
Introduction

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This book sets out to accomplish the especially difficult task of reviewing the issues of transition and of literacy, principally as they affect teachers and pupils. The task is difficult because the transition from primary to secondary school is notoriously problematic and pupils find the shift of cultures at the least very challenging and often traumatic. In the past, communications between the secondary and primary phases have been at best strained and there is no evidence that the National Curriculum has been of much benefit in this respect. And then we have literacy, a term once used as a simple marker of those who could read and write and those (the illiterate) who could not. Now it is, quite rightly, both a much more complicated concept and a somewhat elusive one like 'intelligence' that is recognized to be something we are still grasping to define and understand.

The book thus acknowledges these difficulties and seeks wherever possible to offer help and advice. Some of this takes the form of reviewing research and previous forms of advice, some, concerned with the more uncertain future, is necessarily speculative.

Certain issues are the focus of our discussion. The first must inevitably be the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). The enormity of the National Literacy Strategy is hard to grasp. There has been no single policy initiative like it. It might be compared to the comprehensive movement perhaps, but even there a proportion of the secondary schools were unaffected and the impact on primary schools was essentially to remove the constraint of the eleven-plus. The key point is that every teacher, every pupil and every local education authority (LEA) has been or soon will be, fundamentally affected by this initiative on a daily basis. At least that is what is intended. And who can dispute that possession of literacy is simply a good thing? The writers of this book do not dispute that, but they would be failing all teachers and pupils if they did not point out that this monolithic policy is based on very little research evidence, that its

evaluations seem to have been insignificant or disregarded and that the only measures of its success are narrowly focused tests that most teachers find of dubious validity. Our first issue is therefore that we are supportive of changes where we can see their rationale but critical and questioning where we cannot. We feel essentially that there has been very little time or opportunity to critique the whole Juggernaut and it is far too important for such an unreflective approach.

A second key issue entails making sense of this initiative in relation to the past and the future. Criticisms of the lack of literate school leavers are as old as school itself and the tendency for politicians to blame teachers just as ancient. More specifically in the Language Across the Curriculum movement of the 1970s and early 1980s we have a minor precedent, discussed, if briefly in Chapter 2. Overall we intend to help readers place the whole policy and its impact on transition and continuity in a historical context where this will help to reveal what is significant. This is especially important as all members of the profession from the 'trainee' to the head teacher are involved.

Our next issue concerns the active role of teachers, and in the face of such large-scale and remotely constructed change it is hard for any participant to feel much agency. However, we are convinced that agency is not only possible but crucial and that it will very much enhance those elements within the Strategy that are essentially worthwhile. One feature of the text is its constant reference to teachers themselves, and their views as revealed through surveys, interviews and classroom observations. Their voices and opinions come through very strongly and their pros and cons are evident. Often they do feel very 'put upon' and that their cherished autonomy and professionalism are once more further eroded, especially the nature of the training which they have endured. However, they are equally clear that there are things to be done for their own sake as well as for the policy or its appearances; they show that agency is a reality.

Finally this book is about transition and specifically three of its many connotations. The first meaning is perhaps also the simplest, referring to that long-acknowledged difficulty as children move from primary to secondary. This move and the 'dip' in performance associated with it in Year 7 has long vexed teachers and parents. First the National Curriculum was going to solve this problem, now the NLS is asked to do so. We are clear that this is a naive view. That transition is also between school cultures and, more profoundly, between childhood and adolescence. We would rather acknowledge the significance of the change and argue for various ways of minimizing the difficulties and maximizing the opportunities. In this sense the NLS can be made to help.

Our second element in relation to transition is that the acquisition of literacy is an inextricable part of it, of growing up in fact. The secondary

school has huge specific demands about literacy, and life outside has many more. Sometimes these demands are confusing and conflicting for young people and their teachers. We hope that secondary schools in particular will conceptualize literacy in this way as a part of adolescence and early adulthood, not as something that should be over by an age or a supposedly acquired 'level'.

Our last point about transition is perhaps more of a play on that term. The phrase 'in transit' suggests a starting point and a place to arrive. The architects of the NLS long for the achievement of nicely quantifiable percentages of children with the 'right levels' of literacy, then we will all have arrived. Unfortunately, such an approach is unsound. Paradoxically we feel sure that those statistics will emerge; too much political capital has been invested for failure to be conceivable. The important point is that we can probably assess literacy but we should not pretend to measure it. Fundamentally literacy is always in transition and will not stop long enough to be simplistically measured. Assessing children's literacy is vital and highly productive, best done by experienced and well-practised professionals. Tests can play a useful, but usually modest, part in the process. For literacy itself is surely changing more rapidly now than at any time and this is an exciting opportunity, not a problem in itself. We can see the evidence all around us and so can our children. Accepting that literacy is now and always in transit, allows us to reject simplistic nostalgias about, for example, former golden ages of spelling and to enjoy the benefits of the spellchecker. We acknowledge that schools are under enormous public pressure to produce quantifiable measures of literacy and we must accept that they will have to do so. However, our argument offers them support in their own view that their professional judgement and experience will be more important in the long run and more in touch with literacy's ongoing transitions.

The majority of contributors are researchers but every one has been a teacher and the author of Chapter 7, 'the' practising teacher, is also a researcher. The book has a strong research base made all the more powerful as the majority of that research belongs to the writers and their recent work in schools. Teachers themselves are increasingly embracing classroom research and also recognizing its importance as they are asked to analyse their 'performance'. The book provides many insights into how research provides some possible answers to our problems but also where it exposes and poses problems for which more research will be needed. The National Literacy Strategy is most certainly not certain, for all its frequently dogmatic assertions; rather its dogmas reveal its insecurities. We hope the book provokes some questions as well as offering at least some suggested solutions.

Making the most of the National Literacy Strategy

This book puts forward a strong argument about literacy, about transition and about literacy in transition. It will review the National Literacy Strategy, offer ways that we can work with it but also provide a critique of both its 'theory' and its somewhat formulaic practice. The research at the heart of the book demonstrates that the majority of teachers can be seen to support what might be called the spirit of the NLS, that is, the admirable aim to make all our future citizens highly literate and articulate in their adult lives. However, teachers also make it clear that the 'letter' of the NLS is often oppressive, it ignores their autonomy and creativity as professionals and it is overdetermined by narrow forms of testing. Finally, unless it is constantly revised and made more flexible it will become even more a prisoner of the past. The obsession with 'teacher proof' manuals, overhead transparencies (OHTs), videos and consultants and co-ordinators still seem more like the trappings of some fundamentalist, even evangelical, cult than anything else. They suggest a constant fear of subversion, demanding that everyone is so busy 'delivering' the NLS message that they will not have time to utter that heretical thought, 'Is this really about improving literacy, and what, in the twenty-first century, actually is literacy?'

Other chapters, especially Chapter 1, grapple with the elusive quality of literacy as it exists in print and multimedia, local and global environments and explore how in the last hundred years or so we have been offered an escape from a narrow, fixed and ultimately exclusive and elitist definition of literacy, and instead have discovered a much more human, humane and inclusive vision. In this formulation we must recognize difference, context and the flux of constant change. The example of text messaging is a wonderfully illustrative example of the power of literacy as a creative engine, able to defy the authority of the academy and its obsessions with language control. Literacy must therefore always be seen as in transition, manuals can be useful in the way they should be; they help with the current model but not the one being invented as the print dries.

So this Introduction is concerned with reviewing where we have got to on this endless journey and with ideas and suggestions about the future. The National Literacy Strategy looks set to run for a number of years and, because of its domineering scale, we have nothing really that can be compared to it. Its companion initiative, the National Numeracy Strategy, is clearly important, but it is being treated as if from a very different and relatively junior league. Chapter 2 will consider to what extent the NLS could be compared to the Language Across the Curriculum movement with the suggestion that there were some lessons from that time to be learned and that the next few years would tell. One purpose behind this

book as a whole is to contextualize the NLS and to offer readers some real perspective; the shape of a mountain is best judged from a distance.

The book's other main purpose is to review the problematic transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools. This is always going to be a key issue but is made dramatically so as the NLS itself makes that transition. Therefore, it will have a huge impact on transition issues themselves. Some of the time it is possible to treat pupil transition as a kind of discrete issue; equally literacy and its constant flux can usefully be viewed in a distinctive way. However, at times, and especially now, the issues are entwined and must be considered in that complex formation. The impact of the NLS may well have some significant benefits for transition between schools as long as at least some of the criticisms of the strategy are listened to and the role of teachers is afforded more autonomy and respect. As this may or may not happen, so these suggestions about the future must be tentative but they are informed by a number of patterns that should be helpful.

Literacy as transition

Chapter 1 will explore in more depth how our current obsession with literacy is an outcome of our need in societies with specialized occupations to communicate across distance and time. To that extent every generation since the late nineteenth century has more or less agreed with this impetus and tended to add elaborations both to forms of communication and the literacies that they subsequently generate. Literacy, then, has a history of its own and a future, Margaret Meek's *On Being Literate* (Meek, 1995) provides an excellent account of this whole concept.

One thing missing from the NLS is an interest in literacy *as* transition, that old proverb, 'not seeing the wood for the trees' seems very apt. Children need help to acquire the literacy of yesterday because it has the current status afforded it by the previous generation, i.e., their parents and teachers. This literacy is already dated. However, the great majority of it is worth having and will be extremely useful so there is no tension there for teachers or parents. However, secondary school children also need help to put literacy in perspective. For example, the generation that has 'invented' text messaging may not be very immediately interested in the fact that something called the telegram actually got there first, but good teachers can help them become interested; pupils need to understand, as well as employ, literacy. We have been codifying language to make it more transmittable for longer than we can universally remember, we might possibly track this back through hieroglyphics to cave paintings. This idea brings us to two important points for teachers and schools to consider for the future. First, students should leave school not only lit-

erate but with a perspective on Literacy itself. Secondly, as they approach the age of being eligible to vote, they should be ready to participate in the future of a democratic society where literacies will be contested and changing; literacy is always a political issue.

To gain that crucial perspective involves a number of recognitions that schools can help their students to acquire. First, in this process literacy acts as a transition towards the adult world that 'we' have constructed. In that sense it is at least as much about adolescence as childhood. The child that is acquiring yesterday's literacy is developing identities that inevitably are in some tension with it; this is not a problem – it is the beginning of critical literacy. Young people should question the past and consider the future; literacy allows them to do both. Secondary schools must therefore provide some space, probably in Key Stage 4 (KS4), for their students to reflect on literacy and to critique it in a conscious way. This can only be done if teachers offer them some perspective on the history of literacy.

In itself this is not an entirely new activity and might be seen as the culmination of a series of curricular experiments. Previous initiatives have included the change in English teaching brought about by the emergence of the London School in the 1960s, experiments with Language in Use and Language Awareness in the 1970s, Knowledge About Language as a result of the Kingman Report and the ill-fated Language in the National Curriculum project of 1990–93 (see Carter, 1990, for an account). All these projects attempted to help students understand the power of language to liberate but equally to be oppressive and imprisoning. What might be considered new is the exclusive attention to the word 'literacy'. While the NLS prevails it may be best to accept this partly reductive use of the term because students can be asked to reflect on its dominance. After all, the generation born in the mid-1990s will eventually have experienced approximately 10 years of 'doing literacy' as they themselves increasingly describe it. They surely deserve the right to the question, 'What have we learned from all this?' This critical examination of literacy, its history and its constantly changing definitions should be closely linked to another term with a new spotlight of attention, 'Citizenship'; more about this below.

The key aspect for students must be to consider that their struggle with Literacy is intrinsically 'worth it' but that no definition of literacy is neutral. Much of the history of literacy is about elitism and exclusivity. Surely well-educated students in a democratic society ought to know the name of Paolo Freire, to appreciate a model of literacy that was driven by egalitarianism and democratic principles and demanded that citizens use their literacy to be politically active, never apathetic (see, for example, Freire and Macedo, 1987). This focus on a reflection on Literacy should

certainly take place in English but equally certain elements are at home in other subject areas such as History or within Citizenship itself. English, as suggested in Chapter 1, is the curriculum area where the concept of discourses is examined and for the foreseeable future retains a key role in broadening pupils' thinking about all forms of language. English also increasingly has a somewhat paradoxical role as a kind of antidote to capital L Literacy, a curriculum space where interesting things about language, not just literacy hours, can occur.

The second point for schools builds on this perspective on Literacy. The general election in the United Kingdom in June 2001 had the lowest turn-out of voters since 1918. A full explanation of this would require a book on its own but the fact that it occurred at exactly the same time as 'Citizenship' was being introduced to the compulsory curriculum is a powerful symbolic conjunction. The explanation most frequently offered has been that the dominant political party is now firmly of the Centre, most people are in work and voters are now cynical about political 'spin'. However, another explanation, or at least important factor, concerns 'schooling', i.e., that process by which future citizens are 'schooled' (Buckingham, 2000). Since the mid-1980s teachers have not been losing control of their classes they have been losing control over their work. In the census of 2001 teaching became a 'second tier' profession, principally because of the lack of autonomy teachers now experience. This topic is equally deserving of a book but the point for readers actually relates to literacy.

Teachers and the curriculum have been increasingly controlled and also policed by Inspection and, therefore, so have children and young people (Goodwyn, 2001b). Citizenship for most people is a somewhat worthily remote term and it is no accident that students have to wait until they are at least 16 to study something called Politics or Sociology. In England and Wales teachers are forbidden by law from expressing strong views on controversial issues, i.e., things that actually matter to them and their students. The link with Literacy is simple, what do you do with it once you have it? One major advantage in being literate is that you can argue a case in writing or in speech. If young people are increasingly politically apathetic, perhaps the curriculum they experience at least in part engenders it?

In 2002 schools and teachers remain straitjacketed, the most common form of protest by teachers has been, increasingly, to leave the profession. The report of the Chief Inspector for Schools (OFSTED, 2001), received much media attention because it highlighted the problem of retention of the profession. Many teachers (figures claimed vary from 40 per cent to 25 per cent) tend to leave after about three years, i.e., just as they are becoming genuinely effective. There is no evidence that the teachers who

leave are in any way the ineffective minority. Chapter 2 does stress that there are significant opportunities for agency and Chapter 5 illustrates how thinking professionals refuse to be merely instrumental, however these latter figures are highly experienced and have already survived endless reforms and initiatives. When engaged in a small-scale piece of research about curriculum change (Goodwyn, 1997) I was struck by how consistently highly experienced senior managers in schools reflected on the early years of their careers as full of excitement and challenge. They felt that schools were now much better organized and far more accountable but that much of the enjoyment had gone out of teaching. My own anecdotal experience of the retention crisis is of a similar nature, young teachers in particular are not leaving because they have become cynical or materialistic, they are leaving to find opportunities for more creativity and autonomy, and to escape excessive bureaucracy and endless externally imposed demands. Of course more money helps, but it is less significant than it used to be.

There are no neat and simple solutions but literacy and politics are inextricably linked by ideology. Literacy should be about change not about the maintenance of the status quo. If young people are to be committed citizens, then schools have to challenge their thinking not constantly direct it. One very significant danger in the NLS is that it will further diminish the enjoyment of teaching and deaden the curriculum for teachers and pupils alike. This is especially true in secondary schools where English teachers in particular feel that the curriculum feels like a 'cage' (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999).

Ultimately, then, students should be encouraged by schools to use their advanced literacy skills in critical and engaged ways. Curriculum 2000 at least provided a little more flexibility and there are indications that GCSEs might be reformed early in the twenty-first century. Whatever space opens up to allow schools and teachers to select what they feel is right for their students should be used as an opportunity to challenge all students to be critically literate. One role for Citizenship then will be to engage students' literacies in social critique. At least some aspects of this challenge are potentially available through the opportunities offered by the new technologies.

ICT and some real opportunities

Chapter 2 examines the current uses of information and communications technology (ICT), productive and unproductive, in schools and reflects on the almost complete absence of computer use from the whole NLS initiative so far. There is a striking paradox in this unintentionally anti-ICT initiative happening in parallel with teachers' in-service training (the

New Opportunities Fund, NOF training) in the use of ICT. The review of the research in this area suggests that we would need a much expanded definition of literacy in order to at least make sense of the impact of ICT on a whole range of aspects of our everyday lives. Many of the suggestions in the next section assume the availability of good hardware and software and plenty of access, conditions that are by no means common as yet. However, there seems little point in endlessly repeating the phrase 'if you have access to', the evidence from schools (BECTa, 2001a; 2001b) is that teachers are learning to maximize ICT opportunities for their pupils and will increasingly do so. Equally there are other problematic issues about confidentiality and data protection that will be especially challenging for schools in the future. If a National Grid for Learning is ever to be a reality then some of these problems must be solved by a managed system and not be a constant distraction for individual schools. Again therefore, and with these cautions in mind, it seems best to review what longer-term benefits ICT can bring.

The other factor to be considered in Chapter 2 is the current convergence of computer and media technologies and its implications for schools at present; this section will speculate about how such convergence may (and should be) truly transforming. Our starting point is the primary secondary transition itself.

The transfer of electronic data

At a simple level electronic transfer makes pupil data immediately available, i.e., as soon as it is prepared it can be transmitted simultaneously to as many recipients as need it, for example to all the teachers in school not just the key figures. This still relies entirely on the quality of human input of that data. If the quality is there then the data is extremely manipulable and can be represented in ways that can make sense to different audiences. The data is also importantly provisional. It can be questioned and interrogated. For example, secondary schools should not just receive such data; they should consider it critically. If a primary school's test scores have risen or fallen then there will a story behind the figures that will involve the actual experience of the children and teachers themselves; finding out the story makes the figures meaningful. In other words, such data is a part of a dialogue about transition; it can never replace that dialogue.

In the spirit of that dialogue such data can also be enhanced and returned to its creators. Primary schools have long been frustrated by the lack of reciprocity between themselves and secondary schools; the latter get lots of their information and they receive nothing back. Secondary schools are very keen to claim how many of 'their' pupils go on to uni-

versity for example, with individual pupil records it will be much easier to let primary schools have such information. Of more immediate practical value will be the chance to review pupil progress across Key Stages 2 and 3 (KS2 and KS3) and to plot pupil development, record interventions and then to evaluate what has made a difference. This makes the data a resource for research and long-term planning. Primary schools need to do this themselves so that they can see how children fare at different secondary schools. For example, if one of their successful pupils turns out to be struggling at secondary school they may have suggestions to make to the secondary school. This would at last make use of their intimate knowledge of a child's development, something almost entirely lost under current arrangements.

Data is obviously not knowledge, certainly not the kind that in itself provides an understanding for teachers of individual children making the physical and psychological transition between schools. So, although the transfer of data in electronic form provides swathes of raw information, there is some danger of losing sight of the students themselves. Current good practice has some well-established routines that include visits by pupils, visits by staff in both 'directions' and the transfer of physical records, often including children's work. The evidence is that relatively little use is made of these records (see Chapter 2) principally because teachers lack time to absorb them. The *Framework* document, to its credit, is adamant that "Teachers need to know what their pupils can already do . . . The "clean sheet" approach is too slow and allows pupils to fall back when they need to be challenged' (*Framework*, p. 20). Can ICT make a difference to communication about individual pupils and their actual personalities and achievements? The answer is potentially 'yes' but it will need careful co-ordination. There is space here for only a few ideas, each suggestion covers a different aspect of transition.

Pupil to pupil communication

School web sites offer a perfect opportunity to create genuine and active links between primary and secondary schools. Each school can literally develop a virtual transition part of their web site, the responsibility for which could lie with Year 6 and 7 pupils for maintenance and updating. One challenge for Year 6 is research based, they need to know what life at secondary school will be like. A second is to prepare to present themselves to their new school. What do they bring with them, what do they feel they will need? Year 7 can build up a 'virtual tour' of the school designed specifically for Year 6, every year this will need revising and improving. Individual pupils can also create an electronic diary of life during their first year. In all this it may be possible to create electronic

pairs of Year 6 and 7 children who can exchange information via email whenever they want. The Year 7s might be made responsible, at certain points in the year, for initiating the dialogue, putting them in a mentorship type role. Year 7 classes might be asked to select examples of good work and to send these to primary to help Year 6 develop a greater awareness of what secondary tasks 'look like' and some of the subject literacy issues that they involve. All these ideas are focused on real communications between real people, in themselves they demand and encourage the use of sophisticated literacy skills.

Pupil to teacher

I suggested above that pupils could consider how to 'present themselves' to their new school. One of the great advantages of electronic texts and images is their provisionality. If each Year 6 pupil is made responsible for developing an electronic profile they are given enormous scope to reflect on themselves, to develop their profile over time (unlike so many school literacy tasks) and to revise and extend it. Such a profile might include a selection of appropriate images, e.g. portraits of myself, my family, my school etc., a range of texts produced during the year, perhaps even 'messages to my future teachers' in which each future subject teacher is addressed. Secondary schools will often not be sure who each teacher will be until late in the school year, or even beyond it, but because the profile can be transferred to the school it can be accessed at the point of need.

Teacher to teacher

Some advantages of electronic data transfer are considered above, one being that classroom teachers can have access to the data at the point of need. Equally important, however, are the opportunities for teachers to communicate in the spirit of dialogue as opposed to the more traditional 'handing on' model. The huge advantage of email is that it can be written and sent instantly but is not time dependent for the recipients; they respond when they are ready. The telephone, even the mobile, apparently more authentic as dialogue, is a problem as far as teachers are concerned because the nature of their work makes arranging telephone calls an elaborate and time wasteful activity.

A primary teacher's records and comments can be emailed to the Year 7 form tutor and/or pastoral head. Such records can then be rapidly distributed to subject teachers, learning support assistants, the librarian and so on. Equally they might be better simply stored in an instantly accessible form so that tutors and teachers can search them at the point of need.

The Year 7 staff, particularly the form tutor in the first term, is in a strong position to tap into the expertise of the former Year 6 teacher of any student. One of the major problems with transition is the exchange of knowledge (as opposed to inert records), which could thus be minimised. Equally students can know that their pastoral care is continuous. There are now very few teachers who think arriving at secondary school should be a naively fresh start, a 'clean sheet'; rather it should be a kind of renaissance and so each child is entitled to the excitement of a new environment but should not be hampered by being treated as if a recently arrived alien.

Many teachers may consider these ideas as desirable but impractical chiefly because of lack of time; the enormous burden of bureaucracy imposed on schools by successive regimes has taken its toll. However, the point is that ICT can do two things extremely well. First, it can improve speed and efficiency and, as it does so, it can return some time to every user and to the whole system. Secondly, and ultimately far more important for schools, it can provide information when teachers (and others) want it and this gradually leads to a feeling of agency. Teachers want to help children and if they can achieve this partly because ICT supports them, then they will use it systematically and consistently. This point applies to all teaching not just to the transition phase but the particular relevance to that phase is so obvious because of the physical nature of the move to secondary school. Our use of ICT is so new and so rapidly evolving that there may be many benefits as yet not thought of, as well as a few more problems but its value to schools engaged in transition will be increasingly significant.

Parents and the wider community

There have been so many claims made about the schools of the future and how the computer will make them community resources that one hesitates to consider this area. Equally there has been an increasing trend to suggest that schools and teachers will rapidly become redundant, everything will happen in the high-tech home. My view is that neither extreme is likely to materialize just yet. The current situation is such that there have been sufficient developments on a number of fronts in the last five years to make a consideration timely. It brings to the fore the need to consider issues about data protection and also child protection, but they are not 'new' in themselves. I will focus on a few, relatively straightforward opportunities that are well within the reach of most schools, or certainly will be within two years.

Currently, parents receive frequent generalized communications from schools and, perhaps, twice a year the 'report' on their child. As schools

devise systems to make maximum use of electronic data so they can provide more regular information to parents about each child's progress. Equally, they can make available to parents more information about the curriculum, about policies and about the link between school and national policies. It will be a rare parent who pores over such information, but most interested parents are likely to find such material of relevance at certain times. Many parents will not have state-of-the-art computer access for some time but the evidence from domestic trends suggests that some parents may be much more likely to 'read' information in this form than in some school handbook. Ideally, parents and children might read such information on screen together. As interactivity develops it is even conceivable that parents can be consulted by the school with some hope of genuine response. Even mundane reminders about the school fête might be communicated with speed and minimum effort.

There is certainly scope for some improvement to transition. For example, a primary school web site can offer parents links to all the potential secondary schools that a child might move on to. Each secondary can offer its own links to primaries so that parents can be aware of the wider community that it serves.

It is harder to envisage how the cause of literacy as envisaged by the NLS might be advanced, except to say that many parents are actively engaged in the literacies of the twenty-first century on a daily basis and may themselves become increasingly critical of the narrow conception offered in school. However, one idea may help in coping with school literacy itself. The emphasis on almost all assessment in schools is through writing, in secondary schools this writing is frequently set for completion as home work. What a school (or linked body, e.g. examination board, commercial revision site, etc.) might provide is essentially models of writing, linked to particular ages and tasks. For example the History department might provide three examples of variously successful essays completed by pupils in term 1 of Year 7, giving teacher comments to show how well each piece had been realized. Such exemplar could be useful to a local primary school, to parents and to Year 7 pupils about to attempt their own assignment. The key point is the principle that such models and exemplars of writing are made available and accessible. The various internet based revision sites for GCSE have been extremely popular and this provides some evidence of how such domestic-based interaction with educational support may soon flourish.

Multimedia environments

Later chapters explore the limitations of the NLS in a number of ways and offer suggestions about how schools might go beyond its narrow focus.

They also consider, as earlier in this Introduction, how the absurd prescriptions of the whole curriculum are at least partly to blame for pupil and teacher disaffection. At the same time the NLS attention to 'whole-school' literacy is warmly welcomed as essentially about developing good teaching although even that has one very serious limitation, its lack of attention to the multimedia world we all inhabit. It might seem that attention to ICT is the answer and that the increasingly sophisticated skills of children and of teachers will produce the essential multi-literacies needed by all adults.

Unfortunately this view is part of the problem, not the solution. An increase in skills seems very likely but there is a real danger that the school environment will not be the place in which such skills become a part of a genuine set of literacies. One reason is that the teaching of ICT is still in its infancy and has been frequently criticized as relatively, and not surprisingly, inadequate. For example, I observed an ICT lesson taught by a highly competent ICT teacher in which Year 9 pupils exercised all kinds of ICT skills. They had to demonstrate their skills by designing some web pages about a topic of their choice, the topic had to be researched on the internet and had to include word-processed text, word art and captured images. The pupils did indeed demonstrate sophisticated skills but not a sophisticated grasp of what they were doing or why they were doing it. They had selected all kinds of foci but the majority of pupils had chosen rather self-indulgent topics such as the latest boy band or a premiership football club. There was no process of critiquing choice or rationale. In constructing their web information pupils were only thinking of themselves as audience and so were equally indulgent in this respect. As far as I could tell, the class were using their ICT skills but were learning nothing new. The task should have been an activity that made high demands on their literacy. The key point is that ICT skills in themselves are simply that, isolated skills.

A multimedia world demands a variety of literacies that complement each other. If schools are to make transition a success then their model of whole-school literacy must be based on this fundamental principle. All teachers should not only be teachers of language in the strict and literal sense, they should also be media teachers. This does not require them to become Media Studies experts but it does demand an engagement with their pupils', and their own, experience of media-intensive environments.

It is absolutely clear that increasing amounts of time will be spent with a screen acting as the centre of attention from the infant to the pensioner. This attention may be entirely recreational, watching certain kinds of television for example, or it may be watching an interactive white board as part of a formal lesson. It would be possible to list hundreds of educational, work, entertainment and domestic functions that now involve

attention to a screen (Goodwyn, 1998; 2001a); the mobile phone has become a screen in ways that very few developers would have predicted. Given this centrality, the argument for what is essentially media education becomes irresistible and its centrality to successful transition becomes vital.

The only place where Media Education has some formal status in England is at Key Stage 4 and almost entirely in English. There is a brief section about 'teaching about the moving image' in Curriculum 2000 and GCSE syllabuses require the majority of students to undertake a piece of media-related course work. In Key Stage 3 most English departments have units of work that directly or indirectly focus on media topics. However, a major problem is a lack of progression, students are frequently asked to write newspaper articles or to analyse advertisements with almost no attempt to develop this knowledge into increasing levels of sophistication. There are some teachers able to achieve this but they are certainly not helped by the nature of either the curriculum or the Literacy Strategy. There is some irony in the notion that we start work on media literacy as late as Key Stage 3 when the media are a far more influential source of knowledge for most children than formal school. In the multimedia world this must change.

One complex problem is that the teaching of Media Education still has no real place in the primary school. In one way this is not surprising. The last 15 years have been dominated first by a National Curriculum and then by an equally prescriptive Literacy Strategy. Curriculum delivery, not curriculum development, has been the order of the day. As 'Standards' of literacy are rising some might argue that there is no problem and that media-related work is merely a distraction from the more serious business of traditional print literacy. This book argues vehemently that this is a contradiction in terms. Literacy is much more than decoding and making print but we spend far too much time and money testing to make sure that schools are forced to ignore this fundamental point.

We certainly do not assess pupils' media understanding in the primary school so we have very little in the way of 'standards' to relate to. However, we do have plenty of evidence of two other important factors. First, pupils do show media understanding and a keenness to develop and enhance it, and we have had evidence of this for some time (see, for example, Buckingham, 1990; 1993). Such an understanding increasingly includes the practical dimension of making media as well as analysing it (Buckingham, Graham and Sefton Green, 1995). Part of this practical aptitude comes through the convergence of technologies, the digital camera providing an excellent example. Secondly the literacy practices of young people, as discussed in Chapter 1, are rapidly changing and schools are simply in danger of neglecting these and of ignoring their

potential to make students fully engaged in formal education. We are perfectly happy for teachers to intervene constantly in developing children's print literacy so why do we almost entirely ignore their other literacies, especially in an age when their (and our) lives are dominated by media? The argument here is that both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teachers should be developing children's media literacies and that this book is suggesting that this will further improve transition and progression for pupils. This argument, more extensively developed elsewhere (Goodwyn, 1998) can be summarized as key points.

First, a vast amount of our knowledge and understanding now comes through the media; this is indisputable. However, the term 'through' is potentially misleading. All messages must be codified and so knowledge is mediated, it never passes neutrally 'through' anyone or any 'thing'. All teachers should spend some of their time enabling children to move from decoding to deconstructing. In secondary schools 'whole-school literacy' is nonsense without this fundamental principle.

Secondly, education has been conceptualized as fundamentally concerned with 'cultural capital', that is, the form of knowledge that societies give high status to even if not material reward. For the purposes of this argument, that might be simplified as 'academic' knowledge. A great deal of the knowledge brought into school by children is from the media environment that they (and we) inhabit. Occasionally this knowledge is allowed into the classroom when it coincides with academic content. However, such knowledge could and should play a consistent part in teaching and learning. Unless we bring our own views into play we cannot question them, we cannot test our knowledge and therefore deepen our understanding. Of course, much of this pupil knowledge does fit quite neatly with academic knowledge, such as a documentary about animals (Science) or a profile of a leading politician (History). Other elements, for example the concepts of character and narrator in fictions have absolute links with 'normal' work in school. But far more of this 'knowledge' is problematic and provisional. What do, for example, 10-year-old girls learn from the magazines and comics addressed directly to them? What do 12-year-old boys learn from watching MTV or from playing Tomb Raider games? Certainly these media artefacts are all powerfully engaging for children and young people, and they require all kinds of literacies in order for them to interact with them. The well-managed classroom is the forum for reflection and discussion, it should not exclude some of the fundamental influences on all our lives.

Thirdly, Citizenship is now a secondary 'subject'. Whatever benefits this innovation may bring, one disadvantage is its implicit message that secondary schools will take care of it and that it fundamentally 'belongs' there. A 'common' sense reaction might be that young people approach-

ing the voting age are the natural targets for citizenship. However, Citizenship need not be conceptualized as like the driving test, something to pass to make sure you are safe on the roads. The critically literate citizen, as advocated above, cannot be tested and passed 'safe'. It is rather obvious to state that primary school children have shown themselves passionately committed to many 'causes' but in the rush to create Citizenship as a school 'subject' it needs stating. Key Stage 2 teachers in particular can engage with children's emerging sense of rights and responsibilities and their very deep concerns about justice. As all future citizens are interacting with the media on a daily basis, so they need to be educated about the media just as much as the topics being mediated.

Overall then schools can greatly enhance their pupils' learning by engaging with a broad definition of literacy that both includes media literacy and so requires media education. Through formal attention to media work children's own knowledge can be brought into the curriculum and employed and tested. Key Stage 2 work can provide a sound basis for Key Stage 3, promoting genuine progression and offering another curriculum strand that crosses from primary to secondary. In the transition to the adult world nothing could be more important than making young people literate in the broadest possible way.

The NLS therefore has a very serious weakness in its fixation with an outmoded version of literacy. Ironically it is at odds with the other strategy aimed at increasing the ICT competence of the whole teaching profession. For example, the whole of the *Framework* for Key Stage 3 makes hardly a reference to ICT or to any form of media-related activity. It might be argued that this specificity of definition is intended so that the rest of the curriculum, or at least the English curriculum, can address these 'other' areas. This entirely misses the point that a genuine definition of literacy would have these 'other' areas at its heart, not as alternatives. For teachers the other effect will be to frustrate them, as they wish to make maximum use of their ICT capabilities in their teaching. Once more it will be vital for schools to have the courage to be better than the official policy.

The teachers and pupils of the future

As far as teachers are concerned perhaps the most pragmatic stance to take is that, whatever they do, literacy will always be perceived as either 'in crisis' or having a brief lull, whilst political attention is elsewhere, and so the next crisis is already on its way. It seems most unlikely that we will achieve a future golden age as nostalgia has far more emotional hold than rationalized Strategies; nostalgia certainly has levels but

seems to set its own standards. This view is not cynical it is a realistic reflection on the history of education which is subsumed within the history of politics. The key point is that the evidence (see, for example, the Literacy section of the Department for Education and Skills web site, 2001) suggests relatively minor fluctuations in reading standards since the 1950s. Examination results have steadily risen in quality and quantity, and it seems feasible that 50 per cent of the population will eventually have some experience of higher education. Teachers and their pupils have achieved an enormous amount but good news is weak news, a crisis is much more attractive to politicians and the media.

Realism, in this instance, is not a rejection of principle. If we accept that the sound and fury regularly generated around literacy in the public domain will always be with us to lesser or greater degrees then we can get on with the real challenge which is that, as we are ahead of society's model of literacy, we must embrace the constancy of change. Society's sense of crisis seems to stem from a fear that the literacy of tomorrow looks threateningly different to the comforts of yesterday. For example the constant cry that GCSEs are not really like O levels is, ironically, absolutely right. They were designed for a broader purpose and a much more diverse population; they are evidence of intelligent change. They should be treated by teachers, whatever others say, as one sign of society's increasing levels of literacy. Of course, even they have not been designed to assess the range of literacies that our pupils currently enjoy. We can only keep up with the real literacy of the world by paying it constant attention in the classroom; this is essentially a daily activity. We can only assess it, in an approximate way, by finding new means to that end; tests will always have a place in our repertoire but they are not much use once they become the purpose of teaching. If testing or working towards tests is the daily activity then there is not much time left for learning by pupils, and perhaps even less by teachers. The evidence of this book is that teachers neither value the current testing regime nor do they feel they are learning much from it.

Developing literacy is not simply a daily activity because this may give rise to simplistic notions of a Literacy hour or something similar. Literacy is a constant and it needs constant attention. Hence the role of all teachers is, in every sense, to *take care of* their pupils' literacy. This is the paradox and the challenge of the future. We want to take as much care as possible of children as they make that transition from the relative security of the primary school to the overwhelming and alien landscape of the secondary. In this area (see above) there are real signs of better means to this end.

Literacy, as this book illustrates in abundance, is far more problematic. It is something of a paradox in that our taking care of children's literacy

means we cannot fully endorse the grand design of the National Literacy Strategy. All its folders, manuals, videos and armies of consultants do not make it right, indeed its relentless insistence on its own certainties reveals both its insecurities and its lack of trust in experienced professionals. This point is consistently made throughout the book. However, the attention to literacy is likely to bring positive benefits to teachers and pupils. Their attention to literacy will expose the narrowness and exclusivity of the NLS model, and secondary schools will do a better job than their restrictive brief. Teachers talking to each other about literacy, the literacies of their subjects and about the relationship between technology and changes to literacy, will inspire some genuinely exciting conversations. It is these conversations that lead to school 'improvement'; when teachers talk about learning, they learn. This book is dedicated to them and the following chapters have all been written to help them in that crucial process.

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