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THE JOHNSON REPORT: A CRITIQUE
OF SELECTED ASPECTS.

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ABSTRACT

In August 1977 Mr J G Johnson, Chairman of the Committee on Health and Social Education, submitted to the New Zealand Minister of Education his Committee's report, Growing, Sharing, Learning. The Report of the Committee on Health and Social Education. This Report, subsequently to become known as the Johnson Report, declared that the Committee had endeavoured, in the light of its terms of reference, to produce a blueprint for action in the realm of health and social education.

This thesis examines selected aspects of this Report and argues that in the areas examined the Committee has been unsuccessful in its endeavour.

Following a brief historical introduction, four observations concerning response to the Report are presented. Against this background of response and within the historical context outlined, selected aspects of the Report are then examined in detail.

Under the heading "General Concerns" the Committee's statements on the topics of "Research", "Social Education", "Academic Standards" and "School Climates" are examined in turn. Conceptual confusions are exposed, ambiguities are revealed and the detail necessary in a blueprint is shown to be absent.

Under the heading "Specific Concerns" those areas of the Committee's Report which have occasioned most public debate, viz: "Moral, Spiritual and Values Education" and "Education About Human Development and Relationships", are then considered in some detail. In addition, the area of "Teacher Training", an area seen by the Committee as the key to change in education, is also considered. It is claimed that in all these areas the lack of conceptual clarity, the lack of precision in expression and the lack of any effective attempt to grapple with the central issues involved, militate strongly against the use of the Report as a blueprint for action.

By way of conclusion a summary statement relating to the central claim of the thesis is presented.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
Chapter One:	
Introduction	1
Chapter Two:	
General Concerns	8
Research	8
The Function of Research	8
Recommendation 1.1	12
Social Education	13
Academic Standards	14
Climate in Schools	17
Warm and Open Schools	18
Recommendation 2.1	19
Questionnaire	22
Results	23
Recommendation 2.2	24
Chapter Three:	
Specific Concerns	26
Moral, Spiritual and Values Education	26
The Moral Dimension in Education	27
Schools and Basic Values	28

	Values Education	31
	Positive School Leadership	31
	Schools Reflecting Value Systems	31
	Techniques in Values Education	33
	Recommendation 2.19	34
	Recommendation 2.20	34
	Controversial Issues	35
	The Spiritual Dimension in Education	40
	Education About Human Development and Relationships	47
	Teacher Training	58
	Selection	58
	Pre-Service Training	64
Chapter Four:	Conclusion	72
Bibliography		75

LIST OF TABLES

		<u>Page</u>
Table I	Response to Alternatives	23
Table II	Alternative Classification	23

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

In 1973 a committee set up by the New Zealand Director-General of Education produced a study paper on the topic of human development and relationships in the school curriculum. The paper, subsequently known as the Ross Report, concluded that there was "An urgent need for programmes in human development, sexuality and relationships in our schools, at all levels, for all pupils"¹ and that these programmes at the secondary level be a "Compulsory core study for all pupils at all levels of the school"² and at the primary level be "Integrated into the school curriculum ... within the existing health education service."³ These conclusions provided the focal point for considerable discussion throughout the country on the question of sex education programmes in New Zealand schools.

In 1975 a Committee On Health and Social Education was set up by the then Minister of Education, Hon. P A Amos, to "Look more fully into health education and to set the Ross Committee's recommendations in a wider perspective."⁴ Its terms of reference were:

- "a. To identify the conditions under which healthy growth and development may be fostered in schools.
- b. To make recommendations on the studies and activities that should constitute school programmes, organisation and relationships.

In the context of (a) above the Committee would consider the place of the school in such matters as:

- the physical fitness of children and adults;
- the use and misuse of drugs including alcohol and tobacco;
- the development of outdoor pursuits;

1. Ross, J (Chairman) Human Development And Relationships In The School Curriculum. Discussion paper prepared by a Working Committee, Department of Education, 1973, p 14.
2. ibid p 30.
3. ibid p 29.
4. Snook, I New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies. Volume 13, Number 2. November 1978, p 189

the growth of desirable attitudes to safety in the water,
 the bush and the mountains;
 the place of team and individual sports in healthy growth;
 the staffing and other support services needed in
 implementing programmes, including the development of
 staff leadership."⁵

The following year the new Minister of Education, Hon. L W Gandar, confirmed these terms of reference and referred the members of the Committee to a number of concerns that had been in the public mind over a number of years. As well "The Minister pointed out the link between the Committee's areas of consideration and the work of the Ross Committee on Human Development and Relationships in the School Curriculum, and hoped that it would take into full account the work of that committee."⁶

In August 1977 Mr J G Johnson, the Committee's chairman, submitted to the Minister his Committee's Report, Growing, Sharing, Learning, The Report Of The Committee On Health And Social Education, and declared that the Committee had "Endeavoured, in the light of its terms of reference, to produce a blueprint for action in the realm of health and social education."⁷ Mr Johnson also expressed the Committee's hope and recommendation that "Allowing for careful preparation and training, programmes outlined should be scheduled to be in full swing by 1981."⁸

In accepting this Report, subsequently to become known as the Johnson Report, the Minister expressed the hope that all interested people and organisations would read the Report, consider the recommendations and let his department have their comments. He indicated the importance of the Report by describing it as "A serious attempt to assist the public to identify courses and subjects of study which could be included in official syllabuses in health and social education that could replace existing subjects"⁹ and he declared that it was his intention that "The public have one year in which to consider the

5. Johnson, G (Chairman) Growing, Sharing, Learning. Report of the Committee On Health And Social Education, Department of Education, 1977, p 4.
6. Johnson, G op.cit. p 6.
7. ibid, p 3.
8. loc. cit.
9. ibid, p 2.

Report and to comment on it."¹⁰ The time for public comment upon the Report was later extended for a further year. In reply to a question in the House in August, 1978, the Minister announced "When the Report was first released I set a deadline of one year. The Report has become a best seller, and we have gone into a third printing, and it is obvious that many people will not yet have received a copy. I have, therefore, extended the deadline to about July next year."¹¹ The extension of this deadline for public comment has since been confirmed by Hon. M Wellington the current and third Minister of Education to have been associated with the matter of the Johnson Report.

Public response to the Report, as evidenced by the necessity to produce two reprintings of the document, has been much greater than anticipated.

"Since November 1977, thirty thousand copies of the Report have been printed and widely distributed by the Department of Education, or sold by the Government bookshop. The Report has been widely publicised in newspapers and magazines and on radio and television."¹²

In addition local discussions have been arranged by school committees, parent-teacher associations and other organisations throughout the country. Concerning the nature of this response the following observations can be made.

Firstly, as well as being more extensive than anticipated, response to the Report has been extremely varied, ranging from on the one hand, high commendation and enthusiastic support right through to strong criticism and outright rejection on the other. The following statements are illustrative of this broad range of response.

A secondary school principal, J R Kelly, has this to say about the Report.

"Growing, Sharing, Learning is an admirable document - thoughtful, wide-visioned, nicely balanced between pragmatism and idealism, eminently readable, and handsomely presented. A good title, too, acting as a timely reminder of what schools ought to be about, and balancing the catch-phrases of the Sunday newspapers ... I have no doubt that the Report will be greeted with general satisfaction."¹³

10. loc. cit.

11. Gandar, L W Hansard Notes, 23 August, 1978.

12. Gandar, L W loc. cit.

13. Kelly, J R A Principal's Views. Education No. 4: p 15, 1978.

A university lecturer, Dr R J Bates, has this to say.

"What could one reasonably expect from a report on health and social education? At the very least, surely, a survey of current provisions for health and social education, an evaluation of current provisions against some clearly specified criteria, and recommendations for action where provisions are considered inadequate or in need of improvement. However, anyone turning to the Johnson Report is doomed to disappointment, for Growing, Sharing, Learning is a confused, contradictory and unhelpful report."¹⁴

And the Reverend K J Campbell, a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, has this to say.

"The recommendations of the Johnson Report are all embracive in the realm of child education and if enacted into law would result in a complete takeover by the state school system of the essential education and upbringing of all children. The recommendations smack of totalitarianism. The state school system would thus control the child's learning of academic and technical skills, the content of the child's academic and technical knowledge to a large degree, the child's spiritual development, and the child's moral development! In other words, every child becomes a 'ward' of the state school system indoctrinated six hours a day in the system's humanistic philosophy of life ... The Johnson Report in its entirety seeks to embrace every aspect of the upbringing and education of children, but it does not stop there! With 'evangelistic' zeal it aims to boldly venture into the continued oversight and education of these children even into their adulthood ... What ought to be the Christian's response? Every Christian ought to oppose the Report and its recommendations in every way legally possible ... Christian, act now!"¹⁵

In noting this range of response Snook offers an interesting comment.

"One might well ask, then, why the Report has been greeted with enthusiasm on the one hand and opprobrium on the other. It seems likely that it has functioned as a projective test for political and educational attitudes. If you have a warm liberal glow about children and a sense of the possibilities of schools in

14. Bates, R J Socialization, Social Education And The Johnson Report. Delta 22: p 26, 1978.
15. Campbell, K J The Moral And Spiritual Education Of Children. The Gospel Witness: Volume 4, Number 2. June, 1978, p 15.

making the world a nicer place you will approve the Johnson Report for it believes that schools can be humanised and that better schools will produce a more humane society. If, however, you have a more jaundiced view of children and support a more conservative role for schools the Report will infuriate for it makes highly controversial claims as if they were established facts. ('Schools which remain neutral about education in values are not facing up to their responsibilities.')

¹⁶

Secondly, although the response to the Report has been widespread and varied it has, in large measure, been very superficial. While it is difficult to obtain empirical evidence on this point it seems accurate to claim that in spite of the widespread publicity given to the Report only a small proportion of the public have actually become actively involved in its discussion and of those who have only a small proportion again have studied the Report in sufficient detail to enter into a discussion in depth. Teachers similarly, while expressing considerable interest in the areas the Report deals with, have not, as individuals, been widely involved in depth discussions of the Report.¹⁷

Thirdly, in spite of what has just been said, certain special interest groups in the community have examined selected areas of the Report in great depth and have launched major publicity campaigns to enlist support for their views. Two such groups are the Concerned Parents' Association and the Committee For The Defence Of Secular Education. The former group was established after the publication of the Ross Report in 1973 and has as one of its major concerns the question of sex education programmes in New Zealand schools. It has this to say about this aspect of the Johnson Report.

"The Johnson Committee was set up in 1975 by Mr Amos (then Minister of Education), to continue the work of the Ross Committee and place human development and relationships in a wider context of health and social education. Because of its re-iteration of the Ross Report's recommendations, we can only assume that its function is to achieve what the Ross Report failed to achieve - the widespread public acceptance of human development and relationships courses, and the abolition of the only remaining safeguard of

16. Snook, I op. cit. p 190.

17. The basis for these comments comes from the author's experience in leading a variety of parent and teacher meetings called to discuss the Johnson Report.

parents' rights - the regulation prohibiting primary school classroom sex and contraceptive education."¹⁸

The latter group was formed in March, 1978 and has as its aim the protection of the secular nature of State education in New Zealand.

With reference to the Johnson Report it has this to say.

"Our main concern is with the recommendations and the opinions expressed in Section 2.4. We are amazed that the Committee, which had representatives from all areas of education, did not examine, or even comment on, the moral, values and religious programmes which were operating in State Schools when the Committee was set up and during its sittings. The omission is the more surprising when it is realised that the nature and intent of the programmes have been well documented by the Churches' Education Commission and even in the Department's magazine, Education ... The obvious omissions and superficial comment in Section 2.4 of the Johnson Report will cast doubt upon the validity of its other, possibly excellent, recommendations. Through its neglect, which reflects a much wider neglect, the Johnson Committee has ensured that any Moral, Values, Religious Education programme which might be attempted will be off to an appallingly bad start."¹⁹

Fourthly and finally, it is clear that the response to the Report has focused on a relatively narrow range of concerns. The Report contains one hundred and twenty pages and seventy recommendations yet response from the public has centred very largely on the ten and a half pages of sections 2.4 (Moral, Spiritual and Values Education) and 2.5 (Education about Human Development and Relationships) and the eight recommendations contained therein.

Against this background of response and within the historical context outlined, the present critique is set. Attention is mainly focused on those sections of the Johnson Report already indicated as having occasioned most public debate and the Committee's endeavour to produce a blueprint for action is put up for scrutiny. General concerns relating to the use of research, the definition of social education, the importance of school climate and the requirement of

18. Concerned Parents' Association, Education - The Parents' Right To Choose. Concerned Parents' Association Newsletter April, 1978 p 2.
19. Committee For The Defence Of Secular Education, Statement On The Johnson Committee Report. Wellington, May, 1978.

academic standards are dealt with first and specific concerns, relating to Moral, Spiritual and Values Education, Education about Human Development and Relationships, and Teacher Training, are then considered. The claim is made that, in the areas examined, the Johnson Committee has been unsuccessful in its attempt to produce a blueprint for action.

Amongst other things, a blueprint for action should be conceptually clear, be unambiguous in its expression and be detailed in its instructions. In the sections of the Johnson Report examined in this paper these important features are largely absent. Conceptual confusions abound, ambiguities are common and necessary detail is not provided. These are serious deficiencies. If the Johnson Report is to become in reality the "Blueprint for action in the realm of health and social education"²⁰ that its authors hoped it would become then these deficiencies need to be made good. Insofar as the first step toward the solution of any problem is its identification, this critique represents that first step.

20. op. cit. p 3.

Chapter Two

GENERAL CONCERNS

In this section four general concerns relating to the Committee's statements on the topics of "Research", "Social Education", "Academic Standards" and "School Climates" are examined. Attention is directed to these particular areas for two main reasons. Firstly, they are areas of importance in their own right. In a report of this nature it is important to know the degree to which the report is based upon relevant research evidence, the definition of the area under consideration, the relationships of the recommendations to the maintenance of academic standards and the importance of school climate as a major variable in the establishment of an effective learning environment. Secondly, the areas examined provide clear evidence to substantiate the central claim of this thesis viz. the Johnson Report, in the areas considered, has been unsuccessful in its endeavour to produce a blueprint for action in the realm of health and social education.

RESEARCH

Following a general introduction, a list of major social concerns and a resume of submissions made, the Committee comes to the very important area of research. What it has to say here, both with regard to the status research has enjoyed in its deliberations and with regard to the specific recommendation it puts forward, does not stand up well to close scrutiny. Two particular and important deficiencies stand out. These are, the lack of clarity underlying the stand taken on the function of research and the lack of specificity in the recommendation proposed.

THE FUNCTION OF RESEARCH

These two deficiencies will now be considered in more detail. Firstly, the lack of clarity relating to the function of research. Just what function does the Committee ascribe to this very important aspect of its "blueprint"? To what extent has its deliberations and recommendations been informed and guided by available empirical evidence and to what extent has its activities been informed and guided by the Committee's own collective intuition? The answer to such

questions is not immediately clear and careful reading of the section on research seems to suggest that a large degree of vacillation occurs here. One cannot help but get the feeling that the Committee has not thought out its own theoretical position on this matter at all carefully or precisely. This can best be illustrated by looking at the section in a little more detail.

To begin with we are told that "It would be useful if the Committee could quote incontestable research evidence to support the views and recommendations it has formulated over the course of its deliberations"¹ but that because human behaviour is so complex and because "most of the research that we did examine has been carried out in other countries and has not been replicated here"² this cannot be done. And then, after being further told that "decisions which people make in the social sector cannot wait for appropriate research"³ and that these decisions must necessarily be based on people's perception of a situation, their experience, wisdom and intelligence, we are finally told that "to sharpen its own focus and to illuminate its own perceptions the Committee resolved to make what sense it could of available research"⁴ with reference being made in the text of the Report to research findings where appropriate.

From all this what are we expected to deduce? That the Committee sees research evidence playing an important part in helping it map out a Health and Social Education blueprint for the future or that it does not? The answer is not at all clear but one gets more than a strong suspicion that the latter is the case. The Committee seems to be taking the very dangerous position of using research in what might loosely be termed an "aposteriori" rather than an "apriori" fashion, that is, using research to substantiate a final position already decided upon rather than using research to help decide what that final position might be. Evidence to support this assessment comes from the Committee's own statements where it says in its opening sentence that it would find it useful if it could quote incontestable research evidence "to support the views and recommendations"⁵ it had formulated over the course of its deliberations, and later, in the penultimate sentence, where it reports

1. op. cit. p 11.
2. loc. cit.
3. loc. cit.
4. loc. cit.
5. loc. cit.

that it made what sense it could of available research to "sharpen its own focus and to illuminate its own perceptions."⁶ In both these cases, quite clearly, the Committee is using research evidence in this "aposteriori" fashion and while this need not necessarily lead to false conclusions the chances that it will do so are very high. Unlike the scientific method, where an hypothesis is put to the test and modified or confirmed according to the evidence collected, this method allows for no change whatsoever and the evidence that is collected is likely to be only that which is supportive of the position already taken. The section Research On The Growth Of Self-Awareness⁷ seems to be a good example of this. In this section of the Report seventeen references are made to research concerning the self-concept and all seventeen references are highly supportive of the position the Committee has taken. In an area such as this it is very difficult to believe that there is not even one piece of research evidence which runs counter to the general line. And again in its section on Climate in Schools⁸ a similar situation obtains. The Committee state unequivocally that it "acknowledge(s) research advocating 'warm' and 'open' climates in schools as against 'closed' and 'rigid' climates"⁹ but it makes no reference whatsoever to the research which it does not acknowledge nor to the criteria it employs to judge which research merits its acknowledgement and which research does not. The fact that research in this area, counter to the Committee's acknowledged research, does actually exist is brought out by Cooper who, with particular reference to school climate and moral education observes that:

"Throughout the Report much is made of fostering 'warm and caring relationships' in the school and classroom. These are seen as especially important in moral education. They represent what sociologists call 'wide' as opposed to 'narrow' relationships between teacher and pupil."¹⁰

He then goes on to point out that:

"There is empirical evidence to show that not only wide relationships but also narrow relationships have an important part to play in moral development."¹¹

6. loc. cit.

7. ibid, p 13.

8. ibid, p 20.

9. loc. cit.

10. Cooper, A A philosophical critique of some aspects of the Johnson Report. Delta 22: 1978, p 23.

11. loc. cit.

The Committee was either ignorant of or chose to ignore such evidence.

From these two examples alone, it is clear that the danger of using research evidence selectively to support a predetermined position rather than using it objectively to determine which position to support, is a real one and one which the Johnson Committee has not been able to avoid. It does not make extensive use of research evidence throughout the Report but where it does it tends to do so in this narrowly selective fashion.

Two other points warrant brief mention here. The first, a logical one, relates to the reasons given for not being able to offer incontestable research evidence and the second, also mainly a logical one, relates to the placement of the Committee's first recommendation.

Concerning the first point. As a first reason for not being able to quote incontestable research evidence the Committee advances the notion that the complexity of human nature does not permit this sort of data gathering, but then it goes on to provide a second reason, viz. most of the research studied has not been replicated in New Zealand. Surely, if the first reason stands up to examination then the second is, to say the least, superfluous. Clearly, if the complexity of human behaviour precludes the gathering of incontestable evidence, then the question of where this research should be carried out is entirely irrelevant.

Concerning the second point. After making it clear that in its opinion it is impossible to gather incontestable research evidence the Committee then presents, without any warning or explanatory note, the first recommendation of its Report wherein it is suggested that research studies be set up. The time factor involved in carrying out these studies is acknowledged and the claim made that decisions in the social sector will have to be made in the absence of appropriate research. Following this, the Committee reveals that there is some appropriate research available and it has made some use of it. This order of presenting ideas is highly confusing and does little to help the reader uncover the logic that presumably underlies the whole enterprise. From asserting that incontestable research evidence cannot be obtained it seems a strange shift to then recommend that research, presumably of the contestable variety, be carried out. The basic problem here is to discover what exactly is the relationship between the opening paragraph and the recommendation. What is it that the Committee is

trying to say about research and how does the specific recommendation follow from this? In a report which endeavours to be a blueprint for action there should be no place for such questions.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Moving on now from what the Committee has to say about research in general to what it has to say about research in particular, the specific recommendation put forward by the Committee, i.e. Recommendation 1.1, can now be considered.

For any document to rank as a blueprint or to have any practical value in terms of pointing up future directions, some degree of detail is an essential requirement. The most striking feature of the Committee's recommendation here is the almost complete absence of such detail. We are told that research studies are to be set up but we are not told what type of research studies are envisaged or what particular questions the studies are to address themselves to. We are told that the effects parents and teachers have on an individual's development should be studied but we are given no indication as to what particular effects are to be studied or how these studies should be carried out. We are told that the effects other people have on an individual's development should also be studied but we are not told who these other people might be. We are in fact told very little at all that would be helpful if we were serious in any attempt to put the Committee's recommendation into effect. No limits to the scope of the suggested studies are spelt out, no specific objectives are clearly defined and no means of evaluating the proposed studies are given. The absence of these and other details makes any talk of a blueprint for action quite inappropriate and calls seriously into question once again the degree to which the Committee has fully thought out, and is committed to, its own position on the place of research in this area. While it says that it favours research and would like to see incontestable research evidence made available, its statements on the subject lack the conviction, the clarity and the detail to support such a position.

SOCIAL EDUCATION

In a report prepared by a Committee on Health and Social Education it would seem reasonable to expect some definition of these two particular forms of education. And indeed on scanning the list of contents one is led to believe that such is to be provided. On page eleven, we discover that the question, "What is health and social education?" is to be dealt with and all appears to be well. However, as happens with so much of the Committee's Report, when the inquiry is pushed a little further a number of discrepancies are revealed. Health education, we find, is well attended to, with a precise definition of health being put forward and a general outline of its aims and areas of concern being provided. Social education however, we find, is not so well attended to and search as we may a working definition of social education continues to elude us. References are made to social problems, social well being and social competence but nowhere in the entire section devoted to the question of what is health and social education, is an attempt made to delineate clearly and exactly just what is meant by the term "social education". This is a major omission. In a document which purports to be a blueprint for action in the areas of health and social education it is absolutely essential that both of these areas be clearly defined. If, in addition to health education, we are concerned with social education then this latter area must also be fully dealt with and clearly identified. This the Committee fails to do and indeed as Bates observes;

"It is the absence of any clear and positive conception of social education and the equation of social education with socialisation which leads to the Report's most serious confusions."¹²

In what way does this area of study differ from social studies? How does social education differ from socialisation? Is social education not just another name for moral education? These and many more questions find no satisfactory answers in the Committee's Report and the failure here can be traced back once again to the lack of conceptual clarity which seems to be endemic to the Report as a whole. The Committee, in giving insufficient consideration to the central problem

12. op. cit. p 26.

of definition has failed to establish a clear conceptual base upon which to build its plan for the future. By not formulating clearly and precisely what it means by social education the Committee has undermined its own attempt to produce a blueprint for action. The confusion in concept has led to confusion in precept and the Report suffers badly as a result.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

After attempting to define health and social education and after providing a selective account of available research on the growth of self-awareness the Committee turned its attention to the topic of academic standards. Here again, the Committee's inability to formulate a clear and concise conceptual base upon which to build its case has resulted in a statement which is both confused and inconclusive and which does little to further the endeavour to produce a blueprint for action. In particular, two deficiencies stand out, the first relating to what this section purports to deal with and the second relating to how it deals with it. In the first case, the content of the section does not directly deal with what the title implies and in the second, the material that is presented is treated in such a confused and imprecise fashion that the intent of the statement is obscured.

With regard to the first deficiency it can be contended that the Committee is neither addressing itself to the general topic of academic standards nor to the more specific question of what academic standards should be aimed for in the curriculum of our schools. Rather it is considering the question of what the curriculum itself should consist of. It attempts to show that the establishment of a programme of health and social education and the teaching of "basic skills" are not mutually exclusive but rather are complementary. This consideration, while obviously highly relevant to the Committee's central thesis regarding the development of health and social programmes, can not be rated as an insightful statement on the place of academic standards in our school curriculum. Such a statement ought to contain some reference to what is meant by the term academic standards and some reference to the specific action which the Committee sees necessary with respect to achieving or maintaining the levels of excellence or adequacy aimed at in our schools. When we are talking about academic standards in the context of our school system we are talking about the various levels of

performance which are required of our pupils in the formal subjects of instruction offered by the school. The Committee's statement on academic standards avoids this area altogether. It begins by giving its support to the Educational Development Conference's views on the importance of teaching people to read, write and speak well and ends by suggesting how the teaching of these basic skills might be incorporated in a programme of health and social education, but nowhere does it come to grips with what academic standards are required. This, in a paragraph entitled Academic Standards, seems to be a serious omission.

With regard to the second and rather more important area of deficiency it can be argued that in putting forth its views on the place of Health and Social Education in the school system the Committee has failed to state clearly and unequivocally just what it is that it is advocating. The statement it makes is disjointed and confused and in no way represents a blueprint for action. An attempt to provide a precis of what the Committee is saying here brings out this deficiency very clearly.

After affirming its support for the views of the Educational Development Conference and the McCombs' Committee with reference to the teaching of reading, writing and speaking the Committee moves directly into the field of subject specialisation and declares that:

"Much of the specialised study now taking place in school could well be postponed till later and be replaced by concerns of socialisation and of a healthy society."¹³

The relationship between these two concerns is not at all clear but this is a relatively minor factor. What is more important is the confusion over the terms "socialisation" and "social education" and the lack of justification for the categorical declaration that then follows viz:

"At least up to age 16, primary socialisation must be the overriding concern of home and school."¹⁴

13. op. cit. p 15.

14. loc. cit.

As already noted¹⁵ the Committee continually fails to establish what it means by its terms and in this particular section this failure is very important. When the Committee speaks of primary socialisation as being the overriding concern of home and school, at least up to age sixteen, what exactly is meant? Moreover why should socialisation, however interpreted, be the overriding concern of both home and school? The last major report on New Zealand Education, the Currie Report, (1962), dealt very lucidly with this question of priorities in education and its statement on this question is worth repeating here. In referring to all the competing claims on education this report went on to state:

"Before any decisions could be taken on any of these claims, a more fundamental consideration of the primary purposes served by schools in the New Zealand community was required. This raised immediately the matter of priorities. The school, it may be agreed, is concerned with the whole pupil, his intellectual, physical, emotional, and moral development. But this is not to say that the school is wholly responsible for all these or that all sides of pupil development are equally important and legitimate subjects for a school's efforts. Education as a concept can be made wide enough to include virtually any influence from the environment upon the individual. But particular institutions, such as schools, are provided for particular purposes and there cannot be much doubt that the intellectual development of each pupil to his full capacity is still the primary, even though it is not now the sole, purpose of New Zealand schools."¹⁶

Of course, the Johnson Committee is in no way bound to accept this view of educational priorities but it should (a) recognise that what it is now suggesting in its Report represents a major change in educational policy and (b) be prepared to present at least some evidence or supportive argument to justify the important policy change it is advocating. In the absence of such recognition and evidence its affirmations in this area have little justification.

In the next paragraph of this section the Committee goes on to declare that specialised study should be provided by the interested

15. See, for example, Chapter 2, p 13.

16. Currie, G (Chairman) Report of the commission on education in New Zealand. Wellington, Department of Education, 1962, p 21.

parties in the vocational field rather than by the school and, then after providing an "outstanding example of this"¹⁷ it presents an excerpt from a submission it received.

"Some consider the ultimate purpose of liberal education to be the transmission of our cultural heritage and the creation of good citizens loyal to the ideals of our society. Others, however, stress the development of the independent, sensitive, questioning mind with the liberal arts having a critical, almost revolutionary function. Perhaps we must steer between these two, but come what may, we must move away from the present day's tremendous emphasis on pure academic attainment, especially in narrow or specialist fields."¹⁸

This excerpt in itself is interesting and entirely legitimate but its placement in this particular context is inappropriate. What precisely is this submission saying about academic standards and what is it saying about delaying specialised study? How does this relate to what the Committee has just been discussing and to what extent are we to take this as a statement of the Committee's own position? These questions remain unanswered. While one suspects that the imperative in the final sentence "... but come what may we must move away from the present day's tremendous emphasis on pure academic attainment, especially in narrow or specialist fields."¹⁹ really reflects the Committee's position on this matter this is not stated. All the Committee has to offer is the inconclusive comment "Be that as it may."²⁰ For a Committee attempting to provide a blueprint for action such a declaration is quite inadequate.

CLIMATE IN SCHOOLS

Much of what the Committee has to say in this section is educationally sound and worthy of restatement. The emphasis on catering for the child's individual needs, on enhancing the self-image of every student and not just the gifted or any one section, and on involving children in planning their own study choices, is commendable.

17. op. cit. p 15.

18. loc. cit.

19. loc. cit.

20. loc. cit.

Much, however, is not of this quality and does not stand up well to closer scrutiny. The lack of conceptual and semantic clarity that seems to have beset the Committee from the outset continues to show itself in this section. A more detailed examination of section 2.1.2 concerning the advocacy of "warm" and "open" schools,²¹ and of recommendations 2.1 and 2.2²² where it is urged that research be undertaken and resource staff appointed, will illustrate this claim.

WARM AND OPEN SCHOOLS

In their advocacy of "warm" and "open" schools the Committee's recommendations seem to be open to two quite major criticisms. The first relates to the Committee's selective use of research evidence and the second relates to the simplistic approach the Committee has to the whole notion of school climate.

With regard to the first of these criticisms the Committee, as already noted,²³ makes very selective use of available research evidence, and only acknowledges that research which supports the point of view the Committee has already adopted. In addition, no specific research studies are named and no references made to the criteria used by the Committee to decide which research evidence merited its support and which did not. Appropriate as this line of action might be in some circumstances it is entirely inappropriate in this context.

If there is known to be conflicting research evidence this should be acknowledged, if judgements have been made about the admissibility or non-admissibility of some evidence the criteria used in making such judgements should be produced, and if research evidence is to be used at all it should all be clearly referenced.

With regard to the second criticism the Committee is far too simplistic in its approach to the problems involved. The whole area of school climate is as complex as it is important and in no way is it susceptible to the sort of categorisation that the Committee attempts here. In suggesting that "closed" and "rigid" climates are the only alternatives to "warm" and "open" ones the Committee is setting up a

21. *ibid*, p 20.

22. *ibid*, pp 20, 21.

23. See Chapter 2, page 9 of this thesis.

false dichotomy. There are countless times when a school's climate could quite appropriately be somewhat less than warm and open yet still not be harsh and coercive. A range of possibilities along a very wide continuum, may be considered appropriate. The challenge of a temperate climate and the restraints of a less than open structure could well be the stimulus many pupils require to promote the "vigorous intellectual development"²⁴ that the Committee commendably applauds. It is true that the "warm" and "open" climate the Committee advocates is in strong contrast to the "atmosphere of harshness (as distinct from firmness), and coercion (as distinct from direction)"²⁵ it contrasts it with, but why does a climate that is rather more temperate than warm need to be harsh, and why does a climate that is not open need necessarily be coercive? The Committee in oversimplifying the situation, is running the risk of ending up with the permissive laissez-faire type of education it is so anxious to avoid.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

"We recommend that research be undertaken into the ways of evaluating effective school climates."

The recommendation here is the second in the Report and in that it provides a classic illustration of the conceptual and semantic confusions being focused on in this thesis it deserves close scrutiny.

The first comment to make here concerns the relationship between the recommendation itself and the paragraphs that precede it. Like a number of other subsequent recommendations in the Report²⁶ this particular recommendation does not seem to be the direct outcome of the immediately preceding discussion. The Committee accepts without question research findings favouring "warm" and "open" climates in schools. It gives no indication that this research is open to challenge or that further research may be necessary. Then, immediately following this, a recommendation appears urging research of a very unspecified nature to

24. op. cit. p 20.

25. loc. cit.

26. For example, recommendations 2.2 and 2.19.

be undertaken "into the ways of evaluating effective school climates."²⁷ Such an unsupported recommendation is unacceptable in a report of this nature. All recommendations should arise logically out of, and not be distinct from, the discussion that immediately precedes them and such discussion should contain clear and compelling arguments to support the recommendation that is presented.

A second and more important comment with reference to this section relates directly to the recommendation itself and the meaning we are to attach to it. What is the Committee recommending here? Study of this recommendation reveals that such a question is not susceptible to an immediate or satisfactory solution and it should be. Due to an inability, or unwillingness, to come to terms with the often complex nature of the problems it is dealing with the Committee comes up with solutions which, though superficially plausible, are confusing and too often simplistic. The recommendation presently being considered is a case in point. As a general exhortation it ranks quite highly. After all, who does not want "effective school climates?" As part of a blueprint for action, however, it is far from adequate. The analysis now presented is designed to support this contention.

In answer to the question as to what exactly the Committee is recommending, at least four possibilities present themselves. The first possibility allows the recommendation to be interpreted on the literal level with "evaluating" literally meaning "determining the value of". Following this interpretation the recommendation can thus legitimately be rephrased to read "We recommend that research be undertaken into the ways of determining the value of effective school climates". This, however, will hardly do. If we already know that a school climate is effective we have already, at least in part, determined the value of it. If we have said it is effective we presumably have some acceptable criterion or criteria of effectiveness against which this particular instance of effectiveness can be measured. Why then do we need to undertake research into ways of determining that which we already know? It seems unlikely that this interpretation of the situation is really what the Committee had in mind. What is more likely is that the "spirit" of the

27. op. cit. p 20.

Committee's recommendation has been concealed by the "letter" chosen to represent it. The word "evaluating", at least at the literal level, does not accurately convey the meaning the Committee had in mind.

Taking this further in an attempt to make sense of what the Committee is recommending, three additional possibilities appear. If for the somewhat troublesome word "evaluating" we substitute the word "assessing" then we have the possibility that the Committee is either recommending that research be undertaken to discover ways of finding out which schools have effective school climates, or it is recommending that research be undertaken to find out what climates are effective in schools. Alternatively it is recommending that both these lines of action be taken. Which one of these lines of action captures the spirit of the recommendation is a matter of dispute and in a recommendation which purports to be part of a blueprint for action such ambivalence is inadmissible. If the Committee knows what effective school climates are then obviously it does not need research to help it discover them, but by the same token if it has not the means of discovering whether or not a particular school's climate is effective or otherwise, on what grounds has it been able to make its original assessment of climate effectiveness?

To support the claim being made here the following empirical evidence is submitted.

A group of third year Teachers College students was given a questionnaire relating to Recommendation 2.1 and responses from a random sample of one hundred of these students were carefully analysed. The questionnaire and analysis of results follow.

QUESTIONNAIRE

PALMERSTON NORTH TEACHERS COLLEGE

EDUCATION DEPARTMENTTHE JOHNSON REPORTRecommendation 2.1

We recommend that research be undertaken into the ways of evaluating effective school climates.

This statement means:

- (a) research should be undertaken to discover ways of finding out which schools have effective climates.
- (b) research should be undertaken to find out what climates are effective in schools.
- (c) both of these.
- (d) neither.

If (d) please briefly state what you think the Recommendation means.

RESULTS

TABLE I
RESPONSE TO ALTERNATIVES

Alternative	Number of Responses
a	8
b	32
c	12
d	48
Total	100

TABLE II
ALTERNATIVE CLASSIFICATION

Classification	Number
No clearer than original	25
Synonymous with given alternatives	12
Different from given alternatives	11*
Total	48

* 7 different from each other.

Table I shows the number of responses made with respect to each given alternative. Eight of the sample believed that Recommendation 2.1 meant that research should be undertaken to discover ways of finding out which schools have effective climates. Thirty-two believed that Recommendation 2.1 meant that research should be undertaken to find out what climates are effective in schools. Twelve believed that the recommendation meant both of these things and forty-eight believed that it meant neither.

Table II shows responses to alternative (d) classified into three categories. Twenty-five responses were no clearer than the original recommendation, twelve responses were synonymous with the alternatives given and eleven responses were different from these alternatives. Of these eleven responses, seven were different from each other.

From these results it is quite clear that the charge of ambiguity with respect to Recommendation 2.1 is fully sustained. If, when asked to explain the meaning of a single fourteen word recommendation, a group of one hundred well educated teachers in training are unable to obtain a measure of agreement in excess of thirty-two per cent then something is very much amiss. Clearly a level of ambiguity of this order is not acceptable in a document which purports to be a blueprint for action. Inevitably and repeatedly one would be forced to ask, "What action is this blueprint detailing for us to follow?" and this sort of question one should not have to ask. This is precisely the sort of information that a blueprint is designed to provide.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

"We recommend that resource staff be appointed whose specific task would be to assist schools achieve the type of climate emphasised in this chapter."

In the previous section the Committee's inability or unwillingness to come to terms with the often complex anatomy of

many of the problems it was dealing with was referred to and it was pointed out that this frequently resulted in solutions which were superficial and simplistic. The above recommendation is a further example of this. Achievement of the type of climate the Committee emphasises, or for that matter the achievement of any specified type of school climate, is a much more complex business than the Committee seems to realise and the mere appointment of additional resource staff to the school is not at all likely to produce the results desired.

Essentially a school climate is something which develops from within a school itself and it is not something that is grafted on from without. It is the product of a multitude of factors, many of which are extremely hard to identify and many of which a school has no direct control over. If, as the Committee envisages, a particular type of school climate is required then this will derive in large measure, not from staff additionally appointed for this purpose, but from the existing staff and organisation of the school as a whole. The combined ideologies and competencies of all the teachers in the school have a powerful influence in determining the nature of the particular climate that results. This of course is not to say that the appointment of additional staff with particular expertise in this area is not to be encouraged. What needs to be made quite clear, however, and this the Committee has not done, is that such people alone will not succeed in achieving the revolution in mind. Furthermore, the particular talents required of such people may well be (a) difficult to identify and (b) once identified difficult to locate. In this area too the Committee's recommendation is less than satisfactory. If it is going to recommend that resource staff be appointed for a specific task, then it should indicate the particular skills that such staff will be required to possess and it should give some indication of the nature of the task envisaged. In failing to do this the Committee has again oversimplified a very complex situation.

Chapter Three

SPECIFIC CONCERNS

In this section those areas of the Committee's Report which have occasioned most public debate viz; "Moral, Spiritual and Values Education", and "Education About Human Development And Relationships", are examined in some detail, together with the area of Teacher Training, an area seen by the Committee as the "Key to change in Education".¹ It is argued that the lack of conceptual clarity, the lack of precision in expression and the lack of any effective attempt to grapple with the central issues in each of these areas, militates strongly against the use of the Report as a blueprint for action.

MORAL, SPIRITUAL AND VALUES EDUCATION

Insofar as public response is concerned, this section of the Report, together with Section 2.5, has probably generated as much interest and controversy as the rest of the Report put together. While a great deal of this controversy would seem to be an inevitable accompaniment of any study of this particular area, not all that is generated here is of this kind. Some may be seen as a direct consequence of the confused manner in which the Committee has handled the issues involved. The lack of conceptual clarity and the lack of precision in expression which has already been illustrated continues to be evident here and not infrequently leads to disputes which are both needless and counter-productive. In numerous instances in this section controversy is generated not so much by the ideas being put forward but by the lack of clarity surrounding the expression of these ideas.

In that it provides an excellent example of the sort of problems already discussed, the heading to this section seems to be a suitable starting point for comment. Three apparently distinct areas of education are delineated viz. moral, spiritual and values education. From this presentation, even allowing for a certain overlapping relationship in the areas, one would be entitled to believe that each area had its own territorial integrity as it were and each would receive an equitable

1. op. cit. p 50.

share of the Committee's attention. As one reads on however one finds this not to be the case. Moral education, under the heading "The Moral Dimension in Education" is dealt with in one brief paragraph, Spiritual Education as "The Spiritual Dimension in Education", occupies some fifteen paragraphs and Values Education under three different headings occupies some nine or ten paragraphs. In addition a section entitled "Controversial Issues" and not referred to in the overall heading at all is slipped in between the values and the spiritual sections. In fact, the more carefully one reads the section as a whole the more apparent the Committee's confusion becomes. Referring specifically to the heading of this section one is forced to ask what exactly it is that the Committee is intending to discuss? What is the important distinction between moral education and values education that warrants separate headings? Granted that not all values are moral values,² what matters become the concern of moral education and what become the concern of values education? Are there two discrete areas of operation here? Further, if moral education is important enough to be considered first and in its own right, why does it receive such inadequate attention? It seems clear that the Committee has not thought through at all carefully the exact nature of the complex issues with which they are engaging.

THE MORAL DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

In this section the Committee disposes of the moral dimension in education in three sentences. It speaks of education in eminently sensible terms, it wisely points out that morality involves action as well as ideals and it highlights the necessity for freedom of choice in any moral act. But nowhere does it make clear what it understands by "moral education". In a blueprint this is the sort of specificity that is absolutely essential. Only then can the desired outcomes have a prospect of being translated into

2. See Snook, *op. cit.* p 191.

reality. Generalised talk about the moral dimension in education may well generate contentment and approbation but it does not provide the details that teachers and curriculum planners need if anything "more than talk"³ is going to eventuate in this field.⁴

SCHOOLS AND BASIC VALUES

In moving on to this section the Committee turns its attention to schools and "basic values". Again, it seems that what the Committee has to say is more an exhortation to arms than a clearly supported foundation for action. The list of ten basic values presented by the Committee is interesting and though the values listed relate in a general way to those moral principles which define the moral domain they conflate the important distinction between values which are moral and those which are non-moral. In addition they lack precision in their presentation. For example values two, four and five seem to be covering much the same ground. Caring for and awareness of others, the second listed value, appears again in the value designated aroha and in the value supporting concern and consideration for others. While the Committee may well have had in mind important distinctions here between these values, the distinctions do not come out clearly and in a statement which purports to identify some of the values "which have universal appeal and which will remain cornerstones of every community"⁵ they should. In addition, the Committee is rather

3. Snook, I and McGeorge, G More than talk. Moral Education in New Zealand. Wellington, Department of Education, 1978.
4. Useful references dealing with this vital matter can be found in Beck, C M et al (eds) Moral Education: Interdisciplinary Approaches, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1971.
Hare, R M "Language and moral education," in Langford, G and O'Connor, D J (eds) New essays in philosophy of education, London, 1973.
Hirst, P H Moral Education in a Secular Society, University of London Press, London, 1974.
Peters, R S Reason and Compassion, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972.
Wallace, G and Walker, A D (eds) The Definition of Morality, London, Methuen, 1970.
5. op. cit. p 32.

tentative in its identification of worthwhile values, "it is possible to identify some of these values"⁶ it says. One wonders what other values, as yet unidentified by the Committee, might also form part of the cornerstones of every community and one wonders also what justification the Committee has for the particular selection of values it has made.

Both these matters are too important to remain the subject of speculation. If the Committee is able to identify only some, and not all, of the basic values required to form the cornerstones of every community then the foundation they are attempting to lay is incomplete. Some lead should be given to suggest just how the missing values might yet be identified. Furthermore, if the Committee presents a list of important basic values which should underpin the society they envisage, are we not entitled to know on what basis they make their selection? Such information is essential if we are to make informed personal judgements. We should not be expected to take on faith, or as self-evident, value decisions made for us by other people, however wise and sincere such people may be. To do so would be to deny us "the opportunity to develop the independent values"⁷ which the Committee commendably would have our children develop. As Cooper points out, until unquestioned and hidden assumptions as to what is desirable or worthwhile are brought out into the open "it is impossible to get to grips with their validity or desirability."⁸

Two further points merit consideration here also. The first concerns what can be called the myth of the "Golden Age". The Committee believes that society would like to see a "reinforcement of and return to some basic values which have universal appeal and which will remain cornerstones of every community."⁹ While this may well be a correct interpretation of society's wish in this matter, it is also an indication of the Committee's own acceptance of the belief that "once upon a time" there was a golden age when all the wholesome basic values of a decent society had universal appeal and acceptance. If only, runs this belief,

6. loc. cit.

7. ibid, p 34.

8. op. cit. p 22.

9. ibid, p 32.

we could return to such a golden age all would be well and the ills of our society would disappear. To accept this view is to run the risk of becoming involved in what Marshall McLuhan¹⁰ describes as marching backwards into the future whilst gazing steadily into the rear vision mirror. The Johnson Committee is running just such a risk. Throughout much of its Report it seems to be looking back to the past rather than forward into the future and such a perspective tends to have a limiting rather than liberating effect. There exists no historical evidence of there ever being such a golden age. Moreover the acceptance of the myth is likely to distort the vision one might have for facing the problems of the future. In terms of the Golden Age myth we have "the breakdown of the family unit,"¹¹ while in terms of dealing with the problems of the future we have a family unit which has undergone and is continuing to undergo considerable change. To equate change with breakdown is already to preclude possible solutions to pressing problems.

The second point to be made here concerns the paragraph following the listed values. Here it can be asked whether this statement is meant to be a summary or explication of the values listed before or whether it is intended to serve some other purpose? The answer is not at all clear. A rather bewildering variety of elements are contained in this paragraph and their relationship to the Committee's list of "cornerstone values" is not made explicit. Rather than being an explanation or justification of the above listed values it seems to be more an enjoinder to consider how "Maori people can best touch our sensitivity to the world around us"¹² and an encouragement to accept the "fact" that "Not on bread alone does man live."¹³ Such concerns would be much more appropriately located in the section dealing with the spiritual dimension in education since while they do little to directly illuminate our understanding of the relationship between schools and basic values they do give us some general notion of what the Committee sees as being involved in the spiritual dimension of life.

10. McLuhan, M The medium is the message. New York, Bantam Books, 1967, p 75.

11. op. cit. p 7.

12. ibid, p 32.

13. loc. cit.

VALUES EDUCATION, POSITIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP, SCHOOLS
REFLECTING VALUE SYSTEMS

In these sections the Committee makes brief statements on values education, on the positive leadership expected from schools, and on techniques in values education. Once again, while these pronouncements have a general air of appeal and while some could be said to reflect an accurate assessment of the situation, for example the observation "We tend to love things and use people, instead of loving people and using things"¹⁴ they do not in general stand up well to closer scrutiny. By way of support for such a claim, one example each of a presupposition, a contradiction and a lack of definition to be found in this section of the Report will be examined.

Firstly, there is the presupposition. In speaking of submissions received, the Committee expressed its endorsement of those that emphasised the dangerous lack of basic values within our society. But what does the Committee mean by "basic values"? Not only does it fail to make clear what it means by such a term but it is also unable to identify all those values which it puts in this category. This being the case, is the Committee really justified in endorsing a claim that affirms that there is a dangerous lack of basic values in our society? If it does not have a clear conception of what a basic value is (i.e. its defining characteristics) and if it can not identify all such values it is certainly in no position to claim that such values are lacking in society and that this lack is dangerous. What the Committee is really saying is that there is a large number of people in society who do not share the Committee's views as to what particular values should be upheld. In effect this is to claim that those members of society who do not share the Committee's views in this matter necessarily lack basic values. In the absence of an agreed upon definition of what constitutes basic values all that can be claimed is that the values the Committee sees as being desirable are not shared by a considerable number of other members of society and in

14. op. cit. p 33.

the Committee's view this is a dangerous situation, though why it is dangerous is not made clear.

Secondly, there is the contradiction. This relates to the Committee's judgement that "Schools which remain neutral about education in values are not facing up to their responsibilities"¹⁵ and the claim in the next section that:

"Every school reflects some type of values system. All individuals and organisations hold sets of values, good or bad, whether expressed or not. Each school shows moral decisions of one sort or another within every action and every area of its philosophy and practices."¹⁶

Clearly there is a contradiction here. If every school reflects some type of value system within every area of its philosophy and practice then how can it possibly remain neutral about education in values? Quite clearly by the Committee's own definition, every school by virtue of being a school is engaged in values education whether it intends it or not. This being the case it is odd to speak of schools which remain neutral about education in values as not facing up to their responsibilities. On the Committee's own terms such a dereliction of duty is a logical impossibility. What the Committee may in fact really mean here is that schools which do not accept the Committee's set of values are acting irresponsibly. This, however, is another issue.

Thirdly, there is the lack of definition, in particular the meaning to be attached to the term "positive living". After noting that many young adults feel let down by their experiences within the community the Committee observes that these young people become cynical and apathetic and develop a "lack of enthusiasm for positive living."¹⁷ Unfortunately, what is meant by the expression "positive living" is never made clear. As with so many of the Committee's pronouncements this expression evokes a ready acceptance initially, but when reflected upon, proves to have little substance. Obviously positive living is a good thing but what exactly is it? If we are to help in promoting such living we clearly need to know more about it.

15. loc. cit.

16. ibid

17. loc. cit.

TECHNIQUES IN VALUES EDUCATION

In this section on techniques of teaching values education the Committee seems to be saying three things. Firstly, taking a rather narrow syllabus type view of curriculum it declares that values education goes far beyond the boundaries of the curriculum with every teacher being a teacher of values. Secondly, a variety of approaches to values education is acceptable with a likelihood that there will usually be a blending of approaches. Thirdly, an integrated rather than a separate subject approach to values education is seen as likely to evolve for most schools.

The Committee's view on the second of these matters demands comment. The guidance it has to offer here in terms of helping schools decide what techniques and practices to use is minimal, paralleling its superficial appreciation of the theoretical issues involved. All the Committee has said is that there are a number of approaches to values education, some formal, others informal and each school will have to decide for itself just which one or ones it is to use. Nowhere does the Committee give any indication of the criteria schools might use to aid them in their selection and nowhere does it indicate that with the formalised approaches to moral education marked theoretical and methodological differences are apparent. Cooper brings this out when, after noting that the Committee advocates a blending of the approaches of such people as Simon, McPhail, Wilson and Kohlberg, he points out that this:

"Fails to make sense as the four methodologies are predicated on different conceptions of morality and thus how to teach it. For example, Simon's Values Clarification technique is relativistic and subjective, while Kohlberg's Stage Theory approach is cognitive and objective."¹⁸

Codd makes a similar assessment. When speaking of the approaches the Committee enumerates he declares:

"They vary markedly in their theoretical perspectives, making nonsense of the Johnson Report's suggestion that 'usually there will be a blending of all these approaches'."¹⁹

18. *op. cit.* p 22.

19. Codd, J Values education and the neutrality of the teacher. *Delta* 22: 1978, p 31.

If the Committee is concerned with a blueprint for action it must help schools gain some insight into the various theoretical stances that different approaches to moral education are predicated upon. Furthermore it must offer some specific help in deciding which particular approaches merit consideration for their particular purposes.

RECOMMENDATION 2.19

With respect to this recommendation it could be said that it is so broad in its scope and so general in its direction as to be almost no recommendation at all. Research of an unspecified nature is to be carried out into all aspects of our children's values. As a guide for action such a directive offers little help. What is required is an explicit specification of the objectives of the research and a more precise identification of the areas of study to be considered. In addition it seems appropriate to ask why the research envisaged is not also to be concerned with the values of adults. After all children grow up into adults and it is the difficulty of this growing up that the Committee has just been considering.

RECOMMENDATION 2.20

With respect to this recommendation a similar comment can be made. The recommendation is very broad in scope in that all aspects of health and social education are to be covered, and very general in its direction. (Leadership meeting only the general criterion of adequacy is called for.) In making this recommendation the Committee is not providing the specifications necessary for the action envisaged. It seems almost axiomatic to accept the claim that education in any area requires adequate leadership. The crucial question, however, is, what leadership is to count as adequate? The Committee provides no answer to this question and the recommendation suffers as a result.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

We come now to the section on controversial issues. The manner in which the Committee suggests such issues be handled is once again illustrative of the lack of conceptual clarity that underlies so many of the Committee's pronouncements. Lacking a clear grasp of what is involved in moral education, the Committee's stance on the important question of teacher neutrality is, as Codd observes, "dangerously ambivalent."²⁰

After providing some examples of controversial issues, ranging from euthanasia to vandalism, the Committee makes the point that, "Young people today are under enormous pressures from their peer groups and from the news media to follow the latest 'trendy viewpoint'."²¹ It goes on to point out that teachers, by engaging their pupils in discussion of controversial issues, can assist them to "develop the independent values which will help them cope with peer pressures."²² The Committee then brings out the value of close involvement between teachers and parents and the need for teachers to emphasise strongly the values accepted by the school and community in partnership. At the same time it concedes the right of teachers, if challenged, to express their own personal views. However, it concludes that there should be no room for the values of "anti-establishment heroes" in such a programme. Finally it reaffirms the necessity for good communication between the school and the home.

In the Committee's pronouncements here a number of assumptions are made and some of these need examining.

In the first instance, it is assuming that pressure from peer groups always and necessarily leads to undesirable outcomes. This is an assumption that needs to be challenged. There is little doubt that, as the Committee observes, young people today are under considerable pressure from their peer groups, but this pressure is not always directed towards "trendy" viewpoints. Some of these viewpoints outlive this clearly derogatory connotation and quickly become an accepted and acceptable part of establishment

20. loc. cit.

21. op. cit. p 34.

22. loc. cit.

policy and action. One does not have to go very far back into history to discover examples where masses of predominantly young people, responding largely to peer group pressure, have succeeded in gaining widespread establishment support for what was initially regarded as a trendy way-out viewpoint. On the international scene the Vietnam drama and on the national scene the Conservationist Lobby provide recent examples of this.

Related to this is the assumption the Committee makes with regard to the independent values young people are encouraged to develop to help them "cope with peer pressures."²³ The assumption here is that these values will help young people become independent of peer pressures while accepting of establishment values. Clearly there is a contradiction here. On the one hand the Committee says that it wants young people to "take an independent line"²⁴ in sorting out their own values while on the other hand it says that this line must not be independent of that taken by the school and community in partnership. Such inconsistencies necessarily lead to what might be termed a Jekyll and Hyde stance being forced upon the unfortunate pupils. When they are confronted by the values of their peers young people are to be encouraged to take an independent line. When they are confronted by the values of the school and community, however, a different set of conditions operate. In these circumstances conformity, not independence, is to be valued and young people are to be strongly encouraged to accept what the majority uphold. Two obvious comments can be made about this situation.

Firstly, as already pointed out, peer groups are not necessarily or always wrong. Secondly, and by way of a corollary, the school and the community are not necessarily or always right. This of course, raises the very important question of how we decide what values are worthy of acceptance and what values are not. How do we decide what is right? The Committee does not face up to this vital problem at all. It seems to accept unquestionably the notion that the majority is necessarily always right. The deficiencies in

23. loc. cit.

24. ibid

this viewpoint are brought out well by Codd who notes that:

"New Zealanders are too often inclined to equate democracy with consensus. The Johnson Committee, after first acknowledging that the submissions made to it emphasise the dangerous lack of basic values within our society, proceeds to exhort teachers to stand up for those values that are accepted by the school and community in partnership. But values are not justified merely on the grounds that they are accepted, even if such acceptance is held by the great majority of the community. Indeed, it may be discovered through rational, open and disciplined discussion, that the 'basic values' of the community provide a very insubstantial foundation upon which the teacher could stand."²⁶

Furthermore the Committee suggests that solving complex moral problems, (e.g. abortion or racism,) is largely brought about through open and frank discussion where all points of view are freely discussed and fully understood. Expressed another way the Committee is saying moral education involving controversial issues consists of allowing children to hear and discuss all aspects of a situation while at the same time ensuring that the views held by school and community are given priority. Once again a contradiction is involved here. If parents are to be assured that "all points of view are fairly presented"²⁷ then how can one point of view be more "strongly emphasised"²⁸ than another? If the word "fair" is to have any meaning at all it follows that all points of view need to receive equal emphasis. This said, there still remains however, the important question of the place of discussion and the role of the teacher in helping pupils solve matters of moral concern. As already indicated, the Committee seems to believe that a simple discussion is all that is required for the resolving of controversial issues and that a teacher's role is simply to ensure that pupils understand all points of view. Such a belief is naive in the extreme. Moral education is much more complex than this. Not only do children need to be helped to see all sides of the issues involved but, and this is

26. op. cit. p 37.

27. op. cit. p 34.

28. loc. cit.

of central importance, they need also to be helped to gain the knowledge and skills that will equip them to make moral decisions in this area. To help children see the complexity of a moral problem and yet fail to provide them with assistance in selecting morally appropriate solutions has little to do with moral education.

By contrast, Snook and MacGeorge in their valuable book More Than Talk²⁹ outline what is involved in moral education and how to go about dealing with the sorts of controversial issues the Johnson Committee is talking about. They itemise five principles that are so central to morality that "they cannot be abandoned without abolishing morality altogether."³⁰ They then go on to claim that "These five principles define the moral domain. Initiation into these principles and their working out in practice is initiation into morality: it is moral education."³¹ It is an appreciation of moral education in these dimensions that the Committee seems to lack. In the ostensibly neutral role it prescribes for teachers involved in examining controversial moral issues the Committee displays a disquieting ambivalence. Children are to be encouraged to develop an independent line, yet teachers are charged to give strong emphasis to the position taken by the establishment. A conflict of interests occurs here and more than a hint of indoctrination and even coercion can be detected. Codd deals well with this problem of teacher neutrality. After making the point that: "... The neutrality of the teacher will tend to have a direct bearing on the effects that classroom discussion of moral issues has on the pupils who participate,"³² he goes on to observe:

"Where 'neutrality' is taken to mean 'complete ethical relativity,' these effects could well be contrary to the aims of moral education. On the other hand, if the term 'neutrality' is taken to mean something closer to 'rational impartiality' we have a conception of a teacher's role as a chairman of discussion who is consciously helping pupils to bring impartial standards of reasoning to bear on the moral problems that are under discussion."³³

- 29. op. cit.
- 30. ibid, p 16.
- 31. loc. cit.
- 32. op. cit. p 35.
- 33. loc. cit.

It is rational impartiality that writers like Snook and MacGeorge argue for and which the Committee at times seems to be advocating. However, it is ethical relativism that many critics of the Report fear may eventuate. To allay such fears the Johnson Committee needed to have a much clearer understanding of the complexities involved in an area which is indeed, as Snook and MacGeorge observe "both important and controversial."³⁴

Before leaving this section one further comment needs to be made. This relates to the Committee's declaration, "There must be no 'anti-establishment' heroes 'in such a programme, and we would expect principals to see that this was so'."³⁵ This is both a controversial and a revealing statement. It is controversial in that it points to a new "policing" role for school principals and it is revealing in that it indicates once again the Committee's covert rather than overt position with regard to the unchallengeable sanctity of the establishment view. In spite of what it has been saying about allowing children the opportunity to develop independent values and to see all points of view, the Committee is not itself prepared to concede the possibility that the establishment is not always right and that the ideology and practice of the establishment are as much up for challenge as those of the most trendy way-out minority group. That the Committee should choose to eliminate the possible appearance of any "anti-establishment" heroes through the operation of a principal's authority is odd.

Firstly, it is odd in that it suggests a basic insecurity with the stance that the establishment takes, a feeling that the establishment views have to be protected by some sort of "policing" action.

Secondly, it is odd in that it reveals, once again, the Committee's failure to appreciate what is actually involved in moral education, for if the beliefs and practices of the establishment were open to public, rational scrutiny and modification what need should there be to invoke unilaterally the coercive powers of school principals?

34. op. cit. p 17.

35. op. cit. p 34.

History reveals numerous examples of anti-establishment heroes who have contributed to our moral enlightenment. Is not the Committee overlooking one of the most famous "anti-establishment" heroes of all time? He who said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."³⁶ Is this the sort of hero the Committee proposes to eliminate?

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

The Committee's proposals in this section, insofar as one can fairly interpret them, seem to suggest a major change in the role of our public schools. Since the Education Act of 1877 New Zealand state education has, by legislation, been a secular enterprise. Any religious instruction or direct fostering of religious or spiritual beliefs that has taken place has occurred, at least technically, outside of official school hours. By means of what has become known as the Nelson System, weekly half hour religious instruction sessions have been held in large numbers of primary schools, where school committees have approved. Parents however have had the right to withdraw their children from such sessions and while the sessions are in progress the schools have officially been closed. What the Committee proposes in this section, however, radically changes this. School involvement in the "spiritual dimension" is to range from the pre-school and infant stage right through to form seven and spiritual concerns are to become an integral and integrated part of the total state education process. Such proposals, not surprisingly, have generated extensive and intensive response throughout the country and the close scrutiny to which the Committee's blueprint in this area has been subjected has revealed, yet again, major problems. The following comments focus on three particular areas of concern. Firstly, the lack of precision surrounding the definition of the term "spiritual dimension". Secondly, the assumption made regarding the existence of this dimension. And thirdly, the confusion that surrounds, and some of the implications that follow from, the recommendation that this dimension be fostered in New Zealand state education.

36. The Holy Bible. Oxford, Oxford University Press, Matthew, Chapter 21 Verse 13.

Firstly, the definition of the term "spiritual dimension". Once again the Committee, as with its definition of social education, is not able to define clearly just what it is that it is talking about. The Committee speaks of schools fostering "a pride in heritage, in the growth of self-identity and in seeking purpose and meaning in life";³⁷ it speaks of "ultimate concerns",³⁸ it deplores today's materialistic society and suggests that the word "religion", because of certain contemporary pejorative connotations, does not describe what it is referring to. The Committee claims, rather, to be referring to what Professor Geering exemplifies in the four questions, Who am I? Why am I here? Where have I come from? Where am I going to? and while it agrees that these are essentially religious questions the Committee prefers to speak of them as "spiritual" questions as this more accurately describes the type of school involvement it envisages. The Committee then quotes Albert Einstein when he talks about "the sensation of the mystical"³⁹ and it expresses the hope that "teachers of all subjects would be able to incorporate some of this dimension in their teaching".⁴⁰ The Committee concludes by expressing its support for the affirmation made by the "Aims and Objectives" working party of the Educational Development Conference in 1974 that "the search for meaning, purpose and identity in life is necessary for the health of the individual and the community".⁴¹

What are we to make of all this? Perhaps the Committee in speaking of a spiritual dimension is referring to that human response which goes beyond our concern for the immediate physical world which we inhabit and reaches out to what some people describe as the meta-physical world. But if this be the case one might ask, in what way is "pride in heritage" and the "growth of self-identity" part of this new dimension? The schools of New Zealand have been endeavouring for years to foster in their pupils a pride in their heritage and teachers have been aware of and have responded to, the needs of their pupils to establish their own self-identity. If this be the case is it not correct

37. op. cit. p 35.

38. loc. cit.

39. loc. cit.

40. loc. cit.

41. loc. cit.

to say that the fostering of a spiritual dimension is already an established part of our state education system? Next, the Committee refers to the views of Paul Tillich and the concept "ultimate concerns" and it is here that the word "religion" is referred to for the first time. However, rather than making clear what it understands by this term, the Committee proceeds to tell us what the "misguided" majority of New Zealanders imagine it to be. Following this it presents Professor Geering's four questions as examples of what it is talking about but then proceeds to confuse the issue by informing us that these are in fact deeply religious questions. However, for reasons unstated it prefers in this context to use the word "spiritual" as more accurately describing the type of school involvement⁴² envisaged. To add to the confusion, the Committee brings in Einstein's notion of the "mystical" as a beautiful and profound emotion which is at the centre of true religiousness, thereby successfully conflating the distinction they later make⁴³ between the emotional and spiritual dimensions.

Such conceptual vagueness and confusion cannot be accepted in a blueprint for action. If a spiritual dimension is to be fostered in our state education system then the nature of this dimension must of necessity be made clear.

The second inadequacy to be examined in this section concerns the assumption the Committee makes with regard to the existence of the dimension it has been unable to successfully define. At the beginning of its statements in section 2.4.8 the Committee declares "There is a further dimension in the area of moral and values education to which this Committee gives its support. This is the spiritual dimension"⁴⁴ and again at the commencement of section 2.4.9 it affirms "There is a spiritual dimension which is part of being human ... Man has many dimensions: emotional, physical, intellectual, social and spiritual".⁴⁵ In neither case, nor elsewhere in this section, however, does it make any attempt to support this declaration. Some might wish to argue

42. loc. cit.

43. See page 43.

44. loc. cit.

45. loc. cit.

that the basis for such a declaration is self-evident and thus requires no explication. Others, however, might wish to argue that the justification for such an important premise should be made clear.

One would think that a Committee which encourages young people to take an independent line and which applauds the intellectual development of individuals to the full, would share this view and would have taken the opportunity to exemplify it in practice by stating explicitly and unambiguously the basis for such a belief. One might well accept the existence of an emotional, physical, intellectual and social dimension of man on the basis of an accumulation of empirical and personal experience, but the existence of a spiritual dimension seems not to be as readily susceptible to such verification. Indeed, a quite different set of criteria seem to be involved and these criteria should be available for public perusal.

The third inadequacy to be examined here concerns recommendation 2.22 itself, viz: "That the fostering of a non-sectarian spiritual dimension in New Zealand state education be accepted".⁴⁶ There seems here to be a further area of confusion and at least two important implications relating to charges of possible indoctrination and of failing to take into account the views of those who do not accept the Committee's recommendation.

The confusion already engendered by the Committee's use of the term "spiritual dimension" is further exacerbated in this recommendation by the construction of the recommendation itself and by the inclusion of the term "non-sectarian". When the Committee says it wishes to foster a non-sectarian spiritual dimension in New Zealand state education what does it mean? Does it wish to promote an awareness of this dimension, whatever it may prove to be, or does it mean that it wishes to promote definite belief in this dimension in New Zealand state education? There seems to be a significant difference here. If the former is the case, the emphasis will be on the sorts of experiences individuals will be exposed to in order that they may experience more fully

46. ibid, p 37.

this dimension which is "part of being human".⁴⁷ If the latter is the case, however, the emphasis will be not just on providing particular experiences, but will be on effecting specific changes in an individual's belief system. In the second case it would seem that the individual has little option but to "believe" while in the first an element of choice is retained. Just where the Committee stands here should be made absolutely clear.

When the Committee uses the term "non-sectarian" it adds a further area of confusion. One normally associates this term with the word "religion" but when it is coupled with the term "spiritual" what exactly is meant? One of the common meanings of the word non-sectarian is "non-denominational" and when we apply this to the term "spiritual" we end up with the odd situation of advocating a non-denominational spiritual dimension. This of course presupposes that "spiritual" dimensions can necessarily be categorised into denominations. Is this what the Committee means? Is it advocating the fostering of a non-denominational spiritual dimension? In the absence of any support, either in the Johnson Report itself or elsewhere, for the view that the spiritual dimension is subject to denominational claims, one is forced to conclude that the Committee after all does not really mean what it appears to be saying. Rather than a non-sectarian spiritual dimension it really means a non-sectarian religious dimension. In striving to avoid the problems associated with the word "religion" it has encountered others equally intransigent with the result that a great deal more heat than light has been generated in this area.

Assuming now that by a "non-sectarian spiritual dimension" the Committee means a non-sectarian religious dimension, one further confusion still remains. Is the Committee referring to "sectarian" in the context of Christianity only or is it viewing it in the context of all religions? Again this is not clear. Mention is made of discussing "the tenets of various religions on a comparative basis"⁴⁸ and of considering the wider

47. ibid, p 35.

48. ibid, p 36.

dimension of "ultimate concerns".⁴⁹ On this basis one could reasonably suppose that the "sectarian" aspect of non-sectarian refers to different world religions. However, references to "Christian concerns"⁵⁰ and "the Judaeo-Christian tradition"⁵¹ and other references elsewhere in the Report suggest that the Committee really has in mind "sectarian" in respect of Christian sects. If the Committee is advocating the fostering of a dimension which relates to all the various sects of Christianity that is one thing. If the Committee is advocating the fostering of a dimension which relates to all world religions that is quite another.⁵²

Leaving aside these confusions, two further closely related matters need to be examined. The first concerns the implication attached to the term "fostering" and the second concerns the provisions the Committee makes for those individuals who do not share the Committee's belief in the existence of a "spiritual" dimension.

With regard to the term "fostering" there seems to be a clear indication that since the basic premise concerning the existence of a spiritual dimension is not up for challenge, it will be the task of teachers to ensure that their pupils come to believe in this particular dimension. This being the case one cannot escape the feeling that there is, albeit in an incipient form, an element of indoctrination involved here. In using the term "fostering" the Committee is not really allowing for any outcomes other than the ones it envisages. It is, in effect, saying, we believe a spiritual dimension exists as part of being human and this belief is to be fostered in the New Zealand state education system. By choosing to use the term "fostering" rather than say, the term "examining", the Committee is coming perilously close to advocating a situation where individuals are to be persuaded to accept one version of reality rather than

49. *ibid*, p 35.

50. *ibid*, p 32.

51. *ibid*, pp 35, 36.

52. Alternatively the Committee may have in mind the concept of an "agreed syllabus" in religious instruction following the British pattern.

another, not on the basis of rational disputation or examination, but on the basis of an unquestioning acceptance of the beliefs of others. Even viewed in the most favourable light this approach has strong connotations of indoctrination.

Developing this a little further leads to the second matter for examination. The Committee, in putting forward its recommendation in the way it does makes no allowance for those persons who do not share its convictions. On at least two counts interested individuals might well object to the action that the Committee proposes.

Firstly, there is the objection that not all people subscribe to the Committee's belief that all human beings possess a spiritual dimension. To those who hold the view that there is no spiritual dimension to life any attempt to foster such a dimension makes no sense. If something does not exist you cannot be exposed to it and if it does not exist you should not be encouraged to believe that it does.

Secondly, there is the objection that in a secular education system there is by definition no place for any form of religious instruction. Those who hold the view that there is no spiritual dimension to life believe that the Johnson Committee is really talking about fostering a non-denominational religious dimension in New Zealand state education and this they strongly oppose. The following quotation expresses rather emotionally such a position:

"The tentacles of religious dogma reach out into every corner of our society. They flex their muscles in parliament where a fatuous prayer is followed by actions which stretch out in other directions ... Religious enthusiasts are creating havoc in all parts of the world ... Radios and televisions daily churn out religious nonsenses to provide what Karl Marx called 'The Opiate of the Masses'. Confound our adults if you will, but, please spare the immature child. Keep religion out of schools."⁵³

53. Anderson, E Spare our children. The New Zealand rationalist and humanist Volume 39, Number 12: 1978, p 3.

That the Committee chooses to ignore such objections is both presumptuous and counter-productive. It is presumptuous in that it allows no tolerance for dissenting views and it is counter-productive in that it gives no indication how this extremely difficult dilemma might be resolved. Somewhat ironically the Committee advocates "a caring for and awareness of those around, including the community as a whole ... a concern and consideration for others"⁵⁴ as "basic values which have universal appeal and which will remain the cornerstone of every community",⁵⁵ yet in failing to acknowledge the existence of beliefs contrary to its own the Committee shows little evidence of its preparedness to uphold such values itself.

Whichever way one interprets the Committee's recommendation, two things are quite clear. Firstly, a major change in the controversial area of religious instruction in New Zealand schools is being advocated, though exactly what this change is is not at all clear. Secondly, interest in and resistance to such a change is likely to be very high in the community at large. Not all parents, for example, want their beliefs on religious matters to be challenged in the schools. This being the case, it seems absolutely essential that a "blueprint for action" should give some indication how this very difficult issue might be satisfactorily resolved. The Committee's failure to do this is a major inadequacy and may very well in the long run prevent the implementation of the action the Committee is so strongly recommending.

EDUCATION ABOUT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

With respect to education about human development and relationships the Committee strongly endorses the spirit of the suggestions made in the Ross Report. In addition it supports, with qualifications, the eight recommendations of The Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion, by offering some points to consider and making some suggestions concerning the setting up of programmes and the involvement of teachers.

54. op. cit. p 32.

55. loc. cit.

In terms of the public debate in this area, what the Committee has to say here is interesting and important, but like the other areas of the Report thus far examined it is open to a number of important criticisms. In particular what the Committee has to say does very little to face up to, and help resolve, many of the problems raised by the proposals of the Ross Report. By concentrating more on procedural matters and strategies for implementation, and by raising the status of its own beliefs to the level of fact it seems to be hoping that these problems will quietly disappear. Unfortunately this is not likely to happen.

Although as yet the Department of Education has still to publish details of the submissions it received, it is clear that public response to the Ross Report was extensive and in certain areas very intensive and that while many of the submissions were very supportive of the recommendations made, many were not. It is these latter submissions and the concerns they expressed which the Johnson Committee has in large measure chosen to ignore and it can be argued with some justification that in so doing it has made its own position significantly less substantive.

One of the more serious criticisms of the Ross Report concerned the inadequate manner in which it dealt with the areas of sexuality and morality and the manner in which it presented sex education under the umbrella of human development and relationships.

Speaking specifically of the Ross Report's statements relating to sexuality and morality Bassett claimed that this was where "... the most significant controversy lies and where the Committee seem most unsure and vague".⁵⁶ The Ross Report was to be criticised, he claimed, not so much for what it said but for what it did not say. In an attempt to avoid heated debate, Bassett claimed:

"The Committee have failed to give an adequate account of sexuality and its relationship with morality or the manner in which the subject might be approached. In so doing they have left recommendations so vague and imprecise as to provide insufficient guidance. It confuses

56. Bassett, G R Education and sexuality. Delta 16: 1975, p 45.

more than it clarifies. In brief the document is too timid, lacking the boldness and clarity of outline which might have provided direction in this area."⁵⁷

Speaking of the Ross Report's attempt to present sex education within the context of human development and relationships St. Dominic's College and Primary School Home and School Association claimed that the Report was deceptive in that sex instruction was purported to be only a minor part of the programme but in fact was the only section that was new.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association Conference of 1975 also claimed that the Ross Report virtually limited itself to a discussion of sex education and as a result the conference brought forward and accepted a wider definition of human development and relationships.⁵⁹ The Society for the Promotion of Community Standards made a similar claim in declaring that the only new material in the Ross Report concerned the controversial areas of contraception, petting, masturbation, homosexuality and advanced sexual techniques.⁶⁰

With respect to the Johnson Report the question now arises, "How well have these and similar criticisms been faced up to?" A review of what is contained in this latter Report reveals that the answer is that they have in fact not been faced up to at all. The Johnson Committee does not even acknowledge that these criticisms existed. It merely records that in submissions it received the response ranged from enthusiastic support to "outright opposition (from groups such as the C.P.A.)"⁶¹ but nowhere does it attempt to examine the claims of this opposition. If our understanding in this area is to be advanced, then we should be encouraged to examine the bases on which important decisions are to be accepted or rejected. All the Johnson Committee has to say in this regard is:

57. loc. cit.

58. St. Dominic's College and Primary School Home and School Association, An expression of parents' concern. Dunedin, 1974, p 1.

59. New Zealand Post Primary Teachers Association, Human Development and relationships. National Conference paper, 1975, p 3.

60. Correspondence to the author from Miss P Bartlett, National Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards (Inc.)

61. op. cit. p 39.

"In 1973 the Ross Committee offered suggestions as a basis for discussion on the role of our schools in human development and relationships. We strongly endorse the spirit of the suggestions of this Report. However, we feel that it has been interpreted as emphasising sex education rather than the whole field of human development and relationships."⁶²

To substantiate its feeling here the Committee needs to present something more substantial than this. At the very least it ought to explain why the St. Dominic criticism is invalid since there seem to be good grounds for upholding the St. Dominic view, particularly when one notes the reference to sex and sexuality in the Committee's own statements in this section. In the four paragraphs devoted to the Ross Report the words "sex" or "sexuality" appear in three of them and in the only two specific references to literature in this field direct reference to sex is made. In the first reference the Committee feels that the handbook, Health, Suggestions for Health Education in Primary Schools would need to be expanded to "ensure that every child leaving primary school has a basic understanding of sex in this context"⁶³ and in the second, the Committee advises teachers that the booklet Making Sense of Sex would be very appropriate for their needs.⁶⁴

Three other areas of public concern provide further examples of issues to which the Committee fails to directly address itself.

Firstly, the question of research relating to the efficacy of human development and the relationships programme in overseas schools. This important concern is not dealt with by the Committee. References in the Ross Report to overseas research on the effect of human development and relationships programmes in schools have been claimed to be inadequate and counter research has been offered by numerous organisations and individuals, for example, The Society For The Promotion of Community Standards⁶⁵ and The Concerned Parents

62. ibid, p 37.

63. loc. cit.

64. ibid, p 38.

65. The Society For The Promotion Of Community Standards, Submissions to the Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion. 1976, p 6.

Association.⁶⁶ These claims and counter claims need to be carefully examined, for if human development and relationships programmes of the sort envisaged for New Zealand have already been put into practice overseas then this experience is obviously relevant and any research which bears on this is clearly vital. The protagonists for the development of human development and relationships programmes in schools produce one set of research findings, the antagonists another, and for reasons undisclosed the Johnson Committee has accepted the former. Such an unsupported stance is not acceptable. It is not sufficient for the Committee just to believe that it is right and to make pronouncements to this effect. It must show clearly the basis for its belief. Only in these circumstances can reasoned debate ensue and informed judgements be made.

Secondly, the fear that the implementation of human development and relationships programmes in schools will drive a wedge between parents and children. This concern has also been expressed by the St. Dominic's Home and School Association in its publication An Expression Of Parents' Concern⁶⁷ and is shared by a large number of parents throughout the country.⁶⁸ Nowhere, however, in the Johnson Report does this issue receive any direct attention. This is a serious omission.

In supporting their claim the St. Dominic's parents declared that the whole thrust of the Ross Report was to take from parents the prior responsibility they have to provide for the education of their children in the area of human development and relationships. As an example of what they were concerned about they drew attention to the instructional comic strip Too Great A Risk⁶⁹ which they contended illustrated very clearly the manner in which the position of parents can be undermined. While their general claim in itself is highly debatable the specific claim they make, with reference to the publication in question, is not. A detailed examination of this publication, presented to the Johnson Committee in early 1977⁷⁰

66. The Concerned Parents' Association, Submissions to the Royal Commission On Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion, 1975, p 5.
67. op. cit. p 1.
68. Dalzell, R S To be or not to be. Unpublished paper, Palmerston North, 1976, p 44.
69. New Zealand Council For Educational Research. Too great a risk. Set 74. No. 2, 1974.
70. Dalzell, R S op. cit. pp 46-47.

showed quite clearly that however one views the role of parents in providing sex education for their children the publication Too Great A Risk did effectively undermine this role. It is not a particular view of the manner in which parents should exercise their role that the publication presents, but rather a direct denial that parents do in fact have any role to play at all.

In view of the importance of this concern and in view of the information the Committee had in its possession it is unfortunate that it chose to do nothing to allay the very real fears that exist in this area.

And thirdly, the claim that the existence of a latency period in a primary school child's development precludes the introduction of compulsory human development and relationships programmes in the primary school. This particular claim is advanced very strongly by, for example, the Concerned Parents Association⁷¹ and they made submissions to this effect to the Johnson Committee. Beyond acknowledging in a very general way that there was some opposition to the proposals for human development and relationships education⁷² the Committee does not face up in any detail to this particular concern.

Since a large part of the Concerned Parents Association's argument against compulsory human development and relationships education for all pupils hinges on its belief in the existence of this latency period, it is imperative that the validity of such a belief be examined. This the Committee has failed to do. If it can be shown that a latency period does in fact exist then any proposals for human development and relationships education must take this into account. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that such a period does not exist then the basis for this particular opposition is removed. Parsonson in a paper on pre-adolescent sexual knowledge argues strongly that the latter is the case and he presents references to research which supports his claim.⁷³ It is this sort of examination and this sort of evidence that the Johnson Committee had a responsibility to consider and to comment on.

71. Concerned Parents' Association, Supplement to newsletter, April, 1978 and Newsletter, August/September, 1978, p 7.

72. op. cit. p 39.

73. Parsonson, B S Pre-adolescent sexual knowledge: opinion versus research. Delta 22: 1978, p 60.

Further examples of the Committee's reluctance to face up to the many difficult problems in this area can be seen in its response to the Royal Commission's eight recommendations.⁷⁴ In particular the Committee's response to Recommendations four and eight warrant closer examination. In both these cases the difficult problems involved have not been directly addressed.

As a response to Recommendation four, "That sex education forms a logical part of a carefully integrated programme on human relationships and not be treated as an isolated topic"⁷⁵ the Committee suggests that no change be made yet two pages later it presents its own recommendation maintaining the rights of parents to withdraw their children from human development and relationships programmes if they believe such programmes are not in the best interests of their children. The Committee follows this with the assurance that it has considered "the dilemma which could arise, especially in the primary school, and has carefully thought about the right of parents to withdraw children from programmes".⁷⁶ However, as it sees human development and relationships as permeating wide sections of the curriculum, it could not suggest how such a right of withdrawal could be exercised in this type of approach without great disruption. Quite clearly there is an area of conflict and confusion here with the conflict relating to the seemingly intractable problem of attempting to reconcile two mutually exclusive lines of action and the confusion relating to the manner in which the Committee attempts to effect this reconciliation.

On the one hand the Committee accepts without change the Royal Commission's recommendation that sex education forms a logical part of a carefully integrated programme on human relationships and should not be treated as an isolated topic. Yet on the other, it recommends that parents be given the right to withdraw their children from such programmes. At least at the pragmatic level these

74. op. cit., pp 38, 39.

75. ibid, p 38.

76. ibid, p 41.

two lines of action appear incompatible. If human development and relationship programmes are to permeate wide sections of the curriculum and if parents can withdraw their children from such programmes then, ipso facto, parents who choose to exercise this right will be forced to withdraw their children not just from human development and relationships programmes as such, but from all aspects of the curriculum with which such programmes have become integrated.

One obvious consequence of such an action would be that the children concerned would be receiving instruction only in those narrow areas of the curriculum not permeated by the human development and relationships programmes. By recommending that these programmes be integrated into the total curriculum and by recommending that parents have the right to withdraw their children from such programmes the Committee is in effect forcing parents to choose between accepting a curriculum programme so narrow as to be virtually no programme at all or accepting human development programmes for their children. Confronted by this consequence one is forced to ask, what sort of choice is this?

Consideration of this matter calls into serious question the Committee's decision to formulate Recommendation 2.27⁷⁷ concerning the rights of parents to withdraw their children from particular school programmes. With this recommendation the Committee acknowledges the fact that parents have certain rights in this area but in another recommendation it effectively denies parents the opportunity to exercise these rights. By its own admission the Committee "could not suggest how such a right of withdrawal could be exercised in this type of approach without great disruption"⁷⁸ yet it still recommended that parents have this right. If the Committee could not see the solution to this problem then it does not seem reasonable to leave it to the initiative of the parents to come up with a solution. After all, it is not the parents who have created the problem.

77. ibid, p 40.

78. ibid, p 41.

Another consequence that might also follow from Recommendation 2.27 concerns the right of parents to withdraw their children from other than human development and relationships aspects of the school curriculum. If parents, because they do not believe a programme in human development and relationships is in the best interests of their children, are able to withdraw their children from such programmes, why should they not also be able to exercise a similar right with respect to programmes relating to all other areas of the school curriculum? If the sole basis for withdrawal from a programme is that the programme is not seen by the parent as being in the best interests of the child, then surely such a criterion has equal validity with respect to any programme of instruction a school may choose to offer? At least on the grounds of logic it would seem difficult to argue against this conclusion.

If this area of parental rights is explored more carefully it may be that other possibilities may need to be considered. For example, instead of devising strategies for persuading parents to refrain from exercising their right to withdraw children from human development and relationships programmes the question of the rights themselves might be looked at more directly. What exactly is the nature of this right that parents have and is it an inalienable right? If parents maltreat their children physically they are legally deprived of their right to care for their children. If parents deprive their children of the opportunity to a full education, including an education involving human development and relationships, are there, or could there be, any similar sanctions that can be invoked? Have the children concerned any similar legal protection or means of redress? The problem here is that of the notion of the inalienability of parents' rights over their children. If by withdrawing their children from education programmes at school parents can be shown to be disadvantaging their children, then does this right of withdrawal remain unchallenged? The Johnson Committee could well have drawn attention to a matter of such fundamental concern.

From this examination it is clear that the Committee has not fully come to terms with the implications that arise from the course of action it recommends. By seeking to have human development and relationships courses permeating wide areas of the school curriculum and by giving parents the right to withdraw their children from such

courses, it is creating a dilemma which, on its own admission, is very difficult to resolve. And in accepting the right of parents to withdraw their children from attendance at human development and relationships courses it opens up the possibility of withdrawal of children from programmes right across the school curriculum.

As a response to the Royal Commission's Recommendation eight, "That the selection of staff to undertake the programmes in human relationships be the responsibility of the school principal"⁷⁹ the Committee again suggests no change and this is also an inadequate response. Some of the greatest fears expressed by teachers themselves and by parents have centred on the suitability of those teaching these programmes and the criteria to be used in the selection of such teachers.⁸⁰ A bare "no change" comment does little to alleviate these fears.

The Committee concedes that, "There will be some teachers who feel inadequate and some few teachers who may in fact be incapable of teaching the topic with the necessary sensitivity. And there will always be those few teachers whose personalities render them unsuitable for this type of education"⁸¹ but it gives no guidance as to how principals might be able to identify such people or what criteria would be appropriate to employ when making these judgements.

In addition, the Committee affirms that "a basic philosophy in which ethical aspects are just as important as biological facts"⁸² is essential for the effective teaching of human development and relationships education but the question is, what ethical aspects are the important ones? The Committee acknowledges the fact that "Any school will represent a variety of ethical values within its families"⁸³ and that special consideration and respect must be shown at all times for the differing values that exist, but it does not in any detail describe the form that this consideration should take. In specific terms just what ethical values with respect to sexuality are teachers expected to uphold in their programmes? Or are teachers to be ethically neutral? For many parents this is perhaps the most crucial issue in the whole debate. Because in any school there will

79. ibid, p 39.

80. For an example of this see Concerned Parents' Association, Co-operation or conflict?! Human development and moral values. 1976, p 18.

81. op. cit. p 41.

82. ibid, p 40.

83. loc. cit.

be a variety of ethical values within its families is the Committee suggesting that these values are all of equal worth? It is answers to questions like these that a principal will need to have before she/he will be in a position to select appropriate staff for the programmes envisaged. And when she/he does have these answers, and the Committee makes no suggestions as to where she/he might find them, she/he is still faced with the further problem of ensuring that the human development and relationships education provided "Remains an undramatic and integrated aspect of the total curriculum"⁸⁴ even though not all of her/his teachers will be taking part in these programmes. While it is not suggested that these problems are necessarily insoluble it is suggested that the Committee is negligent in not facing up to them.

In concluding an appraisal of this section of the Report one final point needs to be made and this relates to the question of responsibility for designing and implementing the proposed courses. On this question the Committee is again somewhat contradictory in its declarations.

In outlining how these programmes could be set up it recommends that, "The parents (and senior students where possible) should be involved in the planning of the course"⁸⁵ yet in Recommendation 2.26 it declares, "The Department of Education should accept the responsibility of designing and implementing courses in the field of human development and relationships through life-long education for the whole community".⁸⁶ Some element of confusion obtains here. On the one hand the Committee seems to be saying that the responsibility for the design and implementation of these programmes is the single responsibility of the Department of Education, while on the other it is suggesting that a shared responsibility between parents and the Department is envisaged. In terms of parental support for these programmes the difference between these two interpretations is very important. If parents believe they have a real role in the decision making process relating to human development and relationships programmes then they are likely to be more supportive of such

84. ibid, p 41.

85. ibid, p 40.

86. ibid, p 39.

programmes than if they see their role as being largely a passive one. Consequently it is very important that any confusions in this area be removed. If the notion of parental involvement is intended to suggest a shared parental and Departmental responsibility then clearly Recommendation 2.2.6 should be reworded to indicate this. If this is not the Committee's intention then the exact nature of parental involvement will need to be specified much more precisely.

From the examination made in this chapter, it is clear that the initial claim with respect to the Committee's failure to face up to and help resolve many of the problems raised by the Ross Report six years ago is well substantiated. Rather than explaining the basis for its own views and explaining the rationale for rejecting the various criticisms that have been made of the Ross Report proposals it largely avoids them and seems to assume that its own declarations merit unquestioning acceptance.

TEACHER TRAINING

In this section two areas in particular will be looked at viz. Selection and Pre-Service Training.⁸⁷

SELECTION

The Committee acknowledges the importance of teacher education when it states, "We have received much support, both from submission and from speakers, for the view that teacher education is the key to change in education, and we concur with this view",⁸⁸ but rather surprisingly it gives very little consideration to this in its Report on this vital area. Not only does it give this area very little consideration, but the consideration it does give lacks the detail and conceptual clarity that such an important topic demands. An examination of the Committee's comments with respect to teacher trainee selection will illustrate this.

87. Comments relating to the first of these areas have already been published in Massey University's Delta journal 22: pp 40-44, 1978, and they are restated here with minor modifications.

88. op. cit. p 50.

As a starting point for their comments the Committee recommends a greater measure of personal and social maturity in applicants as a prerequisite for college entry and commends the acceptance of older people with experience broader than that of school leavers. What this seems to be saying is that some, if not many, of current teachers college entrants are inadequate in terms of their personal and social maturity and that the experiences they have had up to leaving school are not sufficiently broad to enable them to become the effective teachers the Committee would want.

At first glance, the Committee's recommendation here would seem entirely reasonable. Most people would agree that entrants to a teachers college should have a measure of personal and social maturity and would be better candidates had they been involved in a broad rather than a narrow range of experiences. However, when pursued further this general recommendation becomes rather less than satisfactory and at least two important questions arise. In the first case, what are to constitute acceptable criteria for judging personal and social maturity? Secondly, what measure is to be used to evaluate the quality of experience that prospective teachers college entrants have had? Neither of these questions seem to be answered by the Committee, yet both are central to their recommendation.

Firstly, let us take the question of acceptable criteria for judging personal and social maturity. If the Committee can declare that prospective teachers college entrants need a greater measure of personal and social maturity, then logically it follows that the Committee must have some standard or set of criteria against which it can make these judgements. Furthermore, if it has such criteria, as one suspects it has, then it seems only reasonable that it makes this information available and explicit, for how else can the interested public join meaningfully in the debate? If however, it has no such criteria then its claim makes no sense at all and is reduced to the status of idle speculation.

Denied criteria as to what constitutes personal and social maturity, one is forced to take on faith what the Committee has decided. What constitutes personal and social maturity is surely far too contentious an issue to be taken as read.

Also, part of this first question, is the matter of evidence. Even bearing in mind what the Committee has to say about its attitude to research evidence⁸⁹ and this, to say the least, is extremely ambivalent and confused, some attempt needs to be made to offer support for the claim that a greater measure of personal and social maturity in teachers college applicants is required. It may well be that the Committee is correct in its feeling here, but it also may well be that it is not. What evidence does it provide or suggest to help us make up our minds about this matter?

Secondly, what measure is to be used to evaluate the quality of experience that prospective teachers college entrants have had? The Committee speaks of "broad experiences" and this seems to suggest that breadth is the measure to be used in this case. If this is so, and there is certainly no evidence in the Report to the contrary, it would seem that the Committee has taken as axiomatic that "broader is better". Whilst this may well be so with some things it is, not necessarily the case with experience. There are other factors to be taken into consideration, not the least of which is the matter of quality and relevance of experience.

It seems not an unreasonable hypothesis to put forward that in some instances the quality of a rather restricted range of experiences could well surpass the quality of a far broader range with the judgement of quality being directly related to the particular objective that one has in mind. With the case of choosing and educating prospective teachers one would need to examine the experience in terms of requirements for that particular activity (i.e. teaching) and it could well be that some experiences might be far more relevant and profitable than a whole range of other experiences. The crux of the problem here seems to centre around the type of experience and its relevance to future teachers, at least

89. ibid, p 11.

as much as to the "breadth" of this experience. If this is the case, a recommendation seeking to establish much more precisely just what type and extent of experience is most appropriate for prospective teachers and what measures can be used to assess the personal and social maturity that allegedly results from these experiences, would have been very much in order. As it is, the bulk of the discussion in this section on selection finds no direct expression in a specific recommendation and this seems to represent a serious omission. If it is important, as the Committee claims, that students should have a greater measure of social and personal maturity, and if it is important that older people with experiences broader than those of school leavers be accepted for entry to teachers colleges, then these important matters should at least be attended to and embodied in appropriate recommendations. Failure to do seems to give substance to the original claim that this particular section of the Committee's report suffers from lack of specificity and conceptual clarity.

From the above discussion of a recommendation that the Committee did not make (yet perhaps should have made) it now seems appropriate to move to a consideration of the recommendation that the Committee did make (but perhaps should not have made, at least in its present form).

Thus far it has been suggested that the Committee's claims regarding teacher training, while surviving superficial scanning, do not stand up very well to a more rigorous examination. Further illustrations of this will now be provided.

In section (a) of recommendation 2.41 the Committee declares that, "All interview committees and selection panels should include at least one member who is not professionally concerned with education".⁹⁰ Now the reason for this might well seem very obvious, but many people would want to know just why the Committee saw it necessary to make this recommendation, particularly in view of the fact that in the preamble to the recommendation no indication is

90. ibid, p 51.

given that such an assertion is about to follow. While many would have no dispute with this particular requirement in itself, what can and ought to be disputed is the expectation that such a recommendation should be accepted unsupported by evidence or argument. If the reason for this recommendation is so obvious and unquestionable that no evidence or argument need be offered to accompany it, then one could well ask, why bother to state it at all?

In section (b) of recommendation 2.41 the Committee recommends that all interview committees and selection panels should be trained in interview techniques. This recommendation seems to be clearly and concisely stated and a direct and logical outcome of the arguments that precede it. As such it stands up well to close scrutiny.

The same however, cannot be said of section (c) in this same recommendation. Here, again we are confronted by what is clearly a lack of clarity. The Committee here is suggesting that selection panels should place emphasis in their selection on those applicants whose personal qualities enable them to relate well to others. There are three points that can be made concerning this recommendation. Firstly, the ability to relate well to others is clearly a necessary but not sufficient condition for teaching. Secondly, the claim that the personal qualities of applicants should take priority over academic standards and these latter considerations should not dominate selection procedures, needs to be elaborated in much greater detail. And thirdly, the criteria claimed for measuring successful experience in dealing with people bringing up a family and having involvement in the community need to be stated and held up for examination.

Let us consider for a moment the emphasis on the ability to relate well to others. It could probably be argued that this ability is, generally speaking, a necessary condition for successful teaching; but it can be argued further that this ability taken on

its own is insufficient for most effective pedagogical purposes. Because an individual has the ability to relate well to others it by no means follows that he is able to teach them. The one does not necessarily ensure the other. It is not too difficult to visualise the situation where children are with a teacher who relates well to them and enables them to have a tremendously "happy time" while actually teaching them very little. The emphasis that the Committee puts on this particular quality arouses fears that, should their recommendation be adopted, this situation could well become a much more widespread reality than it currently is.

Developing this examination a little further leads to the second point relating to the priority of personal qualities over minimal academic standards in selection procedures. The questions that one would want to ask here are: "Why should consideration of an applicant's personal qualities take priority over his/her academic standard?" and, "What evidence is there to suggest that this latter criterion does, or is likely to, dominate selection procedures?" The answer to the first question here could well be that it should not, and it could be argued quite convincingly that it is not a matter of emphasizing one of these factors at the expense of the other but rather that both are essential and possibly equally as important as prerequisites for the task in hand. The Committee may very well have a more convincing argument than this for its case, but it is its responsibility to state it. It is insufficient to expect meaningful public debate to be based largely on an act of faith. Similarly, is there any evidence for the view that a consideration of academic standards does, or is likely to, dominate selection procedures? Such evidence is just as important for the position just outlined as it is for that suggested by the Committee.

There is a third and final point to be highlighted here, namely the confusing criteria for measuring successful experience. In the preamble to its recommendation, the Committee suggested that the sort of personal qualities it desired in applicants for teachers colleges could be the result of successful experience in: (a) dealing with people, (b) bringing up a family, or (c) involvement

in the community. Before this suggestion could be of much value however, a number of closely related questions have to be answered. For example, What do these categories really mean and what is to count as "successful experience" in these areas? In what important way, for instance, is "dealing with people" different from "involvement in the community"? Surely both involve dealing with people. Is not the latter just one aspect of the former? Furthermore, does bringing up a family not involve both of these experiences? No doubt the Committee had in mind some important distinctions between these activities but these distinctions are by no means as clear as they should be if this is really to be a plan for action. Similarly, in deciding what is to count as successful experience in these areas, what criteria does the Committee provide? If success in these areas of activity is important as an indicator of likely success as a teacher, as the Committee maintains, then it would seem most important to suggest some criteria against which this success may be judged. Successful experience in bringing up a family, for instance, could well mean one thing to one person and something quite different to another. Similarly, in judging the success of community involvement, quantitative rather than qualitative measurements might be used by some observers and quite the reverse by others. For the Committee's recommendation here to become a useful guide to action, far greater clarity and detail is required. We need to know what is going to count as successful experience and we need to know how we are to measure these things. The Johnson Committee unfortunately does not provide us with the answer to either of these questions.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Viewed overall the Committee's statements with respect to the pre-service training of teachers suffer from some of the same sorts of defects as noted in the previous section and consequently are similarly not very illuminating. In that they do little to advance our knowledge of what precisely the problems are and what precisely the solutions might be, they provide little real guidance for the future. A brief examination of some of the things the

Committee says in this section illustrates this contention.

Firstly, the claim that "Teachers colleges at the moment ... are far too subject oriented and students specialising in one subject too isolated from students specialising in other subjects"⁹¹ needs to be looked at more closely. As a casual comment this claim might well go, and indeed in certain areas has already gone, relatively unchallenged, but as part of a section which is seen by the Committee itself as, "The key to change in education"⁹² it merits somewhat closer consideration.

The first and most obvious question that might well be asked is, "On what evidence does the Committee base its belief that teachers colleges are presently 'far too subject-oriented'?" To have any weight such a claim needs substantiation. Some analysis of what exactly is done in the various teachers colleges would seem appropriate here, as would some statement of what constitutes "subject orientation" and what would count as an appropriate level of subject orientation. Is the Committee referring to the selected study aspects of teachers colleges courses or is it referring to something else? This is not clear. Further, in what way is this excessive subject orientation at teachers colleges manifesting itself in the activities of the new teachers coming into the schools? These sorts of questions need to be answered if the Committee's very generalised claim is to have any justification.

Turning to the second part of the claim, similar questions can well be raised. What evidence is there that students specialising in one subject are in fact isolated from students specialising in other subjects? What constitutes an excessive level of isolation? What ill effects is this alleged isolation having upon those most closely involved? Again, if the Committee's claim is to be anything more than a statement of faith answers to these or similar questions need at least to be hinted at. Perusal of programmes at one teachers college⁹³ shows that for all students at that college the percentage of timetabled activity not related to a specialist subject area, as in selected studies, is approximately sixty and this not inclusive

91. loc. cit.

92. ibid, p 50.

93. Palmerston North Teachers College.

of non-timetabled time when a great number of social, cultural and sporting activities take place. Does this constitute excessive isolation?

Following on from its initial claim, the Committee goes on to affirm that;

"The teachers colleges must offer a climate that helps the students achieve or grow in personal and social maturity, and must adjust their organisation to allow and encourage this growth."⁹⁴

Here again a number of questions immediately present themselves. Firstly, it can be asked, "What is the relationship of this affirmation to the preceding statement?" Is the Committee implying that students' growth in personal and social maturity is hindered by what it perceives to be an excessive subject orientation in teachers colleges or it is making a statement unrelated to its initial assessment? If the former is the case, the link is extremely tenuous. Experience at a number of teachers colleges suggests that the "isolation" of students specialising in the same subject area over a period of three years can, and often does, result in considerable personal, social and intellectual growth on the part of the students concerned. Secondly, if the latter is the case then what has prompted the Committee to make this affirmation? Surely all teachers colleges would want to offer, and would probably believe they were offering, a "Climate that helps the students achieve or grow in personal and social maturity".⁹⁵ What evidence has the Committee been privy to which suggests that the colleges are not offering such climates? If the Committee is prepared to make such a serious attack on the integrity and competency of teachers colleges in this matter then such an attack needs to be well substantiated and the basis for the charge clearly identified. In this case these conditions have not been met and the status of the Committee's affirmation suffers accordingly.

94. op. cit. p 51.

95. loc. cit.

Thirdly, with regard to the Committee's reference here it must be asked that if its assessment of the situation is shown to be correct, what precisely are the adjustments of organisation that will be necessary if teachers colleges are to allow and encourage the personal and social growth the Committee sees as being desirable?

It is this sort of detail which gives a blueprint its defining characteristics and it is this sort of detail the Committee has failed to provide. To simply state that adjustments in organisation will be required does little more than state the obvious. If the Committee's assessment is correct and organisational matters are hindering the personal and social growth of teachers college students then clearly organisational changes will need to be effected but the vital question is, "What changes?" It is to this question that the Committee fails to address itself.

In regard to the remaining four paragraphs of the Committee's statements on pre-service training, similar comments can be made. The Committee stresses the need for colleges "To give much greater emphasis to the development of mature, caring and supporting teachers than in the past"⁹⁶ but does not indicate the basis for such a declaration. The implication from the statement clearly is that current graduands from teachers colleges are not as mature, caring and supporting as they ought to be, but the Committee gives no indication of how they have arrived at this assessment. Nor do they give any indication as to how the greater emphasis they recommend might best be effected in practice nor what criteria are to be used to assess appropriate levels of maturity, caring and support. The Committee also recommends that;

"Students be given opportunities to be involved in the programmes, skills and techniques that help children to develop socially and personally."⁹⁷

96. loc. cit.

97. ibid, p 51.

The implication here is that students currently are not given such opportunities. Some observers, e.g. teachers college staff, would argue that this is an entirely inaccurate assessment of the situation both on the basis of their own experience of the situation and on that of research evidence e.g. The Campbell Report,⁹⁸ the most recent survey of teacher development programmes. This Report, amongst many other things, declares that in such programmes:

"There is strong commitment to the provision of experiences that will develop appropriate personality qualities in teachers."⁹⁹

In the face of such argument the Committee's claims do not appear to be very substantive.

After dealing with this matter of social and personal maturity the Committee goes on to prescribe what the professional element of courses should include. It makes an important observation concerning the relationship between theory and practice, and declares that:

"Health education, including Human Development and Relationships should be a required substantial course for all college students."¹⁰⁰

It then concludes this very important section by declaring that:

"Teachers in training should have opportunities to observe and work in a variety of different school organisations, including open plan classrooms and team teaching situations, and all should have at least one outdoor education experience. An understanding of the values held by minority groups and of their customs should be required from all students."¹⁰¹

98. Campbell, W J Realities of teacher development. Wellington, Department of Education, 1977.

99. ibid, p 16.

100. op. cit. p 51.

101. loc. cit.

In terms of a blueprint for action these statements are disappointing. The Committee's comment on the relationship between theory and practice is very timely but with one exception, viz. health education including human development and relationships as a required substantial course for all college students, all its other suggestions, are in varying degrees and with varying emphases actually in operation in teachers colleges throughout the country.

A brief analysis of relevant aspects of the programme of one teachers college¹⁰² provides evidence to support such an argument. At this college the professional element of its courses includes a detailed study of human development, (a ninety hour compulsory course,) a detailed study of child psychology with respect to learning and teaching, (a one hundred hour compulsory course,) plus an awareness of the application of this knowledge in the classroom through a minimum of four hundred hours directed school practice activity. The college aims to place students in schools with a variety of organisation, including open plan classrooms and team teaching situations and every student has at least one outdoor education experience of a week's duration whilst she/he is at the college. Many have a great deal more. And with reference to understanding the values and customs held by minority groups one ninety hour course, compulsory for all students, devotes one of its four sections expressly to the consideration of minority ethnic groups. Evidence of this sort is too important to be disregarded.

In addition to focusing on the Committee's error of commission here, it is appropriate also to consider briefly its errors of omission. One such error immediately presents itself and this relates to the Committee's failure to consider what is, perhaps, the most intransigent of all problems facing pre-service teacher educators. This is the problem of providing programmes of instruction for students which are not only directly relevant to beginning teachers but which are perceived to be so by those for whom they are designed.

102. Palmerston North Teachers College.

If the desire of students to "Get out and teach" is acceded to before they have been initiated into at least some of the more important pedagogical principles involved in the enterprise of teaching, the likelihood of their relying on past procedures, and becoming uncritical perpetuators of the status quo is very high. On the other hand, excessive and premature exposure to the same pedagogical principles in the absence of sufficient experience to make the instruction meaningful can lead to the inability to translate the knowledge of these principles into meaningful practice. The situation is very complex and the balance between the areas of theory and practice a fine one. The Campbell Report highlights aspects of this problem when it notes that, "There is considerable discrepancy between the emphases of the pre-service programmes as reported by college lecturers, and the emphases of these programmes as reported by the beginning teachers"¹⁰³ but the Johnson Committee almost completely overlooks this whole area. While teachers college lecturers see their programmes as being relevant and practically oriented, students frequently fail to share the same perception and it is this discrepancy that the Committee has largely failed to examine.

As a summary assessment of the Committee's statements in this whole area of Pre-Service training the following five points can be made.

Firstly, the Committee has not provided evidence, either empirical or by way of argument, to substantiate the claims it makes. Secondly, in large measure its assessment, both direct and implied, of the current situation with regard to the pre-service training of teachers is open to serious challenge. Thirdly, much of what the Committee presents as a prescription for the future is in reality a description of the status quo. Fourthly, in highlighting the alleged deficiencies in the present organisational arrangements it fails to direct its attention to the provision of appropriately

103. op. cit. p 76.

specific solutions. Fifthly, in presenting its deliberations the Committee is making the false assumption that all teachers colleges operate in the same way.

Chapter Four

CONCLUSION

In offering a critique of selected aspects of the Johnson Report this paper has focused on the Committee's endeavour to produce "A blueprint for action in the realm of health and social education"¹ and the claim has been made that, in the areas examined, the Committee has been unsuccessful in its endeavour. Through an examination of the Committee's statements and recommendations in a number of important areas evidence has been presented to show that this claim is well substantiated. By way of conclusion to this study the following summary statement relating to the evidence is now presented.

Under the heading "General Concerns" the Committee's statements on the topics of "Research", "Social Education", "Academic Standards" and "School Climates" have been examined and have been shown to be inadequate in a number of important respects.

In the section concerned with research the lack of clarity underlying the stand taken on the function of research and the lack of specificity in the recommendation proposed are two particular and important deficiencies that have been revealed. With reference to the first of these deficiencies, there is evidence to suggest that the Committee itself is not sure of its own theoretical position on the place of research and with reference to the second it is apparent that the recommendation, as it stands, lacks the degree of detail necessary to allow it to have any practical value in terms of pointing up future directions.

In the section dealing explicitly with social education the lack of clarity concerning the exact nature of this particular form of education has been highlighted and it has been demonstrated that the absence of a clear and positive conception of social education has led to serious confusions.

1. op. cit. p 3.

In the section dealing with academic standards the Committee's inability to adequately conceptualise the nature of the problem being considered has again been revealed. It has shown that the Committee is not really addressing itself to the general topic of academic standards or to the more specific question of what academic standards should be aimed for in the curriculum of our schools, but rather it is considering the question of what the curriculum itself should consist of. It has also been shown that the imprecise and confused manner in which the Committee presents its deliberations has had the effect of obscuring the intent of what it has had to say.

In the section dealing with the climate in schools it has been shown that the Committee has failed to name specific research studies which support its position, that it makes a recommendation which is decidedly ambiguous and that it has been much too simplistic in its approach to the whole question of school climate.

Under the heading "Specific Concerns" the Committee's statements on the topics of "Moral, Spiritual and Values Education", "Education About Human Development and Relationships" and "Teacher Training" have been examined and further inadequacies have been revealed.

In the section dealing with moral, spiritual and values education it has been shown that while a great deal of the controversy is an almost inevitable accompaniment of any study of this area, much is a direct consequence of the inept manner in which the Committee has handled the issues involved. The general lack of conceptual clarity and the lack of precision in expression demonstrated by the Committee throughout the Report continues to be evident in this section. The Committee has not thought through the exact nature of the concepts of "morality" and "moral education" and it has conflated the important distinction between values which are moral and those which are non-moral. It has been shown to be confused in its statements on values education and its prescription for dealing with controversial issues has been shown to be inadequate. With reference to spiritual education, its proposals, insofar as they can be interpreted, have likewise been shown to suffer from similar limitations.

In the section dealing with human development and relationships it has been shown that the Committee has done little to advance public understanding in this area. It has not faced up to, or helped resolve, many of the problems raised by the proposals of the Ross Report six years ago. Rather than explaining the basis for its own views and explaining the rationale for rejecting the various criticisms that have been made of the Ross Report proposals it has largely avoided them and seems to have assumed that its own declarations merit unquestioning acceptance.

Finally, in the section dealing with teacher training it has been shown that not only does the Committee give insufficient consideration to this vital area but the consideration it does give lacks the detail and conceptual clarity that such an important topic demands.

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