

TOP

OPEN DIALOGUE: Education, Educational Research, Ethics and the BPS

Education, Educational Research, Ethics and the BPS

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Preparation of this article was precipitated by the autumn 1996 conferences of BERA, SERA, and the BPS Education Section. On one level, it has to do with the social psychological processes which enable leaders to gain and retain control over societal processes (including "educational" systems and the funding of "research"). At another level it has to do with education and the role of psychologists in the "educational" system. But its main intention is to provoke a debate about how we might best use the insights we have gained into the first process to create conditions in which we can better perform the role revealed by consideration of the second set of issues.

1. Leadership, Social Control, and Societal Management

I have long been, at the same time, horrified and intrigued at the ease with which governments – and not just those of Hitler and Mao – are able, by setting the agenda for public policy and linking personal advancement to its enactment, to induce large numbers of well-intentioned citizens to commit crimes against their fellows.

More specifically, I have been shocked to observe just how effectively the last government was able to do this in the educational arena in Britain.

Let me explain what I mean.

At the autumn 1996 conferences of both the *British and Scottish Educational Research Associations*, it was evident that numerous teams of researchers who were once concerned with school effectiveness broadly defined to include the development of all of the talents of all of the pupils had re-defined "effectiveness" purely in terms of examination grades. The effect of this is to deny pupils who possess any of the wide variety of hugely important talents which do not show up on traditional examinations opportunity to develop or get recognition for those talents. It is to deprive those teachers and schools who are concerned with these wider goals of education of recognition of their efforts. It is to deprive society of the most important talents which could be available to it. It is to contribute to general acceptance of the twin myths that the "most able" people are advanced into influential positions and that those who are "unable" to "succeed" in this race have little to offer to society and deserve the degrading treatment they will suffer at the hands of society.

At the Scottish Conference it was also clear that schools which, only a few years ago, had been concerned with the wider outcomes of education were now concentrating exclusively on examination performance. Furthermore, whereas those same schools would, but recently, have gone out of their way to emphasise to their post-compulsory age pupils that their performance was their own responsibility with the corollary that their attendance was a matter for their own discretion, they were now issuing to pupils heavy-handed and demeaning notices indicating that even minor unexplained absences would result in expulsion from school and thus denial of future access to a decent income and way of life.

All of this would be bad enough. But when it is set in the context of research (note 1) showing that schools are, for the majority of their pupils, with the possible exception of prisons, the least developmental and worst working environments in our society, and that, despite the rhetoric, the educational system operates to promote into influential positions those who are most anxious to do whatever is necessary to secure their own advancement and least willing to ask awkward questions and act on their observations, what we have seen suggests that the changes we have witnessed are part of a wider process which operates to legitimise and perpetuate a dysfunctional society.

The bookstall of the Scottish Council for Research in Education at the Scottish Conference was dominated by publications aiming to reduce truancy. Yet my own work (see note 2) and that of others points to the conclusion that truancy and dropping out are, for most pupils, an entirely appropriate response not only to a personally demeaning and destructive environment but to an entire social process which is operating in a way which will, in the end, lead to the destruction of us all. What was displayed could therefore reasonably be regarded as evidence of an abuse of psychology for political purposes.

These changes in school education are linked to a world-wide move in the occupational selection and training area toward specifying what is to be known and how that knowledge is to be assessed in great detail and in a way which deprives those concerned of an opportunity to decide for themselves what they will learn and take control of their own development.

Taken together, these observations suggest that what we are witnessing is a world-wide reinforcement of a move toward widespread acceptance (of the kind most often desired by fascists) of the right of others to dictate what one will do and what one will learn, of the right of others to issue demeaning and degrading orders and expect compliance, and of the right of authority to test one, assess one's "integrity" according to their standards, and allocate one's life chances on the basis of criteria they have established.

This suspicion is reinforced when one observes that, by simultaneously tripling the number of students and halving the number of staff, government has compelled the universities to dramatically reduce their efforts to nurture such qualities as initiative and an enquiring mind. Requiring staff to produce more peer-reviewed publications in less time has had the effect of preventing them from thinking and engaging in self-directed and free-ranging enquiry. Requiring those same staff to obtain government contracts to buy the time required for the research needed to support their publications has had the effect of focusing nearly all attention on the government's policy agenda to the exclusion of more important matters.

What we would seem to have, then, is a situation in which a particular perspective has been able to take hold of people's minds and, now, with globalisation, do so on a world-wide basis. Protest or suggesting alternatives is futile because those in authority have been sifted and selected to retain only those who echo the now conventional wisdom. Combined with such things as the linking of research funds and the probability that one's writings will attract sufficient interest to merit publication – and thus chances of personal promotion – to particular types of project, the process has operated to create a pervasive network of interlinked pressures which induce well-intentioned people to either or both echo the belief system or work with it whatever their private beliefs. It

would be "unrealistic and unreasonable" to do otherwise: one would get no funding, jeopardise one's career, and, in any case, no one would be willing or able to publish or use results against the grain of the system.

Whether we wish to acknowledge it or not, the net effect is that endless well-intentioned people are, like the Red Guards, led to commit or connive in what amount to serious crimes against their fellow citizens.

Before it is altogether too late, it is time to call a halt. The situation merits powerful, targeted, and organised direct action by every pupil, every teacher, every researcher, every educational administrator, every parent, and every employer interested in the public interest in the country.

The ballot box offers no solution. To see this, it is only necessary to consider, on the one hand, the way in which it has been possible for a government which has the support of but a fraction of the electorate to, over the past 17 years, stifle genuine enquiry and public debate, gain control over the generation and flow of information, and dramatically erode civil liberties. And, on the other, to note the agenda behind the Labour Party's educational proposals and the paucity of fresh thinking about the fundamental issues raised here in the policies of the Liberal Democrats.

The pervasive direct action that is required needs to be guided by some kind of vision of the necessary developments and the steps needed to introduce them. Driven by a feeling that I ought at least to do what I could to stem the tide and discern a way forward, I have attempted to both enumerate the deficiencies of both market and current forms of public management and clarify the way forward in a book entitled *The New Wealth of Nations: The Societal Learning and Management Arrangements Required for a Sustainable Society* (see note 3).

But what are the implications for us as educational psychologists? It is clear that it is not in the long-term interest of most pupils or society for us to fall into line with these social pressures. That is, the tendency to do so is unethical. This clash between our short-term, personal, interests and long-term, societal, interest thus presents us with a classical moral problem.

As in all moral decisions – ranging from considering whether to comply with the demands of a military authority to whether to "drop out" of modern society in the interests of the environment – the consequences of moral behaviour are serious and individuals are easily picked off by authority. Witness what happened to Edinburgh's *Centre for Human Ecology*. Where do we draw the line? If we are no longer around to protest at what is going on we cannot be said to have achieved much. If we comply we are lost.

If we are collectively to take any effective action it will be necessary to have a range of people who contribute in very different ways to the process of societal change. We will need some martyrs to give the issue prominence and encourage the others. We will need some who subvert the system from within. And so on. The question I am concerned with here is how we might bring about institutional action of a kind that is more likely – given the difficulties if we simply take a personal moral stand – to be effective than such individual action.

Clearly most of us – and especially those who have sought and accepted grants for working on projects in which school effectiveness is narrowly defined – should be hauled in front of the BPS Ethics Committee. If the hearings were held in public, that would give the issue prominence and gain useful publicity despite the fact that it would, in many cases, add insult to the feelings of personal disgust which accompany compliance with the system for the sake of monetary gain.

The BPS could – should – protest. It could – should – threaten to strike from its register those who accept what amount to unethical grants. But my experience is that it will not do these things because its dominant members, like vice-chancellors, are mostly pre-occupied with money-seeking and empire-building (or at least empire-retaining) and (as evidenced in the Society's document on *Futures for the Psychological Sciences* which states "It has been put to us that there is a wider role than this, but we wonder whether it is really psychology") lack a commitment to the achievement of the wider vision of the role for psychology outlined here. With a view to strengthening that commitment, it may be useful at this point to restate the reasons for believing that psychologists should be much more heavily involved in the educational system.

2. Education: Its Delivery, Assessment, and Management and the Role of Psychologists

It is widely assumed – particularly by politicians – that the main aim of education is clear and unproblematic: It is to familiarise the young with the knowledge which has been accumulated by our culture. Unfortunately, even the Latin origin of the word *educere* – which means "to draw out" – belies this notion. In fact, one whole camp of educational philosophers (see note 4) has critiqued the notion. Another has advocated alternatives (see note 5). There has also been widespread public disquiet about the educational system since the Second World War. The root cause of this is the failure of those who promoted the 1944 *Secondary Education for All* Act to think through the kinds of curriculum processes required, and assessments needed, to cater for a cross-section of pupils. Numerous attempts – largely dreamt up by politicians and without an adequate research base – have been made to ameliorate the problems stemming from this failure during the intervening half century. These included the comprehensivisation of schools and eventually the GERBIL. Alongside these Department of Education sponsored reforms were others supported by the Department of Employment (in the guise of the MSC and its successors). These included the YTS, TVEI, and (G)NVQS. At the heart of these lay the observation that secondary education does little to enhance the actual competence of most pupils. The reforms that were promoted were therefore based on the feeling that pupils needed to learn to *do* things (not master knowledge) that would be useful to them later in life. Unfortunately, those concerned again failed to call for research which would systematically examine the psychological nature of the competencies which differentiate more from less successful life-performance and how the required qualities currently are, or could be, nurtured. Indeed, characteristically, they did not even think that research in these areas could be done, let alone that it was crucial to the attainment of their goals.

As it happens, I have, from the mid 1960s, been involved in a series of studies of pupils', parents', employers', teachers', and ex-pupils' perceptions of the goals of education, in studies of the qualities which differentiate more from less effective performance in a wide range of occupational and life roles, in studies of how qualities like initiative, problem solving ability, ability to work with others, and the qualities which make for enterprise are nurtured in some homes, schools, and

workplaces, in studies of how such qualities can be better assessed, and in studies of the barriers which prevent educational institutions achieving their goals in these areas (see note 6).

The conclusions are clear: The opinions of the parents, pupils, and employers we interviewed – and of those who wrote the TVEI guidelines – are correct – the qualities which it is most important for our educational institutions to nurture include the confidence and initiative required to introduce change, the ability to contribute in one of a wide variety of diverse ways to group processes, and the ability to understand and influence organisational and societal systems processes. But the barriers which prevent the educational system achieving these crucial objectives are profound and require for their solution huge amounts of research and development activity of an essentially psychological nature.

For a start, no one knows much about how to nurture such qualities. Still less do they know how to recognise, place, develop, and deploy them. Even if the job descriptions of teachers and managers explicitly required them to nurture them, where are the tools to help identify the motives and incipient talents of each of their pupils or subordinates, create individualised developmental programmes and monitor their effectiveness?

But there are more serious problems: The diversity of human talent conflicts with the sociological need to have a clear and unarguable criterion to use to allocate privilege and status and legitimise a divided society (see note 7). Indeed, a little determined enquiry reveals that the central purpose of the National Curriculum and the assessment practices associated with it is, not to promote effective education, but to reinforce a system which legitimises a divided society and support it by the notion that the inequities are based on merit.

Even if this were not the case, recognising and encouraging diversity itself poses serious problems. In the first place, psychologists have failed to provide society with the concepts and tools needed to think about, nurture, and credential multiple talents. But, beyond that, most people's experience of diversity in public provision is an experience of inequality – inequity – rather than of a range of, in some sense equally good, options suited to people who have different needs and priorities.

It follows that, to meet the need, it would be necessary not only to introduce a range of educational programmes which effectively nurtured different talents but also to document their personal and societal, short and long-term, consequences in such a way that people could make meaningful choices between them.

Arranging for the experimentation required to generate such variety and for the consequences of each option to be documented in a comprehensive (see note 8) way can only be a job for public servants ... and psychologists are the people best placed to play a major role in the development of the different options and developing the tools required for their thorough evaluation.

The practical creation of such diversity would mean more than inventing new curriculum's and new assessment procedures and developing new tools to help implement new types of educational programmes. It would also be necessary to identify and find ways of intervening in the sociological systems processes which so much determine what can be done in educational institutions.

What all this means is that a ferment of innovation is required to move forward. So many inter-related changes are needed that they cannot possibly be centrally decreed. Indeed, so many of them have yet to be discovered. All teachers therefore need to become involved in the process.

What we are saying is, therefore, that the process that is required to move forward is very different from that embedded in most current thinking about how change in public provision is to be brought about.

How are teachers and public servants to get credit for having become involved in one or other of a wide variety of different ways in the frustrating and difficult process of innovation? Through what organisational arrangements are they to become involved? Developing the necessary staff appraisal systems and clarifying the required organisational arrangements are quintessentially tasks for psychologists – albeit requiring them to abandon most of their current beliefs about how high-level competencies are to be conceptualised and assessed and about how organisations are to be managed in order to induce change (see note 9).

But what has been said implies something even more basic. What we have seen is that public servants need to stimulate the experimentation required to create variety, to arrange for the options to be comprehensively evaluated, and to feed that information to the public so that they can make informed choices between them. Accountability is therefore flowing directly between public servants and the public and not upward through a bureaucratic hierarchy to elected representatives expected to make decisions binding on all. In other words, new understandings and forms of bureaucracy and democracy are required.

So, one of the key points of intervention if systems change is to be achieved is at the level of our public management arrangements.

In the light of this discovery arising from our educational research, we moved on to think directly about the societal learning and management systems that might be required. The results saw the light of day in the previously mentioned *The New Wealth of Nations*, but the point to be made here is that thinking about and developing such arrangements is again quintessentially a job for psychologists.

Here I would like to acknowledge – and not in a footnote – the role which this journal played in helping us to come to these conclusions. The reason it is important to do so in the main text is that the process which led to the advance stemmed from public debate between positions – and not from a quest for prior certainty of the kind so widely associated with "science". At an Education Section conference, Les Smith asked me to write a starter paper summarising some of our work on the role of values in competence for the Open Dialogue section. I am enormously indebted to the commentators. My hope now is that comments on this paper – written at the request of the subsequent editors – will be as productive.

What I am arguing is, therefore, that not only is the task of clarifying the processes needed in education and teacher education essentially a job for psychologists (because to achieve the main goals of education it is essential to understand the nature of competence, the nature of developmental environments, how to identify and harness different children's motives in order to

nurture their idiosyncratic talents, and how to arrange for them to get credit for having developed those talents) finding ways of managing schools, the educational system, and public policy more generally is also quintessentially a job for psychologists. There is no case for "wondering whether it is really psychology".

Clearly, then, we need to lay claim to, and develop the competencies and organisational arrangements required to deliver, a much more important role in education and society than that we currently espouse. If anyone is to be purged from institutions concerned with teacher education it should be the Methods and Education departments, not psychologists. And so we come back to the main theme of this article. How are we, through our professional associations, and the British Psychological Society in particular, to promote a more appropriate image of ourselves and resist the pressures which trap us into unethical behaviour?

3. Toward an *Institutional* Response

As we have seen, radical reform of the educational system is required to:

1. Nurture the talents our pupils and students require to dramatically change the nature of our society in such a way as to ensure the survival of the planet in anything approaching its present form and the survival of our species, i.e. in order to engage in moral action of the most important kind.
2. Nurture at least some of the talents of all of our pupils and thus create conditions in which (i) pupils are not subjected to demeaning and destructive treatment at school and thereafter assigned to a social scrap heap in which they are treated with disdain and contempt and (ii) develop and recognise many more of the talents we so badly need if we are to create the cultures of enterprise which are required to transform our society into a sustainable one offering high quality of life to all.
3. Help us evolve the societal management arrangements which are required to run the educational system itself, and society more generally, effectively.

If we are to do these things we need to both embrace and promote a wider role for ourselves and stop allowing ourselves to be pushed around by dominators and social processes which we view as being beyond our control.

We need to both behave more ethically as individuals and organise more effectively to collectively achieve long-term social – moral – objectives.

In other words, we ourselves need to develop many more of the competencies which so many people can see that our young people need to develop. Above all, we need the competencies – including the societal perceptions and personal role expectations – required to contribute in one or another way to the evolution of new organisational arrangements.

We, like teachers, need to press, through our professional organisations, for the developments that are needed. What could we do to help to minimise the number of our colleagues who are picked off – either as individuals or as Departments – for saying things which need to be said but are unacceptable to those in authority and to increase the funding available to perform our wider role?

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Part of the answer is, of course, to disseminate some of the things that have been said in this article and in the research which lies behind it.

But how could we get our professional organisation – the BPS – to do some of the things that need to be done?

There is no evidence that psychologists are any more likely than others not to attend first to their short-term, personal, interests instead of those of our fellows or our species – or even our own longer-term interests. That is, there is no reason to believe that we are individually any more moral or ethical.

So the question is: How could we contribute to some kind of *institutional* action which would be less easily stopped?

One thought I have had is that perhaps the BPS Ethics Committee could initiate a public process to consider striking publicly acclaimed figures who have accepted grants to do research – possibly on school effectiveness – which is unlikely to be in the long-term interests of all pupils, from the register of chartered psychologists.

Another thought was precipitated by Kanter's work showing that most innovation comes from "parallel organisation" activity and not from committees of the great and the good, still less from super-stars or "champions". It comes from normal employees spending part of their time in a different pattern of working relationships in which they build on observations made in the course of their normal work and use different talents.

BPS office bearers are continuously changing. It is therefore difficult to see how this insight could be applied to them. But what of the permanent staff? Is there some way in which they could become more involved in promoting the development of psychology? As their employers, could we not arrange for them to spend part of their time in "parallel organisation activity" in order to capitalise on insights they gain in the course of their normal work with us? And could we not use our professional knowledge of management for innovation – which tells us that innovation typically means intervening in the wider social and political process *outside* one's organisation – to find ways of achieving at first poorly articulated goals? In other words, instead of thinking in terms of appointing someone – office bearer or not – to promote developments of the kind mentioned above I am suggesting that it is more a question of changing the internal organisational arrangements and staff appraisal criteria employed in the BPS and finding better ways of exposing staff behaviour to the public – i.e. *our* – gaze so that they are more likely to act on information in the long-term public interest.

In conclusion I would like to underline that, despite appearances to the contrary, this paper has been more concerned with scientific than with professional issues.

Notes

1 See Raven (1994) for a summary.

2 See Raven, 1977.

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3 Raven, 1995.

4 e.g. Goodman, 1962; Illich, 1971 etc.

5 e.g. Kilpatrick, 1926; Dewey, 1899, 1916 etc.

6 This work has recently been summarised in Raven (1994).

7 This is abundantly clear in the Waddell Report (1978). This first rehearses all the arguments in favour of a diversity of curricula and assessments (so that schools can nurture creativity etc.). But it then opines that "the results will be expressed on a single scale of 7 points in a subject area". Since creativity and similar qualities cannot be assessed on the same scale as a knowledge of mediaeval history this has the effect of negating all the genuinely educational arguments put forward.

8 It is necessary to have comprehensive evaluation – looking at *all* the possible consequences of the programmes because unintended outcomes may outweigh intended outcomes and long-term social disbenefits may outweigh short-term individual benefits.

9 Alternatives have again been proposed in Raven (1994).

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Peter Mortimore

As long as I have been aware of John Raven's work, I have found his ideas to be challenging and stimulating – even when I have been unable to see their immediate relevance (as when he dipped into one of the School Effectiveness Sessions at last summer's BERA Conference, made a long comment and then disappeared). I appreciate now that this episode was probably field work for this *Open Dialogue*. The benefit of the radical stance he has taken in his initial paper is that it encourages us to challenge ourselves – and each other – on the likely impact of our work on pupils and on society in general: the drawback is that it encourages him to go 'over the top'. Exaggerated phrases about education being a social process "*which is operating in a way which will, in the end, lead to the destruction of us all.*"(p2) and references to Hitler, Mau and the Red Guards are misplaced and detract from the issues contained in the piece.

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Raven's principal claim is that the Government has sought to increase its control over many aspects of our society, including the Academy. Many academics would support such a view. He goes on to argue, however that academics have largely acquiesced in these changes and have adopted compliant postures in order to further their own careers. In his judgement, even the well-intentioned have committed, or connived in, "what amounts to serious crimes against their fellow citizens"(p.3). It is difficult to imagine that there would be much support for such an extreme view.

Raven's solution to the problem is for each person involved with the education system to take "direct action" and for this to involve the creation of "martyrs": not for him the ballot boxes of democracy. Unfortunately, he does not provide much guidance as to what *specifically* should be done, other than calling for the persecution of those researchers who have accepted research grants for work in the field of school effectiveness. (Actually, very little money has been made available by Central Government or its various agencies over the years for school effectiveness studies. Does John realise that the only 'big money' came from the much-lamented ILEA?)

Despite this rhetoric, many academics and practitioners would probably agree with many of his general points about the education system and it is a pity that he cloaks his piece in a mantle of revolutionary fervour. His claim that the current role of the education system is to "legitimise a divided society" with the "notion that the inequities are based on merit" is surely sound. Likewise, his description of (some of) the recent educational reforms being "largely dreamed up by politicians without an adequate data base" would be widely accepted. His argument is that what most people want is for educational institutions "to nurture the confidence and initiative required to introduce change, the ability to contribute in one of a wide variety of diverse ways to group processes, and the ability to understand and influence organisational and societal system processes" resonates with what a recent survey showed Australian educational stakeholders also wanted (McGaw et al, 1991). Few would argue with his emphasis on the need for all public servants to act ethically. Finally, his pleas for a new, more open, approach to learning is very close to that currently being articulated by Abbott (1995) and many of us working in school improvement (Stoll & Mortimore, 1995). Curiously, Raven makes little reference to intelligence, even though attitudes towards it underpin much of the debate about learning and a radical view of its nature and identifiableness has been available for almost twenty years (Gardner, 1983).

Not surprisingly, I disagree intensely with Raven's views about school effectiveness research. In fact, I wonder if he has actually studied much of the empirical work that has been undertaken in this country. I cannot believe that he has spoken with many of the heads and teachers who have studied the findings of British school effectiveness work and who are drawing on this literature to 'improve' their schools. (See, for instance, Stoll & Fink, 1996). Bashing school effectiveness seems to be the current fashion as publications by Hamilton (1996), Elliott (1996) and most recently Woodhead (1997) illustrate. Responses to these attacks will appear in forthcoming articles by Sammons et al, (1996) Sammons & Reynolds (in press) and Mortimore & Sammons (in press). Raven appears simply to be following a trend.

For all his fierce noises Raven is offering us little guidance on how we can assist our society to move to a more open education system where a learner's talent and motivation will count more than his or her family, class or race. Yet surely this should be the main pillar of his polemic? The silence of the text is revealing. In his conclusion he assures us that his argument is "more

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concerned with scientific than with professional issues" (p8). It is hard not to conclude that it is really most concerned with politics.

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I would like to state at the outset that I welcome John Raven's paper, and applaud many of the points he makes. However, even as a psychologist without a vested interest in "school effectiveness" research, I would wish to distance myself from the somewhat Stalinesque proposal that researchers be hauled before the BPS Ethics Committee merely for doing research that reinforces the system. Wouldn't we have to include every researcher who ever used an I.Q. test, a standardised test of language proficiency, and so on? And what of the myriad tests with dubious consequences for individuals and organisations? I much prefer Raven's other proposals: that we seek innovation through "parallel organisation" and through consistently vocal, well-argued and researched minority influences (of which Raven's paper is an example).

There can be little doubt that school education and higher education as currently structured fail at a number of levels. Perhaps most fundamentally, formal education has failed even in terms of its own rather limited goal of imparting conceptual understanding of a restricted range of subjects. Various studies have shown that children and university students "educated" in science have great difficulty in solving problems "covered" on the curriculum but cast in a slightly novel form (e.g. Gardner, 1993). These findings suggest that students acquire very particularised notions through formal education, as opposed to broader, and more useable, concepts. A broader implication is

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that the implicit theories of "knowledge" guiding teaching and assessment do not coincide very well with the more explicitly stated goals of promoting students' understanding. In other words, we need better and more usable psychological theories of conceptual representation and its relation to pedagogic practice. We psychologists are not immune to this form of pedagogic naiveté: has any of us ever taught undergraduates or post-graduates without ever being surprised and exasperated by the "conceptual slippage" revealed in the writing and research of our students? Of course, in the light of such revelations, it is very easy for us to engage in potentially spurious attribution processes, and blame these failures on "obtuse" students. I have often suspected that even the "better" students who don't make glaring howlers have only succeeded better in being "accommodators", to use Piaget's term.

The emphasis on a core curriculum taking up a greater proportion of an individual's educational experience creates another constraint on the value of schooling. I have come across a number of school heads and other teachers who welcome innovations in what is taught and how it is taught. Extending the range of primary education to include experiences relevant to living in a complex social and physical environment is often welcomed by teachers. However, if this does not fit into a neatly compartmentalised topic with associated assessments, or deviates from the renewed emphasis on the Three Rs, then teachers lost interest. The teachers' priorities have been shaped by government policies and disparaging media coverage relating to "declining standards" and "child-centred" learning.

This constraint also operates in universities. Tony Gale has been vocal in admonishing us for the distinct lack of imagination we show in formulating learning environments and assessment procedures in undergraduate psychology courses (e.g. Gale, 1990, 1997). With increasing emphasis on "research productivity", modularisation, and managerial packaging of homogenised "units", it is little wonder that many undergraduates express a deep dissatisfaction with what they have gained from their "training". Many of us at the "chalk face" are also despondent, and may feel that we are short-changing our charges. Yet, we do little to change the situation, for the very reasons that Raven outlines.

Enforced participation and regularisation is both a symptom and a cause of motivational difficulties in pupils and students alike. In my own university, we have resorted to taking registers of student attendance, prompted by local education authorities' increased concern with attendance. It seems not to have occurred to policy makers to ask why students would be tempted to stay away. The passivity and homogeneity of experience encountered in the classroom, lecture theatre and seminar room does little to kindle the intellectual passions of either students or teachers, and both are retreating further from Ivan Illich's (1970) vision of an empowered learner and citizen.

Perhaps the time is ripe for forming vocal parallel organisations within and outwith the BPS. Perhaps a new BPS Interest Group on "Rethinking Education" would be one viable avenue. Denunciations and purges will merely serve to alienate a number of potential allies, and lead to all sorts of infringements on personal liberty. Besides, who will cast the first stone?

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Notes from the Underground: A reply to Raven

Rhona Stainthorpe, University of Reading

Emotion is unfashionable in academic life. We are taught to be wary of the passionately held belief and to espouse the rational objectivity of empirical evidence. We have a responsibility to present evidence in as measured a way as possible to ensure that the audience is able to evaluate the message without undue influence. However, this does not mean that there is not a place for passion in academic discourse. It is therefore refreshing to read a paper which is so clearly personal. Unfortunately, having been educated in a traditional western academic mode, I find myself ill-equipped to respond. I do not have the appropriate discourse style.

I do find it intriguing that Raven throws down his thunderbolts from Scotland. Many people in England have clung to a vague belief that the Scots have been able to guard themselves against some of the worst effects of the educational roller coaster that has been driving the system south of the border.

From the perspective of a psychologist involved in teacher education at a number of different levels, I think we are being charged with being mealy mouthed and cowardly in not standing up to be counted as the drama has been unfolding on the national stage. My interpretation of Raven's paper is that we are considered to be guilty of letting the system usurp our role in education. At best we have been reactive and not proactive. The Education Section was involved with a BPS initiative in hosting the successful conference considering the place of Psychology in Initial Teacher Training (PITT) in 1991 which would appear to have been positive action. But I must be careful about choosing my words. The conference was successful in that all participants were fully engaged and committed to the discussions. However, the conference cannot be said to have had an effect on national policy in teacher education. Indeed the conference was held too late to be productive. By that time psychology had gone underground in many institutions.

Why? To the students engaged in initial teacher training courses; to their teacher mentors; to the journalists of the TES; indeed to the lay public, the place of psychology in teacher training seems obvious. Teachers are assumed to need to know about how children learn; about development from the pre-school child's level of cognitive immaturity to the adolescent's emotional see-saw; about behaviour and its management; about communication skills. These are all standard chapter headings. Yet, from the mid seventies onwards, the needs of teaching students were no longer seen to lie within the extant coherent academic disciplines but within more pragmatic generalist courses which had more immediate practical applications. Even as it was published *Understanding Teaching: Interactive Educational Psychology* by Tomlinson (1981) was considered to be too specialist for undergraduates; or possibly even too learned. It was clear from the PITT conference

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that many psychologists working on initial teacher training courses were trimming. They were either not operating as psychologists at all or were going underground; changing the names of their courses but not necessarily the content.

Teacher education is now led by the National Curriculum and is shortly to be dominated even further when the National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training comes into existence. These are atheoretical anonymous documents. They lay down what should be taught but not why. They contain no discussion about how children learn, although they incorporate, implicitly, a linear model of learning. Nothing is supported by reference to published authorities. The implication of this is that teachers do not need to know the provenance of the curriculum. They are to be technicians. In the documentation for English, there is no question that the work of contemporary psychologists has greatly influenced the sections on the teaching of reading and spelling. Rhyme and phonological awareness is there (Bryant & Bradley, 1985); analogy is there (Goswami, 1985); alphabet knowledge is there (Adams, 1990; Stuart and Coltheart, 1988). As someone working in the field, I applaud the incorporation of their findings in the national curriculum. However, I can also recognise in this, Ravens concern that protesting or suggesting alternatives is futile because those in authority have sifted and selected to retain only those who echo the now conventional wisdom.

In the debate that has raged about literacy, many people were concerned that the received orthodoxies of the seventies were presented in a filtered and selected form. The views of Smith and Goodman were accepted as uncontentious. Their assertion that reading was a psycholinguistic guessing game and that children did not need formal instruction in reading held sway - at least in the training establishments. At that time they were the authorities. Their views were not questioned. Smith was a very persuasive writer and a charismatic speaker. Public lectures, attracting large numbers of teachers and students, were rather like revivalist meetings. I sat through Join the Literacy Club feeling like a confirmed atheist at a Billy Graham rally. From the point of view of a psychologist involved with reading, I am delighted to see that recent trends are implicitly based on sound empirical evidence. However, we are now in danger of allowing a new orthodoxy which might be singing a different tune, but it appears to be similarly imposed, if just from a different power base. In the small but important domain of reading, it can be seen to be important that students and teachers have access to the research literature so that they are free to debate and evaluate and make up their own minds in the light of the evidence. Formalised unattributed documents will not allow this.

Has this anything to do with Ravens paper? Could all those people, many of whom were psychologists, who were working away on investigating how children learnt to read have changed things earlier? It was after all probably not in the long-term interest of most pupils or society for us to fall into line with these social pressures. One area where this might be relevant is only implied by Raven. As in other academic areas, psychologists who work in teacher education and the area of reading are required to publish their findings in the most academically respectable journals possible. These are not accessible to teachers. There are no brownie points earned in the Research Assessment Exercise by writing for the professional journals. However, Stuart (1993) and Goswami (1994) have done so with very good effect. Goswami has also literally put theory into practice through her collaboration with Kirtley to produce the Rhyme and Analogy Card Games.

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Whilst accepting some personal guilt for being ineffectual, I am not sure that psychologists have the right to think they can be martyrs in quite the way Raven seems to be advocating. Indeed, in crying for martyrs he seems to be advocating the type of behaviour associated with the totalitarian systems he rails against. From my perspective, persistence has won out in the end with regard to the teaching of reading; though no doubt many people would say that that was a complacent view point. Just as I objected to the old orthodoxy, I do not want it replaced with a new one. In the field of teacher education we need to ensure that we provide evidence and opportunity to debate issues. This includes ensuring that psychology takes its rightful place within the system, as one amongst equals; not claiming special privileges. Perhaps we need to come out from our bunkers and become more effective in our dealings with the system so that teachers and students will have the opportunity to study aspects of psychology which may well enable them to become more effective. One can only hope that academics in general do not go too far underground, echoing the belief system or working with it whatever their private beliefs. Psychologists are not a special breed, they are no more or less responsible than any other professionals. If we claim to be specially responsible, then we claim special rights. That is a dangerous road to go down.

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From the trenches: A reply to Raven.

Yvonne Reynolds, Earlham Junior School, London Borough of Haringey

It used to be thought that there were certain things that primary schools did rather well, and many of these are mentioned by John Raven as aims which education ought to have.

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They *nurtured variety*. It was taken for granted that individual differences were important and to a degree should be allowed to suggest directions for classroom work. This still receives expression, for example, when objects brought to school by children are treasured, discussed and used as stimuli. Differing rates of development by pupils were taken as given. Most pupils never wanted to stay away from their primary schools and on the whole don't find them *demeaning or degrading*.

Schools 'networked' by means of the structure provided by the local authority and changes were not *centrally decreed*.

Primary schools were and still are in close daily contact with parents. Knowledge about pupils, their *idiosyncratic talents* and potential which is thereby constructed often runs parallel to and unconnected with national directives about what children should know or understand by a given age. By a natural process this close daily contact also confers a degree of direct democracy, increased by the fact that parents and members of the local community are also governors who can appoint staff and, by the way they exercise their choice, have *some* mitigating influence on the *right of authority* to impose its own standards.

Thus it could be argued that each primary school already has *the ability to contribute in one of a wide variety of diverse ways to group processes* and potentially to *identify and find ways of intervening in the societal systems processes which so much determine what can be done in educational institutions*.

However, all this could be fast disappearing. John Raven's mapping of the political features of the current educational landscape does accurately characterise the harsh recent experience of primary schools. His 'red guard' terminology may be somewhat surprising in the context of an academic discussion, but it actually quite aptly conveys the reign of terror now experienced in schools as a result of the joint tyranny of league tables (which may soon destroy any remaining school networks) and OFSTED inspections which are perceived as hostile, unpredictable in outcome, flawed in their methodology, and politically influenced.

Primary heads like myself can also confirm from daily professional experience Raven's finding that, when it comes to 'choosing' a secondary school for example, *most [parents] experience diversity...as inequity, rather than a range of...equally good options*. This casts a distorting anxiety over children's later primary years. The situation cries out both for genuine educational options and for work to be done to try to predict long-term outcomes of the exercise of such choices.

I would agree that *the task of clarifying the processes needed in education and teacher education is essentially a job for psychologists* and also that psychologists have a contribution to make in the field of school management and the management of education generally. I would however add another task to this list.

Although Raven sees these problems for psychologists, teachers, nonetheless, do have expertise (should we call this 'psychology-in-action?') in *identify[ing] and harness[ing] different children's motives in order to nurture their idiosyncratic talents in arranging for them to get credit for having developed those talents* and in many other areas. Nevertheless, the call for teachers to get involved in a *ferment of innovation* is surely at present over-optimistic - they have known nothing but change for the last decade, and during the same period their professional self-esteem has

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been wrecked. Unless, that is, in taking up a wider remit, psychologists can contribute to the rebuilding both of the self-regard of teachers and of public perception of their professional expertise. This would certainly be a worthy subtask on the road to the full reconstruction of education in which Raven has recommended that psychologists involve themselves.

Why has the government...been able to stifle genuine enquiry and public debate over the past seventeen years? The sad contrast between the joint potential for creative educational thinking among parents, teachers and academics and the aridity of the prescriptions of all three main political parties has long been a feature of the British educational scene. The equally sad - and puzzling - contrast between that potential and the lack of its realisation - has led to the educational disasters through which we are living. Psychologists have a central role to play, but it's not just psychologists that should heed Raven's call to arms.

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Geoff Lindsay, Director Special Needs Research Unit, University of Warwick

John Raven has produced a thoughtful and provocative paper on which I have been asked to comment, picking up in particular on the implications for the British Psychological Society. I must admit, with regret, not to be familiar with John's recent work which provides the research evidence for much of his paper, and the tight deadline has not allowed me the opportunity to read it. I shall respond from a perspective of a psychologist working in the field of special educational needs (SEN), and as an honorary officer of the BPS.

I have sympathy with Raven's concern for the trend in education. As a practitioner of educational psychology for over 20 years in Sheffield, I saw at first hand the effects of the education system, in its changing form, on the staff and pupils with a particular focus on those who were vulnerable, failing or resisting - and I do include staff as well as pupils. The 1988 Education Reform Act, its attendant assessment programme, but also the way other legislative changes affecting local government (competitive tendering, cuts in central financial support etc.) worsened the situation. Market forces and local financial management have clearly led many schools to choose pupils, rather than parent or pupils choosing schools. This is particularly so when potential pupils do not conform to certain narrow, pre-determined criteria. While some schools might make a sales pitch with certain groups, for example, those with physical difficulties, it is clear that there is much less of a welcome for pupils likely to reduce the overall level of results of the school, or pose curricular and management challenges which the school may decide it could well do without. The 'Choice and Diversity' of the 1992 White Paper is with us but in a different form. In the context, I support Raven's concern about any restricted research programme which promotes, by design or default, the view that effective schools are to be defined in terms of examination successes and high attendance.

However, it is my understanding that this is not necessarily the case. What the work of, for example, Carol Taylor Fitz-gibbon and David Jesson has done is to raise the issue of what happens if we do go down this route. For example, how might a school which is just the 'wrong' side of a line dividing 'effective' schools from the opposite category (ineffective? Non-effective?

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Less effective?) respond. How do we get to the 'right' side of the line? Careful analysis (and I discussed this issue with one head 4 or 5 years ago before the benefit of such research providing data) may lead a head teacher to focus resources on a small area of the school (e.g. the Geography department) to try to ensure enough of an increase in examination grades to shift the balance. But where do these resources come from - the ESN department?

These are real issues facing schools. Raven has my support in arguing that we should have a broad range of criteria against which to judge school effectiveness. Clearly some studies have focused narrowly, and such studies can then lead to a reification of the research-led criteria being considered the only or most important. Also, the variables commonly chosen may be those most easily measured, as well as being those favoured by politicians. This is not to argue against their use, but there is a danger of an unconscious collusion between those concerned to *limit* evaluation to such measures. For my part, I would wish to see school effectiveness research having a broader brief, with consideration of social and emotional development, for example. Indeed, my own work on baseline assessment, which can be used for a value added assessment at the Infant stage, has incorporated these variables into the assessment measure, the Infant Index (Desforges and Lindsay, 1995).

Further, we need to consider *differential* measures of effectiveness; that is, judging schools by their effects on different pupils, not simply taking aggregate measures. Effectiveness may differ by gender, ethnic group or ability/disability. This is useful information for a school to reflect upon. Also, effectiveness may vary if non-academic outcomes are compared with other factors: self esteem, lower rates of offending, positive contributions to the community etc. The problem, however, is that the public may be less interested in such variables, and researchers may consider some too problematic to use. Both researchers and schools, and indeed politicians, have the opportunity to guide the agenda. At the moment, the expectation of what constitutes an effective school, and the judgement made by parents of an appropriate school, are problematic.

For example, as part of a current research project on pupil support in secondary schools I visited a school which appeared to be, in my eyes, a good school. It was in a disadvantaged area, but has a sense of purpose, calm and commitment from staff and pupils. However, the main problem facing the school was, I was told, the resistance of white parents to allow their children to attend a school with a high proportion of British Asian children. This school had a clear sense of values, from the head through to staff. These were based on religious beliefs, respecting a multi-faith community. This school has chosen to pursue its own path, recognising it might fail by not drawing in enough pupils. This school has a clear direction and areas of high achievement; it attempts to reduce truancy, seeing this as, at times, a reasonable reaction, but nonetheless unacceptable. It has many attributes which may lead it to be considered effective, yet its placing on any table of examination successes and exclusion rates would not reflect this.

There is not the space to extend this case, or the arguments. Suffice it will say that, while Raven has highlighted many problems with the educational system there are still schools promoting their own beliefs, and there are researchers examining those alternatives, with a broader perspective of 'effectiveness' than Raven criticises. The issue is: how long will these schools survive? The situation in London, for example, suggests the market place philosophy is driving schools to focus on narrower definitions of success, leading to restricted entrance requirements (when schools can

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demand this) and a greater focus on higher achievement in a restricted domain for schools in general. If, as researchers or psychologists working on education, we collude with such a restricted approach, rather than examining its impact and alternative, broader models of effectiveness, we shall be reinforcing those schools' actions, and politicians' predilections. In my view we should adopt a different tack: examine a broader model and attempt to influence politicians that education is indeed about academic success, but this is not all.

Let me turn now to the BPS. Here Raven is concerned with two different issues: 'ethics committee' and the role of staff/officers in promoting particular approaches to the development of psychology.

Raven, not uniquely, appears unaware of the Society's disciplinary machinery and procedures. There is no Ethics Committee, although the Strategic Plan approved by Council in February 1997 proposed one be set up. Rather, there is an Investigator Committee, comprising four senior psychologists (including the Honorary General Secretary and normally the President) which hears and determines action on complaints. Those for which there is a *prima facie* case of offence are investigated by an Investigatory Panel, and if this recommends action, the case is heard by a Disciplinary Committee comprising a majority (normally two) of non-psychologists and one past President. (The non-psychologists are drawn from the Disciplinary Board, and are all senior members of other organisations with Royal Charters, Registration Councils and the Law Society).

Any person can make a complaint - John Raven may do so. The complaint is judged against the Society's Code of Conduct. The question for Raven, therefore, is whether the concerns he states offend the Code. With respect to his example, would 'accepting research grants to do research - perhaps on school effectiveness which are unlikely to be in the long-term interests of all pupils' to be grounds for striking a psychologist from the Register? The more substantive point is interesting. To try to answer this - it is necessary to examine the Code of Conduct. (All members should have a copy, or see also the October 1995 issue of *The Psychologist*). Under the first section, General, there is the following requirement:

In all their work psychologists shall conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring into disrepute the discipline and the profession of psychology. They shall value integrity, impartiality and respect for persons and evidence and shall seek to establish the highest ethical standards in their work. Because of their concern for valid evidence, they shall ensure that research is carried out in keeping with the highest standards of scientific integrity.

Also, under Section 5, Personal Conduct, members shall:

refrain from improper conduct in their work as psychologists, that would be likely to be detrimental to the interests of recipients of their services or participants in their research.

The first clause quoted clearly lays a responsibility on researchers to conduct their work with 'the highest standards of scientific integrity'. Would Raven's concerns be covered by this clause? Section 5.1 is more generally interpreted with respect to the research exercise *per se*, rather than the outcomes for research subjects some time in the future and at one or more stages removed. There is normally assumed to be a difference between responsibility for the research subjects of a study (e.g. if administered aversive treatment or subjected to deception within an experiment) and

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for later outcomes, not of the particular study, but as a result of its adding to the evidential base for later decisions. What level of probability for 'unlikely' in Raven's charge would be necessary? What proportion of pupils would need to be affected, and to what degree?

The current system focuses on harm, not failure to achieve optimal practice, and this applies to the therapist-client, as with the researcher-school. If Raven believes there is a psychologist who is offending the Code then he has a duty under Section 5.10 to report that person to the Clerk of the Investigatory Committee (I have done this myself). The Society does not itself seek out alleged wrong-doers, but will to complaints. There have been cases of academics subject to investigation.

With respect to Raven's second point about the BPS, I disagree with his view that office bearers, that is the members who are elected to honorary office, are not able to be involved in the promotion of development in psychology. Many of us believe that is what we are doing, and those of us who have had several roles in the Society have had the opportunity to attempt a long-term approach. Whether this is by 'parallel organisation' activity I do not know: neither do I know whether that matters. But it is this group (and over 1000 members work for the Society on Committees, Boards, working parties etc.) who are currently the *only* ones able to do this. The Society despite a staff of over 70, has only one senior psychologist, in the person of the Executive Secretary, Dr Colleen Newsman. We also have three junior posts, filled by recent graduates. This group forms the basis of psychological work from the office. But all other posts are filled by non-psychologists. Effective as these staff may be, they are not the people who will fulfil Raven's suggested roles.

In conclusion, I would like to thank John Raven for this paper, and the Peer Review process which has followed. I share his concern for the future of our profession and discipline of psychology, and in particular I am critical of the values which have dominated society over the past decade or more, and have impacted on education, in schools and academe, and on the practice of psychology (see Lindsay 1995; Lindsay & Thompson, in press). From my research with Ann Colley, I am aware of the ethical dilemmas faced by psychologists (Lindsay & Colley, 1995). But we must distinguish bad and harmful practice from less than optimal practice. These judgements are themselves problematic, and will be influenced by value systems held by each of us, and embodied in the context of the Code of Conduct. Interestingly, research was the second most prevalent category for dilemmas in our study, although none of those reported was of the nature of that raised by Raven.

If Raven really believes a researcher has acted unethically, he should complain to the Investigatory Committee. But his general point is more important for us all. We should explore our own value systems and challenge dubious practice. We should attempt to remove gagging clauses from grants; undertake research which is not designed to fit the political flavour; publish research critical of official lines, challenge inappropriate use of findings whether by researchers or government agencies; consider the impact of our research on participants and others; and further a healthy debate on the ethical basis of our practice.

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Authors Response to Peer Reviews

John Raven, Edinburgh

In the first part of this Response I focus on some assumptions which may lie behind what commentators have said and which may be more widely shared and perhaps deter us from appropriate behaviour. In the second, I focus on Yvonne Reynolds' remarks.

General

The fact that "everyone does something" does not make it ethical. It simply makes it more difficult to change. As Kuhn has shown, significant advances in scientific understanding challenge the status quo and are therefore "political" at least in a narrow, and often in a wider, sense – witness Galileo. Designation of a scientific finding as "political" simply brands it "a threat to the social order", thus discouraging appropriate action. Our documentation of the developments needed to have effective education certainly challenge the dominant world view and the existing social order. They are therefore without doubt political. But they are no less scientific for all that. What is more, effective education is itself subversive in precisely this sense. One of the central objectives of education is to help people to develop the competencies they need to understand the way their organisations and society work and thereafter to influence them. Most of those who have commented on my initial paper agree that this is precisely what we, as psychologists, need to do. Yet any serious attempt to nurture the required competencies elicits a powerful co-ordinated reaction from authority – as Harold Rugg and the Schools Council Integrated Science Project discovered to their cost. Furthermore, perhaps because of a desire to think well of authority, many people dismiss documentation of the concerted conspiracies of authority (such as those provided by Robinson and Chomsky) as "over the top" or "exceptions".

Another way of denigrating important research is to accuse its author of emotional involvement. But the fact is that not only do *all* new cognitions originate in feelings – emotion – Kuhn, Roberts and others have shown that the dissemination and enaction of scientific findings *depends* on extraordinary championship. The attempt to purge emotion from science therefore emerges as a ploy used by those whose dominant concern is to ingratiate themselves with authority (and thereby advance within the social order) to stifle investigation of the important.

Then there is the "shoemaker should stick to his last" argument. Psychologists should not dabble in (moral) philosophy. Actually, psychology has a key role to play in moving ethics out of the domain of philosophy and into the realm of science. It is psychologists who have developed the concepts and tools needed to think about and assess organisational (and societal) arrangements and their personal and societal consequences ... and who can thus contribute most to advancing

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understanding of how things *do* work and what the long-term societal consequences of alternative courses of action are likely to be - the point being that morality and ethics are at heart concerned with getting people to clarify, and act in accord with, the long-term, public, interest as against their short-term, private, interests.

Backing-up somewhat, time and again we have demonstrated - as Yvonne Reynolds again illustrates - that it is what people do - or don't do - *outside* their organisations which primarily determines their *competence* - for, unless they influence the wider social and political constraints on what they *can* do, they *cannot* do in their jobs the things which it is most important for them to do. It follows that it is what lecturers in education, educational researchers, and managers of research do to influence the perceptions of the importance of broadly-based educational research and promote the flow of funds into it which should primarily determine our assessments of both their morality and their competence.

So, the question is: "What *can* we do to influence the wider constraints on our behaviour so that we can behave more competently and ethically?"

In our quest for answers we asked, among other things, how we might do this through our professional organisation - the BPS. At one level we found ourselves wondering what we might do to provoke an institutional response which would be less easily picked off than individual protest. We considered a committee of enquiry, but dismissed the idea when we reflected on what had happened to others. We thought of activating an ethical investigation of a prominent individual - not as a witch hunt but as a means of creating enough of a stir for the press to pick it up. But then it was pointed out that the hearings would be in private and that those who would be most likely to be asked to be involved would be unlikely to ask awkward questions. So then we thought of trying to apply what we had learned, as psychologists, about political (organisational) processes and how to promote movement and change. Here there were Rosabeth Kanter's insights into how organisations can be brought to promote innovation and the surprising insights into the forms of bureaucracy and democracy which are required to manage the educational system for effective schooling that had emerged from our own research.

Peter Mortimore complains that I do not tell him exactly what to do. Perhaps wisely, Jack Whitehead insisted that I list a series of specific actions in both *Managing Education* and *The New Wealth of Nations*. But it is, in reality, more important for any actions initiated to be informed by (1) a preliminary understanding of the nature of the *systems* processes which are to be influenced, and (2) a tentative understanding of the nature of the public-service based learning and monitoring system that appears to be required to move forward. "Political" action? Of course. But, more appropriately construed, action grounded in the results of applying the concepts and methods of organisational psychology to the management of society as an organisation. And, above all, action guided by a desire to apply the scientific method (experiment; with echoes of Dewey and Schon) to learn more about organisational arrangements, their functioning, and how to intercede effectively - ie competently - in them. Let us be clear. We do not have to wait for some government to mandate such work. We can - and should - begin *now* through our professional organisations. It is the only ethical and realistic course of action. Direct action, yes, Peter. *Because our work has shown that what are presented as democratic processes do not - and, for reasons spelt out at some length in "The New Wealth of Nations", can not - operate in the long-term public interest.*

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But the question remains: What actions, additional to, or alternative to, those suggested in my starter paper might be envisaged? And how are we to initiate and sustain them? Maybe the editors would publish further thoughts if readers were to write to them.

But before everyone leaps to their keyboards, let me return to one of the basic observations which prompted my paper - for none of the commentators has helped me to understand it. How is it that certain "leaders" are able to gain control over public perceptions in such a way as to make it almost impossible for contrary views to be formulated, let alone acted upon. One has only to think of the way in which mumbo-jumbo about "efficiency", "market forces" (note Geoff's use of the term to refer to politically engineered events), and "competitiveness" have, in this country, been able to obliterate alternative viewpoints in a political party which, at least on the surface, had the machinery required to develop and disseminate alternative thinking. Closer to our theme, Berliner, in a recent issue of *The Educational Researcher* chided colleagues who had been invited to use their knowledge of educational research to "respond" to the widespread "concerns" about educational standards aired by industrialists for having accepted a vocabulary and way of thinking about education and its relation to the economy which lacks almost any connection with reality - let alone foundation in educational goals or processes, competence, and individual or societal well-being. What it was important to note was, he argued, that that way of thinking *does* perform vitally important sociological functions - and does so in a way which confers particular benefits on the owners of "industry". *How is it* that we are so gullible, so susceptible to this kind of "manipulation", so constrained by the power of the word?

Yvonne Reynolds

I turn now to some reflections prompted by Yvonne's paper. The first thing to be said is that, in our work with primary schools (published as *Opening the Primary Classroom*) we found (1) that "good practice" was nothing like as widespread as Yvonne believes, and (2) that, where it existed, *it resulted from extraordinary effort going far beyond the call of duty*. These teachers spent a great deal of time *outside* their classrooms working with others to *invent* ways of meeting their clients' (pupils') needs and gaining control over wider societal processes which would otherwise have prevented them doing the things which needed to be done. *Conclusion 1:* It is what one is *not* paid to do which most importantly determines one's competence. Teacher competence depends on being able to influence the social, legal, economic, and political constraints on what they *can* do in their classrooms. *Conclusion 2:* Psychologists have a major role to play in helping to develop the concepts and tools which are required to enable more teachers to implement individualised high-level-competency-oriented educational programmes of the kind run by these teachers. *Conclusion 3:* Psychologists have a major role to play in clarifying the organisational arrangements, personal development programmes, and staff-appraisal tools that are required to help teachers to work outside their classrooms to invent ways of meeting the diverse needs of pupils, to influence the wider constraints on their behaviour, and to get credit for their accomplishments. *Conclusion 4:* Our competence as psychologists depends on recognising the need to develop these understandings and tools - and the ethical implications of *not* developing them - and on *finding* ways of developing them. Excuses like "there isn't any money" or "the government won't listen" are unacceptable - for they demonstrate that we are incompetent and lacking in ethical commitment.

OPEN DIALOGUE: AUTHORS RESPONSE TO PEER REVIEWS

But Yvonne raises a still more fundamental issue: Why have governments attacked educational programmes which nurture diverse high-level talents (Mr. Major dismissed them as "playschools")? Why have they set agendas for "school effectiveness" studies which preclude recognition of high-level competencies and multiple talents (the contract for the evaluation of Headstart Follow Through was *taken away* from the Stanford Research Institute when the researchers said they wanted to evaluate wider outcomes)? I have discussed these questions at some length in *Managing Education for Effective Schooling*. Part of the answer is that neither teachers nor psychologists have provided society with the concepts and methods which are required to discuss the diversity of human abilities and how these abilities are to be nurtured and recognised. But another part of the answer is that the main function of the educational system is, as Jencks noted, to legitimise the rationing of privilege and to promote those *least* willing and able to make their own observations about how society works and act in the public interest into senior positions in such a way as to perpetuate the kind of society we have. We do not have to attribute evil intent to those who have been promoted into influential positions (although our own work, and that of McClelland and Hogan, suggests that such an attribution is appropriate more often than most people care to think). Once again it is necessary to reiterate that, while these conclusions have political implications, they follow from the psychological data we collected every bit as logically as the inference that an electron was present in a cloud chamber follows from the observation of a trail of condensation. Furthermore *the interventions it is possible to make in a field of sociological forces can only be psychological*. To be meaningful, our studies of competence and organisational arrangements must engage with these observations. The need is clearly for classical, "pure", academic research targeted at understanding, and thus finding ways of intervening in, social and psychological processes which are of the greatest practical importance. They merit what Kanter has called "parallel organisation activity" on a scale unprecedented in social research and development yet common in physics, chemistry, and applied areas such as agriculture.