Programme), 1984¹⁹. The picture which emerges from this document is that of a proposal assembled with haste in response to the problem of rising youth unemployment and the opportunity to obtain funding from the European Social Fund. To expedite the process, the existing pre-employment programmes, the effectiveness of which had never been the subject of any serious analysis, research or educational debate, was renamed, slightly remodelled and presented as a new proposal.

There is no attempt to hide the fact that the impetus for the extension of vocational preparation provision came from the EC rather than from the Irish Department of Education. The 1983 Resolution of the EC Council of Ministers which called upon member States to ensure 'that a full-time programme involving basic training and/or work experience to prepare them for an occupation would be available to all young people who require it' is quoted and the implication that VPTP is to be the primary Irish response to this request is clear²⁰.

From this point on, the Department document uncritically reflects official EC thinking on the issues of youth employment, vocational preparation and transition education. This thinking is best illustrated by the following statement from the EC Commission's Action Plan to Promote Youth Employment quoted in support of the VPTP in Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme.

A lack of appropriate training is often seen as a factor in unemployment, either it is argued because an inadequate level of training inhibits economic activity and thus depresses employment or because there is too often a mismatch between training and available jobs.

It is suggested that the provision of 'appropriate training' can eliminate this deficiency and thus reduce unemployment.

As I have indicated in chapter six, the validity of this logic was even in 1984 being seriously questioned by several projects in the First Transition Programme. Continuing high levels of youth unemployment appeared to many to undermine the rationality of focusing the transition curriculum almost exclusively on the world of work. As a result, general education and personal development had emerged as the central themes in several such projects. This change of emphasis became even more noticeable in the work of many Second Programme projects and began to a limited extent to influence the transition literature as a whole. However, despite the staggering levels of youth unemployment in Ireland, no sign of thinking along these lines is evident in Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme. The role of general and social education and of personal development remains peripheral, completely subservient to the acquisition of work-related skills and attitudes. Nor, even more fundamentally, is there any suggestion that the entire problem of youth unemployment and associated demands for increased vocational preparation is largely a function of the national and Community policies being pursued by member States, and therefore unlikely to be resolved by even the most sophisticated treatment of symptoms while these basic policies

remain unchanged. In short, the Department document raises no questions and challenges no assumptions.

Consequently, in line with then current EC transition education theory, the centrality of instrumental, employment-related considerations is reflected throughout Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme. However, there is little evidence that the implications of this approach have been thought through. For example, it is suggested that the VPTP will improve the employability of young people by making good certain shortcomings in their basic skills. The skills in question are not defined, no evidence of the alleged shortcomings is adduced, no effort is made to demonstrate that these skills are in short supply in the Irish economy or that such shortages have caused the present high levels of youth unemployment. Nonetheless, between Preparation for Working Life, Work Experience, Vocational Studies and the 'practical' areas of General Studies such as Mathematics and Communications, the overwhelming content of the programme is built entirely on this 'skills shortage' supposition.

Evidence is offered which demonstrates the relative disadvantage in the labour market of those with no educational qualifications, and such young people are identified as the prime target group of VPTP. Yet there is no proposal to formally assess or certify those who have completed the programme or to award them a recognised qualification of any sort. Moreover, as I have already pointed out, by making the programme available as a post-Leaving Certificate option, the Department has allowed almost half of the places to be taken up by pupils who have completed the senior cycle and have ~~the~~ obtained a valuable

qualification. At the same time, only 5% of the total participants have no formal educational qualifications at all. Moreover, the trend in this direction is increasing and by far the greater proportion of funding for VPTP may soon be directed to the post-Leaving Certificate sector. The low status attached to VPTP by the Department of Education is further illustrated by the failure to extend the programme to two years' duration, as was originally envisaged, and by a recent decision to end the payment of allowances to pupils pursuing the programme. There is thus no question of VPTP being genuinely perceived as an alternative senior cycle programme of potentially equal importance to the traditional academic courses.

The influence of EC transition education theory is also evident in another aspect of the contents of Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme, that relating to the nature of the vocational skills training which pupils participating in the programme should undergo. Traditional vocational training programmes are defined in the Department document as those which were 'built around the concept of specific vocational skills, which it was believed were a pre-requisite for employment'. In contrast, the new VPTP is designed to concentrate on 'general competencies' in such areas as literacy and numeracy and 'generalisable manipulative skills', rather than specialist training related to specific vocational fields. In the development of the vocational studies elements of the programme, a similar, non-specific approach based on the identification of 'broad generic skills' is recommended.

The 'general competencies' approach is further illustrated in the guidelines for the individual modules of vocational training which are recommended. The section on Hotel, Catering and Tourism Studies, for example, states that

this module is not intended to provide professional level training but rather to enable the student to 'taste' and to explore a range of vocational possibilities within the hotel, catering and tourism industry²⁶.

The preamble to the guidelines for the Construction Studies module speaks of enabling young people to '...explore the range of job opportunities available in construction'²⁷. Therefore, it appears to be intended that more specific training be left to the training agencies or employers. However, no borderline or interface is defined between school-based and further training and no logical progression between the two is offered. Indeed, there is no provision for the training received on a VPTP programme to be acknowledged as an entry requirement (or even as an advantage) to more specific training in the same field, and the evidence suggests that the Leaving Certificate is given much greater weight than participation in VPTP in the allocation of further training places²⁸.

The level of training offered in the various vocational studies areas of VPTP is not then in any way comparable to the training offered in a recognised apprenticeship scheme or by the training agencies, nor does it offer access to such training. Rather it is envisaged in terms of the terminology used widely in the transition literature and echoed

throughout the Departmental document - 'tasting' 'sampling' and 'vocational exploration' of the various types of work available, with a view to 'informing career choice', the acquisition of 'generalisable manipulative skills' and the enhancement of 'vocationally relevant personal qualities and attributes'.

The cultivation in the participants of certain personal qualities, particularly those valued by employers, is another aim of VPTP strongly demonstrating the influence of EC transition thinking. The following statement, drawn from the Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme illustrates the point.

Generalisable skills, together with positive attitudes towards learning, adaptability and initiative will be the characteristics most sought after by employers²⁹.

Accordingly, it is argued that VPTP should reflect these requirements and skill expectations by striving for '...the cultivation of skills, disciplines and attitudes which have a general applicability to any work situation'³⁰. The efforts of schools to develop these personal qualities are to be augmented by the learning experiences provided by work experience. The aim of the work experience element of the programme is stated as being to provide

an experience of the nature and realities of working life and of the skills needed for success at work and an understanding of the relationship between these skills and realities and the content of the overall programme³¹.

Each of the above quotations is drawn almost verbatim from the transition literature.

A final area of similarity which deserves mention is the absolute failure of both the transition literature and the Department of Education to acknowledge the reality of youth unemployment. While purporting to be primarily concerned with a needs-based approach to educational provision, neither seems willing to countenance any serious attempt to prepare pupils for the psychological stresses of unemployment or to suggest that, through social or political education, young people might be made aware of societal as opposed to personal responsibility for unemployment. It is striking how little consideration is given to education for leisure, community service, voluntary work or other alternative occupations to fulltime, paid employment. The tone of Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme firmly reflects a consensus view of unemployment, which tends to blame the individual for his plight and, in common with its European model, resolutely ignores critiques which emphasise economic policies or the organisation of society as significant factors.

In summary, the considerable influence of transition education theory on the underlying rationale of the VPTP is clearly visible throughout Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme. In these circumstances, one might then have reasonably expected that the curriculum - aims, methodology, organisation and content - elaborated in the same document would also reflect the developments of the First and Second Transition Programmes. However, this expectation, as we shall see when we turn our attention to

the curriculum outline offered by the Department, does not appear to be fulfilled.

2. VPTP: CURRICULUM:

The foundation document of the VPTP states the Department of Education's intention of undertaking 'a fundamental review of existing preparation for work programmes'. This appears to imply that a significant analysis of the pre-employment course was to be initiated and appropriate curriculum developments incorporated into the new VPTP. In the light of the fact that European transition education theory had made such a deep impact on the underlying thinking evident in the VPTP foundation document, and also that the results of the First European Action Programme on Transition from School to Adult and Working Life were then available, it might have been expected that the revised VPTP curriculum would be quite different from its predecessor. In fact, the 'fundamental review' mentioned above has never taken place and the curriculum of the VPTP is essentially the same as that of the pre-employment course. The extent to which developments and innovations pioneered on the EC pilot projects in such areas of the transition curriculum as methodology, context, content and structures have been ignored in the planning of the VPTP form the central theme of the remainder of this chapter.

The VPTP is structured into three areas, which are described as inter-related and interdependent, as follows.

	<u>% of Time</u>
1. Vocational Studies:	40
2. Preparation for Working Life: School Based Work Preparation Programme	
Work Experience	25
3. General Studies: Communications	
Mathematics	
Education for Living	35 ³³

1. Vocational Studies:

The area of vocational studies is divided into 'seven basic course designations or generic skill areas' from which schools are required to select one. The seven are Engineering, Construction, Agriculture, Services, Crafts and Design, Commercial and Electronics. Provision is made for schools to submit programmes in other designations such as science, instrumentation and entertainment³⁴.

As I have previously indicated, schools are instructed 'to place the emphasis on general skills within each sector'. It is made clear that the VPTP participant is not being admitted to anything like full craft training. Apart from this instruction, there is little to guide schools in terms of methodology or content, and no reference is made to innovations developed in the First Transition Programme. For example,

there is no indication that the modules should be structured or taught in any significantly difficult way from similar subjects on traditional Certificate courses. The use of active learning methodology in the form of projects, mini-companies or mini-cooperatives is not mentioned. Neither is there any reference to the possibility of utilising the out-of-school environment in the form of skilled volunteers to teach aspects of the programme, or twinning with industries to promote joint projects, or the sharing of facilities and operation of joint programmes with training agencies, community organisations and so on.

A very general reference is made to the strategy emphasised by many pilot projects of gearing the vocational preparation element of the programme to the strengths and opportunities of the local economy - 'when selecting the areas of study the school authority should take note of local employment difficulties'³⁶. However, there is no suggestion of a structure - such as a local liaison committee drawn from different sectors of economic and social life - through which opportunities to do so might be identified, and no question of additional resources to equip schools to operate in new vocational areas.

As a result, only a tiny minority of schools have been willing or able to move away from the traditional vocational training designations. For example, while Commerce was offered by 73% of all schools (this reflects the fact that many VPT programmes are merely traditional secretarial courses under a new name), Construction by 34% and Engineering by 34%, only 7% offered Electronics, 6% Science, 9% Agriculture and 12% Craft and Design³⁶. Overall, in the words of the Department's own survey,

'schools showed a traditional and often stereotyped approach to the provision of vocational designations' and the aim of including 'a significant element of training in the new technologies' in all VPT programmes is far from being realised³⁷.

These criticisms apply particularly, according to the survey to single sex schools. This outcome would appear to be at odds with what the Department describes as 'one of the key goals of the new programme', namely, to broaden the educational aspirations of females by 'providing all participants with the same range of educational possibilities and training opportunities in order to expose girls to a range of occupational experiences beyond those traditionally offered in existing secretarial programmes'. In practice, only Commerce, Services and a small number of Craft and Design modules are being offered in all-girl schools.

None of these failures can be regarded as surprising given the striking indifference to the lessons of the EC transition programmes displayed in the Department's guidelines in the areas of vocational structures.

2. Preparation for Working Life:

This section of the programme consists in two elements, work experience and a school-based programme of work preparation, involving areas such as job search, interview skills and so forth. Twenty five percent of the programme time is devoted to preparation for working life - 20%, or

one day per week, to work experience (this can also be operated on a block release basis) and 5% to the school-based element³³¹⁹.

A similar disjunction between the acknowledgement offered to the theory of transition education on the one hand, and the extent to which the lessons of the two EC transition programmes are implemented in the realm of curriculum determination on the other, is also evident in the area of preparation for working life. A number of examples will illustrate the point.

Firstly, the foundation document is by no means clear on the purpose of work experience placements as perceived by the Department of Education. As I have indicated in chapter four of this work, pilot project experience defines three distinct goals, which depending on the one chosen require very different approaches to the organisation and planning of the resulting work experience. The first - significant on-the-job vocational training, involving sufficient initiation into a particular skill or craft to provide a realistic introduction to the nature of the work involved - requires wide student choice of placement, considerable time in the placement chosen and close supervision and tuition by skilled persons in the chosen workplace. The second - the use of work experience to allow students to explore a range of vocational possibilities - also requires wide student choice together with regular movement within a range of good quality placements in different vocational fields. The third - the acquisition by the pupil of experience of the nature and realities of working life and the complexities of relationships in the workplace - requires considerable

time spent in one placement, with less emphasis on the quality of training or the type of work involved.

The Department of Education makes it clear that the first goal is not considered applicable to VPTP. No detailed consideration is given to the provision of student choice or of supervision and training in the workplace; no onus is placed on employers to provide these services and no definition of the types or standard of work which might be considered suitable for pupils is attempted. Clearly, work experience is not perceived in the context of significant job training. However, the foundation document does attempt to encompass the latter two goals within the confines of the VPTP scheme.

References to 'tasting' and 'sampling' of the various types of employment available, together with the recommendation that 'work experience should be related to the vocational sectors of study chosen', indicate that a key goal of work experience is perceived by the Department to be the facilitation of informed vocational decisions by the pupils⁴⁰. This emphasis is reinforced by Departmental instructions to the effect that 'work stations must be carefully chosen and employers and supervisors briefed on the aims of the programme'⁴¹.

In practice, the nature of the work experience provision which has emerged appears to be largely useless from the point of view of vocational 'tasting'. Far from carefully choosing their work stations, a recent survey concludes that 'schools have to be content with whatever work placements they can get'⁴⁰. Often these are not enough to go

around and school-based work simulation has to be provided as one alternative. Where there are enough places, the nature and status of the work offered is characteristically that of an unskilled, manual nature, of little value in encouraging vocational aspirations and assisting vocational choices.

A close reading of the foundation document indicates that despite aspirations to the contrary, the Department of Education realised that this situation was the likely outcome. For example, we are told that while it is 'desirable that each participant should gain experience of more than one level or area of work...local conditions may dictate otherwise'⁴³. And, again, 'the range of industrial sectors involved will be determined largely by the willingness of local business people to cooperate'⁴⁴. Thus, the task of providing placements is left entirely in the hands of individual schools and the goodwill of employers.

In effect, the disinclination of the Department of Education to provide a coherent national or regional framework for the provision and coordination of work experience has meant that the second goal defined has largely been abandoned. Models of a more effective approach are available within the context of the pilot projects and indeed within the general education systems of other member States but have been ignored. For example, the 'SPIRAL II' project⁴⁵ at Shannon, Ireland and the work experience/guidance project at Aalborg, Denmark⁴⁶, have both succeeded in providing significant numbers of high quality placements drawn from a range of vocational fields. In each case, the key to success was the

cooperative but structured involvement of the employers through school - community liaison networks, organised by coordinators with adequate time and resources.

In rural areas, where limited placement opportunities exist, the solution may lie in the use of residential hostels as bases for periods of work experience in other regions where placements are more readily available. This approach was very successfully pioneered by the 'Schulundheim' project⁴⁷ in Germany. These projects, being local or regional in nature, had to depend on a cooperative approach. However, in other cases - the Federal Republic of Germany, for example - employers, organised into a network of local school - industry liaison groups, are often *required* to provide placements and also specific levels of training and standards of supervision⁴⁸. Given the constant complaints voiced by Irish employers regarding the failure of schools to prepare young people adequately for the world of work, it does not seem unreasonable that they might themselves also be required to contribute to improvements in this area through the provision of suitable work experience placements.

In the light of the above, it appears reasonable to argue that only the third of the three goals outlined previously is, in reality, being addressed by the work experience provision of the VTP as designed by the Department of Education. Pupils (or at least those who get work experience at all as opposed to work simulation), while not undergoing any significant level of training or gaining access to a broad range of different vocational experiences, do at least obtain an opportunity to

become socialised to the realities and problems of work and the skills needed to survive in the workplace. Thus one, if only one, of the stated Departmental aims is being met - 'to gain experience of the work involved and establish proper relationships in the work situation'⁴⁹.

However, such work experience - based largely on unchosen, unskilled manual placements, involving no training and little supervision - has, as I have indicated in chapter four, come in for growing criticism in the course of the evaluation of the two transition programmes, and from educationalists analysing parallel initiatives in various countries. Such critics allege the existence of a hidden curriculum in vocational preparation courses which involved this type of work experience. The hidden purpose is said to be to socialise young people to aspire only to types of work which are lowly paid, insecure and of low status, and which contain a high incidence of part-time or casual working - in short, that students are, in the words of one critic, being 'geared for sub-employment or unemployment'⁵⁰. Such criticisms have, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 4, had an impact on some projects. In particular, they have encouraged a move away from work experience in low quality placements to community service projects and cooperative ventures. However, there is no indication in Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme that the Department is aware of these issues, or takes any position on them. On the contrary, it is significant that the VPTP scheme as outlined by the Department makes realistically possible only the most basic form of work experience and makes no reference to alternatives such as community service.

Before leaving the issue of work preparation as dealt with in Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme, one more point may be worthy of note. In the school-based element of work preparation which amounts to about two class periods per week, the range of items to be studied closely reflects similar programmes developed by various pilot projects. For example, the guidelines state that each student should acquire a knowledge of 'the economy, of employment, of essential institutions and public services and of the structures of management and labour'⁵¹. However, once again no allowance is made for the teaching to take place by way of integrated, project-based initiatives such as a mini-company/mini-cooperative which are central to education for enterprise programmes recommended in the transition literature. Moreover, and most importantly, there is none of the emphasis on the study of local as opposed to the national economy which has been shown by the Italian 'territorio' projects to be most effective, both in developing ideas and suggesting employment opportunities.

3. General Studies:

The third and final element of the VPTP is general studies. General studies consists in three areas: '1. Education for Living and Physical Education, 2. Communications, 3. Social Mathematics'⁵². The foundation document suggests that 'there is a high degree of inter-relationship between these sectors'. Teachers concerned with this element of the programme are accordingly urged to 'plan their work in consultation with one another'⁵³.

Little further guidance is offered to schools concerning the implementation of general studies. An indication is given that Education for Living should contain a programme of social education, religious education and physical education; while Communications might contain 'preparation in core literacy' (presumably in English), together with areas such as Irish Studies and Media Studies⁵⁴. No attempt is made to outline a basic syllabus, define appropriate content or offer guidance in the vital areas of teaching methodology, course context or learning strategies.

These omissions are particularly culpable, since the Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairne openly recognises that general studies has been in the past, and is likely to be in the future, the most problematic section of the programme for schools and teachers to implement. For example, it is suggested that 'further attempts to present these subjects in the traditional way may be doomed to failure. The experience with the present pre-employment courses bears this out'⁵⁵. The same problem is put even more starkly in a later section.

The General Studies area of the VPT course is bound to be the least acceptable and most difficult sector of the programme to implement, both for the young people and teachers alike, largely because of the similarity between the way it is taught and the previous school experience of the students. Participants regularly question the value of this part of the programme despite the importance placed on it by employers and it is necessary therefore...to ensure that participants fully appreciate the relevance of these topics to the entire programme⁵⁶.

In these statements, the Department explicitly recognises the validity of two central issues identified in the transition literature. First, the importance of making programmes relevant to the vocational and practical/social needs of the pupils and, second, the impossibility of effectively implementing even the most relevant of transition programmes through the medium of traditional modes of presentation which pupils have already rejected. Yet none of the range of solutions suggested to these problems by the experience of the pilot projects - for example, alternative physical and social contexts for courses, active teaching strategies, widespread use of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource, extensive personal and vocational guidance and appropriate information provision - is mentioned by the Department document or suggested as alternative approaches to schools for consideration.

Not surprisingly in these circumstances, the difficulties predicted by the Department in the implementation of the general studies element of the VPTP I appear to have come to pass. The detail of the situation in schools in this regard will be considered in the next chapter; but two indications of the present state of affairs will serve to illustrate the point. Firstly, Michael O'Donovan concludes his consideration of general studies in the VPTP by remarking on the feeling of unease among teachers working in the field about the 'extremely vague curriculum guidelines', the 'lack of a detailed syllabus, low status and poor pupil motivation'. He reports that teachers feel strongly the 'students' negative perception of their subject areas'⁵⁷. This teacher perception of negative student attitudes to the general studies programme is

confirmed by the Department's own survey in which the general studies area is consistently placed third, well behind work experience and vocational studies, in the preferences stated by past and present students for various aspects of the course²³. Clearly, significant interventions are needed to improve the effectiveness of general studies in the VPTP and to raise its status in the eyes of teachers and students alike.

Assessment Procedures:

The assessment and evaluation of student performance on the VPTP represents yet another area where Departmental provision is extremely vague. Once again, the significant work of many pilot projects in both transition programmes on the development of appropriate assessment procedures for transition courses has been ignored.

The Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme recommends that schools offering the VPTP should operate student evaluation along the following lines:

evaluation...should take the form of a folder containing information on all aspects of the course covered. This folder could include the following

- (i) a general statement covering duration, objectives, course structures and subjects taken
- (ii) outline syllabus material as supplied or as amended by school authorities
- (iii) material illustrative of work on the course as appropriate²³.

A number of points need to be made concerning the above. Firstly, although the Department purports to view the VPTP as an appropriate alternative senior cycle option for the less academically able and for those anxious to enter employment at once, there is no suggestion that a nationally or even regionally-based form of assessment or certification should be provided. Since research such as that of O'Donovan, for example, clearly indicates that the lack of assessment and certification reduces motivation both among teachers and students and tends 'to mark the programme as a lower-status one in the eyes of employers', it seems clear that VPTP is regarded in official circles as definitely an inferior alternative to the traditional Leaving Certificate⁶⁰.

This conclusion becomes even more inescapable when one considers the research evidence in relation to the type of evaluation actually proposed by the Department - unspecific and untested, school-based assessment. Studies by the Inner London Education Authority⁶¹ and by Jo Mortimore indicate clearly that employers tend to place little reliance on school-based assessments, references and reports⁶². Further research in this field by Ashton, Maguire and Garland reveals that even employers who are primarily concerned with personal characteristics often use educational certificates as evidence of these characteristics - for example, motivation, perseverance and determination⁶³. It seems clear, therefore, that assessment carried out and certified by individual schools - particularly when it amounts to little more than a statement of the objectives and content of the programme - is likely to be of

minimal value to VPTP students and may serve only to further widen the gap between their employment prospects and those of pupils with even poor Leaving Certificate results.

Interestingly, however, both the ILEA research mentioned above and the experience of many pilot projects indicate that employers might be willing to take school-based assessments seriously, but only if the assessment contains more detailed information about the student concerned than can be obtained from educational certificates or from a short interview. Specifically, employers were interested in two kinds of information. The first was a rigorously tested and clearly stated account of precisely what the pupil can do - the level of proficiency he has reached in the performance of particular skills. The second was an evaluation of the personal and interpersonal skills and the vocationally relevant traits or attributes of the prospective employee.

In response to these indications, various pilot projects developed test instruments and assessment methodologies - such as profiles and records of achievement - designed to meet both of these requirements. The resulting suggestions, although involving, as I have argued in chapter seven, certain unresolved ethical and practical issues, represent a coherent framework within which the Department might have elaborated a realistic school-based assessment system, preferably linked to some form of local, regional or national standardised certification. Once again, however, the work of the EC transition programmes has been ignored and schools are left with the choice of either implementing the largely worthless 'folder' system recommended by the Department or seeking out

or developing for themselves a more comprehensive assessment methodology. Moreover, since, as I have previously pointed out, no structures for inter-school or school - community liaison are provided for by the Department of Education, enterprising schools wishing to provide a broader based form of certification for their VPTP pupils must themselves seek the cooperation of other schools and agencies and provide the resources from their own limited budgets. How the schools have responded to these challenges will be considered in the next chapter.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

The main purpose of this chapter has been to analyse the official thinking which has informed the development of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in Ireland in order to assess the extent to which the underlying rationale and the curriculum practice elaborated have been influenced by the EC Action Programmes on Transition from School to Adult and Working Life.

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP) was introduced in 1984. It was developed in response to a Resolution of the European Council of Ministers of July 1983, which requested all member States to extend vocational preparation provision for disadvantaged young people and which made funds available from the ESF for this purpose. The VPTP was presented for funding purposes as a new programme, but in fact it

closely resembled the pre-employment course which had existed in certain second level schools since 1977. The take-up rate among schools and pupils for the 'new' programme was dramatic. By 1986/87, 440 post primary schools were providing a VPTP for in excess of 20,000 pupils. This rate of growth obviously reflects a widely felt need in many schools for alternative programmes. It also reflects Departmental support and encouragement for the programme which attracts funds to education both from the ESF and from the Youth Employment Levy.

The foundation document of the VPTP is entitled Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme and was published by the Department of Education in 1984. The underlying rationale expounded therein for the expansion and development of school-based vocational preparation closely reflects the then current official EC analysis and policy. This thinking can be summarised as follows. Schools do not provide appropriate vocational training or develop adequate practical skills in their students, and this failure is a significant factor in youth unemployment in that it results in the lack of a skilled workforce, and this inhibits economic activity. More relevant and vocationally-oriented programmes in schools can redress this deficiency and consequently reduce youth unemployment. Having accepted these assumptions uncritically, the foundation document proceeds to elaborate a curriculum theory for the VPTP which is strongly influenced by the literature of the First and Second Transition Programmes.

A number of examples are provided to illustrate the extent of this influence. One is the stress placed on non-specific forms of skills

training described as 'broad generic skills' or 'generalisable manipulative skills' - as opposed to craft or apprenticeship-type training - in the formulation of policy in the area of vocational studies. In the same field, the transition literature's concepts of vocational tasting and work exploration/sampling are clearly preferred to alternative approaches such as realistic on-the-job training or serious induction into skills or crafts.

A second example given is the emphasis accorded to the cultivation of personal and interpersonal qualities, and particularly those related to the world of work, among the key objectives of the programme. A third is the identification of the less academically able pupil with few or no educational qualifications as the group most lacking in vocationally relevant skills and consequently requiring affirmative interventions in their favour. It is noted, however, that *in practice* half of the places on the VPTP have been given to pupils who have completed the Leaving Certificate while only 5% of places have gone to those with no educational qualifications. Moreover, no coherent system of assessment or certification is envisaged for those completing the VPTP and no recognised progression to further, more skill-specific vocational training is offered - a situation which can only further enhance the advantages of those pupils pursuing traditional academic programmes. The disjunction between rhetoric and practice becomes ever larger when we turn to the curriculum of the VPTP elaborated in Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme.

Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme suggests that the curriculum of the new programme will be formulated in the light of a fundamental review of the effectiveness of existing work preparation courses. Since the theory elaborated by the EC transition programmes had such a major impact on the official thinking behind VPTP, one would have expected that the practice developed by the same programmes would also have a profound influence on this 'fundamental' curriculum review. However, the review never took place. The VPTP curriculum outlined in the foundation document is largely the same as that of its predecessor, the pre-employment course, and the experimentation, initiatives, experience and results of the EC transition programme pilot projects were largely ignored. Examples are then provided of ways in which, within each of the three elements of VPTP - vocational studies, preparation for working life and general studies - valuable innovations pioneered by the pilot projects have been overlooked and discredited and inconsistent approaches retained.

For example, in the realm of vocational studies, little encouragement is given to schools to diversify into new areas of study or to adopt new teaching strategies or course structures. They are exhorted to take note of local economic opportunities and to provide encouragement for girls to work in non-traditional areas, but no indication is given of how this might be achieved. Pilot project experience, which shows that most schools can only hope to progress in these directions through cooperation, joint course or twinning schemes with industry, training agencies and other institutions, and through utilisation of the out-of-school environment organised by means of local liaison networks, is not

mentioned. Active learning methodologies such as mini-companies which can enhance the relevance of vocational studies and encourage their linkage with the rest of the programme, are overlooked and there is no suggestion that teaching methodology or context should differ in any way from those of traditional schooling. Not surprisingly, the vocational studies area has as a result remained locked into a traditional stereotyped approach, and the exposure of girls to a wider range of vocational opportunities remains a pious aspiration.

It is clear from the foundation document that the Department sees work experience in two ways. Firstly, it speaks of allowing the pupil access to a range of vocational experience which will inform his decision-making concerning career choice. Secondly, it sees work experience as a mechanism for making the pupil aware of the realities of working life and the complexities of the workplace. However, the evidence is unmistakable that in practice the first goal is not being achieved. Schools find it very difficult to get adequate placements of any quality and therefore it is impossible to allow pupils any choice of work experience or movement from one chosen vocational field to another. Therefore, as a mechanism for vocational exploration designed to inform future decisions, VPTP work experience is of little value. Pilot project experience indicates that cooperative structures can be established on a local or regional basis through which adequate good quality placements can be made available. Alternatively, employers can be encouraged on a national basis or compelled to provide suitable work experience for pupils. Neither course appears to be of interest to the Department of Education.

The evidence also shows that what placements are available tend to be of low quality - repetitious, manual labour with no training and little supervision. Many pilot projects preferred to involve pupils in community or environmental projects, rather than risk 'socialising' them to accept poor quality work as their natural destination in life. Such criticisms of this type of work experience appear to have no impact on Departmental thinking and there is no suggestion that community-based alternatives might be pursued where only low quality placements can be obtained.

In the area of general studies, the failure of the Department of Education to learn from the work of the pilot projects and to plan accordingly is perhaps even more glaring and culpable than in the other cases discussed. This is so because the foundation document makes it abundantly clear that the Department is fully aware that subject areas comprising general studies have been in the past, and are likely to be in the future, the most unpopular and problematic areas of the programme. Reference is made to the absolute necessity of not teaching these subjects as they have been traditionally taught and of integrating this element of the programme with the remainder. Yet no specific methodological guidelines are offered, no reference is made to the experience of the pilot projects concerning the value of alternative physical and social context, no framework or resources are provided in order to encourage integrated programmes, improved guidance and information services or permit the appointment of transition tutors and curriculum coordinators. In short, a serious problem is recognised, but

the initiatives which might solve it, and which are documented in the work of the two EC transition programmes, are studiously ignored.

The Department of Education guidelines with regard to assessment and certification are equally vague and unhelpful. No provision is made for a standardised local, regional or national system of assessment, and pupils completing VPTP are offered only a school-based certificate based on non-specific and non-comprehensive evaluation. There is clear evidence in the work of the pilot projects and elsewhere that this type of assessment and certification based thereon is not taken seriously by employers, parents or pupils and thus is of little value to VPTP graduates in their quest for employment. Employers will take school-based assessment seriously only if it provides detailed information on the skill level of the pupil in specific areas together with information on his personal and interpersonal skills and qualities. Methodologies for producing such assessments together with mechanisms for providing local or regional if not national certification have been developed by several pilot projects but the decision as to whether to avail of such developments has, like so much else, been left to the discretion and initiative of individual schools.

Overall, it appears fair to conclude that while the rhetoric of Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme takes its tone and content from the literature of the Transition Programmes, the substance of the VPTP remains largely devoid of any traces of curricular initiative or innovation. One might infer from this, perhaps a trifle cynically, that while the Department of Education may think it good politics to proclaim the theory of

alternative approaches to the preparation of young people in transition from school to working life, in practice there seems little need to implement changes in the curriculum. Thus, the VPTP, as it appears in the pages of Clár Ullmhúcháin Ghairme, remains a largely traditional course, based primarily in the school/classroom setting, divided into rigidly segregated subject areas, taught by the usual size teacher team, and only by teachers, in much the same way as mainstream academic courses, and condemned through lack of recognition and certification to a low status in the eyes of the community as a whole.

The foregoing may seem very critical of the Department of Education approach to the implementation in VPTP I of many of the curriculum initiatives of the First Transition Programme. The picture that emerges seems a rather devious one - the acknowledgement of transition theory, the acceptance of ESF funding, but very limited help to the schools to implement a genuinely radical programme. Is this a fair view? It ought perhaps to be said that there may well be an inevitable gap between the production of ideals and ideas by international agencies such as the EC and their implementation at national level. The process of implementation may be inhibited by poor dissemination of the new ideas, lack of funding, rigidity in current systems, poor in-service training provision and even perhaps opposition to the specifics of many of the changes suggested. Moreover, since the final evaluation report on the First Transition Programme was not published until 1983 (although there were earlier interim reports) and the final evaluation report on the first three Irish projects until 1984 (again there were earlier ongoing evaluation reports), it could be argued that time was against the

Department of Education in developing VPTP I along transition principles in 1984. Also, the work of those individual projects which challenged the entire logic of programmes based on vocational training in areas of high unemployment and suggested an alternative personal development rationale only came to prominence in 1984 (although the first report to raise such issues, i.e. the Clydebank final evaluation report, was published in February, 1983).

However, it must be pointed out that in the six years since 1984 there has been adequate time to consider and implement change, but little has happened. No further major VPTP I documents have been issued and very little change in the curriculum has taken place. No significant effort has been made to disseminate the ideas of either transition programme, and very limited and very traditional forms of in-service training for those working on VPTP has been provided. Most importantly, schools have been funded to run the programme provided that the course offered conforms in a very general way to Departmental guidelines. There has been no requirement that the fairly generous funding provided must be used to implement transition education ideas such as coordinator, staff development officers, curriculum development officers, use of outside experts, multi-skills base area, small teaching teams, project resources, flexible timetables, and so on. Indeed, it may well be that the funds in some schools are applied to general school activities and programmes and not necessarily directed entirely to VPTP at all.

From all this it seems reasonable to infer that the constraints which inhibited the Department of Education from adopting transition education

curriculum initiatives in 1984 were not simply related to lack of time or if they were that this is an excuse which has long lost any validity it may once have possessed.

However, a study of the foundation document of the VPTP is only one side of the coin. If the Department of Education have failed to recognise the potential of the programme, and has shown little interest in curriculum innovation and experimentation, does it follow that the schools themselves have done no better? To answer this question, we must turn to a detailed assessment of the way in which the bones of the VPTP discussed in this chapter have been fleshed out and given substance in the post primary schools of Ireland.

CHAPTER ELEVEN NOTES AND REFERENCES

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CHAPTER TWELVE

A SURVEY OF CURRENT CURRICULUM PRACTICE IN THE VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME, TYPE I, IN IRISH POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS: RESEARCH PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION:

I wish to compare current practice in Vocational Preparation and Training (VPTP) courses in Irish schools with the ideas emerging from the EC transition programmes. To do this, I have carried out a survey based on a questionnaire sent to one hundred schools offering a VPT programme. The questions asked were not so much concerned with specific programme content as with the key elements of course organisation, methodology, use of the out-of-school environment and modes of assessment which were stressed in the outcomes of the two transition programmes.

The VPTP concept as it is operated in Ireland is really two overlapping entities - courses for potential early school-leavers of lesser academic ability (VPTP 1) and a course for those who have satisfactorily completed general education, usually up to Leaving Certificate, and wish to prepare for entry to specific employment (VPTP 2). Naturally the curriculum of each one is substantially different. As I have explained in the Introduction to this work, my interest lies primarily in improving the effectiveness of the former type of VPTP, and it was the current practice in relation to these courses that I wished to investigate. However, the Department of Education listing of schools offering VPTP does not distinguish between VPTP type 1 and VPTP type 2. Therefore, a

number of the schools surveyed in fact offer only VPTP type 2 courses and replied accordingly. These surveys were not used in compiling the following results.

1. RESEARCH PROCEDURES:

A survey of one hundred of the four hundred and forty four schools which offered a VPTP in the academic year 1987/88 was conducted by postal questionnaire in the autumn of 1988. The one hundred schools surveyed were chosen by random selection in proportion to school type. Thirty three secondary schools out of 160 offering the course, 11 community and comprehensive schools out of 51, and 55 vocational schools out of 242 were surveyed.

The questionnaires were addressed to the coordinators of the VPTP by name where such information was available from the Department of Education and other sources and to the vice principal where it was not. Coordinators and vice principals were chosen, for reasons mentioned later, as being in the best position to report on the VPTP curriculum and to be aware of national and school policy and the difficulties being experienced in its implementation.

2. AIMS OF THE SURVEY:

Essentially the aim of the survey was to discover the extent to which the VPTP curriculum practice in Irish schools is consistent with the organisation, methods, content and modes of assessment developed in the course of the First and Second EC Transition Programmes. Specifically I wished to determine the following.

1. The extent to which new teacher roles - coordinator/transition tutor, curriculum development officer and staff development officer - have been developed to facilitate the effective provision of the VPTP.
2. Whether VPT programmes reflect transition programme approaches to organisation - i.e. modular courses, largely project-centered and non-subject based, with a small team of teachers - or alternatively whether they remain traditional, subject-based programmes taught by a large team of teachers similar to the Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate.
3. The extent to which transition programme developments in methodology - i.e. project work, integrated studies, negotiation and use of the out-of-school environment - and in context - i.e. use of facilities outside of the school, multi-skills base areas and courses jointly run with other agencies - are influencing VPTP practice in Irish schools.
4. The emphasis being placed on gender equality and the effectiveness of efforts in this regard.
5. The extent of utilisation of work experience, and mini-company/education for enterprise programmes and the perceived quality of work experience placements.

6. The modes of assessment being employed in VPT programmes and the validation of the certification being offered.
7. The extent of formal school - community liaison and inter-agency cooperation, particularly between schools and other agencies at the education/training interface.
8. The influence as perceived by VPTP course coordinators of the EC transition programmes on the development of VPTP in Irish schools.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:

As the purpose of the research was to track the extent to which the most important EC transition initiatives were being implemented in VPTP I, a questionnaire sent to as many schools as possible providing the course appeared to offer the most appropriate method of proceeding. A questionnaire was chosen as being the most flexible instrument of enquiry because it could reach a wide target population and be refined to probe the specific issues of most interest to the researcher. Other options were considered, including interviews with VPTP coordinators, but it was felt that

- (i) it might be difficult to get sensitive information regarding the practice in particular schools where those responding would be meeting the researcher face to face, and
- (ii) since, due to limited availability of time and resources, only a small number of interviews could be conducted, an overall

picture of the extent of implementation of transition ideas would not be obtained.

It was decided, therefore, to construct a questionnaire to be sent to one hundred of the four hundred and forty schools offering VPTP in the 1988/89 academic year. The schools were chosen at random. Resources did not allow for the questionnaire to be sent to a larger number of schools.

It was decided to target the questionnaire to course coordinators or vice principals where there was no specific VPTP coordinator. (Vice principals were targeted because in schools with no VPTP coordinator the vice principal appears often to be given responsibility for VPTP.) Course coordinators and vice principals were chosen as being in the best position to know about the curriculum developments being implemented in the VPTP in their schools. In particular, they would be involved in decisions about the deployment of resources, the development of the curriculum and the coordination of the programme, and at the same time be closely involved with the VPTP teaching team and with the pupils.

A draft pilot questionnaire of some sixty questions was constructed. At first it was hoped to cover more or less every element of curriculum innovation developed by the two series of action programme projects. For example, Question 17 in the final questionnaire consisted originally of no less than nine separate questions (each with six subsections) in the pilot version. In each question respondents were asked in the case of each method mentioned - for example, project work - to

- (a) comment on how widely it was used,
- (b) give examples of the types of project in use,
- (c) indicate the resources and facilities available for project work,
- (d) indicate why project work was not used where this was the case,
- (e) indicate the respondent's view of the value of project work, and
- (f) indicate the respondent's view of the EC transition theory idea of organising the entire VPTP programme around one or more projects.

There were also some seven questions containing detailed inquiries concerning VPTP course content in areas such as social education and education for enterprise, and the methods in use to implement these aspects of the programme.

The original draft questionnaire, which was some fourteen pages in length, was submitted to the critical scrutiny of my advisors - Dr Peter McKenna, thesis supervisor, Dr Peter Archer, Head of Research for the Council of Major Religious Superiors of Ireland, and Dr Kevin Williams of the Education Department of the Mater Dei Institute of Education. The draft questionnaire was examined and discussed in detail by the researcher with each of the expert advisors. These experts were in agreement on five critical points of substance.

- (1) The survey was too long and would meet resistance from respondents busy with their normal work loads.
- (2) The survey was seeking information not strictly relevant in the context of the remit of the thesis as a whole, which was primarily to

establish the extent to which specific EC transition curriculum ideas were influencing or not influencing VPTP I.

- (3) It would be better to reduce the size of the survey by concentrating on the level of implementation of those initiatives, given the greatest emphasis in the transition literature - teaching methodologies, for example - and excluding questions relating to less emphasised areas such as course content.
- (4) Many of the questions could be eliminated or condensed, and several such as those on the teaching methodologies in use could be adequately dealt with by a single multiple choice question.
- (5) Several of the questions were poorly constructed - for example, questions in which the respondents were merely asked their opinion of the quality of cooperation between schools and other agencies at the education/training interface (Question 41) or their opinion of the quality of work experience provided by employers (Question 28). It was felt that the possible responses to such general questions might be so varied as to be unusable in formulating the survey results. It was agreed that these questions should be revised in a form offering the respondents a choice of five graded adjectives to describe their opinion. Changes were also suggested to Question 9. Originally, respondents were asked to list the roles undertaken by the coordinator. It was felt that a list of possible roles, together with

space to include others not on the list, might elicit a more satisfactory answer to this question.

Acting on this advice, the questionnaire was redrafted. Firstly, the number of questions was reduced to forty five. This was done

- (1) by concentrating on the key issues emphasised in the transition literature;
- (2) by condensing the questions on the use of various methodologies and teaching strategies into one, thereby eliminating some eight items from the final draft;
- (3) by eliminating six questions from the original draft questionnaire on the details of curricular content such as, for example, whether the VPTP contained a social studies or personal education element and if so to outline the content and methodology of that element of the course. These questions were condensed into one, which asked respondents to list the 'subjects' offered in the VPTP in their schools.

Then the remaining forty five questions were re-examined and many made more specific by, for example, offering the respondent a choice of adjectives to express a view rather than simply seeking an opinion, and by other rewording as suggested by the expert advisors.

The revised questionnaire was sent for piloting to six schools in which the VPTP coordinator was known to the researcher. These schools represented different school types and management structures, including schools in urban

and rural areas. Each coordinator was asked to complete the questionnaire and to offer an opinion on its general construction.

Detailed comments were received from all six coordinators contacted. This stage was considered an important test of acceptability. The responses were almost entirely positive. Each indicated that they felt that while the survey was fairly long it would interest coordinators and most should respond to it. A number of faults were identified. For example, words such as 'negotiation' (Question 17), which had not been explained in the pilot questionnaire, clearly puzzled a number of respondents. Also in Question 17, the item on 'use of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource' did not include the phrase 'other than for work experience' and in each case work experience (which is a compulsory part of the programme) was returned as the only example of use of the out-of-school environment. This of course was not what the question wished to probe and modifications were made accordingly.

These and one or two other questions which were not fully explained to the satisfaction of the respondents to the pilot questionnaire were further refined and the final questionnaire of forty five questions and ten pages was again submitted to and approved by the three advisors mentioned above. The questionnaire was then deemed ready for posting to the one hundred schools chosen.

4. METHOD:

The Population:

The respondents consisted of 51 coordinators representing all types of post primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. (The 51 mentioned all related to VPTP type 1. A further nine replies were received from schools offering only post Leaving Certificate VPTP type 2. These replies were not used in compiling the survey results, as VPTP 2 programmes are beyond the remit of this thesis.) The achieved population (N = 51) was 11.3% of the universe population (N = 440) of schools offering a VPT programme and 51% of the target population (N = 100) of the survey. However, of the 51 replies, 6 indicated that for various reasons the programme had been discontinued, and these questionnaires were therefore not completed. This was interesting in its own way and will be mentioned later, but left in effect only 45 usable responses. Therefore we had a final achieved population (N = 45) which was 45% of the total target population (N = 100).

Controlling for type of school, 54% of all post primary schools offering a VPTP in 1987/88 were vocational schools, 35% were secondary and 11% community/comprehensive. Table 1.1 indicates that of the respondents (as a percentage of all survey respondents) 31% were from secondary schools, 15% were from community / comprehensive and 54% were from vocational schools.

Table 1.1 Target and Achieved Population of Schools

	Secondary	Community/ Comprehensive	Vocational	Total
Target Pop.	34	11	55	100
Achieved Pop.	14	7	24	45
Response Rate	41%	64%	44%	45%

Procedures:

The questionnaire (see Appendix I) was posted out in October 1988 and reminders sent in December 1988 and January 1989. It consisted of an introduction which set out the purposes of the project, guaranteed confidentiality and gave instructions for completing the sections. The sections were as follows.

Section 1, 'Background and demographic information', consisted of three items requesting data on school type, size and location.

Section 2, 'VPTP - general information', consisted of three items requesting data on the number and gender of VPTP pupils and the size of VPTP classes.

Section 3, 'VPTP - organisation in the school', consisted of six items dealing with teacher contact with the VPTP groups, the role of the coordinator, and the other support roles in the field of staff development, curriculum development and in-service training.

Section 4, 'VPTP - Methodology', consisted of two items designed to discover the extent to which active learning methodology is employed in implementing the programme.

Section 5, 'VPTP - learning spaces', consisted of four items designed to elicit information regarding the physical context in which programmes are operated.

Section 6, 'VPTP - gender equality', consisted of four items designed to collect data related to the provision of gender equality programmes and the provision of non-traditional forms of work experience for girls.

Section 7, 'VPTP - work experience', consisted in seven items pertaining to the use of work experience, mini-companies / education for enterprise, and community work placements and to the perceived quality of these placements, particularly with regard to employer input.

Section 8, 'VPTP - assessment and certification', consisted of five items designed to collect data on the modes of assessment employed and the validation of the certification offered.

Section 9, 'VPTP - community involvement', consisted in four items designed to collect data regarding the extent of school - community liaison and inter-agency cooperation.

Section 10, 'VPTP - influence of the EC Transition Programmes', consisted of four items requesting data on the extent to which Irish VPTP practice has been influenced by transition theory and the general level of satisfaction felt by coordinators in relation to the operation of their own programmes. Space was left for coordinators to respond to an invitation to offer any further comments which might be of use in the research.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

In order to compare curriculum theory and practice as developed in the course of two EC transition programmes with the current practice in VPTP programmes on offer in Irish post primary schools, a survey, finally consisting of some 45 items, was constructed, refined, piloted and then sent to a randomly-chosen one hundred of the four hundred and forty schools offering the programme. The questions referred to the academic year 1987/88 and was conducted in late 1988 and early 1989. Due to time and resources and possible respondent resistance, the questionnaire attempted to focus only on the key initiatives which emerged from the EC transition programmes and did not set out to exhaustively examine other issues such as content. Fifty one replies referring to VPTP I were received and nine referring to VPTP 2 (the latter were not used in compiling the survey results). Of the fifty one replies, six indicated that the course had been discontinued, leaving forty five usable replies. The results reported in the following chapter are based on the responses contained in these forty five replies.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A SURVEY OF CURRENT CURRICULUM PRACTICE IN THE VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME, TYPE I, IN IRISH POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

THE RESEARCH RESULTS

INTRODUCTION:

In this chapter, the results of the survey referred to in chapter twelve are presented and analysed. The purpose of this exercise is to compare and contrast the curriculum approaches revealed by the survey and those suggested by the work of the First and Second Transition Programmes. Where significant differences between EC transition education theory and Irish VPTP I practice are identified, these are made explicit and in some cases explanation for the differences suggested. For the purpose of this work, however, the important point does not lie in the reasons for the divergence identified, interesting as these may be. Rather the focus is on the very existence of such divergence at all and the possible impact of this divergence on the effectiveness of the VPTP I in achieving the aims and objectives posited.

1. PRESENTATION AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES:

The data from the survey is presented in a number of ways. In most cases, simple frequency distribution of responses are given. In other cases, cross-classifications of the data by response category - for example, school type - are presented.

Four independent background variables were employed as controls in the study:

1. type of school and gender of school population;
2. size of school;
3. location of school;
4. number of pupils in VPT programme and the average number of pupils per VPTP group.

For the purposes of analysing the results, the independent variables were cross-tabulated with the dependent variables. Where this exercise indicated that an independent variable appeared to be an important factor in explaining VPTP curriculum pattern the results are reported in relation to it.

(1) Type of School and Gender of School Population:

Table 1.2 shows the data relating to the type and gender composition of the surveyed schools.

Note: In this table, and in the others throughout this chapter, N gives the usable response for the category of question.

Table 1.2 Gender Category by Type of School

Gender	Secondary N=14%	Community/ Comp. N=7%	Vocational N=24%	All Schools %
Boys	21%	--	--	7
Girls	50%	--	--	15
Co-ed	29%	100%	100%	78

The vast majority, 78% of the schools in the survey, are co-educational. Of the remaining schools, 7% are boys' schools and 15% girls' schools. However, it is interesting that 16 out of the 45 schools responding, that is 35%, indicate that the VPT programme is confined to girls. Only seventy five or 55% are co-educational and 4 (8%) are boys only. These figures, together with the curriculum practice reported in the case of many of the all-girls VPT programmes, point to the conclusion that these are in fact secretarial courses under another name. This factor appears to be a significant element in the picture of unreformed traditional curriculum approaches and methods which will emerge later in this chapter.

2. School Size:

Table 1.3 sets out the data on school size. Schools are categorised as either small (between 1 and 250 pupils), medium (251 - 600 pupils) or large (600+ pupils).

Table 1.3 School Size

Size	%
	N=45
Small	27
Medium	36
Large	17

3. Location of School:

Schools were classified as 'urban' if they were located in a city or town with a population of 5,000 or more, and as 'rural' if otherwise. The data is reported in Table 1.4 below. Fifty eight percent of schools are classified as rural and 42% as urban.

Table 1.4 Location of School

Location	%
	N=43
Rural	58
Urban	42

4. Number of Pupils on the VPT Programme in the School and the Average Size of VPT Classes:

Details of the number of pupils taking part in VPT programme in the school in the academic year 1987/88 were requested. The number of

pupils reported ranged from 11 to 160. The mean number of pupils per programme was 35.35. The data regarding overall VPTP numbers in the survey school is reported in table 1.5. Also requested was the number and size of each VPTP class group. The number of class groups reported ranged from 1 to 9 with 22 schools reporting one class, 11 reporting 2 classes, 5 reporting 3 classes and 7 reporting 5 or more classes. The number of pupils per VPTP class was considered to be of potential importance in explaining curriculum patterns and the data in this regard is given in table 1.6.

Table 1.5 Total Number of Pupils Taking a VPT Programme in the School

No. of Pupils	%
	N=45
20 or less	33
21 - 40	42
More than 40	25

Table 1.6 Number of Pupils per VPTP class group

No. of Pupils	N=45	%
16 or less	10	22
17 - 20	20	44
21 - 24	12	27
25 or more	3	7

Clearly the extent to which methodological innovations such as small group work or industrial learning can be implemented successfully is closely related to class size. Up to the cutbacks of recent years, VPTP classes were seldom larger than 16 pupils. Now those with 16 or less represent only 22% of the total while greater than one third have more than 21 pupils. The largest VPTP class reported was 33, the smallest 10 and mean number per class was 19. Such numbers make successful small group interaction processes extremely difficult to implement. The problem here lies not with the schools but with national policy regarding VPTP. Only additional resources aimed specifically at VPTP can reverse the trend towards even larger classes.

2. THE ORGANISATION OF THE VPTP IN THE SCHOOL:

The evidence of the transition literature suggests that fundamental organisational and methodological changes are central to effective transition courses. In this and the following sections of this chapter, I will be seeking evidence as to whether such changes are in fact taking place.

The first question in this section related to the number of teachers, on average, dealing with each VPTP class. It will be remembered that a recommendation of the transition literature was that in order to improve the social context of transition courses, fewer teachers than normal should be involved in teaching the programme. The response to this

question indicates that in terms of teacher numbers VPTPs are in fact organised similarly to the academic school courses. The smallest number of teachers reported was 3, while the largest was 13. The mean number reported was 6.54. The outcome reflects that fact that, as we shall see, VPTPs in Irish schools remain largely based on discrete subject divisions. It also suggests that additional teaching resources made available to schools offering VPTP are being dispersed throughout the schools as opposed to being directed to VPTP.

The next two questions related to the role of coordinator or transition tutor which emerged in the transition programme literature as a crucial element in the organisation of successful transition programmes. The responses indicate that this role is being implemented and developed to a considerable extent. All but three of the 45 schools which responded had a specific teacher acting as programme coordinator. The three exceptions were small vocational schools with one VPTP group each where the vice principal took on the coordinator's role.

Of the forty two other coordinators, 10 reported holding an 'A' post of responsibility for this work, 10 had 'B' posts, and a further 19 reported that they enjoyed a reduced teaching load. The remaining 11 coordinators had neither a post of responsibility nor a reduced teaching load. These figures appear reasonably satisfactory at first sight, but in fact when we add the 'B' post holders to those without either an 'A' post or reduced teaching load, we find that one in two coordinators are performing the role together with a full teaching commitment.

The responses do show a clear correlation between school and VPTP pupil numbers on the one hand and the appointment of coordinators to 'A' posts or reduced teaching loads on the other. With only two exceptions, schools reporting more than one VPTP class group had a coordinator with some reduction in class contact time. However, the tasks envisaged in the transition literature for the tutor / coordinator include the building of trusting interpersonal relationships with the pupils, personal and to an extent vocational guidance, liaison with parents and perhaps curriculum coordination. It is hard to envisage the satisfactory conduct of these tasks without a significant reduction in class teaching time and a coordinator for each class group. Clearly this is not happening, since no school, even those with very large VPTP numbers, reported two or more coordinators. Damien Hannon, in a study of the Irish projects in the two transition programmes comes to the same conclusion - that the coordinator role is essential and requires 8 - 10 hours teaching time per week. Hannon estimated that the additional cost to the school of providing such a reduction would be £3,000 per annum¹.

The final question relating to the role of coordinator was the range of tasks undertaken. The responses offered are reported in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 The Role of the Coordinator - Tasks Undertaken

Task	No.
	<u>N=42</u>
Curriculum Coordinator	35
Obtaining W. Exp. Placements	40
Supervisor of W.Exp.	38
Personal Counselling	32
Vocational Guidance	30
Staff Development	11
Discipline	31
<u>Liaison with Parents</u>	<u>31</u>

Respondents were asked to indicate other tasks not specified in the question. Those regularly reported were supervision of trips and extra-curricular activities, teaching, supervision of part-time teachers, active job search, engaging outside specialists, running mini-companies, supervising assessment, and preparing profiles and records of assessment.

A number of points emerge from these responses. Firstly, the suggestion that a reduced teaching load (and indeed extra remuneration) is required to allow anyone to undertake such a range of tasks is surely proven beyond all doubt. Secondly, even given these concessions, it is unlikely that one person could do it all. This certainly was the experience of the transition pilot projects and in consequence two other roles - curriculum coordinator and staff development officer - were

recommended as necessary to support the coordinator/transition tutor role. Neither of these roles, however, have been developed significantly in the Irish VPTP context. Some 20 of the 45 schools indicated that a teacher other than the coordinator had some responsibility for curriculum development and only five reported having a person responsible for staff development. The latter is particularly disturbing since only 13 out of the 42 coordinators indicated that staff development was among the tasks which they undertook. The problem which emerges in relation to staff development is further illustrated by the patchy responses to the next question on in-service training.

Asked if 'the VPTP staff had undergone any in-service training to prepare for this work', 25 out of the 43 usable responses stated 'yes', while 18 stated 'no'. Cross-analysis of these figures showed that school type influenced the extent of in-service provision with vocational schools leading the way from the community/comprehensive sector and secondary schools well behind. The figures are shown in table 2.2.

Table 2.2 In-Service Training by VPTP for School Type

N=43	%		
	Secondary N=13	Vocational N=23	Community/ Comp. N=7
Did undergo training for VPTP	38.4	69.5	57.1
Did not undergo training for VPTP	71.6	30.5	42.9

Asked to specify the nature and extent of in-service undergone, the responses were very varied. In a number of cases the in-service provided was for principals only, or for coordinators, or for both. In these cases there was no training for the other staff involved. Where such training was available the indications are that it was of short duration and of a once-off nature. Some such courses were a half day, others one day or three day, and in a small minority of cases one week of training was provided for the entire team. It is also very noticeable and very disturbing that the best of the in-service training reported was invariably provided by EC transition programme-funded centres - Shannon CDU, PIPE in Galway and the City of Dublin VEC CDU - and involved schools taking part in the EC projects. Since the specific projects ended, the three centres have continued to operate, but on a much reduced budget, and are managing to provide a degree of service, mostly to VEC schools in their catchment areas. Also, the three centres continue to provide access to much of the material generated by the projects, such as, for example, a mini-companies database and a work experience database provided by Shannon CDU through the NITEC network of school computer link-ups. Significant in-service offered by other providers appears to be limited as far as can be judged from the survey.

Clearly staff development and in-service are being neglected. This is very serious in that radical change in such things as teaching and learning methods are very dependent on staff re-training. The role of staff development officer (along similar lines and at similar cost to that of coordinator / transition tutor), planning and organising in-service training in liaison with an enhanced provision of same by the

Department of Education, teacher centres and other agencies, would seem essential to VPTP curriculum innovation. The lack of such a role and the poor provision of in-service training which emerges from the survey must be vital contributing factors in the very limited methodological innovation revealed in the next section.

3. VPTP - METHODOLOGY:

The crucial importance of new methodological approaches in order to provide learning experiences based on pupil-centered, active learning strategies is perhaps the single most important theme to emerge from the two transition programmes. The transition literature is clear on this point - new content without new methodology will fail. To implement such methodological changes, strong emphasis is placed on the need to replace what is described as the inherently alienating and demotivating subject-centered approach with flexible integrated modular programmes based largely on project work by small groups or individuals.

The lack of movement in this direction in Irish VPTP is clearly evident in the survey results. Asked in Question 16 whether the VPTP programme in the school 'was subject based - i.e. divided into distinct subjects', all 45 schools answered 'yes'. To later questions regarding the use of integrated subject approaches such as mini-company / mini-cooperatives, education for enterprise and community-based learning, the responses were also largely negative. The overwhelming impression emerging is

that the VPTP is organised along traditional school-based separate subject lines.

Also of interest are the replies to Part Two of the questionnaire in which respondents were asked to list the subjects taken by one VPTP class group. Those that answered only (21 did so) invariably produced a list of 'subjects' ranging in number from five to eight. The most striking thing about these lists was the absence in all but five of them of any mention of social / personal education (other than religious studies). Social / personal education is specified by the Department of Education for inclusion in the general studies section of VPTP. Its absence on this scale is remarkable and tends to confirm the suspicions of critics that schools see VPTP in a very narrow, vocationally-focused way.

In order to discover the extent to which particular teaching methods strongly recommended in the transition literature are being utilised in the schools, respondents were asked to judge on a scale of one (very widely) to five (never) the level of use made of each strategy. The results are indicated in table 3.1 below.

In general the responses seem to confirm the traditional nature of most of the VPTPs on offer. Project work, very or quite widely used in 43% of cases, appears to be the most widespread strategy, followed by modular courses (29%) and small group work (27%). Individualised learning packages score only 2% in these categories, link courses 7%, negotiation 12% and role play 16%. Apart from project work, it seems

fair to say that the implementation of progressive teaching strategies as part of VPTP is far from impressive.

Table 3.1 The Use of Active Learning Teaching Strategies in VPTP

N=45 Strategy	Very Widely	% Quite Widely	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Project Work	13	29	33	25	0
Integrated Studies	4	22	34	22	18
Small Group Learning	9	18	22	38	13
Modular Courses	17	12	26	28	17
Individual Learning Programmes	0	2	18	22	58
Role Play	7	9	31	33	20
Negotiation (with pupils re content, methodology, assessment)	4	8	28	32	28
Use of the Out-of- School environment (other than for work experience)	7	18	45	20	10
Link Courses (courses run jointly with other agencies or involving sharing of facilities)	0	7	15	9	69

There is some evidence to suggest that school type influences the degree of methodological innovation, with vocational and community/

comprehensive reporting higher use of most of the methods above than secondary schools. This is shown in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 The Use of Some Active Learning Strategies 'very widely/quite widely or occasionally', by School Type

N=45	% N=7		
	Secondary N=14	Community/Comprehensive	Vocational N=24
Project Work	57	86	79
Small Group Learning	29	43	63
Negotiation	21	29	54
Integrated Studies	36	71	67

These differences could be caused by several factors. We have already noted that the best in-service training is provided by Curriculum Development Units jointly or partly funded by a VEC, and vocational schools may benefit more from this than the other sectors. Also the fact that the vocational sector and some community/comprehensive schools have come in recent years to depend on VPTP to maintain pupil numbers may result in greater efforts to produce innovation programmes. Perhaps the most likely reason is that VPTP classes tend to be smaller in vocational schools, averaging 16.5 according to the survey results, as against an overall average of 19.

VPTP - Physical Context:

The importance of a change of 'physical context' in the process of remotivating school and/or learning rejectors and developing group cohesion is stressed in the transition literature. Questions 18 - 21 inclusive were designed to discover both the extent to which accomodation within the school was specifically designated and redesigned to suit VPTP needs and whether or not use was made of accomodation outside of the school environment for all or part of the programme.

In answer to Question 18, 58% of respondents (N=45) indicated that the VPTP group were assigned a base area used only by them. However, in response to Question 19, which enquired whether or not the base area was suitable for project/group work, only 33% (N=45) of replies were positive. Here again the majority of replies indicating that a VPTP base area was in use came from vocational schools. This may simply mean that falling pupil numbers in such schools is tending to make accomodation available, but whether for financial or other reasons, modifications to make such accomodation suitable for a more active learning type approach are relatively infrequent.

The responses to questions 20 and 21 illustrate clearly the isolation of VPTP within its own institution and this finding is further strengthened by the responses to a later section of the survey enquiring about 'community involvement'. Asked whether use is made of accomodation or facilities outside of the school for part of the programme (Question 20), only 18% (N=45) replied 'yes'. Asked whether any parts of the

programme were held in institutions other than the base school, the positive response fell to 13% (N=45). Those respondents who answered 'yes' to Questions 20 and 21 were asked to specify examples, and the replies indicate the type of opportunities available. The outside accommodation mentioned included outdoor education centres, hostels, community sports centres, parish halls, youth clubs and the rooms of local groups and societies. Examples of the use of facilities belonging to other institutions included training centres, other schools, factories, hospitals and libraries. Overall the responses to Questions 20 and 21 not only tend to strengthen the view that the concept of change of context has made little impact on VPTP in Irish schools but that equally important ideas including greater use of the out-of-school environment and cooperative action involving the sharing of scarce resources are also largely unknown.

4. GENDER EQUALITY AND WORK EXPERIENCE IN VPTP:

Gender Equality:

In this section of the survey (Questions 22 - 25 inclusive), information was sought on the extent to which gender equality and the elimination of sex role stereotyping, particularly in vocational choice, were actively pursued objectives in VPTPs. Question 22 simply asked whether gender equality measures in relation to female employment aspirations were regarded as an important VPTP theme. 91% (N=41) replied in the affirmative and only 9% in the negative. However, in response to

Question 23 which asked whether or not a specific course is provided for girls in order to influence their vocational aspirations and expectations, only eight schools or 19% (N=45) replied in the affirmative. The evidence of the transition programmes indicates that such a course is usually a necessary pre-requisite to interesting girls in, for example, work experience in non traditional areas of female employment.

The lack of action as opposed to aspiration demonstrated in response to Question 23 is confirmed by responses to Questions 24 and 25. Question 24 asked respondents to list the vocational studies made available to girls as part of the VPTP. Responses fall into three categories. Out of 39 usable replies, twelve listed only traditional secretarial subjects. Each of these was a girls-only VPTP - in effect, a secretarial course redesignated to obtain grant aid. However, a further two such all-girls VPTPs offered potentially less traditional alternatives, including food technology, furniture restoration and food science. This is an indication that traditional secretarial courses could offer a less stereotyped range of choice if they were prepared to do so.

The second category of response involved mixed schools which admitted to having a traditional and separate range of options for boys and for girls. There were seven such responses which indicated that while boys did metalwork, woodwork or engineering, girls did information technology or pottery. The third category consisted of 18 schools which reported that all the options offered were available to both boys and girls. Of

these, three offered the comment that while all options were available, girls invariably took up the traditional areas.

Question 25 enquired whether the school endeavoured to provide work experience for girls in non-traditional vocational areas. 51% (N=39) replied 'yes' and 49% 'no'. When asked how effective efforts in this direction had proved, 16 comments were received. Of these, seven claimed some success, but in most cases on a very small scale with individual or small numbers of pupils. The more negative comments virtually all suggested that interest in non-traditional work experience was very low among girls and hard to encourage. Strong resistance is mentioned in a number of cases. Four responses also single out difficulties with employers while only one indicates a lack of suitable opportunities due to a rural location as a reason for failure.

The responses to the section taken as a whole appear to confirm the results of the Department of Education's own survey of VPTP referred to in chapter eleven. The Department expresses general disappointment with the lack of initiative being shown by schools in the provision of non-traditional vocational studies and work experience for girls. The present survey also indicates a lack of appreciation in schools of the need for a positive compensation or familiarisation course for girls to encourage a change of attitude. The passive view being adopted at present is summarised in a comment from one respondent, 'we have met any of the requests which have been made'.

Work Experience:

Questions 26 - 32 inclusive sought to elicit current practice and opinion in the schools in relation to work experience and preparation for working life / enterprise education. Question 26 asked whether it was possible to obtain an adequate number of work experience placements. The overwhelming response was positive, with 43 answering yes (N=45) and only two reporting difficulty. This is interesting, since it would appear to contradict a general view that work experience presents major difficulties for rural schools due to lack of suitable placements.

Question 27 concerned the number of different work experience placements given to each student. The responses are recorded in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The Number of Work Experience Placements Given to Each Student

No. of Placements	No. of Schools	
		%
1	10	24
2	6	15
3	16	39
4	3	7
5	2	5
6	4	10

It is difficult to say whether the variation shown above is indicative of different approaches to VPTP or simply reflects local circumstances. There is an indication in the survey results that the majority of the schools offering only one or two placements are the smaller rural type, and this would suggest that the 'taster' approach to work experience involving 3, 4 or more placements would be the favoured norm, circumstances permitting.

Question 28 asked the respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the work experience placements available to their students at one of five levels from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied'. The satisfaction rating reported was remarkably high. Out of 44 usable responses, 20 (45%) indicated that they were 'very satisfied' and 22 (50%) reported that they were 'fairly satisfied'. One response was 'uncertain' and one 'fairly dissatisfied'. This high level of satisfaction is remarkable, particularly in view of the response to the next question and to Question 36 which shows a low level of employer involvement in student assessment. One cannot help suspecting that the fact that employers are cooperating to the extent of actually providing placements is seen as sufficient cause for satisfaction.

Question 29 asked whether employers offering work experience placements provided any formal training for the VPTP pupils sent to them. The responses are shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2. The level of training offered to VPTP pupils by employers as reported by the respondents

Formal Training Provided by Employers	Number (N=44)	%
Very Often	2	7
Often	6	14
Occasionally	21	48
Seldom	8	18
Never	6	14

The total of employers reported as 'occasionally', 'seldom' or 'never' providing training comes to 80%. The transition literature on work experience concludes that much of the value of work experience resides in the quality of placement, including employer supervision and provision of training and, as I have indicated in chapter four of this work, a number of EC countries have begun to insist not only that employers provide placements but also supervision, training and assessment. In Ireland, employer organisations regularly complain about the lack of adequate preparation for working life which pupils undergo at school. One response to this problem would be employer agreement to provide more structured and effective work experience places including some training.

Question 30 was designed to establish whether any significant use is made of non-traditional work experience placements in the form of community service / voluntary work. As indicated in chapter four, a number of projects saw such work experience as being appropriate, particularly in countries with high youth unemployment. Unlike work

experience in business, it would not create false employment expectations, could not be regarded as manipulative or exploitative, and might open opportunities for voluntary / community work. It is interesting that a significant proportion of schools (15 out of 39 replies to this question) report some utilisation of this approach. No pattern emerges from a cross-analysis of the fifteen positive replies - these are certainly not confined to deprived urban areas.

Questions 31 and 32 concentrated on the school-based back-up to work experience offered in each VPTP. The transition literature strongly suggests that work experience placements require considerable school-based preparation and follow-up in order to meet their objectives in preparing young people for the world of work. Two connected strategies involving project work in the form of a 'mini-company or cooperative' together with an introduction to the self-employment possibilities of the local economy - education for enterprise - were suggested to meet these objectives. Question 31 asked whether a mini-company project formed part of the VPTP. Sixteen respondents or 35% (N=45) replied 'yes' and 65% 'no'. Question 32 asked whether the VPTP included an education for enterprise component; six schools (13%; N=45) replied 'yes' and 87% replied 'no'.

The responses to the questions on work experience and school-based follow-up lead to the following conclusions. Work experience is in all cases an integral part of VPTP and adequate numbers of placements are available. Most work experience is of the 'taster' variety rather than either long involvement in one or two placements or work shadowing

involving a large number of placements. There is some use of non-traditional placements in the form of community service. There is a high level of satisfaction with placements expressed by the respondents. These outcomes are, in terms of the transition programme recommendations, basically positive. Far less satisfactory is evidence regarding placement quality - the low level of training offered by employers as part of work experience. Also of concern is the surprisingly low level of active learning-based work experience, follow-up programmes in the form of mini-companies and education for enterprise reported by the respondents.

5. ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION:

The survey questions (33 - 37 inclusive) in the area of assessment and certification were designed to discover the extent to which measures such as ongoing assessment, a role in assessment procedures for students and employers, and certification validated outside of the individual school, are being implemented. These measures represent the main conclusions of the two transition programmes in the assessment/certification field.

Question 33 asked whether there was a formal, terminal examination at the conclusion of the VPTP. Twenty two, or 50% (N=44), replied 'yes' and twenty two 'no'. Question 34 asked whether there was a system of ongoing assessment in operation and if so what methods were used to implement it. Thirty three (73%; N=45) replied that ongoing assessment was employed.

Only thirteen of these commented on the method of ongoing assessment used. Four reported that regular examinations were used, the results of which formed the ongoing and final assessment. Two indicated that pupils were entered for progressive stages of City and Guilds examinations. The remaining seven reported the use of the various types of modular records of effort and attainment involving teacher judgements of pupil knowledge, skills and personal qualities. It is this last type of ongoing assessment involving recognition of achievements, skills and qualities other than just the academic that is strongly suggested in the transition literature on assessment. The use of such broad measures of achievement appears to be confined to quite a small minority of VTPs.

Also strongly recommended in the transition assessment literature (see chapter six of this work) is the involvement of students, work experience employers and parents in the assessment process. Question 35 asked whether pupils have an input into the assessment system. Only three respondents (7%; N=45) replied 'yes'. Question 36 asked whether employers have an input into the student assessment. In this case, 14 (31% - N=45) replied 'yes'. From these figures it is clear that there is considerable scope for a broader approach to assessment procedures in VTPs.

The final question in this section of the survey centered on certification. It is argued in the previous chapter of this work and in the transition literature that pupils undertaking programmes such as VTP are likely to be disadvantaged unless a widely recognised system of certification leading to access to further education and training is

provided at the conclusion of the course. This of course is primarily a matter of national policy. However, in the absence of such a policy, local education authorities, and even individual schools cooperating with other schools, training agencies etc. can attempt to achieve wider recognition of their programmes. Question 37, part 1, asked whether a formal certificate is presented to the students at the end of the course. All but one of the 45 replies indicated the there was. Part 2 of the question asked whether the certificate is validated by the school only. 41 replies to this question were received, of which 17 (41%) indicated school-only certification, while 24 (59%) indicated outside validation of certificate.

Part 3 of the question asked those schools with outside validation of certificates to name the agencies involved. Of the 19 replies received, the majority (15) were from vocational schools where programmes and certificates were validated by the local vocational education committee. The remaining four received validation from the Shannon Curriculum Development Centre, and subsequent enquiries which I made with the Shannon CDC indicated that these schools felt that such certification was taken seriously by employers in the region aware of the work of the CDC through involvement in community/business liaison networks. Considerable research would be required to discover whether this type of validation is of greater relevance to employers or training agencies than certification from one school, but in the absence of a rational system it indicated welcome initiative on the part of at least some VECs and schools.

6. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSITION PROGRAMMES ON

VPTP:

Questions 38 - 41 inclusive were designed to measure the extent of school - community liaison and inter-agency cooperation being brought to bear on VPT programmes. Effective and well-structured school-community liaison and joint initiatives between institutions and agencies at the education - training interface were key themes in the results of two transition programmes.

Question 38 asked if there was a school - community liaison structure in place. Replies were overwhelmingly negative with only one 'yes' and forty-three answering 'no'. Question 39 asked whether members of the community with particular skills were used to supplement the regular VPTP teaching team. Twenty five, or 57% (N=44) replied 'yes' and 19, or 43% replied 'no'. Those replying 'yes' were asked to give examples and 15 did so. Of these, the vast majority supplied examples which amounted to no more than bringing a speaker such as a garda juvenile liaison officer or a bank official for a once-off talk with the pupils. Only four examples of the type of ongoing tutoring suggested in the transition literature were offered - a craftsman providing a course in furniture restoration, two business people helping with mini-companies, and a swimming and first aid instructor providing a course in lifeguarding.

Questions 40 and 41 concentrated on joint course operation and the level of inter-agency cooperation experienced by VPTP course coordinators. Question 40 asked whether any elements of the course were run jointly or

in cooperation with other agencies. The response was again overwhelmingly negative with one saying 'yes' and 40 'no' in the 41 usable replies. This lack of cooperation was further reflected in the responses to Question 41 (how good is the level of cooperation between the school and state agencies such as FAS) which are shown in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 The Level of Cooperation Between Schools and State Agencies such as FAS and CERT as Perceived by School VFTP Coordinators

Level of Cooperation	Number	%
N=40		
Very Good	3	7
Good	7	18
Fair	9	23
Poor	13	32
Very Poor	8	20

These figures speak for themselves, with over 50% regarding cooperation as poor or very poor and only one quarter feeling that it was good or very good. A number of unsolicited comments decrying the total lack of cooperation and communication between schools and the employment/training agencies in some areas of the country strengthen the perception of a major problem requiring urgent attention. In general, the responses to this section indicate very poor levels of structured school - community liaison or inter-agency cooperation. Without improvements in this regard, it is unlikely that transition programme suggestions regarding the fuller utilisation of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource or cooperation and coherence at the education / training interface can be implemented.

VPTP - The Influence of the EC Transition Programmes on VPTP

in schools and coordinator satisfaction levels with their own VPTP:

Questions 42-45 inclusive were designed to discover the influence, if any, of the EC transition programmes on the developments of VPTP in the schools. Questions 44 - 45 inclusive were to measure the level of satisfaction of coordinators with their own programmes and to allow them the opportunity to offer further comments.

Question 42 asked respondents to measure their familiarity with EC pilot projects. Of the 43 usable responses, 16 (37%) admitted to being 'unfamiliar with the projects', 18 (41%) said that 'they had heard of the projects' and only 9 (21%) claimed to have 'read the project literature and used materials and ideas'. Given the low level of knowledge of the EC projects demonstrated above, the responses to Question 43 are hardly surprising. Respondents were asked to assess the influence of the EC transition programme pilot projects on the development of the VPTP in their schools. Results are shown in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 The Influence as seen by Programme Coordinators of the EC Transition Programme Pilot Projects on the development of VPTP in their schools

Influence	Number	%
		N=41
Very Important	3	7
Quite Important	4	10
Slightly Important	11	27
Unimportant	23	56

The insignificant impact of the extensive and expensive work of the EC Transition Programmes on the development of VPTP demonstrated above must be a cause for concern. Clearly the value of such projects lies primarily in their influence on curriculum theory and practice in the schools. When this impact fails to materialise, questions must be raised if not about the quality of the projects then certainly about the level of commitment to extensive and determined dissemination of results, materials and ideas.

Question 44 asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with the operation of the VPTP in their schools. The responses are shown in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2 The Satisfaction Level of VPTP Coordinators with the operation of the Programme in their own schools

Satisfaction Level	Number	% N=40
Very Satisfied	9	22
Fairly Satisfied	22	55
Uncertain	6	15
Fairly Dissatisfied	3	8
Very Dissatisfied	0	0

The high level of satisfaction shown above is somewhat at odds with the responses to the final question, number 45. Respondents were invited to comment generally on VPTP and particularly on areas they felt had not been covered in the questionnaire. Of twelve replies received to this

question, five were very pessimistic in tone. Three of these felt that the VPTP of 1988/89 would be the last in their schools and the other two believed that VPTP would not survive much longer. When these five are taken in conjunction with the six original surveys returned uncompleted because VPTP had been dropped in these schools, there emerges a clear pattern of decline in VPTP provision. That this pattern has continued will emerge in the concluding chapter of this work.

The reasons for this decline given in the five questionnaires mentioned include a feeling of lack of Government support and interest, the decision to end payment of an allowance to the pupils, pupil resistance because of lack of positive course profile and poor certification, inadequate in-service training and a feeling that a lot of hard work by teachers was little valued or appreciated.

The remaining seven replies to Question 45 consisted in a variety of comments with no common theme. Among comments repeated more than once were: the pressing need for course 'standardisation' and certification on a national level; the need for greater staffing flexibility and thorough in-service training; more formal testing and examinations; a questioning of the value of traditional secretarial courses; and the suggestion of a curriculum unit charged with the task of updating the VPTP curriculum.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

This chapter set out to compare curriculum practice in vocational preparation and training programmes in Irish post primary schools with the key recommendations arising from the two EC transition programmes. The underlying assumption in this process is that in order to meet the stated objectives, Irish VPT programmes ought to correspond fairly closely to the curriculum framework developed in the course of the EC pilot projects.

In the previous chapter it emerged that despite considerable lip service to transition theory in the Department of Education circulars on VPTP, there was little of a concrete nature to help or encourage schools to implement a radical curriculum. In these circumstances it was always unlikely that individual schools would find the initiative or the resources to make such changes themselves. The results of the survey as reported in this chapter confirm the largely traditional nature of the VPTP curriculum as it operated in Irish schools.

The VPTP curriculum as it emerges from the replies of the coordinators remains largely subject-centered in organisation with big teaching teams averaging nearly seven members. The subjects offered are largely vocational with very little artistic/aesthetic education and little social/personal education, and most programmes no matter how large have only one coordinator. The role of coordinator or transition tutor is widely in operation but one coordinator in two enjoys no reduction in teaching load to undertake the many tasks required. Moreover, important

supporting roles elaborated in the transition literature - curriculum coordinator and staff development officer - have not emerged at all.

Little in the way of in-service training has been provided for teaching team members and courses for coordinators and principals are usually short and once-off. The only extensive training provided was given by EC pilot project centres such as Shannon Curriculum Development Centre, and only to schools involved in the project. Since the projects are now completed, this source of in-service may have ended.

In the field of methodology, significant change has also been limited. Project work (as part of individual subjects as opposed to a largely project-based programme as suggested in the transition literature), integrated studies, modular courses, small group and individual learning link courses, and so on remain largely untried.

In the field of context, we have seen that large teaching teams and a coordinator with little time to devote to the task can hardly help the creation of an alternative social context for VPTP. Some attempts at developing alternative physical contexts have been made, with 58% of respondents reporting a definite base area for the VPTP group or groups. However, very few of these areas have been remodelled as project or multi-purpose base areas as suggested by the work of several projects, and the movement of all or parts of a course to a physical context outside of the school environment is largely unknown.

In the area of gender equality, despite protestations of good will there is little evidence of either specific courses for girls to improve vocational aspirations or the provision of non-traditional vocational training or work experience.

Work experience placements are used on all courses as required by the Department of Education and in general the respondents indicate general satisfaction both with the number of placements available and the quality of the placement. However, the evidence suggests that little or no training is provided by employers as part of the work experience programme and they have input into pupil assessment only in a minority of cases. Active learning-based school elements of work preparation in the form of mini-company / education for enterprise courses are also relatively rare.

The use of ongoing modes of assessment was widely reported but the implementation of such assessment, at least in part by means of the broadly-based measurement of skills and attributes other than the academic, does not appear to be widespread. There were no reports of student involvement in setting and assessing learning goals and achievements, and a role for employers in assessment was reported in only one third of cases. In the field of certification a majority of schools had, in the absence of a national certification process, achieved some form of external validation. This was usually in the form of certification by the local vocational education authority and was almost exclusively confined to vocational schools.

School - community liaison and inter-agency cooperation, both key themes of the transition literature, have made little impact on VPTP practice according to the survey. Local liaison groups are unknown, cooperative or jointly-run courses are rare, as is sharing of facilities and the level of cooperation between the agencies at the education - training interface seems very unsatisfactory.

In summary, the gulf between the type of programme for the less academic, post-compulsory student proposed by transition theory and the curriculum of VPTP in Irish post primary schools appears to be immense. Much of this has to do with official Departmental policy and limited resources, as well as inflexibility and lack of initiatives at school level. However, some of the responsibility must also lie with the follow-up dissemination stages of the two transition programmes. Clearly, when only 9% of VPTP coordinators have 'read the project literature or used the material', and only 17% regard the work of the transition programmes as important in terms of their own courses, a problem of communication exists.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. D. Hannon, Schooling and the Labour Market, (Shannon: Shannon Curriculum Development Unit, 1987), p. 52.

CONCLUSION

THE FAILURE OF VPTP:

TRANSITION EDUCATION THEORY AND VOCATIONAL PREPARATION PRACTICE

This concluding chapter will be divided into five sections. In section one, I propose on the basis of the points made in chapters two to ten inclusive to outline briefly the parameters of the ideal transition education programme as defined in the literature on the two transition programmes. In section two, I propose on the basis of the points made in chapters eleven and thirteen to outline briefly the features of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme type I currently being implemented in Irish post primary schools. I will then attempt to make explicit the differences between the theory of transition education and the reality of VPTP.

In section three, I will argue that VPTP in its present form has failed and suggest that part of the reason for its failure is the theory / reality gap identified in section two. In section four, I will suggest that recent evidence indicates a realisation among policy makers in Ireland that VPTP I has failed and a belated attempt to move in the direction of programmes more on the EC transition model. Finally, in section five, I underline the main theme of this thesis and suggest some of the implications for EC education and training policies which it entails.

Section 1 Transition Theory: the Ideal Programme:

Chapters two to ten inclusive of this work offer a model of what might be described as the ideal transition education programme as developed in the course of the First and Second Transition Programmes. The key elements in such a programme might be summarised as follows:

- (1) a curriculum based on pupil needs in terms of coping successfully with the demands of adult and working life;
- (2) a curriculum emphasising relevant knowledge and practical learning;
- (3) an input from the pupil into the development of the curriculum by means of a process of negotiation;
- (4) an active learning methodology involving modular units, integrated studies, project work, pupil-directed learning and small group and individual work;
- (5) extensive use of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource through such methods as work experience, community tutors, community service, work shadowing, and residential courses;
- (6) a broad course content involving vocationally relevant studies but also social and personal education and the arts;
- (7) close personal and vocational guidance for each pupil and access both in school and in the community to adequate information sources;
- (8) an appropriate social context involving cooperation and democratic relationships with staff;

- (9) an appropriate physical context including purpose prepared base areas within the school and use of outside facilities for course elements;
- (10) the involvement of parents and the broader community in the programme through home - school links and school - community liaison networks;
- (11) an emphasis on gender equality through specific courses and non traditional vocational training and work experience for girls;
- (12) closer cooperation and link courses between schools and other bodies such as training agencies and industry;
- (13) ongoing assessment of a wide range of pupil knowledge, skills and personal qualities through profiling systems and records of achievement;
- (14) widely recognised certification leading to further training and employment.

The above list clearly represents a daunting challenge and as I have previously indicated few of the projects were successful in implementing each of the proposals. However, they do represent what the transition literature would propose as a framework or set of principles to be worked towards in the development of transition education courses. However, it is made clear in the literature that certain of the above, particularly those in the areas of methodology, course context, gender equality, community involvement and assessment procedures must be seen as fundamental to transition courses. It is argued that transition courses which do not conform to the above model in these fields are

unlikely to reintegrate the alienated and demotivated and are incapable of achieving many of the aims of transition education. In particular, those pertaining to the development of desirable personal qualities and attributes such as initiative and enterprise are unlikely to be achieved in the absence of new approaches in these areas.

The implementation of some or all of these approaches in school transition courses carries major implications for school organisation, resources, and teacher training and retraining. These issues, with the exception of the third, are not really adequately dealt with in the transition documents. Also, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the quality of dissemination - the aggressive salesmanship required to sell these innovations to policy makers and school authorities - has been sadly lacking. Finally, as shown in chapter eleven, the Department of Education while endorsing much of the theory outlined above has, whether for financial reasons or otherwise, not greatly encouraged the implementation of the suggested curriculum reforms.

For these reasons it would be unrealistic to expect that the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme type I being implemented in Irish schools would closely mirror the EC transition model outlined above. The results of the survey reported in chapter thirteen confirm a major divergence in practice between the two. This should not, however, lead to undue criticisms of the schools. Given the guidelines and resources within which they are working and the poor dissemination of the pilot project experiences, it is not surprising that the VPTP I appears closer in structure and methodology to the traditional certificate courses than

to the transition model. The following section briefly outlines the key features of VPTP I as it is operated in Irish post primary schools.

Section 2 The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme Type I in Operation:

Chapters eleven and thirteen of this thesis offer an account of the rationale, theoretical framework and practical implementation of VPTP I in the Irish post primary schools. The key elements which emerge from this account might be summarised as follows:

- (1) curriculum content designed to be more practical and relevant to pupil needs;
- (2) centralised Departmental and school control of the curriculum - little evidence of room for pupil (or teacher) input;
- (3) largely traditional course structures - subject-based, inflexible timetables, conducted largely in a classroom setting and involving a full teaching team of five to eight teachers;
- (4) some use of project work but otherwise involving traditional approaches based largely on whole class teaching strategies;
- (5) limited use of the out-of-school environment as a learning resource other than for work experience placements;
- (6) narrow course content emphasising vocationally relevant subjects, but with limited work in areas such as social/personal education or the arts;

- (7) no evidence of improved social context in the form of changed pupil-teacher relationships or more democratic staff-staff and staff-management relationships;
- (8) some use of alternative physical contexts within the school in the form of separate accomodation for the programme. The accomodation is, however, seldom suitable for project / small group / individual work; very little use of facilities outside of the school;
- (9) considerable use of course coordinators but without the time or resources to develop relationships with VPTP groups along the lines of the transition tutor model; little development of other support roles - staff training officer and curriculum development officer;
- (10) no special provision for personal and vocational guidance for VPTP pupils;
- (11) little use of compensation programmes to encourage gender equality and very slow progress in encouraging girls to become involved in non-traditional vocational studies and work experience;
- (12) little formally structured school - community liaison or parental involvement and poor cooperation with outside bodies - training agencies, industries, manpower services and so forth;
- (13) some limited use of profiling and records of achievement to assess progress;
- (14) no nationally recognised certification providing access to further education / training. Some development of

certification on a regional or area basis as opposed to certification validated only by the individual school.

On the positive side, the picture that emerges is one in which the content of the curriculum has undergone significant change. New subjects such as Communications and Preparation for Working Life have replaced the more traditional subject designations. Other subjects, particularly those in the technical areas such as Building Construction, have retained the same name but the course content tends to be more practical and relevant than that offered on the Certificate courses. The introduction of work experience in one form or another as a part of the programme has added at least one significant experience / activity-based learning experience. Finally, the small number of VPTPs which offer significant social and personal education are achieving a greater balance in the curriculum content than is the case with the more traditional courses. The role of the coordinator although underdeveloped is another positive feature of VPTP.

However, other than in the fields of content and the coordinator's role, little of substance in VPTP differs from more traditional courses. In particular, in those areas designated in the transition literature as being of crucial importance - methodology, context, gender equality, community and inter-agency liaison, assessment and certification - few of the approaches developed in the transition programmes have made a significant impact.

It might be helpful at this stage to present briefly in schematic form the key conceptual and organisational differences identifiable between the 'ideal transition model' and VPTP I as implemented in practice.

	<u>Transition</u>	<u>VPTP I</u>
Knowledge	Skills relevant to work and adult life	Skills relevant to work and adult life
Organisation	Modular, integrated, flexible	Cyclical, subject-based, rigid
Learning Experiences	Practical, activity-based, informal, out-of-school	Formal, school-based, passive learning
Methodology	Pupil-centred, project-based, individual/small group	Formal teaching, whole class
Social Context	Informal, democratic	Formal, hierarchical
Physical Context	Extensive use of the out-of-school environment	Largely confined to school and classroom
Liaison	With the community, parents, industry, training agencies and other bodies	School-dominated - limited role for outside groups

The transition literature is clear in its insistence that reform of content alone is not enough to achieve the goals of transition education, and courses which rely on traditional methods will fail,

regardless of the excellence of the content offered. If this view is correct, the implication is that VPTP I will fail to meet the aims and objectives stated in the Department's foundation documents. These, as we have seen in chapter eleven, were closely modelled on the aims and objectives of transition education elaborated in the literature produced by the two transition programmes. In order to see whether this prediction has in fact come to pass we must now turn to an examination of the available evidence concerning the success or failure of VPTP I.

VPTP I - A Failure?:

The most significant evidence for the relative failure of the VPTP I lies in the steady decline in the numbers of young people taking the programme. When the original pre-employment course was redesignated VPTP in 1984 and made available to all post primary schools it engendered widespread hope. It was felt that the new programme would become in due course a realistic alternative senior cycle pathway of two years' duration or at least an effective alternative intervention programme for the growing numbers of economically redundant, less academically able young people remaining in school beyond compulsory school leaving age. However, as the following figures illustrate, the original enthusiasm was not maintained and with the emergence of VPTP 2 a remarkable and disturbing change takes place in the figures.

Vocational Preparation and Training Programme Numbers

1985/86 - 1990/91 inclusive

	<u>VPTP I</u>	<u>VPTP 2</u>
1985/86	17,740	1,220
1986/87	18,224	1,771
1987/88	18,006	768
1988/89	14,661	4,202
1990/91	9,207	17,645

Source: Department of Education figures supplied to author, January 1991

Two things emerge clearly from these figures. Firstly, the steady decline in VPTP I numbers and, second, the remarkable rise in the numbers taking VPTP 2. The latter is explained by the shortage of third level places and the consequent provision of VPTP 2 (now usually referred to as post Leaving Certificate courses: PLC) as either an alternative for those not proceeding to third level or in many cases as a preparatory year for a third level course. Most of the pupils involved have, as the name PLC suggests, completed the Leaving Certificate. A small percentage (no figures available from the Department) are what one might call genuine VPTP 2 students - in that they are proceeding to VPTP 2 having completed VPTP I.

The increasing dominance of VPTP 2 / PLC courses is a cause for concern. Certainly, opportunities for further education / training beyond Leaving Certificate for those not able or willing to proceed to third level are

desirable. However, in the light of declining VPTP I numbers and keeping in mind the categories of pupils for which European Social Fund monies are essentially intended, the utilisation of the bulk of resources to further aid those who have completed a full programme of post primary education must be questioned.

With regard to the declining VPTP I numbers, there can be no definitive case made to prove that this is simply a question of pupil resistance to an inadequate curriculum. Other factors may be just as important. For example, the Government decision to cease paying an allowance to the students may have affected pupil numbers. Also the recent development of the Youthreach course aimed at the most disadvantaged young people may have taken some potential VPTP recruits. Finally, the continued lack of adequate certification has probably resulted in many potential VPTP students opting for a pass Leaving Certificate course.

Nonetheless, the view that the unreformed nature of the VPTP I curriculum is a factor in the decline in pupil numbers is supported by various pieces of research into the programme. For example, the Department of Education's own research showed pupil dissatisfaction with the general studies area of the programme and Departmental dissatisfaction with the provision of vocational studies, work experience and efforts to eliminate gender bias¹. Michael O'Donovan's detailed study of VPTPs in Dublin indicated both pupil and teacher dissatisfaction with curriculum content, methodology, assessment and certification². A recent study by the Confederation of Irish Industry indicates that only 12% of employers consider the training offered by

VPTP as 'excellent' or 'good'³. Diarmuid Leonard, in a recent article reviewing the progress of VPTP since 1984, expresses concern at the limited nature of curriculum reform and innovation and the low level of resources committed to the course⁴.

Finally, and most recently, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) senior cycle consultative document entitled Senior Cycle Issues and Structures states that 'the current senior cycle provision does not adequately cater for the diversity of student needs'⁵. In particular the NCCA expresses concern at the very high numbers of pupils undertaking the Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate programme which clearly does not suit their needs and aptitudes. The major cause of this problem is identified as lack of an appropriate alternative. Clearly, the Council's view is that VPTP does not meet the requirements of such pupils. To remedy this, the Council suggests either significant improvements in VPTP provision or the extension of the Senior Certificate, a two year alternative senior cycle programme developed by the 'SPIRAL II' Second Transition Programme pilot project at Shannon. This programme is based very much on the transition education model. Alternatively, the Council suggests the possible remodelling of the pass Leaving Certificate along the lines of the Senior Certificate⁶.

This evidence, taken together with the decline in pupil numbers, seems to me to vindicate the view that failure to develop along the lines advocated in the transition literature has damaged the effectiveness and credibility of VPTP I. Moreover it may well be that educational policy

makers in Ireland are now coming around to this view. Certainly a number of recent initiatives suggest an increasing influence for transition theory on developments in education/training provision.

New Education / Training Initiatives and the Influence of Transition

Education Theory:

Certain statements of policy from both the Department of Education and the NCCA, together with a major education/training initiative entitled Youthreach, appear to betray an increasing transition theory influence. Examples of the former include the plans of the Department of Education to develop a national system for the assessment and certification of post-Leaving Certificate programmes and Vocational Preparation and Training programmes, and indications from the NCCA that the Senior Certificate programme, developed by the 'SPIRAL II' project at Shannon should either become an alternative senior cycle pathway or influence reform of the Leaving Certificate and Vocational Training and Preparation programmes. It is also interesting that the Department of Education has continued to fund the Senior Certificate after the conclusion of the EC project funding and has allowed it to spread to schools not originally involved. These examples represent perhaps no more than straws in the wind, but the Youthreach initiative provides more concrete evidence of new official thinking along transition education lines.

Youthreach came into operation on 1 January 1989. It was designed to provide up to two years duration of 'foundation training, education and work experience for those young people who find it most difficult to make the transition from school to work'¹⁰. It was aimed primarily at Priority Group One pupils (PG1) - those who drop out of school without any qualifications before reaching compulsory leaving age. More than 3,200 PG1s were placed on the programme in 1989¹¹. Also in 1989, 2,407 PG2 pupils (those leaving school after the Intermediate/Group Certificate) were taken onto the Youthreach foundation year. The figures for 1990 were 4,200 PG1s and 3,207 PG2s¹². These figures help explain some of the decline in VPTP I numbers. Since Youthreach pupils or 'trainees' are paid an allowance, and the curriculum is more structured to their needs, it seems the new programme may be proving attractive to considerable numbers of those who would normally opt for VPTP I.

The rhetoric of Youthreach draws heavily on the transition literature. The following are three of many examples that could be offered.

The programme content and methodology ... is participant centered and based upon experiential learning¹³;

the fundamental approach will be one which facilitates trainee centered learning and which helps to develop a range of competencies related to work and to life. Training modules will be person centered and needs-based. Use will be made of guided experiential learning techniques¹⁴;

to achieve the aims, the setting (premises), the context (relations with home and community), together with the methodology and staff/participant relations are of equal importance and can be referred to at the Programme or Project¹⁵.

The curriculum content specified also draws on the transition programmes' experience. For example, 'skill training in practical activities will form a vital part of the programme', but 'training which in the past was geared towards specific skills training must change to incorporate a type of training which develops versatility in the trainees'⁴. Practical work training will include 'periods in employers' premises, in community service type activities on work simulation or work experience and mini-company activities'⁵. General education is to include, as well as literacy and numeracy, 'guidance and counselling...information, periods out of the training environment and residential week-ends'. It also includes an element of 'personal effectiveness training' with detailed aims and objectives. Finally, the course is to be structured around these elements 'on a modular basis' and involve 'self assessment'. 'Skill sampling' and regular joint (between staff and student) 'negotiation and review periods' are to be included'⁶.

Perhaps more significantly than either rhetoric or content is the influence of transition theory on Youthreach in the fields of context, structure, organisation and assessment. For example, regarding social context the Youthreach documents state:

experience to date indicates very strongly that the climate and context within which the programme takes place is very important... The key to success is the development of effective learning situations coupled with adult-to-adult relationships as distinct from teacher-to-pupil'⁷.

To facilitate improved social context, instructor/teacher retraining is suggested, together with 'negotiation of the curriculum with students' followed by a 'personal learning contract between instructor and student with detailed agreed objectives and opportunity for student self assessment'¹⁴. The structure of Youthreach, involving small student groups (12-15), a course coordinator or manager with very extensive contact with the group (very similar to the transition tutor model) and a small team of teachers / instructors is also designed to influence social context for the better.

The approach to physical context is likewise very reminiscent of transition theory on the subject.

'Experience to date shows that it is unlikely that the target group can be catered for in the context of traditional school or training premises. Attractive premises outside such institutions will probably have to be used through drawing on resources locally from education, training, youth and community services'¹⁵.

Further examples of transition theory influence on Youthreach include the extremely detailed provision for ongoing assessment through profiles and records of achievement recently produced by the Youthreach working group, the proposals for national certification involving a credit system linked to further training and the facilitation of close formal liaison between the training agencies, Vocational Education Committees and other agencies at the education/training interface²⁰.

Clearly the work of the two EC transition programmes has exerted a profound influence on the Youthreach initiative while, despite the similarity in target group profiles, it has influenced VPTP I to a far lesser extent. It is hard to understand why this is so. It may well be that FAS (since training is its main remit) is more in the forefront of new initiatives in the training end, as it were, of the education market. It may also be that the PG1 target population of school drop outs is now receiving greater attention, while those pupils who are coaxed to remain at school, however unsuccessful their efforts there, are regarded as less problematic. It may also be that FAS as an organisation has managed to retain a degree of flexibility in organisation and openness to new approaches which is beyond that of the Department of Education and of most schools. Finally, it may be that in the ongoing struggle for finance FAS has been able to obtain the funds necessary to develop transition type initiatives while such programmes in schools have not been adequately funded.

In the event of VPTP I continuing to fail to develop along the lines of transition theory / Youthreach, it is likely that more potential VPTP I pupils from the PG2 category will opt for Youthreach by dropping out of school until they become eligible. This is undesirable in itself, but also runs counter to Government policy (which is to keep Youthreach for PG1 category pupils) and most importantly could swamp Youthreach capacity to the detriment of the PG1 young people who need it so badly. Youthreach appears to offer a model of transition theory in operation which could in modified form be applied to VPTP I and transform its

effectiveness and attractiveness to pupils. However, it is only in the context of such a transformation that VPTP I may have any future at all.

Final Conclusion: Curriculum Reform and Programme Funding - the Missing Connection:

My main concern in this thesis has not been to criticise the Irish Department of Education or the VPTP I. Nor has it been to suggest that the rhetoric-reality gap identified applies only to this one programme. (In this regard, I must say that my ongoing research in the field of education/training developments in EC member States suggests that the problem identified here is not uncommon).

Rather I wish to argue that for whatever reasons much useful research has not had the influence on the curriculum development of VPTP which it merits, and that consequently it and other initiatives at the education/training interface have experienced the worst of both worlds. On the one hand we see the often imprecise and ideologically loaded rhetoric of EC education/training youth policy documents acknowledged and deferred to. On the other hand, we find a failure fully to exploit something of much greater value, namely the experience distilled from two extensive research programmes involving many innovative and talented educationalists. This is a situation we would do well to reverse and perhaps are beginning to do so in areas essentially controlled by the training agencies.

However, in the education field little has changed and the rhetoric-reality gap has major implications for EC policy with regard to the harmonisation of education systems and the mutual recognition of qualifications and certification. These much touted goals, said to be even more pressing as 1992 approaches, can hardly be advanced as long as what might be termed a 'blind eye' policy is pursued. In the transition field this policy involves the funding of programmes which acknowledge the required rhetoric but contain in reality little substantially new other than an often attenuated version of work experience.

National policy makers may well feel that much of what in theory is expected of them is unworkable, irrelevant or impossible to implement, whether as a result of inadequate funding or through flaws in the basic thinking. But at least these arguments should have to be made. As it stands, the EC funds research, publishes the outcomes and argues that their implementation is crucial to the provision of effective transition programmes. However, it does not appear willing to use the key instrument of funding to encourage compliance. As a result, no real debate on the value of these curriculum initiatives is engendered since national policy makers are largely free to decide how much or how little they will implement. Progress therefore towards harmonisation may become little more than a veneer of common rhetoric over a range of divergent practice.

A number of steps appear urgently required to bridge the rhetoric-reality gap. Firstly, the criteria for funding could be brought more into line with the curriculum practice which the EC claims to support.

Secondly, much more detailed examination of the actual programmes funded appears necessary. The present system seems to rely on vague generalised reports from each member State and seldom initiates more extensive research nor makes use of such research where it has been conducted by non-governmental agencies in the particular country. Thirdly, a much more extensive programme of dissemination and education is required in order to make the relevant authorities in each member State more aware of the research carried out and more convinced about its merits. There has been a serious failure in this regard to date and at least part of the blame for the limited response to EC education/training initiatives can be traced to what one might term poor salesmanship. Fourthly, the extent of funding must be reconsidered where it can be argued that the implementation of desirable reform would go far beyond the resources available at present. It is of little use suggesting extensive changes in education systems already badly underfunded. Indeed, financial constraints more than any other factor are undoubtedly the most important element in the rhetoric-reality gap, at least in the case of Ireland.

However, each of these steps is conditional on a clearer definition of where the power lies in terms of education/training decision making, for in the last resort it is the granting or withholding of funding that will decide the nature of the programmes implemented. This of course is delicate territory where national sensitivities have to be considered, but if harmonisation is to be more than a catchphrase, the piper will have to be coaxed, cajoled or coerced into playing the newly composed tune.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire on Curriculum Practice in Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes, Type I, in Irish Post Primary Schools

SECTION 1: THE VPTP - BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

For each of the following questions please tick the appropriate answer.

1. Type of School (Tick one)

Secondary	Girls Only__	Boys Only__	Co-ed__
Comprehensive/Community	Girls Only__	Boys Only__	Co-ed__
Vocational	Girls Only__	Boys Only__	Co-ed__

2. Size of School

Please indicate number of pupils. Tick one.

0 - 250 ___
251 - 600 ___
over 600 ___

3. Geographic Location of the School

Is the school located in an urban or a rural area? Tick one.

Urban ___ (centre of population of over 5,000)
Rural ___ (centre of population of under 5,000)

SECTION 2: THE VPTP - GENERAL INFORMATION

Indicate type of VPTP offered in the school. (Tick one).

VPTP I	VPTP 2	Both
(Post Inter/Group Cert)	(Post Leaving Cert)	

For each of the following questions please enter the appropriate number in the space provided.

4. Please indicate the total number of pupils taking a VPT course in your school in the academic year 1987/88

Total number _____

5. Please indicate the numbers of (a) boys and (b) girls who took the VPTP in 1987/88.

(a) Boys _____ (b) Girls _____

6. Into how many classes were the VPTP pupils divided?

Number of classes _____

7. How many teachers, on average, taught each VPTP class?

Number of teachers _____

SECTION 3: THE VPTP - ORGANISATION IN THE SCHOOL

For each of the following questions please tick the appropriate answer.

8. Does the Coordinator of the VPTP hold a post of responsibility for this work?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please specify the type of post.

A ___ B ___

If 'no', does the Coordinator enjoy a reduced teaching load to facilitate his/her work?

Yes ___ No ___

9. Please tick any of the following tasks which you undertake in the course of your work as Coordinator of VPTP.

- Curriculum Coordination ___
- Obtaining Work Experience Placements ___
- Supervising Work Experience ___
- Personal Counselling of Pupils ___
- Vocational Guidance of Pupils ___
- Staff Development ___
- Discipline ___
- Liaison with Parents ___

Please indicate any other tasks not included in the above list.

10. Is there a member of staff other than the VPTP Coordinator with particular responsibility for curriculum planning and development in the VPTP area?

Yes ___ No ___

11. Is there a member of staff other than the VPTP Coordinator with particular responsibility for the staff development of the VPTP teaching team (e.g. organisation of in-service training, team meetings)?

Yes __ No __

12. Has the VPTP staff undergone any in-service training to prepare it for this work?

Yes __ No __

If 'yes', please specify the nature and extent of the training received.

13. Does the VPTP Coordinator and his/her teaching team meet regularly?

Yes __ No __

If 'yes', please specify the regularity and duration of these meetings.

14. Is the VPTP timetable structured to allow the Coordinator and teaching team to meet on a regular basis?

Yes __ No __

15. Does each VPTP class/group have a class teacher/tutor with special responsibilities for that group?

Yes __ No __

If 'yes', please specify the responsibilities of the class tutor.

Does the class tutor enjoy a reduced teaching load to facilitate this work?

Yes __ No __

SECTION 4: THE VPTP - METHODOLOGY

Please tick the appropriate response to the following questions and answer in the space provided as necessary.

16. Is the VPTP in your school subject-based (i.e. is the course divided into distinct subjects)?

Yes __ No __

If 'yes', please list the subjects taken by one VPTP class in 1987/88.

If 'no', please explain on what basis the Programme is organised.

- 17 We are interested in finding out to what extent the following teaching/learning strategies are used in the VPTP in your school. Please consider each methodology by looking at the scale beside the item and then circle the number which comes closest to your own perception of how widely that particular strategy is used in the VPTP. For example, '1' means that you think the strategy is "very widely used", '5' means that you think the strategy is 'never used'.

Strategy Used	Very Widely	Quite Widely	Occasion-ally	Seldom	Never
Project Work	1	2	3	4	5
Integrated Studies	1	2	3	4	5
Small Group Learning	1	2	3	4	5
Modular Courses	1	2	3	4	5
Individually-based Learning Programmes	1	2	3	4	5
Role Play	1	2	3	4	5
Negotiation (with pupils concerning the content, methodology and methods of assessment of the Programme)	1	2	3	4	5

Use of the out-of-school environment for parts of the Programme (other than Work Experience) 1 2 3 4 5

Link Courses (parts of the programme organised jointly with another agency e.g. technical school or college, training agency) 1 2 3 4 5

SECTION 5: THE VPTP - LEARNING SPACES

18. Does each VPTP group have a base area - special classroom, prefab, etc. - used only by that group?

Yes ___ No ___

19. Does each VPTP group have access to a learning area suitable for project/small group work (e.g. a number of rooms close together, a large room which can be sub-divided by partitions, a group of prefabs)?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please specify.

20. Is use made of accommodation or facilities outside of the school for any part of the Programme (other than Work Experience)?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please specify.

21. Are parts of the Programme ever held in learning institutions other than the base school (e.g. other schools, technical colleges, training agencies)?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please specify.

SECTION 6: THE VPTP - GENDER EQUALITY

22. Do you see gender equality - measures to improve the educational and employment aspirations of girls - as an important theme in the VPTP?

Yes ___ No ___

23. Is there a specific 'compensation' or 'familiarisation' programme for girls designed to improve their vocational aspirations and expectations?

Yes ___ No ___

24. Please list the vocational studies areas which are made available to girls in your VPTP.

25. Does your school try to provide work experience for girls in 'non-traditional' areas (technologies/electronics, for example)?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please comment on how effective you think efforts in this regard have been.

SECTION 7: THE VPTP - WORK EXPERIENCE

26. Are you able to obtain an adequate number of Work Experience placements?

Yes ___ No ___

27. On average, how many placements would each pupil receive per year?

Average number of placements ___

28. How satisfied are you with the quality of the work experience placements available to you? Please tick one answer.

Very satisfied ___ Fairly satisfied ___ Uncertain ___

Fairly dissatisfied ___ Very dissatisfied ___

Please explain your answer.

29. Do the employers involved provide any formal training for VPTP pupils sent to them? Please tick one answer.

Very often ___ Often ___ Occasionally ___ Seldom ___ Never ___

30. Is any use made of community service work as an addition or alternative to Work Experience in firms?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please specify.

31. Was there a mini-company project as part of your VPTP in 1987/88?

Yes ___ No ___

32. Was "Education for Enterprise" a component of your 1987/88 VPTP?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please indicate the topics covered in this component.

SECTION 8: THE VPTP - ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

33. Is there a formal examination on the completion of the VPTP?

Yes ___ No ___

34. Is there a system of ongoing assessment?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please indicate the methods used to carry out the assessments.

35. Do the VPTP pupils have an input into the assessment system?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please indicate how this is achieved.

36. Do the employers who provide work experience have an input into the assessment procedure?

Yes ___ No ___

37. Do the VPTP pupils receive a formal certificate at the end of the Programme?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', is the certificate validated by the school only?

Yes ___ No ___

If there is validation by an agency outside of the school, please state the agency involved.

SECTION 9: THE VPTP - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

38. Is there a formal structure such as a school/community liaison committee to assist in the organisation of the VPTP?

Yes ___ No ___

39. Are members of the community with particular skills ever used as additional instructors/tutors on the VPTP?

Yes ___ No ___

If 'yes', please give an example.

40. Are any elements of the VPTP run in cooperation or jointly with other agencies (e.g. other schools, training agencies)?

Yes ___ No ___

41. How good, in your view, is the level of cooperation between the school and State agencies such as FAS or CERT? Please tick one answer.

Very good ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor ___ Very Poor ___

