

BOOKS

Stillman, Andy, and Maychell, Karen, *School to School: LEA and Teacher Involvement in Educational Continuity*. Great Britain: NFER-NELSON Publishing Co. Ltd., 1984, 160 pp.

For most educators, teachers and administrators, pupil transfer from school to school creates an extra load. For the student it creates new policies, procedures, curriculum and various hazards concerned with involvement with new people.

"School to School" attempts to describe the problem — particularly from the view point of curriculum interruption. Interestingly, negative assumptions of teachers combined with low ability to communicate effectively create friction in the continuity process.

The scenario for the study is Great Britain, but the problem exists world wide whenever pupil transfer occurs. Ability of schools, teachers, and local administrative areas to smooth transition has seemed to vary with the amount of time and interest taken by the teacher, combined by practices promoted by administration. The effect of facilities appears to be minimal.

This study was conducted between February, 1981 and continued through July, 1983. The aim was threefold: to describe current practices in movement from one school to another within the same system, to identify areas of concern as well as good practices when youngsters transferred to the new school, as well as to suggest ways of improving upon present transfer procedures.

Premises underlying the study approach included the fact that every pupil transfers at least once in his or her school career — almost certainly between primary and secondary schools. If a middle school intervenes a second transfer is embraced. The assumption that curriculum continuity is important to the education of youngsters is interestingly expounded — in fact, improvement in continuity appears to be the basis for the study and its ensuing suggestions.

The study was centered around the local administrative area of the Isle of Wight (IOW). It developed when the Isle of Wight's LEA* seriously began to question how well schools were dealing with pupils' double transfer. Catering to the Isle of Wight's 1,500 (approx.) school population are 47 primary schools (5 to 9 year-olds), 16 middle schools (9 to 13 year-olds), and 5 high schools (age 13 to 18 +). Pupils are a rural/urban mix. Because some of those involved in the study described the Isle of Wight as atypical compared with the remainder of the country, additional areas were added to the surveys. Two samples of mainland schools were drawn into the study.

The final group surveyed thus included three school types: IOW middle schools, mainland secondary schools, and mainland middle schools.

The study comprised three separate instruments. A general set of questions was sent to all heads, while heads of departments (subject coordinators) in eight curriculum areas (English Language, Art, Science, Home Economics, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Needlework, and Physical Education) were asked to reply to a separate checklist. A third set of forms requested replies from all teachers of 12 to 13-year-olds.

Questions asked concerned amounts of teaching time, class sizes, biographical details, qualifications, subjects taught, facilities and equipment, and so on.

The study was coordinated by the LEA officers which included specialists in Music, Physical Education, Science, Mathematics, English, Arts and Crafts, psychological and welfare representatives, handicapped and remedial assistants.

Existing measures were currently taken by the various LEA groups to ease pupil transfer difficulties. These measures included methods of familiarization of pupils with their future school at both primary/middle and

middle/high levels. The aims of these activities were to develop positive attitudes towards the change and to dispel fears and uncertainties. Parent familiarization was also attempted.

Interestingly, the project team discovered no particular problems with pupils as a result of transferring schools.

Curriculum link meetings between teachers and administrators met with a number of problems. Described were "lack of direction dysfunction" — which was partially alleviated by limiting discussions to just one subject or even one aspect of a subject.

Repetition of teaching material was described as a problem interfering with curriculum continuity. This one item met with both agreement and considerable disagreement. Repetition of work was defended as being positive and not detrimental to continuity.

For the reader who is looking for a panacea to solve the problems of loss of curriculum continuity, he will not find them here. Rather he will discover an interesting local study with some concluding perceptions for administrative coping.

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Roe, Keith., *Mass Media and Adolescent Schooling: Conflict or Co-existence?* Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1983, 244 pp., \$21.50.

Interest in the effects of mass mediated culture (particularly via television) on child and adolescent development and human behaviour generally, stems from the advent of electronic mass communication itself. Several decades of research into the effects of television viewing and behaviour have resulted in a voluminous outpouring of research findings. Despite this widespread interest and these massive efforts, however, few unequivocal findings have been produced. This is partly because, as is frequently the case in human affairs, the matter is extremely complex and partly because the research tradition itself is only now emerging from its infancy.

The overriding theme (sometimes implicit but frequently explicit) that has dominated this research is that televised material has a causal and unidirectional effect on the viewer. A particularly good example of this is the extensive research of Albert Bandura and his colleagues on the question of the effects of film-mediated violence on the aggressiveness of the viewer. Bandura has employed carefully controlled experimental studies and has shown that exposure to film-mediated violence can enhance the aggressiveness of the viewer under a variety of conditions. This work, however, has come under criticism primarily because the experimental situations are deemed to be "artificial" — that is, they are not representative of "real-life" viewing. Bandura's findings, then, may lack ecological validity.

A second major research strategy to the study of the effects of television is the correlational approach. A good illustration of this approach is the study of the effects of mass media exposure on educational achievement. In this research it is frequently demonstrated that amount of television viewing is inversely related to reading ability, mathematics achievement, basic skills achievement and so on. Similarly, the types of programmes watched are related to attitudes and interests about education and schooling. Even for the correlational studies, the basic theme of this research is that TV viewing has causal and unidirectional effects (usually detrimental) on schooling.

In his recently published book, *Mass Media and Adolescent Schooling: Conflict or Co-existence?*, Keith Roe reverses the orthodox causal specification of the relationship between the mass media (especially television) and