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## CHAPTER 7

### WHY DO SCHOOLS NEGLECT THEIR MAIN GOALS?

It may be thought that schools' lack of attention to the wider goals of education is adequately explained by the lack of clarity about the goals that are to be achieved and how they are to be achieved, the difficulties involved in nurturing the desired qualities, the dearth of ways of monitoring their development, and the absence of means of recording the outcomes in ways that are acceptable in the certification and placement process<sup>7.1</sup>. In fact, further serious problems arise from the value-based nature of competence and the social functions which the educational system performs for society. These will be reviewed in this chapter.

#### *The Problem is not a Lack of Time, Money, Resources or Teacher Training*

Before moving on it is important to note that the significant barriers to educational reform do not include a lack of time, money, resources, traditional support staff, conventional forms of teacher training, or accepted forms of staff development.

Progressive Education in America has a long history of well-funded and well-resourced attempts to tackle the problems which confront the educational system. These include those of Dewey<sup>7.2</sup>, Aikin<sup>7.3</sup>, Caswell<sup>7.4</sup>, and the Newton School System<sup>7.5</sup>. Fraley<sup>7.6</sup> has shown that billions of dollars, and endless teacher and support time, together with ample professional assistance from university staff, were poured into seven US school systems. Despite this, at least once the external support and limelight was withdrawn, only about 5% of teachers did what it was hoped they would do.

In Britain, numerous attempts, each costing millions of dollars, have been made to reform the educational system in ways which would lead it to focus on the goals we have been concerned with in this book. These have included the introduction of mixed ability teaching (which was, in part, designed to stimulate the invention of ways of identifying and fostering more of the talents of more of the pupils and to focus attention on ways of fostering talents which are more important than those designated as "academic" in most schools), some of the curriculum development projects of the sixties and seventies<sup>7.7</sup>, and the introduction of profiles and records of achievement (which were intended to enable pupils to get recognition for a wider range of talents and thus legitimize more broadly based programs of education)<sup>7.8</sup>. None of these "initiatives" met with notable success... yet they are now being joined by a number of other well funded "developments". One is the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. This is explicitly intended to foster qualities like initiative, the ability to communicate, the ability to work with others, problem solving ability, and the ability to understand society<sup>7.9</sup>. Despite its goals, however, the programs rarely include the kinds of activity that would be needed to nurture such competencies. Another is the attempt, embedded in the Education Reform Bill<sup>7.10</sup>, to improve education by specifying curriculum content, introducing regular testing of pupils and teachers, devolving some powers to School Boards, and offering parents a choice of school in the context of

published performance data<sup>7.11</sup>. Both programs have been accompanied by huge development exercises based on the assumption that the problem and the solution were correctly diagnosed and understood - but by virtually no fundamental research of the kind we have been concerned with in this book.

Class size is often blamed for some of the problems. Yet the IEA data<sup>7.12</sup> show that teachers with small classes generally pursue the same goals, and teach in the same way, as those with larger classes. Dewey had one adult to every four pupils in his experimental school - but still only about 5% of the teachers did what he enjoined them to do. In a pre-school Home Visiting project which we evaluated, teachers (who were also mothers) worked with *individual* children for an hour a week over about 9 months. Few of them facilitated the development of high-level competencies in these children in the way in which they themselves - in their role as mothers - facilitated their development in their own children.

Lack of resources, large classes, and time for conventional development work are, therefore, not the main barriers to the dissemination of the kind of work undertaken by the outstanding teachers whose work was summarized in Chapter 6. Several unsuspected, and much more serious, barriers have, however, come to light in the course of our work. These will be discussed in this chapter under nine headings.

1) *The absence of tools to help teachers to manage multiple, individualized, competency-oriented, programs of education.*

Running competency-oriented educational programs is a difficult, creative, inventive, and frustrating job: as indicated earlier, teachers have to find out what each pupil cares about and is good at, invent a range of personalized developmental programs which enable pupils to practice (and thereby develop) some of the wide range of competencies which might be developed and which are needed in society, monitor pupils' reactions to those experiences, and take corrective action when necessary. When there are 30 or more students in a class this is an almost superhuman task. We have found that those teachers who do manage it have painstakingly - and often at considerable personal cost - developed the necessary sensitivities, monitoring strategies, and competencies over many - perhaps 20 - years<sup>7.13</sup>. If more teachers are to do what these outstanding teachers appear to do "instinctively" it will be necessary for them to have some tools which will help them to undertake the activities mentioned above explicitly. Those tools will have to enable them to identify each pupil's motives or values, indicate personalized developmental programs for each pupil, and familiarize them (the teachers) with the concepts they need to think about multiple talents and their development<sup>7.14</sup>.

(2) *The absence of means of giving pupils or teachers credit, in the certification and placement process, for having developed high-level competencies.*

The next problem is the absence of appropriate summative assessment procedures. To understand the importance of this, we must first recall that we have already seen that most pupils and parents know that the main benefit offered by the "educational" system is not education at all. It is grade-bearing credentials or certificates which will buy entry to courses of further and higher education and thereafter entry to protected occupations<sup>7.15</sup>. They are therefore faced with a dilemma if they are offered programs which are genuinely developmental but which do not lead to tradeable certificates<sup>7.16</sup>. Teachers have a similar

dilemma. They would be jeopardising their pupils' life chances if they offered them programs which nurtured important high-level competencies but which, by taking time away from the syllabi on which they will be tested, reduced their chances of obtaining high grades. Perhaps just as importantly, since teachers' reputations are based on their ability to ensure that their students get high grades, they would be jeopardising their own prospects as well.

It is for these reasons that it is what is assessed in the certification and placement process - and not the educational aspirations of parents, pupils, teachers, curriculum councils, Secretaries of education or anyone else - which primarily determines what happens in schools<sup>7.17</sup>. Teachers would generally prefer not to recognise this sociological reality or address the dilemmas it poses<sup>7.18</sup>. Many of them come into teaching because they want to help people and do a worthwhile job in the community<sup>7.19</sup>. They resent - and are demeaned by - the child-minding and social-allocative roles which society thrusts upon them. Rather than think about how the sociological imperative that schools allocate position and status might be grasped and satisfied, they want someone else (such as employers or the universities) to perform these tasks and leave them free to get on with education. Unfortunately, Dore's<sup>7.20</sup> data shows that this is sociologically naive: teachers' behavior continues to be determined by what is assessed in the certification and placement process - regardless of how widely its irrelevance is acknowledged and regardless of who does the assessing.

Actually, ways of assessing these qualities are not only needed for certification purposes. They are also needed if teachers and pupils are to be able to monitor progress toward important goals and obtain the feedback needed to improve their performance - and, indeed, if they are to know that they have accomplished anything worthwhile in the time they have devoted to the necessary activities. Means of assessing such qualities are equally badly needed for use in evaluation studies and accountability exercises. If no such measures are available, the educational system's failure to achieve its main goals will continue to be unknown on the "factual" register which largely determines the educational policy-making agenda. So long as this is known only "intuitively" - in the way it is currently known to parents, teachers, pupils and employers - it does not figure in the discussions which determine educational policy. Proposals to improve education will continue to focus on the easily measurable, but relatively trivial, and miss the important (witness the way in which the educational-improvement-through-testing philosophy has swept the world).

*(3) The conflict between the procedures which are required to foster high-level competencies and the widely held view that "teaching" means "telling".*

The activities which are required to nurture the development of high-level competencies are best captured by the term "facilitating growth"<sup>7.21</sup>. Yet, overlooking the fact that fostering the abilities required to read, write and count involves advancing skills or competencies, most people believe that teaching is about "telling" - transmitting *information* from teachers to pupils.

This identity between education and "telling" on the one hand, and knowing the "right" things to say on the other, has resulted in a vicious circle: teaching as a profession recruits a disproportionate number of people who want to be the center of attention and the source of wisdom<sup>7.22</sup> ... and these are exactly the sort of teachers that many pupils and students think they want. Those who have the skills and sensitivities which are required to

facilitate growth tend not to become teachers in the first place, and they are often rejected by their students if they do find their way into teaching. The conflict between the satisfactions which most teachers want from teaching and the satisfactions available to those who facilitate development - even in language laboratories - results in many teachers finding such activities so distressing that they corrupt them back into "telling".

What these observations show is that there is a serious conflict between the role required of teachers if they are to facilitate the development of competence and:

- i. Parents', pupils', and students' accurate observation that the "educational" system is not mainly about developing competence but about legitimising the rationing of privilege and teaching people how to buy personal advancement by ingratiating themselves with their superiors, and
- ii. The satisfactions which teachers want from their jobs.

If progress is to occur it will be necessary to get this conflict out into the open and ensure that it is carefully addressed.

If more emphasis is to be placed on facilitating the growth of competence it will also be necessary to challenge another widely held belief which derives from the technical-rational model of competence. This is that "learning" can be chopped up into 40-minute "periods" or 40-hour "modules". The work we have reviewed shows that that high-level competencies are usually developed whilst people are involved in difficult and demanding activities that they care about, which continue over an extended period of time, and which lead, in the end, to something worthwhile (thus enabling those concerned to experience the benefits and satisfactions which come from having engaged in such difficult and demanding activities)<sup>7.23</sup>.

*(4) The problems which stem from the transformational nature of the educational activities which are required to foster high-level competencies.*

To promote the development of high-level competencies one starts by studying pupils' motives and incipient talents. One then tries to invent individualized developmental experiences which will test one's initial hypotheses about incipient interests and talents and the processes which will lead them to flower<sup>7.24</sup>. One cannot know the outcome of this process in advance. One may end up doing things which are quite different to those one initially envisaged. Unexpected talents surface and develop. In this way pupils are *transformed*<sup>7.25</sup>. All of this is fine from an educational point of view. But it is in sharp conflict with widely held beliefs about the ways in which it is appropriate to spend public money. It is generally believed that one should not take risks with such money and that contractors (teachers or researchers) should be able to specify in advance what the results of the expenditure will be. Funding an *adventure* which may (or may not) transform people or existing understandings is viewed as not merely risky: it is illegitimate. The solution to this problem has not only to do with legitimising venturesome activity in the public sector. It also involves finding ways of identifying the sorts of teachers who are able to capitalize on what they stumble across in the course of an adventure - i.e. teachers who are able to recognise the value of something they have come upon "by chance" and turn it to advantage. To do this it will be necessary to develop staff appraisal tools which will make it possible to identify, recognise, reward, and encourage among teachers the very competencies that we have been concerned with in this book.

(5) *The dilemmas associated with catering for diversity.*

We have seen that high-level competencies can only be nurtured when people are doing things they care about, and that this means tailoring developmental tasks to pupils' personal values, priorities, and motives. It is sometimes impossible for pupils to pursue goals which they care about in the same room as other pupils undertake tasks which *they* care about. For example, one cannot, in the same classroom, meet the needs of those pupils who want to develop toughness and strength and those who wish to develop the sensitivities required to learn how to set their minds to the "dreamy" state required to notice the fleeting feelings on the fringe of consciousness which form the germ of nearly all creative insights and slowly bring them to the center of attention so that they become articulate and communicable.

This need for variety and choice conflicts with the widely accepted emphasis on equality and uniformity in public provision - uniformity which is stressed in such developments as the English National Curriculum. It is therefore essential to make explicit, and possibly challenge, the reasons for this distaste for variety in the public domain. One of its causes is the experience-based belief that such variety leads to a *hierarchy* of options - running from those which are of high quality to those which are poor - rather than to alternatives which are very different from each other, but all of which are of high quality. When the quality of provision varies only from good to bad, the more informed, articulate, and powerful tend to get the best deal. It was, indeed, to counteract just this tendency that education was brought into the public domain in the first place. If the stultifying effects of the emphasis on equality in public provision are to be reduced, it will therefore be necessary to introduce much more effective quality control mechanisms to both (i) document the personal and social consequences of each of a number of demonstrably different options, and (ii) assure the public that each option is of high quality.

Another objection to providing variety and choice in public education is the fear that it will lead to the ossification, even exacerbation, of class differences in the social structure. Fortunately, the evidence already summarized in this book does not support these fears: In the first place, a wide variety of different patterns of competence is required in modern society. Even a single occupational group requires people who want do very different things and who possess different patterns of competence. Secondly, no one person could possibly develop all the concerns and patterns of competence we have identified in the course of our work<sup>7.26</sup>. Thirdly, pupils have very different preoccupations, concerns, and talents: they want very different things from their education and very different satisfactions from their work<sup>7.27</sup>. Fourthly, this variation is more closely related to the occupational destinations pupils are bound for than to their social origins<sup>7.28</sup>. Fifthly, there is, in our society, a great deal more inter-generational social mobility - both upward and downward - than people believe<sup>7.29</sup>. The picture is therefore much more complex than has often been suggested and it points very strongly toward the need to respect, and build on, the variance in pupils' values, priorities, and patterns of competence instead of "inculcating middle class values into working class children". The spectre of teachers perpetuating socio-economic divisions and creating a caste society if they treat different children in different ways does not seem to be well founded.

(6) *Value conflicts.*

A host of serious problems flow from the fact that high-level competencies are heavily value-laden and involve social and political beliefs<sup>7.30</sup>.

The first is that any teacher who attempts to foster them is invariably confronted by parents and pupils who either do not value (1) the competencies (such as the tendency to ask questions or the ability to find information for oneself) which it is hoped to foster or (2) the activities the teacher hopes to initiate to allow his or her pupils to practice, and thereby develop, such competencies. (For example, a teacher might plan to nurture a range of high-level competencies by encouraging his or her class to try to stop a factory polluting a local river - an activity which would almost certainly lead to objections from some parents<sup>7.3</sup>.)

There are several reasons why this problem cannot be simply resolved by offering the public a variety of programs which are tailored to different values and which aim to foster alternative talents. Among them are:

- a) As we have noted, the idea that teachers should treat different children in different ways conflicts with the current emphasis on equality in public provision.
- b) Even parents who are basically in favour of schools fostering high-level competencies are faced by the dilemma that working at such activities will take time away from subject-and-grade-oriented activity and is thus likely to jeopardize their life chances. However, a related problem is that many parents who do want their children to enjoy the economic and social benefits which are associated with high status managerial jobs do not want their children to do some things that it is necessary for them to do to develop the competencies which are required to perform those jobs effectively. For example, managerial ability involves the ability to ask pertinent questions: Yet many parents do not want their children to ask questions - particularly if it would mean that they themselves would have to justify their commands. Another important competence is the ability to venture into the unknown - yet many parents cannot tolerate the anxieties which arise when children undertake tasks which are on the verge of their capabilities<sup>7.32</sup>. A still more fundamental problem is that many parents (and teachers) know that they themselves lack the competencies which are required to manage independent, adventurous, children who take initiative, think for themselves, and guide their behavior by reference to personalized, reason-based, moral codes.
- c) Many parents not only do not, on balance, want schools to foster high-level competencies in their own children, they do not want them to nurture them in other people's children either: if they did, those other children would do better in life than their own. This is why so many people oppose private schools even when they would not send their own children to them even if they could. Private schools can, and often do, inculcate important values and political beliefs - and foster important value-based competencies. But any public school which attempted to do the same would be engulfed in a political furore.

The net effects of the processes just described are, firstly, that the ethos of public schools is more correctly described as *working-class* than "middle-class", and, secondly that, cumulatively, they make change extraordinarily difficult. Thus while, in the end, the solution to the problems posed by the value-laden nature of high-level competencies will have to come through offering pupils and parents a variety of demonstrably different educational programs, the provision of variety is not sufficient in itself. It will also be necessary to surface and challenge many social and civic beliefs and resolve some of the dilemmas identified above.

To resolve those dilemmas it will be necessary to:

- i. Systematically generate a range of educational programs which will appeal to people with very different concerns and incipient talents and which will lead them to develop very different concerns and patterns of competence.
- ii. Accumulate much better research data on the differential consequences of each of the alternatives for the pupils concerned and for the societies in which they live. (Such data should include information on the consequences of each option be for: (a) the patterns of life-satisfaction and competence the pupils develop at the time, (b) the career options open to the pupils in the future, (c) the patterns of life satisfaction and frustration that those concerned are likely to experience in the future [in the context of alternative changes in society], and (d) societal change itself).
- iii. Develop the tools and structures which are needed to (a) assure the public that the options, although distinctly different, are all of high quality, and (b) administer that variety equitably.

It follows from these observations that, if the public is to be offered a variety of options which have very different consequences and be invited to choose between them, we will need to run our society very differently. Among other things, the public service will have to: (1) invent, and provide in each community, a variety of options, and (2) collect, and provide people with, the information they need to choose between those options.

What this means is that the public service will need to feed information *outwards* to the public, rather than upwards through bureaucratic hierarchy to elected representatives who take decisions *for* the public. This will in effect mean that the main decision makers will be the public, not elected representatives.

The task of supervising the information collected and disseminated at each level will require much greater public and media involvement. If this is to happen we will need a much more transparent public bureaucracy, changed roles for elected representatives, and changed citizenship activities. Put another way, we will need to develop new, network-based, participative (rather than representative) forms of democracy to monitor and influence the public service.

It appears, therefore, that (i) fundamental research directed toward the solution of these practical problems, (ii) a wide range of development activities, and (iii) programs of adult civic education to promote the evolution of new means of managing society are unexpected pre-requisites to effective schooling. It follows that one of the first steps to be undertaken by schools is, somewhat surprisingly, to change the beliefs they lead their pupils to adopt about the procedures which are required to promote social development.

A second problem posed by the value-laden nature of competence is that fostering important competencies means influencing pupils' values and political, economic, and civic beliefs. This raises the spectre of brain-washing. Once again, the dilemmas which this poses are most likely to be resolved by finding ways of making what is going on more visible, by providing more markedly different options, and by providing better information on the long term personal and social consequences of each of the alternatives.

But there is a still more thorny issue to be addressed. We have not only argued that all important competencies are value-based but also that the effective operation of both our educational system and our staff guidance, placement, and development systems is

dependent on the *assessment* of these value-laden qualities. The spectre of explicitly assessing value-based motivational dispositions for these purposes throws the moral questions associated with educators working in this area into sharp relief. One can only respond that it would be better to do it openly than do it clandestinely.

*(7) The barriers posed by the latent functions of the educational system.*

In Chapter 5 we saw that the educational system: (i) nurtures the tendency to work out which behavior one's superiors will favour and do whatever is necessary to secure one's preferment regardless of the consequences for one's organization or society<sup>7.33</sup>, (ii) breeds that kind of facility with words that enables people to create a good impression by using fashionable phrases, (iii) advances those who are best able to do these things, (iv) squeezes out those who are most anxious to act in the long term interests of society and those who are best able to invent new ways of thinking about and doing things, (v) selects those who are, because of personal ambition or naivety, most willing and able to undertake the fraudulent "work" of modern society, and (vi) operates to perpetuate an inequitable society by legitimising the way in which privilege is rationed instead of fostering and promoting those best able to identify and introduce changes in the way society is organized. We concluded that these processes make it very difficult to change what happens in schools.

We may now introduce yet another observation about the functioning of the educational system. This is that the way in which it works reflects the way modern societies work. To substantiate this claim we must first examine some features of the way contemporary society works. Despite its rhetoric, the main things manufactured by the marketplace are: (i) useless jobs, and (ii) discriminations which compel participation in the make-work activities of which modern society is largely composed. It is easiest to see this by considering the insurance industry. Insurance should be a simple matter of transferring resources from those who have them to those who do not. In fact, the insurance industry manufactures endless jobs and magnifies differences between the rich and the moderately rich in such a way as to compel participation in the system. Thus the industry creates jobs for endless people generating insurance packages, selling those packages, collecting and keeping account of small sums of money, assessing entitlement, pursuing legal wrangles, assessing the profitability of companies in which it might be suitable for the insurance company to invest, investing in those companies, monitoring those investments, and intervening in the companies concerned. It also generates crass differences between the benefits available to those who can pay and those who are subjected to degrading and dehumanising treatment because, although they have the greatest need, are unable to pay. The educational system works in much the same way: it offers activities which occupy a lot of time of a lot of people; it creates jobs for teachers, administrators, researchers, publishers, librarians, editors and test agencies; it manufactures discriminations between individuals whose competence differs only slightly; it makes use of norm-referenced assessments which require more people to spend more time in the system to attain the same occupational position; and it promotes and advances those who are most concerned with their personal advancement and least concerned with, able to analyse, and anxious to do something about, wider social problems. This parallel between the educational system and society was not discussed in Chapter 5 because we were there concerned with the educational and human resource components of the educational system. The processes we are describing here are purely sociological... but they clearly contribute to the difficulties involved in introducing change.

This is not, however, the only way in which the educational system seems socially functional in the short term but dysfunctional in the longer term: The system also operates as if it were designed to lay the blame for the ills of society at the door of the uneducated and those who are least able to do anything about those social problems instead of at the door of the leaders and managers of society. In the same way, the "devolution of management and control" procedures currently being widely advocated for the educational system throughout the world seem designed to lay the blame for the ills of the educational system on teachers and parents rather than on the administrators and politicians who could do something about them: teachers and parents are in no position to do anything about the social constraints on what schools and teachers can do, to alter the tests which are inflicted on schools in any fundamental way, to influence the text books that get written, or to generate the understandings and tools which are required to run alternative educational programs.

The parallel between what the educational system does in this respect and what the IMF does on a grander scale should not be overlooked: just as current social and educational policies tend to legitimize blaming the poor for their poverty, so the IMF blames poor people in poor countries for their poverty instead of the leaders of those countries and those who are responsible for managing the international financial system - namely bankers, international public servants, politicians, and the managers of Trans-National Corporations.

Perhaps the most insidious aspect of the educational system is that it nurtures the tendency to go along with things that are not what they seem to be and promotes those who are most willing to quote the conventional wisdom despite its lack of reference to reality. Thus the educational system advances those who are least willing to notice that the educational system is not what it seems or claims to be. Such people are, in the short term, ideally suited to jobs in insurance, the World bank, "aid" agencies, welfare agencies, the public service, the food industry, and politics and government. The most pervasive, but least remarked, feature of modern society is that *nothing* is what it seems to be - and is, in fact, usually its opposite<sup>7.34</sup>. The tendency of the educational system to disseminate false consciousness and promote those most inclined to engage in "double talk" makes it extremely difficult to conduct any rational discussion of wider social processes.

Although it is tempting to see some kind of conspiracy in the parallelism between what happens in the educational system and the wider society and in the educational system's tendency to introduce false consciousness into discussions of social processes when these threaten the short term interests of those with more power in society, it is not necessary to make that assumption. The educational system has grown on the basis of myths. These include: "If we all get more education we'll all get good jobs" and "More education will make for economic and social development"<sup>7.35</sup>. It has also grown as a result of the less mythical fact that, whatever doubts there may be about the educational benefits of the system, staying on at school confers a greater likelihood of obtaining a good job. Despite these observations, Robinson's<sup>7.36</sup> discovery that there was a very effective conspiracy to discredit the work of Harold Rugg is disconcerting. Because Rugg's books were *effective* in fostering in pupils the tendency and ability to think critically about the workings of society, the National Association of Manufacturers mounted a deliberate campaign to discredit both Rugg and his books - a campaign from which he never recovered. The documents which Robinson has reviewed show beyond reasonable doubt

that this involved numerous accusations which were known to be false and deliberate lying to congressional committees of enquiry. It is hard to credit that work as innocuous as Rugg's - directed toward what is widely agreed to be one of the main goals of education - could have produced such concerted, sustained, dirty tricks. Robinson's (and Bellini's<sup>7.37</sup>) work therefore leads one to take more seriously the claims of those, like Chomsky<sup>7.38</sup>, who are inclined toward the conspiracy theory.

If these observations are correct, it is obvious that it would be extremely difficult to do such things as introduce any form of multiple talent education designed to develop and credential at least some of the talents of all of our children - because this would undermine the educational system's role in manufacturing and legitimising discriminations of a kind which would compel participation in institutional arrangements which give meaning to life in modern society.

That this hypothesis is not so far-fetched as it may at first sight appear to be can be seen by reflecting on what happened to attempts to reform examinations in England and Wales. For 20 years committees of the (national) Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations debated the desirability of establishing a common system of examinations without coming to a conclusion. Then the Minister for Education established a new committee with a specific remit to come to a conclusion. The committee observed that pupils had a wide variety of talents which could only be fostered through very different types of educational program. It noted that workplaces and society required a wide variety of people who possessed very different talents. It therefore concluded that there was a need for a wide variety of educational programs which would foster very different competencies and in the course of which pupils would cover very different syllabii. This led it to the conclusion that it would be necessary to retain a wide variety of examining boards (the equivalent of ETS and ACTS) which would each promote a wide variety of courses covering different content, aim at different goals, and be assessed using different forms, or "modes", of assessment. Then it did something which was, at first sight, inexplicable. In one sentence embedded in a long paragraph it said "the results will be expressed on a single scale of seven points in the subject area". This, of course, negated all the steps - based on all the educational and occupational observations it had made - that it planned to make to promote and cater for diversity. If one asks oneself what could have caused such an action one can only conclude that the sociological need for a single and unarguable criterion to legitimize the allocation of position and status - and with it a whole social system for rationing privilege - had over-ridden all human, educational, and occupational considerations.

What all this means is that, if education is to be brought back into schools, those concerned (including teachers), will as part of their professional duties deriving from their remit to achieve *educational goals* have to take active steps to influence the way society is organized.

#### (8) *Dysfunctional beliefs about the role of the public servant.*

We have seen that competency-oriented education requires teachers to pay attention to the needs of individual pupils and to invent individualized developmental programs which will lead them to blossom. It also requires them to get together with other teachers to invent better ways of meeting pupils' needs, to find ways of influencing the tests which are available from test publishers (so that these cease to direct attention toward low-level

goals and away from high-level goals), and to influence the beliefs which parents and others hold about education itself and the way the public service in general should operate. Unfortunately, teachers, like other public servants, are not generally expected to be inventors and activists of this sort. They are viewed as functionaries who should do the bidding of elected representatives. To solve this problem we not only need to re-think our beliefs about how the public service should operate and to create structures (a la Kanter<sup>7.39</sup>) which promote innovation, we also need to apply new criteria to judge the effectiveness of public servants and to develop new tools for use in staff appraisal - so that teachers can get credit for engaging in the difficult, demanding, frustrating, and time-consuming activities which are required if they are to do their jobs effectively. The way in which this is to be done will be discussed in the next chapter.

(9) *The absence of an innovative educational system.*

In the course of this book, we have seen that the attempt to deal with the conspicuous problems of the educational system by trying to prescribe what children will learn and then find out whether they have learnt it using centrally prescribed tests of the traditional type is misguided. We have seen that the barriers to effective education are deep-seated and non-obvious, that what children need to learn to do varies markedly from pupil to pupil, that the available tests are unable to reflect the high-level competencies which students need to develop, and that our hierarchical management system has been unable even to eliminate grossly incompetent teachers, never mind to create a ferment of innovation. Pervasive innovation in every nook and cranny of the educational system is required. There is no way in which any central authority can lay down what teachers will do, never mind prescribe what individual children should learn. Instead, the task of a central authority is to create a structure and set of expectations which will: (a) lead to increasing clarity about the goals which are to be achieved and the procedures which are to be used to reach them; (b) encourage all concerned to assess whether they are achieving their goals effectively; (c) encourage them to identify the barriers to success; and (d) lead them to vigorously set about trying to do something about those barriers.

It is clear from these observations that one of the barriers to the evolution and diffusion of educational innovations has to do with the fact that the educational system operates in the context of a set of beliefs to the effect that it is the job of publicly elected representatives and senior management both to establish the goals of the educational system and the procedures to be used to reach them - with its corollary that the teacher's job is to carry out the activities prescribed by such authorities. These beliefs and expectations discourage teachers from studying the needs of their pupils and trying to invent better ways of meeting them. Unfortunately, these beliefs are only part of a much wider problem: in Britain and the United States, since innovation is thought to be the prerogative of management, the educational system does not have a management structure which stimulates and facilitates innovation. We have already seen that the stimulation of innovation involves creating within the educational system what Kanter has called "parallel organization" activity which would focus on innovation. What we are now saying is that we also need to replace our hierarchical management structures - our structures of bureaucracy and democracy - by network based management structures of the kind advocated by Toffler<sup>7.40</sup>, Schon<sup>7.41</sup> and Ferguson<sup>7.42</sup>. These will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9. Here it is sufficient to note that the failure to create an innovative educational system is not only dysfunctional in itself - it also has the gravest knock-on effect on society

as a whole because teachers powerfully communicate to their pupils their own beliefs about what it is important to attend to and how things should be done<sup>7.43</sup>.

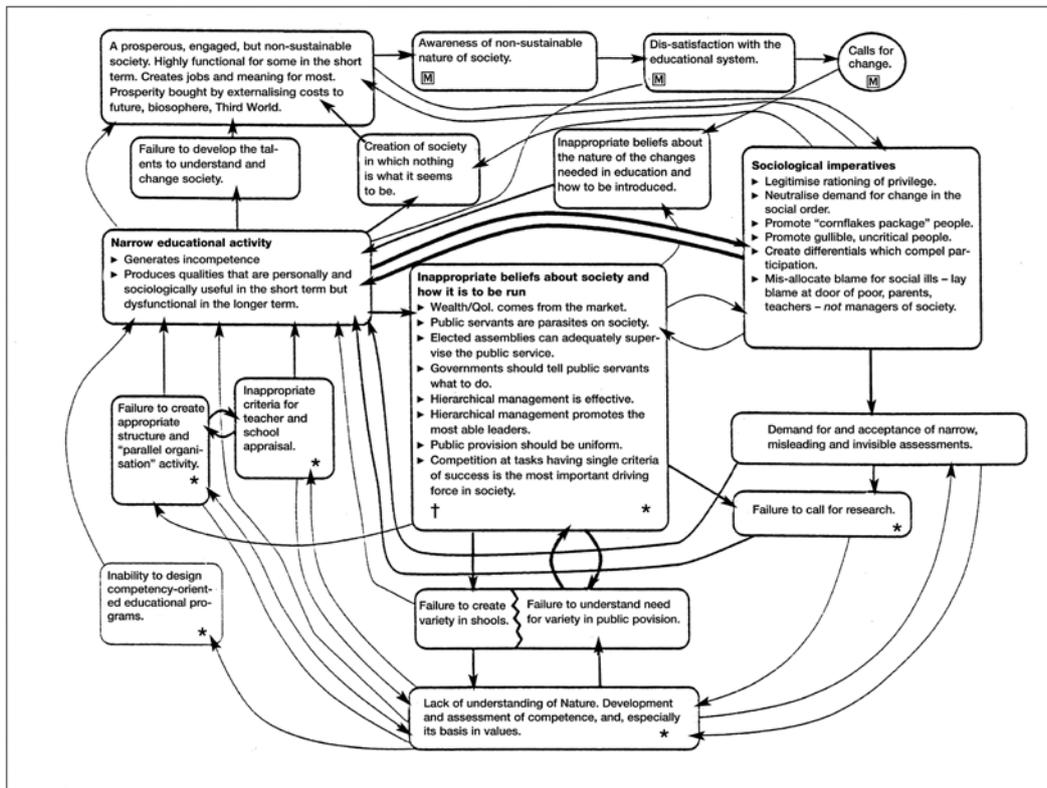
We may conclude by noting that what has been said implies that the areas in which research and innovation are *most* badly needed in our society do *not* have to do with finding better ways of producing goods of one kind or another but with finding better ways of running society itself. The way in which such research is to be organized will be discussed in Chapter 10.

### *Summary*

Following Morgan<sup>7.44</sup>, Figure 1 has been prepared to summarize what we have now learned about the feedback loops which result in, and reinforce, narrow educational activity. It shows how the narrow nature of educational provisions is heavily over-determined and demonstrates why it has been so difficult to introduce change in education. The effects of any single change will be negated by other forces and predictable reactions produced by the overall system of forces. "Common-sense" reform will not work. While indicating the motives which might be harnessed to produce result in educational change, it also shows the difficulty of linking those motives to the points at which systemic interventions might be targeted.

### **Figure 1**

Feedback loops driving down quality of education.



\* Intervention in these cells would help change the nature of the qualities nurtured and rewarded in the system. Motives which could be harnessed to do this are marked M.

† These need to be replaced by acceptance of the need to make managed economies work – to find way of giving effect to information concerning the public long-term interest, the need to explicitly create variety and information on the personal and social consequences of the options, and to find ways of holding public servants accountable for, and getting them to at in, the long-term public interest. This means systematic, broadly based, evaluation and participative democracy.

In more detail, the diagram shows:

1. That the narrow educational activities which dominate schools are produced by: (i) a series of sociological imperatives (e.g. that schools assist in legitimising the rationing of privilege); (ii) inappropriate beliefs about the nature of the changes that are needed in education itself, the management of the educational system, and the management of society; (iii) failure to initiate research which would yield useful insights into such things as (a) the nature of competence and how it is to be fostered and (b) how to manage the educational system to nurture high-level generic competencies; (iv) the absence of (a) systematically generated variety in, and choice between, educational programs which have demonstrably different consequences and (b) information on the consequences of each of these alternatives; (v) failure to introduce "parallel organization activity" to produce innovation within schools, and (vi) inadequate dissemination of the results of research into the nature, development, and assessment of generic high-level competencies, and, especially, the implications of the values basis of competence.
2. That this narrow educational process has a series of knock-on effects which finally contribute to its own perpetuation. The competencies and beliefs that are nurtured and inculcated in schools reinforce a social order which offers major benefits to "able" people who do what is required of them without questioning that order; it creates endless work which gives meaning to people's lives (but does not enhance the general quality of life); it creates wealth at the expense of the biosphere, future

generations, and the third world; and it protects its citizens from a knowledge of the basis of their wealth. The educational system helps to teach a host of incorrect beliefs which collectively result in nothing being what it is popularly or authoritatively said to be (for example, the educational system itself claims to be about promoting the growth of competence when it in fact mainly operates to engage vast numbers of people in "teaching" and "learning" activities of little educational merit but which ensure that those who are most able and willing to challenge the fraudulent nature of the system are routed to social positions from which they can have little influence while those who are least able to do anything except secure their own advantage are promoted into influential positions in society). This double-talk makes it extremely difficult to conduct any rational discussion of the changes needed in society. The sociological imperative that schools help to legitimize the rationing of privilege helps to create a demand for, and encourages acceptance of, narrow, invisible, and mis-labelled assessments. Those predisposed to acquire these "qualifications" are not inclined to see the need for, or to commission, genuine enquiry-oriented research or notice other talents in their fellows. Teachers who discover the hidden competencies of their "less able" students experience acute distress. The lack of understanding of the nature of competence leads to a failure to underline the need for a variety of value-based educational programs and thus to the perpetuation of narrow educational activity.

3. That the main motives for change are widespread awareness that there is something seriously wrong with the educational system, and, more specifically, that it fails miserably in its manifest task of identifying, nurturing, recognising, and utilising most people's motives and talents. The most commonly proposed solutions to this problem, based as they are on other misunderstandings, are, however, inappropriate. Another motive for change is that there is increasing recognition that we have created a non-sustainable society and that basic change in the way society is run is essential.
4. That there are a number of points at which it should be possible to intervene in the feedback loops to create an upward spiral. These involve:
  - (i) promoting wider recognition that one cannot get value for human effort in modern society unless we introduce better means of monitoring and evaluating the long term effects of what we are doing and better ways of giving effect to information on such effects. This points to the need to change the way we run society, to the need to introduce more, and more appropriate, social research and evaluation activity, and to find ways of holding public servants and politicians accountable for seeking out and acting on information in an innovative way in the long term public interest;
  - (ii) introducing the "parallel organization" activities that are required to promote innovation within schools;
  - (iii) establishing a greater variety of distinctively different, value-based, educational programs and providing information on the short and long term, personal and social, consequences of each;
  - (iv) creating public debate about the forms of supervision - the nature of the democracy - needed to ensure that public servants seek out and act on information in an innovative way in the public interest and,
  - (v) disseminating what is already known about the nature, development, and assessment of competence and its implications.

The developments hinted at in the last paragraph are discussed in the next Part of this book.

### *Notes*

- 7.1. See Raven (1977, 1984, 1988); Raven et al. (1985) for our contributions to resolving these difficulties.
- 7.2. Dewey (1902)
- 7.3. Aikin (1942)
- 7.4. Caswell (1942)
- 7.5. Whiting (1972)
- 7.6. Fraley (1981)
- 7.7. Bruner (1965); Curriculum Development Associates (1969/70); Nuffield Science (1967); Schools Council Humanities Curriculum Project (1970-72); School Council Integrated Science Project (1970-72)
- 7.8. See Hargreaves (1988) for a discussion of these movements.
- 7.9. MSC (1984)
- 7.10. The Educational Reform Bill (Her Majesty's Government, 1988).
- 7.11. I have discussed the inadequacy of the latter measures, as introduced by the Government, as a mechanism for school improvement in Raven (1989). The goals are wildly unrealistic and the proposed assessment procedures have drained off enormous resources and goodwill - but cannot work without a substantive research base. Yet the one thing which is not proposed is any kind of fundamental research.
- 7.12. IEA: Comber and Keeves (1973); Purves (1973); Thorndike (1973)
- 7.13. Raven et al. (1985)
- 7.14. The development and provision of such tools is not as unrealistic as may at first sight appear because the computers which are required to run programs designed to elicit the relevant information from pupils and suggest appropriate individualized experiences to both pupils and teachers are now widely available. Nevertheless the development of the necessary tools does remain dependent on the wider adoption and refinement of the framework for thinking about the nature and development of competence which has emerged in the course of our work and is summarized in Raven (1984). Work is currently in hand to develop a kit of assessment procedures which are designed to introduce teachers to this framework, to nurture in them an understanding of the classroom processes which are required to foster high level competencies, and key features of "parallel organization activity".
- 7.15. Raven (1977)
- 7.16. Raven (1977, 1980). Under the circumstances, the wonder is that any school pupils are willing to enrol in genuinely developmental activities. But, they are. However, as Schon noted, and as is widely reported, it becomes increasingly difficult to persuade students further up in the educational system to devote time to such activities. They know too well that advancement, whether in the educational system or outside, is not achieved by demonstrating occupational (let alone personal or civic) competence but by discerning and saying the right things to the right people. (Sternberg [1986] has included a knowledge of what to do to secure promotion in the academic world as one of his varieties of "intelligence". [Thus, incidentally, confounding values, problem-solving ability, and acquired information]).
- 7.17. Raven (1977); Dore (1976); Broadfoot (1979)
- 7.18. Raven (1977)
- 7.19. Morton-Williams et al. (1966)
- 7.20. Dore (1976)
- 7.21. Raven (1980); Raven et al. (1985)
- 7.22. Morton-Williams et al. (1966)
- 7.23. Note that this comment applies with equal force to the competence areas which are currently embedded within the curriculum - i.e. to the 3Rs. It is easy to see that - as is spelt out in Raven (1989) - the teaching of reading in particular and the development of the ability to communicate is seriously hampered by teachers' failure to relate what they are doing to children's interests and pre-occupations. There is no doubt about the need for modularized knowledge to support competency oriented programs.
- 7.24. Raven (1980); Raven et al. (1985)
- 7.25. Bachman et al. (1978); Jackson (1986)
- 7.26. Raven (1984)
- 7.27. Raven (1977)
- 7.28. Raven (1977); Sigel (1985); Pellegrini et al. (1985); Burns et al. (1984); Miller et al. (1985, 1986)

- 7.29. Hope (1985); Payne et al. (1979)
- 7.30. See Raven (1984) for the evidence that high-level competencies are value-laden and involve social and political beliefs. See Raven (1980) for a discussion of the importance of coming to terms with values.
- 7.31. See Raven (1989) for a fuller discussion of this issue.
- 7.32. See Raven (1980, 1987, 1989).
- 7.33. Hogan (1990) has noted that the available evidence suggests that about half of those managers who appear to be competent, confident, intelligent, poised, and skilled in human relations, either: i. destroy the careers of competent subordinates in order to minimise challenge and competition, ii. destroy the developmental potential of their sections (i.e. get rid of the time and the personnel required for the "parallel organisation activity" which is required for innovation and to provide for the future) in order to seem able to reduce costs and appear "efficient", or iii. refuse to take important decisions which affect the future of the organisation because these would result in their becoming unpopular and thus jeopardize their future.
- 7.34. I have the impression that more people in the UK than the US have observed that the educational system is not what it seems to be and generalized this observation to other aspects of society and chosen to resist, whereas in the US more students have simply accepted the mythology, and, as a result, failed to question market mythology, religious mythology, and democratic mythology.
- 7.35. Actually, more people involved in the useless tasks of education, insurance, defence industries, trade, is economic development. Thus growth of education does not lead to GNP; educational employment is part of GNP.
- 7.36. Robinson (1983)
- 7.37. Bellini (1980)
- 7.38. Chomsky (1987)
- 7.39. Kanter (1985)
- 7.40. Toffler (1980)
- 7.41. Schon (1971/73)
- 7.42. Ferguson (1980)
- 7.43. The downtrodden and rather ineffectual images which teachers have of themselves are documented in Raven (1977) and the fact that these are communicated to pupils is documented in Raven and Varley (1984).
- 7.44. Morgan (1986)