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FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

23 May 1988

Dear Alison

**HMI REPORT: 'ASPECTS OF EDUCATION PROVISION IN WALES 1986/87**

... I am enclosing, with apologies for the omission, a copy of the report which should have accompanied my Secretary of State's letter of 19 May to the / Lord President. Copies also go to the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Private Secretaries to other Cabinet Ministers and to Trevor Woolley.

Yours sincerely

Keith Davies

E K DAVIES

Ms Alison Smith
Private Secretary to
The Lord President

# SOME ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL PROVISION IN WALES 1986/7

## A REPORT BY HM INSPECTORS

### Introduction

Reports by HMI on the observed effects of LEA expenditure policies have taken increasing note over the years of the many influences which bear upon schools and colleges, including the policies and funding of central as well as local government and of other agencies such as the MSC, the financial contributions of parents, and the impact of falling rolls. During the academic year 1986/7 the effects of a number of important developments (TRIST, the LEA Training Grants Scheme, GCSE, ESG and Circular 21/84 on initial teacher training), which were introduced or gathered momentum as the year progressed, were beginning to be felt. As a result, this particular record of HMI's monitoring of the system is expressed on a broad canvas, but does not attempt to be comprehensive in its treatment and gives more attention to some aspects than to others.

The assessments made in this report reflect the evidence of inspections over the period of the report, in this case the academic year 1986/87. During the year more than 40 individual primary schools and nine secondary schools were formally inspected but a much larger number of schools in both phases were included in surveys, or were the subject of other inspection visits. There have been formal inspections of three colleges of further education and surveys in this sector of computer-aided manufacture and design in engineering and hotel and catering courses which included most colleges in Wales. Individual centres and/or aspects of youth, adult and community education have been inspected in all eight LEAs. The year also saw the last of the series of formal inspections of initial teacher training institutions in Wales which began in 1984 in the wake of Circular 21/84, and the first survey of in-service education and training.

## PRIMARY EDUCATION

### Premises and Resources

Premises have an important influence on the quality of pupils' learning. Many primary schools enjoy well designed and attractive modern buildings in which staff and pupils have access to a wide range of appropriate facilities. However a significant proportion are housed in Victorian premises. Although many are sturdy buildings which have been reasonably maintained over the years, several pose particular problems, typical of their age, and all of them have a somewhat forbidding appearance, often exacerbated by poor internal and external decoration. Provided maintenance has been good and remodelling has occurred, these buildings can contribute to satisfactory provision. Others, however, do not provide a suitable learning environment.

Most primary schools make commendable efforts to provide a colourful and stimulating learning environment whatever the difficulties of the premises. A good deal of the work displayed reflects pupils' work in progress, though adult images tend to predominate in some schools.

On the whole, schools make reasonably good use of their accommodation. The use of shared facilities, such as the hall or the television viewing room, is carefully organised so that all classes can take advantage of them. Accommodation which is no longer occupied by a class is usually put to good use, for example, as a space for activities associated with a specific area of the curriculum.

Resources are generally adequate for the range of everyday activities provided in all schools. The more routine the activity, the less the probability that a school will have difficulty in providing appropriate resources. The great majority of schools have sufficient paper and other consumables. The more sophisticated the learning experience, the less likely it is that the school will have wholly adequate resources to meet the needs. Virtually all schools have, and most use, computers - but the use of them as adjuncts to learning across the curriculum is limited unless the school can provide (usually from parental funds) more than the often encountered one or two shared machines.

Many schools have adopted commercial schemes in language and mathematics and an increasing number are purchasing similar materials in other subjects. The

cost of such purchases is frequently heavy, and, though increasingly supported by parental funding, often means that resources in other curriculum areas are relatively neglected. Certain aspects of English and mathematics themselves may also suffer; library books (especially fiction) may be old and worn and mathematics apparatus insufficient to support fully the important practical aspects of the subject. Resources for art, craft and music and equipment for the under fives are often limited; the high cost of suitable items means that only intermittent purchases can be made. Apparatus for physical education is generally satisfactory.

The organisation of pupils' work too often discourages the use of resources (including reference books) as an integral part of pupils' learning, and there is a tendency in many schools not to use the resources available to best effect. Use of the environment of the school as a resource for learning is limited.

**Staffing and Organisation**

The great majority of primary teachers have been trained for the age they teach. There is a small number of teachers, originally trained for secondary, who have been redeployed to primary. The amount of preparation they have received varies considerably, from brief intermittent training, to year long courses in which training is partly college and partly school based. Particular difficulties are experienced by those transferring from secondary to infant classes, especially when their new classes contain a range of age, ability, and, sometimes, language.

The period under review has been one of considerable change in some LEAs. There is no longer the volume of early retirements common some years ago, but LEAs' efforts to take surplus places out of use, to make staffing responsive to fluctuations in school rolls and to place headteachers in schools of a size commensurate with their protected salaries have entailed a good deal of staff movement in some areas. All LEAs have responded to the government's Education Support Grant (ESG) initiatives and several heads and other senior staff have been seconded for extended periods as advisory teachers. In general, LEAs have been strict in the operation of their staffing ratios and have in a few cases made them tighter (for example, by varying the number of pupils needed to justify an additional teacher or to free the head from full-time charge of a class).

Inspection reports suggest that the INSET record of teachers in recent years has been modest (the years in question include the period of industrial action). Many of the courses attended have been of short duration and held locally. Mathematics and the use of computers have figured prominently in these courses. A growing number of schools require staff attending courses to report back to their colleagues, but there are few schools where course attendance has been organised as part of a policy designed to enhance the expertise of staff holding posts of responsibility for areas of the curriculum.

Much of the curriculum is taught by class teachers. There is some specialised teaching, mainly in Welsh, craft, music and games, for which classes may be exchanged between teachers, or amalgamated. The work of most classes is controlled by a timetable of some kind. In the infants this may be no more than an indication of a broad range of learning activities; in the juniors it may make greater use of subject titles. A substantial proportion of primary classes devote mornings to work in language and mathematics and afternoons to the remainder of the curriculum. Arrangements for the use of the hall cut across this pattern. In most junior classes all the pupils in a class will be engaged on a specific curriculum area at the same time; in many infants' classes pupils will be engaged on more than one activity at any one time. The fact that pupils all do the same subject at the same time makes for pressure on resources, and not least on the teacher's time. The result is often that there is inadequate group work, insufficient time to give help to all individuals who need it, and a considerable burden of marking. There is also little encouragement to develop links between subjects and in particular to exploit the role of language across the curriculum. The scope and quality of the work attempted in subjects other than English and mathematics are adversely affected by their being taught in the shorter afternoon sessions and by the general lack of cross-curricular links.

Class teaching occurs quite frequently (even when a class has more than one age group, and, sometimes, a range of ability and language), but its main purpose is to organise the work of the class and give the initial stimulus for a piece of work that pupils work on thereafter as individuals.

It is also the means of sharing experiences, such as a story or a recent remarkable event. Much of pupils' time is spent working as individuals from course books or workcards, especially in English and mathematics. Pupils

generally work at their own pace on individual assignments which are nonetheless frequently similar in nature to those of their fellow pupils. Some of these tasks are undemanding and most have little in them seriously to challenge the ablest or specifically to support the less able. Group work designed to encourage pupils to cooperate on joint tasks towards common ends remains rare. Many infants have opportunities to move about their classrooms and to engage in practical activities; juniors have fewer opportunities - and in general primary pupils spend an undue proportion of their day engaged on sedentary tasks.

**Curriculum and Standards of Work**

Most primary schools provide the following subjects or curriculum areas: English, Welsh, mathematics, science, religious education, history, geography (frequently included within an area entitled 'humanities', 'environmental studies', 'topic' or 'project'), art and craft, music, physical education. An increasing number of schools also provide, either as free-standing elements or as aspects of the areas listed, drama, health education, safety education, moral education and the use of micro-computers. What is actually taught in the areas described varies considerably from school to school. There are, however, some common features. Science is attracting increasing attention, work with micro-computers is gaining ground, and there is growing emphasis on health education. There is also evidence that work in the various subjects is better planned than it was, usually through the allocation of specific curricular responsibilities to members of staff and the compilation of schemes of work. There is, however, still much to be done to ensure that what is planned is carried through into practice; too often schemes of work are but indistinctly reflected in the work of classes.

With a few notable exceptions, schools give inadequate attention to multi-cultural issues and to the securing, as a matter of policy, of equal opportunities across the curriculum for boys and girls.

Insufficient and insufficiently challenging oral activity continues to be a significant weakness of much work in English. Improvements depend to a large degree on more flexible classroom organisation. High standards can be and are achieved where pupils have opportunities to discuss their tasks in detail and extend their grasp of oral language. Some of the work done in drama is encouraging in this respect.

**Reading** standards are generally satisfactory, in terms of both decoding and comprehension. A few schools emphasise the enjoyment of reading and encourage pupils, parents and teachers to share their enthusiasm. In general, however, too little use is made of book corners and libraries to encourage pupils to browse or to refer to books as a routine part of their work, and abler pupils have fewer opportunities than they could profitably use to acquire and apply higher reading skills.

**Writing** remains rather limited in scope in many schools. Pupils complete many unchallenging tasks and are not sufficiently encouraged to develop writing skills for a wide range of purposes. Where they are so encouraged, splendid results ensue, suggesting that a great deal of potential remains unexploited elsewhere. Many schools fail to capitalise on the range of learning experiences they provide outside language as a source of inspiration for writing. Those that do are able to give pupils experience of many types of writing and to broaden the range and improve the effectiveness of their expression. There are encouraging signs of a developing interest in the writing of verse; the scheme whereby practising poets spend time in primary schools has stimulated much good work.

In general, standards in **Welsh as a second language** are improving; the system of specific grants and in particular the activities of the 'athrawon bro' have been partly responsible. There is now a much greater emphasis on giving pupils the means of early communication in Welsh and less on teaching the language according to a predetermined grammatical sequence. Nonetheless, standards remain disappointing in some areas, even in places where there is considerable Welsh in the community. The main difficulty in many schools is ensuring adequate continuity and progression in pupils' learning of Welsh. Standards of Welsh as a first language are generally pleasing (including the work done with the increasing numbers of originally English-speaking pupils whose parents have chosen Welsh-medium education for them). The quality of the work is associated with the pervasive influence of a particular language scheme which offers not only a wide range of language experiences but also a thorough exploration of each of them. Pupils in general respond well to the challenge which the scheme undoubtedly poses and much work of a good standard is produced. The extension of good practice to the use of Welsh as a medium across the curriculum has been more limited and less successful.

Standards in **mathematics** are satisfactory over a limited range of arithmetical skills, adequate in several areas, but unsatisfactory in a number of others, all of which are important to mathematical development.

Number work is done thoroughly in most schools. Pupils have a generally sound understanding of number bonds and place value (though they are often slow when responding orally) and can perform operations efficiently. They are, however, sometimes unsure of the relationships between basic operations and often waste time doing unnecessary re-calculations. They also tend to be required to practise to excess skills which they have clearly long mastered and are not frequently enough required to put these skills to use in investigations or in solving problems.

Pupils know the properties of, and can recognise, the commoner two-dimensional shapes, but are less knowledgeable about the three-dimensional objects they encounter in the world around them. Pupils are taught to measure, using arbitrary units initially. They measure carefully but often do not have enough opportunities to estimate beforehand and as a result their appreciation of relative sizes and distances is poor. The means of calculating area is taught systematically and pupils are generally given useful practical experiences. Nonetheless, perimeter and area are frequently confused. Work in weighing and in measuring volume is frequently given much less emphasis and pupils' understanding is often weak in these areas.

The importance of graphs is acknowledged in most schools but the work done is often notably lacking in continuity and progression. There is also a certain amount of confusion about which form of graph is the most appropriate means of displaying the data in a given case. Opportunities for using graphs across the curriculum are infrequently exploited.

There is a general tendency in mathematics for the work prematurely to become sedentary, book-based and mechanical. Practical work is still not given its due place in the work of pupils of most ages. There is renewed interest in and emphasis on mental work, but room for much more in many schools. There is little to extend the ablest or to show all pupils the uses of mathematics across the curriculum and in everyday life. An increasing number of schools encourage pupils to use electronic calculators and computers, but there is scope generally to make greater use of the new technology.

Standards in **science** are improving, but the subject remains sporadic in its occurrence among and within schools. In infants' classes much of the work is concerned with projects which help to develop self-awareness and with observation of the natural world; in junior classes this interest continues but the physical and technological aspects of the subject grow in prominence. There is still in many junior classes a tendency to see science as mainly the doing of experiments, often involving teacher demonstration and the compilation of unduly uniform accounts, without adequate engagement of pupils in hypothesising, investigating and problem solving. Health education is part of the work in science in several schools. Issues are handled sensitively and pupils' awareness of self and others is often enhanced.

Work in **humanities subjects** (or as variously titled) remains in general rather uncertain of purpose and often of disappointing quality. The difficulties of achieving coherence and balance are considerable, but there has been a pleasing increase in the number of planning documents designed to bring order to the work. Pupils' achievements remain generally rather unsatisfactory and often represent a poor return for the energy and resources which have been expended. Much of the work fails to develop specific forms of historical and geographical understanding, although some of the more successful examples have been effective in developing historical empathy and the skills of mapping. The most successful work has clearly in view the specific concepts and skills being aimed at, and the content, resources and methods are adopted with these in mind. Work in religious education is often limited in scope and more concerned with covering content than with helping pupils to acquire concepts and attitudes. The quality of the work is frequently modest and sometimes poor. Most schools have yet to grapple with the challenge of teaching religious education in a society of many faiths. Moral education forms an important part of personal and social development in the great majority of schools, and the work done is frequently effective.

Adequate standards are attained generally in the **creative-aesthetic areas** of the curriculum (including art, craft, music and physical education). The educationally unnecessary and generally undesirable separation of boys and girls for craft and games continues in many schools but is gradually decreasing. In art and craft, work in two dimensions is still commoner than work in three, and modelling and other craft activities in general occur much less frequently than painting. The range of media and of associated skills remains rather limited in many schools. Singing in large, and instrumental

playing in small groups form the bulk of the work in music, the former being often supported by broadcasts and the latter by visiting teachers. Other aspects of music command less attention. Standards of singing and of instrumental playing are satisfactory on the whole. Opportunities for pupils to hear and appreciate recorded music are infrequent and experiences in creative music making remain very limited. Standards in physical education are generally satisfactory, and very good in a few cases, though the work in a good number of schools is subject to interruption for a variety of reasons (including the weather when schools have no hall). The emphasis continues to be on gymnastic skills and there have been few significant developments in the field of expressive movement and dance.

A slowly increasing number of pupils whose **special educational needs** are the subject of formal statements are being taught for part of the time in ordinary classes. Some of these pupils are physically handicapped; in their case additional ancillary help is usually provided and with it they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. These arrangements are generally satisfactory. Most of the others have mild or moderate learning difficulties, though there are a few schools where pupils with severe and persistent difficulties are so taught. In most cases these statemented pupils spend only a small proportion of their time learning alongside other pupils. In nearly all schools statemented pupils are full members of the school community and take part in the full range of social and community activities.

Pupils who have learning difficulties but who are not the subject of statements continue to receive additional help from their class teachers (and often from heads) and, especially for reading, from visiting remedial teachers. The work of the visiting teachers is generally satisfactory. A good deal of systematic teaching ensures success for many pupils. On the other hand, liaison between visiting and class teachers remains weak and there has been only limited progress towards locating the additional help, where this accords with pupils' needs, inside rather than outside the classroom.

A majority of LEAs use standardised tests as part of their procedures for identifying pupils with learning difficulties before transfer to junior classes or schools. Standardised tests also form part of the procedures adopted in all LEAs for the identification of pupils whose special educational needs may need to be the subject of formal statements. All LEAs also have some form of cumulative record of pupils' attainments (and frequently of other

aspects of their life and work in school) which accompanies pupils through the primary and on to the secondary school. Individual schools also frequently use standardised tests themselves as part of their general assessment procedures. Few schools assess the contribution of the curriculum overall to pupils' personal and social education. The areas of the curriculum outside language and mathematics are in general lightly assessed - or assessed infrequently.

Pupils' work is continually assessed in class, both formally and informally, and much of this **assessment** results in feedback (usually oral) to the child which confirms or modifies the learning steps the pupil is about to take. Lack of flexibility in classroom organisation quite often means that this sort of assessment occurs less often than it should. The bulk of the assessments made by teachers take the form of the marking of pupils' written work and the completion of checklists of various sorts. Marking is generally done conscientiously but the volume of work sometimes leads to superficiality. Some teachers make encouraging and stimulating comments, especially on pupils' extended writing, but some perfunctory ticking does less than justice to pupils' efforts and is of little value. Completed checklists covering skills in various areas of the curriculum (but chiefly language, especially reading, and mathematics) give little indication of the particular success with which individual pupils have mastered a skill or the particular difficulties they may have had in acquiring it. In this respect this form of assessment is poorly designed to act as a diagnostic base on which further work may be founded. In practice, there is little diagnostic analysis of pupils' work and in consequence insufficient differentiation of subsequent tasks. LEA cumulative record cards are conscientiously completed, but the comments tend to be brief and summative and because they are compiled at the end of the school year they can only be used purposefully if there is close liaison with the next class. There is much informal discussion of pupils before transfer and an increasing number of schools pass on pupils' work either in its entirety or in the form of files of selected samples. But the repetitious nature of much of the work done in the early weeks of the school year in many schools suggests that there is room for improvement in liaison between classes.

### Social and Community Dimensions

Primary schools are, in general, places where pupils feel secure and where their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Relationships among pupils and between them and adults are usually good. There is often a coherence and unity of purpose in the pursuit of social aims which is missing from work in the curriculum. There are exceptions to the general rule; some schools find that unruly behaviour is commoner than it was and affects even the youngest children. Pupils' outside play is often naturally boisterous but there are some signs of aggressiveness which appear to be modelled on adult behaviour observed outside school.

The range and frequency of extra-curricular activities are returning to normal after a difficult period. The dedication of staff, the cooperation of parents and the enthusiasm of pupils make for a varied provision in many schools.

An increasing number of parents help with the day-to-day work of the schools. Some of the leaflets of information for parents go well beyond what is statutorily required and there are few schools which do not offer parents at least one annual opportunity to examine and discuss their children's work in detail in the school with the head and class teacher. In addition to helping with extra-curricular activities parents may also help in classrooms (especially with the youngest children) and several schools invite parents with special expertise to share it with staff and pupils. Parents also continue to make substantial payments to schools for the purchase of resources which the school feels unable to afford from its capitation.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION

### Premises and Resources

All but a few schools now have enough teaching spaces and many have been able to dispense with the use of temporary or otherwise unsuitable accommodation. A small number of school buildings constructed to high specification during the 1980's are of excellent design and, it would appear, durability. The quality of the majority of school buildings is, however, variable. Some are well maintained and continue to offer wholesome learning environments. In many others, dingy and depressing surroundings, in a part or the whole of a school, result from poor standards of internal and external maintenance,

manifested in a variety of ways in different schools. These include damaged interior fitments, minor repairs not made good, worn floor coverings, decaying exterior woodwork and peeling paintwork, and rooms and circulation areas left undecorated for many years. Playing fields are usually at least reasonably maintained but flower beds and shrubberies, together with more specialist outdoor sports facilities, such as cricket squares and nets and tennis courts, often bear a sadly neglected appearance.

With few exceptions, schools have ample specialist teaching spaces. A recent survey showed that nearly all schools taught at least 90% of their science in years I-III in laboratories; schools are generally well-endowed with traditionally-planned workshops and art rooms. The quality of specialist accommodation is rather more variable, especially when viewed against current curricular needs; the most serious mismatch occurs in craft, design and technology (CDT), though there are examples of poor provision in science and other practical subjects. Against this, many schools now enjoy splendid facilities for swimming and a wide range of individual sports and leisure pursuits, often shared with the local community.

Capitation allowances to schools have remained fairly static overall in recent years, with some injection of extra funds to some or all schools for specific purposes, for example TVEI, GCSE and Certificate of Education (CoE) courses. Overall, the provision of books and materials in most schools ranges from barely adequate to satisfactory. Within most schools, some departments are well-resourced, especially those which have been active in curriculum development over a number of years and have purchased wisely to meet perceived needs. There are many other departments which have adequate resources for a narrow range of learning approaches, but not for the wider and more ambitious range of learning experiences associated with GCSE courses. Most of these departments are in varying stages of improving their resources to meet the new demands. Special funding for the GCSE has helped considerably, but has not succeeded in making good all the deficiencies in schools and departments which started from a low baseline of provision. Such departments have tended to give priority to the purchase of books and materials for years IV and V and for A-level courses, and in these areas, most are now at least adequately, and often well resourced. The position is less favourable in years I-III, where much reliance continues to be placed on a limited range of textbooks, often a single title or series, usually for class study only and rarely issued on extended loan. The limitations of the range and quality of resources

available in these circumstances are being increasingly exposed as the learning approaches in years I-III are modified to provide continuity with those adopted for GCSE. There has been a significant increase in the availability of **computers** in secondary schools, although provision remains variable from school to school. Most schools now have a microcomputer base with a number of machines, but these, however, are often of several different types and ages. Many rooms, because of the lack of networking facilities and an inadequate number of machines, are unsuitable for use by groups following a class-based programme - the commonest requirement in subject teaching. Some LEAs have provided schools with considerable support for the purchase of computers; for example, in Clwyd, where the authority has provided out of its own resources a modest extension of a Phase I TVEI pilot project, most schools have enhanced their facilities in information technology and some are now generously provided. West Glamorgan also has invested heavily in advanced technological equipment on behalf of its schools, though to a considerable extent at the expense of schools' basic capitation allowance.

There has been a move in some schools away from public examination courses in computer studies towards the provision of modules in computer awareness and related topics within core teaching programmes (eg personal and social development), especially in years IV and V, but also in the earlier years. The encouragement of computer use within subject courses also usually forms part of this strategy, and many schools have made a useful start in providing subject departments with single computers for their own use. With a few exceptions (though the number is growing), use by subject departments of this facility is largely confined to the sixth form, where individual students can make use of a range of suitable programs to support their work. In the earlier years these machines tend to be used only occasionally and for class demonstration purposes.

Pupils' use of **school libraries** is generally poor; levels of borrowing, especially beyond years I and II are disappointingly low in the great majority of schools and good use of the library within subject courses is rare. This is due in part to arrangements for access to libraries but to a far greater extent to their unattractiveness, their lack of proper organisation and control, the impoverishment of stock and a failure to introduce the technological advances which should accompany resource-based learning. The funding from capitation for library provision and the allocation of time of ancillary or teaching staff to library duties are very rarely at a level sufficient to provide an adequate service.

Specific grant for Welsh has provided a useful range of resources for the age range 11-16, but there remains only a limited range of printed materials in Welsh to support A-level studies.

**Curriculum and Standards of Work**

There were no sharp changes in the curriculum offered by schools in 1986/7. The abandonment of foreign languages other than a school's first continues; while of very small proportions in 1986/7, it is a more significant phenomenon over a longer period. Around a quarter of Welsh schools now offer only one foreign language, though many of these offer Welsh as a first or second language.

Most schools continue to offer a very largely common curriculum to all pupils in years I-III, with some differentiation of provision in foreign languages, and (more rarely) science, for pupils of various abilities and more generally for pupils with learning difficulties. Patterns of provision are generally satisfactory at this level. However, the practice in many schools of timetabling practical subjects (eg CDT wood, CDT metal, food, textiles) in rotation, in modules of a term or less, often leads to fragmentary and disjointed learning experiences and a failure to develop foundation skills adequately in any of these areas.

In years IV and V, there has been a substantial move towards arranging subject options in a way which ensures a degree of curricular balance (eg a science, a practical/creative subject, a 'humanity', a foreign language) in each pupil's choice. This has largely prevented grossly unbalanced subject choice, though in their mode and quality of delivery the individual components do not always match their intended function. The arrangement has also enabled schools to retain better control over group sizes: maximum group sizes rarely exceed 20 in practical subjects, the low 20's in science and the mid-20's in other subjects.

There has been some tendency towards rationalisation of curricular provision in forms IV and V; in a few schools, subjects such as geology, economics, rural science and human biology, have been either discontinued or incorporated within broader studies. Alongside this, new subject courses have been provided; for example, most TVEI project schools have introduced several new GCSE courses for pupils in forms IV and V and some schools offer pre-

vocational curricular packages for specific groups of pupils, both in years IV and V and, with the advent of the Certificate of Pre-vocational Education (CPVE), in the sixth form. These developments have been accommodated despite falling pupil numbers and consequent reductions in staffing, and have not, as yet, led to the withdrawal of subject options on any significant scale, save possibly for the provision of 16+ examination courses in the lower sixth.

Although the work of some schools has benefited from many years of curriculum review and development, the principal catalysts in the current period of rapid change in teaching and learning approaches have derived from sources external to the schools, viz TVEI, GCSE and, to a lesser extent (since they are concerned with specific categories of pupil), CPVE and the WJEC Certificate of Education (CoE) pioneered by the Mid-Glamorgan authority. By 1986-7, all LEAs had a group of schools (usually four or five) involved in TVEI pilot projects, one LEA having commenced in 1983/4, five in 1984/5 and two in 1985/6. These projects are based on new or enhanced courses which seek to enrich the learning experiences of identified groups of pupils aged 14-18, though in practice, other pupils have also benefited.

At their best, **TVEI courses** provide pupils with admirable experience of active, practically-orientated learning which emphasises problem-solving and applications of learning outside the school, for example, in the community and the world of work. The extra equipment and resources made available have, in many schools, helped to make the work more attractive to pupils and there are many examples of high motivation and achievement within varied and well-balanced programmes of study. Not all TVEI experiences meet these high standards; some aspects of the work remain disappointing, for example, visits, work experience and other 'outgoing' activities are not always well exploited in the classroom. For some pupils, the balance of the curriculum has been adversely affected; sex stereotyping remains prominent in pupils' choice of some courses and the ablest and least able pupils are less likely to choose TVEI courses than pupils of about average ability. However, despite these areas of concern, the overall effect of the introduction of TVEI has been beneficial to the pupils concerned.

The advent of the new **GCSE courses** in year IV was the dominant factor in curriculum planning during 1986/7, especially at departmental level. Despite a significant number of difficulties and uncertainties, the net impact of this innovation on pupils' work has been favourable. In most subject departments,

the introduction of GCSE has resulted in an observable improvement in the quality of pupils' experiences. GCSE schemes, through the careful attention that has been given in each subject to the inclusion of a defined range and variety of experience, and to the means of assessing it, have helped to provide better breadth, balance and relevance in pupils' curricula. The work done in English, Welsh, foreign languages, history and art has benefited particularly from recent efforts to define the purpose and range of the learning to be attempted, of which GCSE developments have formed a part. In Welsh and French, for example, the gains have included a greater concern than formerly with communication through speaking, listening and reading the language, as well as with the formal skills of grammar and syntax; many schools have gone to much trouble to ensure that this work uses resources which authentically reflect aspects of French or Welsh life. In history, many schools are helping pupils to use evidence in a discriminating way and to build up a vivid and empathic personal picture of times past - work which goes on alongside the traditional concern with the development of generalised knowledge and understanding, albeit of a reduced body of content.

In some other subjects, it is taking longer for the work done to achieve the potential illustrated in the most successful approaches. In CDT, for example, only a minority of departments have achieved reasonable success in accommodating the elements of design, problem-solving and evaluation which distinguish the modern subject from traditional craft-orientated approaches. In some schools where a reasonable GCSE-based study programme has been drawn up in years IV and V, the achievements of pupils are inhibited by the poor levels attained by pupils in new skills and abilities (such as those described in relation to CDT) within a still-limited years I-III course. In science, the welcome emphasis upon experimental work by pupils brought by GCSE is a major advance; however, there is rather less evidence in many schools of the development of higher order scientific skills, such as hypothesis-testing and the application of scientific principles to problem-solving, even in the work of abler pupils.

**Assessment** of course work and differentiation of assessment remain the aspects of GCSE which give rise to the greatest uncertainty and anxiety amongst teachers. There is evidence of growing confidence in these aspects in science subjects, based on the experience of carrying out assessment exercises, but many departments have been slow to respond to the demands. There is a particular and regrettable tendency in some schools to regard course work as

an additional project or a discrete series of exercises to be done by pupils in their own time, rather than an integral part of normal classwork and homework. This tendency may cause considerable difficulty as pupils are faced with the task of finalising numerous collections of course work as they approach the end of the course. Some departments point (with some justification) to the burden of information content in some GCSE schemes which, they claim, limits the time which can be spared for the organisation and monitoring of course work. In most schools, there is inadequate differentiation of demands on pupils, with a tendency to pitch course work and practical exercises at a level where most pupils can obtain good marks.

**Public examination results** at the higher levels of attainment have shown modest gains since 1980. In the previous five years, between 23.2% and 23.9% had attained O-level grade C or the equivalent CSE grade 1 pass in five or more subjects. Since 1983 the proportion has ranged from 20.4% to 28%. The proportion of pupils attaining at least one higher grade has also increased, from less than half in the earlier period to 54.5% in 1985 and 53.2% in 1986. It remains to be seen whether the richer, more varied study programmes associated with GCSE will give rise to still higher standards of public examination performance from 1988 onwards.

Provision for pupils of lower ability in senior forms has improved markedly in recent years. Significantly more are now pursuing public examination (O-level or CSE, now GCSE) courses, and the proportion leaving school with no GCE or CSE grades has been reduced considerably from its high level of a decade or so ago. Between 1975 and 1980, for example, this proportion ranged from 25.1% to 30.5%, whereas in 1986 it stood at 16.1%, having fallen in every year since 1979. All but a few of these are pupils who leave school at Easter or Whitsun, many having taken courses leading to alternative forms of certification, such as the CoE or the City and Guilds of London Institute/Business and Technician Education Council (CGLI/BTEC), some of which are cross-curricular packages, often geared to a pre-vocational theme. These programmes have, in general, enhanced the experiences of less able pupils and provide much-needed elements of order and progression in their work. This is particularly the case where the opportunities offered by some pre-vocational courses for enhancing links with the world outside school have been fully grasped and where the resulting experiences inform and illuminate all elements of the programme. In CoE courses, some commendable work is done, especially where pupils have access to learning materials of good quality. However,

considerable unevenness remains in the quality of provision and of pupils' response in all courses of this kind. Some programmes are limited in scope and the expectations of pupils within them are too low; coursework assessments are sometimes based on unduly low level tasks. Some of the work in communication and numeracy is repetitive and mechanical in nature and provides few opportunities for pupils to improve these basic skills by applying them in relevant settings. At times, vocational needs are too narrowly interpreted - for example, when the course is dominated by a limited range of business-orientated language exercises. Some of the best work is to be found where subject departments take a keen corporate interest in the planning of the various elements of the course; some of the poorest occurs where individual teachers are left largely to their own devices.

Standards of **work in years I-III** show more variation than those attained within examination-orientated courses in years IV and V. Many departments which have given close attention to curriculum development throughout the school over a number of years have been able to take GCSE in their stride. In such cases the work in years I-III is already varied and well-structured, reflecting a coherent and perceptive view of the subject; some departments are phasing-in appropriate new schemes of work gradually. There are others, however, where the work in years I-III, to varying degrees, lacks confidence and consistency - where, for example, new work has been introduced as discrete elements which, as yet, do not form a sufficiently integral part of the learning process. Examples include the introduction of investigational and project work in mathematics, fieldwork and data analysis in geography, and experimental work in science and home economics: all worthwhile activities, but too rarely linked to the understanding and wide application of the principles represented in the activity. Elements of new approaches, for example, an increased emphasis on oral work in French, are sometimes introduced piecemeal, in advance of a thorough-going review of the full range of learning modes. In a minority of subject departments, the work continues to be limited in scope and in the range of demands made on pupils; such programmes provide an inadequate foundation for later GCSE courses. This is particularly apparent in many schools in subjects where GCSE approaches have necessitated considerable change, such as CDT, home economics and, to some extent, foreign languages.

Most pupils apply themselves to their work with some enthusiasm in the first year or so of secondary schooling; most continue to work diligently throughout

the first three years, during which the curriculum remains largely common to all. The pace and degree of difficulty of much of the work tend to be best suited to pupils of average ability, and most pupils achieve well in relation to the standard demanded. There is some tendency, especially in mixed ability classes, for abler pupils to be working below the level of which they are capable. This is particularly the case where tasks are heavily directed by the teacher (through demonstration and explanation) or by structured written or practical exercises in a way which largely circumscribes the pupils' work and level of response. Many of the worksheets through which data response and experimental activity are organised in science and humanities subjects are open to this criticism, as are activities in home economics, where teacher demonstration and imitative practical work by pupils take place in alternate weeks. Where pupils are given more open-ended tasks, such as design and problem-solving activities and extended, analytical or creative writing, high standards are achieved.

A minority of pupils in years II and III fail to keep abreast of the work, either because of lack of effort (reflected, for example, in poor attendance and an unwillingness to complete homework), or because they find the pace and/or difficulty of the work too great. Schools attempt various strategies to provide extra help to such pupils, through remedial work or special teaching on a withdrawal basis, participation of remedial teachers in mainstream lessons, and withdrawal of pupils for a period to a separate class. None of these has proved consistently effective in providing the individual help which these pupils need. The large size (approaching or exceeding 30) of some mixed ability classes in years I-III militates against the efforts of subject teachers to provide the necessary support.

A rather larger minority of pupils - the proportion reaches a majority in certain schools - have a degree of difficulty with formal language skills which inhibits their academic progress. Most have made a reasonable beginning in reading and writing prior to their entry to secondary school but fail to develop adequately higher language skills, such as those associated with reading for a range of purposes, the organisation of written composition and the sensitive use of analytic and descriptive vocabulary, which would enable them to take full advantage of learning opportunities in senior forms. While many pupils benefit in years I-III from well balanced and varied programmes in their first language (English or Welsh), the language of instruction across the other curricular subjects is often used in too restricted a range of

contexts and registers to promote the confident development of language. Work in sciences and humanities, for example, rarely incorporates the careful attention to vocabulary, the sequencing of argument, oral preparation and the drafting and re-drafting of written work which characterises the best language courses. The lack of cross-curricular language policies in many schools contributes to these weaknesses.

At **sixth form** level, most students pursuing A-level courses are working diligently and achieving good standards within the programmes provided. In most schools the provision of text and reference books at this level is adequate and most students use them well for directed reading. These wider studies, however, are often undertaken additionally to a class programme heavily dominated by teacher exposition, accompanied by voluminous notes, either handed out by the teacher or taken in various forms by students. The volume of material thus acquired by students, though commonly well ordered and presented in their files, is sometimes of daunting proportions. Standard examples and generalised or theoretical information are sometimes treated in too much detail, while less attention is given to wider reading, to real-world applications or to enhancing students' understanding of the general context. The best work at A-level involves students regularly in seminar-type work which explores the applications of general principles in a range of contexts and allows individual students to prepare and deliver personal contributions.

The proportion of pupils leaving school with two A-level passes reached 13.7% in 1986. This was only marginally the highest level of the decade; however, allowance needs to be made also for the increasing number of school-leavers transferring to tertiary colleges to take A-level courses whose results are not included in these data. **CPVE** programmes have provided the framework within which some varied and purposeful educational activities have been developed. A range of communication, numerical, personal and general vocational skills are developed, often through participation in practical projects based upon enterprise, work experience or work simulation. Many CPVE schemes have evoked considerable interest and commitment on the part of students and most have progressed from the course to employment or full time further education.

Although there are examples of considerable merit, general studies provision continues to be on the whole weak: it appears to rank low in the priorities of schools (eg in staff allocation) and of the sixth formers themselves, and

attracts neither the careful planning by staff nor the high levels of commitment on the part of students apparent in the academic A-level courses. There is evidence in schools of some deliberate sacrifice of general studies courses, and rather more of one-year GCSE courses, in order to accommodate CPVE provision.

The strengthening of **links between secondary schools and the world of industry and commerce** continued in 1986/7, in part stimulated by TVEI and by a number of agencies external to schools and LEAs; schools/education-industry links officers (SILO's and EILO's) were in post in all eight Welsh LEAs. Initiatives taken include secondments of head teachers to industry for periods of up to a term and a number of local arrangements for visits by pupils to industrialists and by commercial employers to schools. These arrangements have strengthened the mutual awareness of schools and commercial organisations and have provided staff in senior positions in schools with valuable and thought-provoking insights, especially with regard to organisational matters. However, effective incorporation of an industrial/commercial dimension or context within pupils' everyday studies, especially in traditional curricular subjects, occurs only sporadically and is usually confined to a specific group of pupils or small areas of the curriculum. Curriculum-led links, for example between industrial establishments and particular subject departments, are in evidence in only a small number of schools but there are examples where the learning has been significantly enhanced by such links.

Specific enterprise projects of various kinds have gained a greater foothold in many schools. They occur within particular courses (often in a cross-curricular pre-vocational package such as CPVE or foundation programmes aimed at pupils of modest and lower ability), within extra-curricular or sixth form general studies activities or, more rarely, as part of a school's core provision for older pupils in the area of personal and social education. Pupils have generally responded enthusiastically to such opportunities and have engaged in a wide range of purposeful and productive activities. The best examples provide pupils with experience of an appropriate range of enterprise-orientated tasks, such as market research, product design, production organisation and control, and financial planning and management. A common weakness in such schemes, however, is the tendency to devote too much time to the repetitive jobs of production at the expense of the provision of broader insights into commercial and industrial organisation. The vast majority of schools offer pupils work experience, though only a minority are

able to provide this for all. It is most effective when provided as an element in a planned and structured course, for example careers education, pre-vocational or business/enterprise courses, and when subject courses can draw on elements of pupils' work experience to enrich classroom learning.

Overall, a number of factors are commonly associated with good quality learning and high standards of achievement by pupils in secondary schools. These include a clear and consistently held sense of curricular purpose among staff, both overall and within particular subject areas; careful planning of pupils' programmes to reflect the full range of these intentions; a strong sense of involvement by pupils in the learning, whatever pedagogy is employed; and a willingness by teachers to monitor pupils' work and to use their efforts as a basis for further learning.

These conditions, however, are very unevenly realised in secondary schools. There are a few schools where work of good or very good quality, and the factors which promote this, are to be found consistently across most or all curricular areas. In all schools, there are areas of the curriculum where provision is well planned and richly varied and where pupils of all abilities achieve well; even in areas where standards are less consistent, there are particular classes doing very good work. But the commonest characteristic of the quality of pupils' learning is its variability - from class to class within subject areas and from department to department within schools. These judgements reflect the varying degrees of success and failure which have attended authorities' and schools' efforts to generalise the best practice. This is itself a reflection of the low priority which is often accorded, by both schools and LEAs, to monitoring the provision made at departmental and school level, and to the evaluation and improvement of pupils' learning experiences.

## FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

### Premises and Resources

Most colleges have sufficient accommodation overall, but many lack the resources to adapt facilities to changing needs. In a number of instances where there is pressure on accommodation, greater flexibility in timetabling and a college-wide (rather than a departmental) approach to room allocation would ease the problems considerably. In general, most classes are taught in

classrooms, laboratories, studios and workshops which are adequate in design and space, but there are frequently specific deficiences, for example, in the provision of facilities for practical work in catering, secretarial and tourism courses, or the lack of suitably furnished and equipped general purpose science laboratories to 'service' other courses in colleges where discrete science courses are not offered. Some colleges continue to use demountable classrooms for general teaching and, in a few cases, for specialist work also. These usually fail to provide a suitable ambience for learning and sometimes lack even basic facilities such as OHP screens. In the non-advanced sector, demographic factors, coupled with a decline in some traditional industries and a growth in others, have resulted in some accommodation, for example, mechanical engineering workshops, being under-used, while intensive use is made of rooms for business, computing and secretarial studies.

Specific funds, such as the ESG for information technology, and other grants for computer-assisted design facilites, have helped colleges to equip departments with new technology. However, many colleges have problems in replacing or up-grading conventional equipment in the established vocational departments, particularly expensive capital items in engineering, agriculture and catering. Some colleges have failed to adapt the rooms in which computers are installed to provide good working conditions and facilitate effective use. While the introduction of new technology has had considerable impact in some areas, for example, aspects of business studies and engineering, computer facilities are often unavailable to support and enhance the work in science, catering, caring and hairdressing courses.

The environment within which staff and students work varies considerably within and between colleges and also between LEAs. While there are a number of attractive, well-planned specialist working areas, in many instances the continued neglect of interior decoration, or the failure to redecorate following routine maintenance or more extensive repair work, result in unsatisfactory standards.

In non-vocational adult education, students have access to good resources in an attractive ambience in a substantial number of centres, but less favourable conditions prevail in many schools and colleges. Innovation within existing resources is frequently constrained by the reluctance or inability of institutions and LEAs to plan the use of funds.

Commonly, courses in colleges with low numbers or those in adult centres which have covered the same ground for many years continue to absorb resources that could enable these institutions to provide for a new or emerging need.

**Students**

The number of students in further and higher education remains largely unchanged overall. While institutions are less selective than hitherto in some vocational areas, there are also examples of suitably qualified applicants finding difficulty in gaining admission to certain vocational courses in others. FE colleges are seeking ways of providing access for mature students to enrol on vocational courses and are also placing greater reliance on progession from one level of vocational study to another. There is growing interest in non-vocational education and more emphasis, in an area that has traditionally catered for liberal and leisure studies, upon award-bearing provision. A number of initiatives in non-vocational education are supported in part by specific grants from the Welsh Office and MSC.

The introduction of two-year work-related YTS has led in some colleges to an increase in enrolments on part-time off-the-job training and education and on block release courses. In agriculture, the number of students studying beyond the requirements of YTS has so declined that the needs of the industry may not be met. The demand for full-time courses remains strong in secretarial and business studies, in the humanities and in art and design.

The Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education continues to give priority in its planning to part-time and sub-degree courses and to encouraging recruitment to areas such as electrical and electronic engineering, mathematics and computing, which account for about 14% of total enrolments. However, with one exception, colleges are unable to recruit to targets in these priority areas and, in some cases, a significant proportion of the students who are recruited fail to complete courses successfully. Colleges frequently exceed their set recruitment targets, sometime substantially, in programmes such as management and business studies, which now represent a fifth of total enrolments.

In adult continuing education there has been little change in the number, background interests and needs of students. Where adult education is supported and encouraged by LEAs, a number of centres have successfully

extended their programmes, attracting clienteles more fully representative of their communities. In one LEA, total enrolments have increased by 15% over the year without change in LEA funding. Government-sponsored projects sometimes succeed in providing for students with special needs not normally found in LEA classes. There is ample evidence to indicate that specific funding encourages LEAs to provide for categories of special need including the unwaged and those lacking in basic skills. It is equally evident, however, that little advantage is taken of the lessons learnt from such activities once direct funding ends; only infrequently is the work continued by the LEA.

**Staffing**

Courses in FE colleges and institutes of higher education are generally staffed by lecturers with appropriate and relevant academic, professional or vocational qualifications. Colleges have no difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff, except in areas such as computing, electronics and business and management studies, where competition from other employers is strong, and in new areas such as tourism and leisure. The stability in staffing, which is a characteristic of many colleges, facilitates continuity, and students benefit from the considerable teaching experience of tutors. There are indications, however, in vocational courses, that continuity in staffing is sometimes at the expense of up-to-date industrial experience, with the result that the relevance and effectiveness of some courses are reduced. Some colleges and authorities encourage and enable staff to liaise closely with industry and commerce so that tutors can up-date their expertise. Much, however, depends on the enthusiasm and initiative of individuals as the present arrangements for this aspect of staff development are unevenly developed.

The considerable number of short term projects funded by the Welsh Office, MSC and others, together with uncertainty over the level of enrolments, results in continuing reliance on part-time staff and full-time staff on short-term and temporary contracts, some of which have extended for as long as five years. In some instances this practice is helpful in that colleges are able to draw on a wide range of expertise and up-to-date industrial experience. But in others where part-time staff may be responsible for a significant proportion of the teaching, the advantages are at times outweighed by the fragmentation of courses, discontinuities in student learning and the low level of support

which staff are able to offer students outside the teaching programme. Heavy reliance on part-time staff imposes additional administrative and managerial tasks on full-time tutors and course review and curriculum development may be affected. Colleges rarely include part-time tutors in their staff development programmes and most find it difficult to arrange for such tutors to attend course meetings. In the youth service and in non-vocational adult education there is generally an appropriate balance between full and part-time tutors and many authorities arrange inservice training for full and part-time staff.

**Course Provision and Standards of Work**

Significant recent developments are the introduction of BTEC First Awards and the setting up of new courses in advanced technology applications and information technology as applied to communications and related electronic engineering and micro-electronics. Among other new areas of course provision are tourism, leisure and recreation studies, and information studies and systems in business. ESG funding has stimulated the application of IT in some NAFE courses; developments in computer-assisted design and computer-assisted manufacture have continued. Provision for special needs and for social care and health care studies has been increased, often to fill long-standing gaps in local course provision, but there is still scope for further expansion in these areas. Colleges have become involved to varying extents in making provision for the unemployed, largely as a result of MSC funding.

In spite of increases in overall NAFE programmes, there remain areas where demand exceeds provision. These include: office and business studies, hairdressing and beauty therapy and, to a more limited extent, art and design. In AFE and NAFE some of the wide range of opportunities in many areas in engineering, construction, agriculture and computing have not been fully taken up, mainly because of a shortage of suitably qualified applicants.

Most of the courses offered in **FHE** lead to recognised vocational, professional and academic qualifications validated by external examining boards. The work is set within the syllabus requirements of these boards, but, in practice there is often considerable scope for units or modules which reflect local needs, and for college-devised vocational courses in advanced further education. However, in **NAFE**, few departments modify or provide alternative units to those issued as standard by the examining board. The past year has seen considerable changes in the nature of the work undertaken in some areas

because of revisions made by examining boards. In general, the move has been towards assignment-based learning; this has led departments in some colleges to review the disposition of both staff and resources. The response to changes has, however, been variable: in some departments and colleges course teams have been formed, integrated assignments developed and time allocated to team meetings and staff development; in other colleges, the departments remain divided into sections and teaching continues to be based on specialist subjects. Where conditions are favourable, course teams have devised interesting programmes, for example in catering and business studies, in which several subject areas have been drawn together in integrated activities which enable students to relate various areas of study to vocational tasks and thus to see relevance in their work. In these situations, student motivation is improved and learning is more effective. However, there are also examples of assignments of a trivial, undemanding nature, lacking specific learning objectives and relevance to real situations. Such tasks give little encouragement to students to make use of library facilities or to draw on experiences at work; in many cases library and other resources are inadequate to meet the needs created by more challenging assignment-based approaches.

Much of the classroom work is characterised by teacher exposition, supported by a good volume of notes. Generally, lectures are well structured and presented at an appropriate pace. Learning is enhanced in those situations where extensive use is made of visual aids and resource materials. However, there are often insufficient opportunities for students to be active participants in their own learning and occasionally the pace of the work is seriously impaired when students have to copy notes from the blackboard or from dictation. Where an assignment-based approach has not been adopted there is little encouragement to undertake independent reading or individual or group research and emphasis tends to be on transmission of information rather than on problem-solving and application of knowledge.

New competence-based syllabuses in some vocational areas enable departments to devise schemes of work which ensure that learning is systematic and work-related and that tasks are progressive. Most departments reach high standards in the teaching of practical skills, though, in construction, higher standards are generally achieved in this aspect of the work at craft than at technician level. Generally, the nature and quality of work are linked to the availability and disposition of resources. For example, in some engineering departments CAD facilities allow draughting to be taught by a series of graded

assignments using computer keyboards, VDUs, and other facilities. In other cases, computers have been linked to CNC machines to enable students to work on projects linking drawing, planning and production of components. The development of electronics assignment facilities has also enabled learning to have a more significant 'hands-on' element, though some colleges fail to exploit fully the potential of these arrangements. On the other hand, lack of facilities for reception and accommodation studies restricts the work in some catering courses and developments in applied science are inhibited by the non-availability of computers for such activities as interfacing with other equipment and simulation of laboratory/workshop practices and control systems.

A limited range of courses in commercial, office and business studies, catering, tourism and agriculture are available in Welsh. Welsh Office specific grant has funded production of some support materials for this work.

Self-funding and other entrepreneurial activities continue to be developed, but by only a minority of colleges and departments. Most of these initiatives are related to the provision of training, short courses and full course programmes for public services, but there are also useful initiatives in consultancy and scientific/technological services to industry. These offer important, but as yet not fully developed, opportunities to profit from the availability in HFE of expert staff and up-to-date equipment and facilities which are not always fully used.

There has been an increase in open-learning and supported self-study opportunities within colleges but more coordinated approaches within LEAs and colleges are needed if the full potential of these modes of learning are to be exploited.

The opportunities for adult study vary markedly between LEAs and also within individual authorities. There is evidence that in the authorities where funding for this sector is low, it is possible, given good leadership, consultative procedures and marketing, to offer attractive, purposeful programmes. There is also evidence of poor provision in some areas within LEAs that overall provide adequate resources for an acceptable, though basic, programme.

In most areas **adult continuing education** is undertaken largely within non-vocational classes organised independently of courses within colleges of

further and higher education. This organisational division can be unhelpful for some individuals, particularly the unemployed and others anxious to acquire new skills for employment or to improve career prospects. It can also lead to less efficient use of resources. The scale of provision for the adult unemployed in relation to resources available within the public sector is limited and generally isolated from the work of other agencies. With few exceptions there is less LEA support than previously for adults handicapped by inadequate basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Two projects, one largely funded under the Urban Aid programme, have been notably successful in generating desirable changes within youth and adult work. In one, the education service has improved the quality of its work with young people and in the other, adults with special needs, who would normally not benefit from traditional programmes, are profiting from new courses negotiated with them. During the year programmes in some LEAs have been extended, within existing resources, to admit more students, while in others the decline of recent years is unchecked, leaving large areas with virtually no provision.

The nature of adult education programmes has remained largely unchanged for many years, with the arts, crafts, domestic subjects, languages, humanities and physical recreation dominant, although attention is being given to new technology. The nature of many programmes is such as to attract more women than men and has limited appeal for those with below average educational attainment. Exceptionally, a centre is allowed to adopt an entrepreneurial approach and some have as a result extended and improved the range and quality of their provision.

The nature and quality of work in most classes is satisfactory; in many instances, though good use is made of audio-visual material to provide greater variety in the learning experiences, its potential is under-exploited.

The teaching of Welsh as a second language is a notable feature of adult provision, involving about 700 students each year. Specific grant has enabled centres to establish a range of courses at various levels. Students come from many walks of life but a substantial number are non-Welsh speaking parents whose children attend bilingual schools. Those in intensive courses show great commitment and achieve encouraging standards. Progress on other courses is more uneven but through diligent effort many students learn to understand and speak Welsh reasonably well. Although there is a shortage of suitably qualified tutors in some areas, standards of teaching are generally adequate.

Uncertainty about the level of future funding and the continuing neglect of maintenance and re-decoration are particularly damaging to the effectiveness of **youth work.** In most units the range of activities, outside sports, is limited, thereby confining the appeal of clubs to a minority. Nonetheless, work of good standard is found in a minority of clubs, often those with access to the resources of schools, where the curriculum is varied and the methods adopted give due emphasis to the educational functions and processes of youth work.

## INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

### Premises and Resources

Extensive refurbishment occurred in the course of the year in most colleges offering initial teacher training and there has been a significant change in the ethos of all. By the acquisition and arrangement of books and teaching materials and the use of display, particularly of children's work, the role of each as an institution engaged for the most part in the training of teachers for primary schools has been made manifest. Most have established demonstration classrooms, equipped with furniture and resources to serve as good quality teaching spaces for classes of infants and/or junior age pupils and, in at least one case, with a viewing gallery, video cameras and suspended microphones for the close observation, and relaying and recording of teaching/learning experiences.

Though some hutted accommodation continues in use on one campus, by the end of the academic year, the quality of provision for teacher training throughout Wales was everywhere satisfactory and in some cases good.

### Students

Recruitment in initial teacher training in the past year closely followed the pattern of previous years. In no institution is the target of BEd student entrants with O-level passes in English and mathematics and at least two A-level passes achieved easily. Two had particular difficulty and even with the admission of substantial numbers of 'exceptional entrants' (mature applicants who do not possess the normal entrance requirements) fell well short of their targets.

In all the institutions, the average A-level points scores of those students who entered with the normal requirements were, as in previous years, modest (in the range 4.2 to 5.1). Considerable satisfaction was drawn from the qualifications obtained by students who concluded their courses in July 1987. However, the weakness in the recruitment is a matter for concern to the system and in varying measure to all the institutions. During the year there has been considerable investment of time and money in more vigorous marketing strategies, particularly by the two that have most difficulty in recruiting normally qualified students.

**Staffing**

Analyses made during inspections over the last three years revealed as the typical profile of a teacher training institution an aging staff, many 15 to 20 years in post, the vast majority having only secondary teaching experience, in many cases of rather short duration. The records of research and publication were, in a small number of cases in all the institutions, impressive, but most tutors could provide little evidence of effort in this direction. Of greater concern was the widespread lack of firsthand experience of teaching in the primary classroom, though emphasis on primary initial training was already well established before the round of inspections commenced.

The criteria for accreditation in Circular 21/84 include a requirement that tutors engaged in pedagogy have and continually update experience of classroom teaching with the appropriate age group. This has precipitated a number of developments in the past year. All the teacher training institutions in Wales are small and there is little scope for development within staffing establishments; staff turnover has been traditionally low. Nevertheless the exploitation of marginal opportunity for growth and early retirements have allowed four institutions to appoint several new staff straight from primary schools and all have made some new appointments. It remains rather difficult, however, to reconcile in individual cases the need for academic strength in particular subject areas with that for primary, especially early years, teaching experience. In four institutions, secondments from the classroom are regularly used to provide a valuable input of primary experience, and everywhere closer relations with schools, and the use of practising teachers as visiting speakers, were benefiting courses. Also, in response to the CATE requirement, all institutions were encouraging tutors to undertake teaching

commitments in primary schools and were devising rolling programmes to release staff for this purpose. By the end of the academic year there was a small but significant increase in the 'recent, relevant experience' that staff collectively could offer to students. A clearer sense of purpose and relevance was evident in most institutions, related in part at least to appointments directly from primary schools.

**Course Provision and Standards of Work**

Validation and accreditation of new courses engaged one teacher training institution after another through 1986-7. In one or two cases after submission of further information, ultimately the three public sector institutions and the one voluntary college which had presented their new BEd degree proposals were informed that CATE had recommended they be approved by the Secretary of State. By the end of the academic year only the most recently inspected institution and one other were not in the accreditation pipe-line.

One institution, granted temporary approval of its new BEd, embarked upon it with the September 1986 intake. The remainder continued teaching the course which had been seen by HMI, though in every case somewhat modified, in the main to introduce an element of school experience for students earlier than that course structure formally permitted. These 'old' courses had in common a Diploma in Higher Education/BEd structure: two years DHE, followed by one-year of professional studies and teaching practice to the BEd qualification or two years to BEd (honours). This had the advantage of allowing students to pursue two years of higher education at the end of which they could elect to proceed with a BEd course, or a BA (Combined Studies) or some other training or occupation. In practice, students tended to declare their choice of route on entry and few changed direction subsequently. While the proposed benefits of flexibility have never been realised, the chief disadvantage of this structure from the point of view of teacher training (that is, the postponement of school experience until the third year of the course and the concomitant difficulty of linking students' subject studies with pedagogy), has always posed problems. Of the newly-accredited courses, only one retains a two-plus two structure, concentrating on subject studies in the first two years and professional studies in years III and IV, and linking these two major segments with an interlude of field studies during which students work together at the teaching applications of their academic subjects. Even in this case, however,

there are some school visits in Part I and voluntary attendance at schools by students is formally encouraged.

Though they afford less room for manoeuvre, the one-year PGCE (Primary) courses in two colleges have also been adjusted to meet the criteria in Circular 21/84 and by the end of the academic year these institutions had been informed that approval had been recommended by CATE. In July 1987, therefore, four of the six teacher training institutions were looking forward to a new intake and a new course in September.

In the course of the year teacher training institutions were actively promoting **relationships with schools.** In responding to the Circular they were seeking to involve practising teachers in the process of selecting student applicants for training; they were setting up liaison panels and consulting headteachers and LEA advisers about the more intensive use of schools for school experience and intermittent visits in addition to somewhat extended block teaching practice. The documentation relating to school experience and teaching practice was being reviewed and revised so that schools could become better informed about students and the progressively more demanding expectations of teaching practice from year to year through the course. A better basis for mutual understanding was beginning to emerge of the role of the class teacher and of the tutor in the supervision and assessment of students on teaching practice. Though much remained to be done, particularly in respect of teaching practice in infants schools/departments, because of the severe shortage of appropriately experienced tutors, by the end of the year some progress had been made towards establishing a partnership between training institutions and schools over the selection and professional training of students.

The **college-based programmes of work**, enhanced by increased school experience and a greater emphasis on professional relevance, were broadly satisfactory, though development was constrained by the structure of the 'old' courses. There was a greater emphasis on involving students in the learning process through discussion and more conscious deployment by some tutors of a variety of teaching methods, involving, for example, the use of learning aids such as audio and video recordings, the overhead projector and the micro-computer, to serve as models to students. Many individual sessions included lucid and stimulating presentation of information and education theory. Often, however, there was a failure to underline the direct relevance of topics to schools and

teaching, particularly to analyse recently collected examples of children's work in the relevant age range and to probe in sufficient depth students' accumulating first-hand experience of schools.

**IN-SERVICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING (INSET)**

It has been a year of transition in the sphere of INSET but this does not account for the disappintingly low levels of involvement in professional development of the great majority of those in the education service.

The teachers' industrial action caused the cancellation of many local, regional and HMI Teachers' Short Course Programme INSET events; even GCSE INSET was affected to an extent which placed some authorities and departments in some schools at a disadvantage in the early stages of preparation for the new examination's syllabuses and substantially changed approaches. This was not the only deleterious influence, however: the INSET programmes of most LEAs have been modest in scale for some years and the entire planned primary provision in one authority was cut in 1986-87; though some LEAs invited and gave due consideration to course proposals and eventually published an INSET programme, others did not, but relied upon the uncoordinated initiative of advisers and teachers' centre wardens. In the absence of policy and procedures for the dissemination of INSET experiences and follow-up by the advisory service much of their impact has been lost.

Against this background certain features of better practice stand out. There is still that minority of teachers and tutors who pursue their own professional development enthusiastically, giving their own time (and often money) to study and intellectual refreshment; some teachers' centres are adequately supported by LEAs and ably organised to serve the needs of schools in their locality; a small number of advisers are particularly active and influential in promoting good practice in schools; a few schools, even in the difficult circumstances of the last year, kept up valuable initiatives in school-based INSET. The attention given by some LEAs and schools to publications such as the "Curriculum Matters 5-16" series and to the implications for schools of the designation of 1986 as 'Industry Year' was beneficial though localised. The Specific Grant funding of certain priority areas of INSET such as school management training, special educational needs, mathematics, science and CDT, made a significant contribution in the course of the year, but not throughout Wales, as this provision also was subject to

disruption in the course of the teachers' industrial action. The most widely successful INSET experiences, however, were those provided under the aegis of the Education Support Grant (ESG) and the TVEI-related Inservice Training Scheme (TRIST). The success of **ESG**, particularly in promoting good practice in science and mathematics in primary schools (though there were notable achievements in other categories also, such as 'Welsh Heritage and Culture', in some LEAs), was largely based upon the seconded appointment of advisory teachers, themselves keen and successful practitioners in schools, to work alongside class teachers and gradually build up their familiarity with teaching materials and their confidence. The duration of the contact with particular schools, the readiness of the school to build upon what was offered to one or two classes, and the support of a framework of LEA policy, were the significant features which made for success. Unfortunately, only a limited number of schools could be reached in this way.

Though it was by definition confined to secondary schools and tended to be mostly concerned with the technical, electronic and vocational areas highlighted by the TVEI scheme, **TRIST** was in many places a notable success, both in providing INSET of some quality for the staff involved and, perhaps more importantly, in providing the officers of LEAs and school coordinators with experience of the organisation of a systematic INSET scheme.

Though few INSET events occurred in the summer term (apart from GCSE provision, given full scope following the end of the teachers' action), with the experience of TRIST as a guide, most LEAs addressed themselves promptly and efficiently to the task of implementing the LEA Training Grants Scheme and looked forward to a much increased emphasis on professional development in the education system in 1987-88.

**CONCLUSION**

The standards of work achieved in those aspects of educational provision covered in this report are generally satisfactory. However, the evidence points to an unfortunate unevenness in the nature and quality of pupils' and students' experiences as their learning proceeds. Good work done in one class, one subject or one course may not be matched by that done in the next. Pupils' and students' learning therefore tends to lack adequate continuity and progression.

The period covered by the report saw the beginning or development of several initiatives, the eventual outcomes of which will not be manifest for some time. Given their scale and significance, and bearing in mind the difficulties of the immediately preceding period, LEAs, schools, colleges and other providers have, on the whole, responded resolutely and imaginatively. Some of this response has depended unduly on the enthusiasm and initiative of individual institutions and staff, and there is in general a continuing reluctance to acknowledge that more can be done by providers acting in concert than can be achieved by them working on their own.

Although premises do not determine the nature and quality of provision, they can and do have a palpable effect on the attitudes of teachers and learners alike. Some premises are rapidly becoming unsuitable for the learning required in the last decades of the twentieth century. But many could, despite their shortcomings, provide an adequate learning environment were they to have the necessary maintenance and refurbishment. An education service which is being asked to take on a wide range of new initiatives will do so with greater confidence if the teachers' and learners' physical surroundings enliven and attract rather than impede and depress.

At the end of the academic year 1986/7 the government announced its proposals for a range of reforms and developments in the education system, including in particular its proposals for a national curriculum. The aspects of provision and of current developments which have been covered in this report - and many others - will be profoundly affected by these proposals. The challenges facing schools, colleges and indeed all providers are substantial and will require a large measure of cooperation and goodwill. The evidence of this report suggests that, if this is forthcoming, the challenges will be suitably met.