

**The North of England Educational Priority  
Area Projects 1968-1971. An area-based  
response to educational underachievement.**

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## ABSTRACT

The use of area-based positive discrimination as a response to the persistent educational underachievement of children was adopted by the Labour governments elected in both 1964 and 1997. Much has been written about recent policy, but the first use of this approach during the 1960s is, at present, no more than a footnote in the history of education. This thesis presents an historical account of the Educational Priority Area projects that took place in Liverpool and the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1968 and 1971. The lessons from the past which emerge from this 'novel' policy response to a seemingly intractable problem help us to understand the dilemmas of the present.

The EPA project was part of an ideological tradition concerned with enduring pedagogical and political ideals relating to social justice and equality. Theoretically, the EPA projects raise questions about organisational structures and the agency of individuals. The actions of the Liverpool and West Riding teams challenged the ideological construction of teacher identity. Their work provided evidence that the relationship between the professional and the home is not unalterable.

The approach taken was to analyse a range of primary sources including original documentary evidence and extensive interviews with the surviving EPA team members. The actions taken by the teams and the voices of those responsible revealed distinctive practices that contribute to existing understanding of the potential of area-based interventions.

At a time when the respective roles of teachers and parents were clearly demarcated, the EPA projects demonstrated what might have been. They effectively challenged existing preconceptions held by professionals regarding their relationship with the home and provided a legacy of innovations with which to challenge educational underachievement. For anyone interested in overcoming educational inequality the EPA projects offer a contribution to debates concerned with what works, what doesn't, and why.

**I hereby declare that, except where attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own. The word count, excluding bibliography is 79,093.**

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### **Abbreviations used within the thesis**

ABI	Area-Based Initiative
ACE	Advisory Centre for Education
CEO	Chief Education Officer
DES	Department for Education and Science
CCCS	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors
HV	Health Visitor
LEA	Local Education Authority
LEPA	Liverpool Educational Priority Area Project
MP	Member of Parliament
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NCC	National Consumer Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEP	Project Extension Plan (LEPA)
PRIORITY	Priority Urban Education Centre Liverpool
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
TES	Times Educational Supplement
TUC	Trade Union Congress
WEA	Workers Education Association
WREPA	West Riding Educational Priority Area

## **Dramatis Personae**

### **West Riding characters**

Mike Harvey	WREPA Project Director
George Smith	WREPA Research Officer
Teresa Smith	WREPA Action Assistant
Geoff Poulton	Red House Warden
Lin Poulton	Red House Warden
Gina Armstrong	WREPA Educational Home Visitor
Mr Timothy	Divisional Officer for district 18 of West Riding LEA
Alec Clegg	Chief Education Officer for West Riding LEA

### **Liverpool Characters**

Dr Eric Midwinter	LEPA Project Director
Keith Pulham	LEPA Research Officer
Eleanor Connor	LEPA Preschool Fellow
Tom Lovett	Workers Education Association Officer
Gerry Bailey	Teacher in LEPA School
C.P.R. Clarke	Liverpool Chief Education Officer
Tom McManners	Liverpool Chief Inspector of Schools
W.A.L. Blyth	Professor of Education Liverpool University
Margaret Simey	LEPA Steering Committee

Tom Ward	LEPA Steering Committee
John Moores Jnr.	LEPA Steering Committee
Norman Garner	Chair of College Liaison Committee

**National EPA characters**

Michael Young	EPA National Steering Committee Chairman
A.H. Halsey	EPA National Project Director
Basil Bernstein	Institute of Education Head of Sociological Research
Alan Brimer	National EPA research adviser
Roger Dale	Assistant to Alan Brimer

**Other characters**

Professor J.M. Tanner	University of London and Plowden Committee
Lady Bridget Plowden	Chair of Plowden Committee
Sir Edward Boyle	MP and Conservative Party Spokesman for Education
Roy Hattersley	MP and Labour Party Spokesman for Education
Margaret Thatcher	Secretary of State for Education
Anthony Crosland	Secretary of State for Education
Shirley Williams	Junior Minister at the DES

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Following their victory in the 1997 general election the new Labour government placed great faith in the use of area-based intervention policies to address the persistent educational underachievement of children growing up in England's poorest communities. Diane Reay has effectively summed up both the apparent class-based nature of the problem and the failure of education policy to find a solution, thus:

Against a policy backdrop of continuous change and endless new initiatives it appears that in relation to social class the more things change the more they stay the same. Social class remains the one educational problem that comes back to haunt English education again and again and again; the area of educational inequality on which education policy has had virtually no impact.<sup>1</sup>

Reay's repetition of the word 'again' indicates the seemingly intractable nature of the problem. New Labour's education policy, at least the element relevant to this thesis, represented a return to the use of area-based policy targeting the glaring inequalities of both opportunity and outcome inherent within the English education system. For more than a decade targetted attacks on the causes of underachievement were a consistent strand within education policy, from Education Action Zones (EAZs) to Children's Centres.<sup>2</sup> The ministerial foreword to the 2007 Children's Plan acknowledged the then government's intention to strive for improved educational outcomes for children in deprived areas. Secretary of State, Ed Balls, called for

... a new role for schools at the centre of their communities, and more effective links between schools, the NHS and other children's services so that together they can engage parents and tackle all the barriers to the learning, health and happiness of every child.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Diane Reay, 'The Zombie stalking English Schools: Social Class and Educational Inequality', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 54, no. 3 (September 2006) 305.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education and Employment, *Education Action Zones An Introduction*, (London: DFEE, 1997). Her Majesty's Treasury, *Choice for Parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare*, (HM Treasury: HMSO, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Department of Children Schools and Families, *The Children's Plan. Building brighter futures - Summary*, (London: DCFS, 2007) foreword.

Government policy aimed to bring together all essential services to support the growth of families in areas where standards had refused to rise. Ed Balls declared that 'more than ever before families will be at the centre of excellent integrated services that put their needs first, regardless of traditional institutional and professional structures'.<sup>4</sup> The government claimed it was challenging the traditional relationship between school and community.

The use of area-based interventions in poor communities represented an acknowledgement by government that, as an educative force, the home and community are hugely important. According to New Labour, schools were not doing enough to maximize the positive impact parents can have on their children's educational performance. The Index of Multiple Deprivation, Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities, the London and Manchester Challenges, Surestart Neighbourhood Nurseries and Children's Centres were each examples of attempts to tackle underachievement through the generation of new partnerships. These initiatives represent an ideological commitment to social justice, equality and the reversal of social exclusion. Prime Minister Tony Blair declared a belief in meritocracy that obligated government to develop the full potential of all children. The potential of this approach to generate long-term benefits has been the subject of numerous critiques.

Tomlinson claimed that Labour 'preached inclusiveness' yet, at the same time, 'market and selective forces were demonstrably excluding large sections of the working and non-working classes'.<sup>5</sup> Gamarnikow and Green questioned whether the 'combination of individual responsibility, education, social support and welfare to work initiatives' would be enough to move families 'out of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion'.<sup>6</sup> Power claimed that New Labour's use of ABIs left 'intact the deep structures that generate class disadvantage'.<sup>7</sup> She argued that there was greater

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, foreword.

<sup>5</sup> Sally Tomlinson, 'New Labour and Education', *Children and Society*, 17, no.3 (June 2003) 195-204.195-196.

<sup>6</sup> Eva Gamarnikow and Anthony Green, 'The third way and social capital: education action zones and a new agenda for education, parents and community?' *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 9, no.1 (January 1999) 3-22. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Sally Power, 'Reading Education Action Zones', *Journal of Education Policy*, 16, no. 1 (January 2001a) 39 - 51. 50.

continuity between New Labour policy and the neo-liberalist policies of the 1980s Conservative governments, than with policies that followed the Plowden Report in 1967.<sup>8</sup>

This thesis asks whether the recent deployment of ABIs represents policy turning full circle. New Labour was not the first government to place the link between educational underachievement and poverty at the centre of the policy agenda. Challenges to the outcomes of the education system have a long history. The policies implemented by New Labour represent the continuation of a much longer battle to secure greater levels of educational equality.<sup>9</sup>

At the time of writing, in 2011, a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government has replaced New Labour and the effects of an economic recession continue to unfold following the global banking crisis of 2008. There have been recessions before due to the cycle of booms and slumps that affect the economy's global economic performance. Each downturn in the economic cycle results in increased levels of poverty. Thus, poverty may be considered cyclical. This thesis asks whether education policies are also cyclical.

The 1967 Plowden Report, a landmark within the progressive educational tradition, marks the start of the period addressed by this historical thesis. The first recommendation made by the Plowden Report was for the use of positive discrimination to overcome the persistent underachievement of children living in the poorest urban areas. As the Report notes, 'equality' has an appealing ring, 'discrimination' does not, so the implementation of area-based positive discrimination was something of a departure for education policy.<sup>10</sup> Plowden argued that enriched intellectual development could be as beneficial as free school meals were after the First World War. Positive discrimination by resource was intended to level the playing field. It would allow, more teachers' aides, teachers' centres, salary increments, expanded nursery provision, links with colleges of education, extra

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<sup>8</sup> Sally Power, Geoff Whitty, Sharon Gewirtz, David Halpin and Marny Dickson, 'Paving a 'third way'? A policy trajectory analysis of education action zones', *Research Papers in Education*, 19, no. 4 (2004) 453-475.

<sup>9</sup> Central Advisory Council for Education, *Children and their Primary Schools*, (London: HMSO, 1967).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, see paragraph 148 and Chapter 5.

books and equipment, educational social work and the introduction of experimental community schools with appropriate evaluative research.<sup>11</sup> The areas targeted were to be designated as Educational Priority Areas (EPAs), and the research project that took place in two of these areas is the subject of this thesis.

The areas in question were Liverpool and the West Riding of Yorkshire villages of Denaby Main and Conisborough. They were two of five locations chosen to participate in the national EPA project from 1968 to 1971, an experimental, action research intervention directed from Oxford University. The other bases were London, Birmingham and Dundee. A.H. Halsey and Michael Young were responsible for securing the EPA project. Young had been a member of the Plowden Committee and was Chairman of the recently established Social Science Research Council (SSRC). Halsey was previously an adviser to Education Minister Anthony Crosland. They used their influence to obtain funding from the SSRC and the Department for Education and Science (DES) for a project that would demonstrate to the government that there was a 'viable theory of the geography of poverty' and that positive discrimination by area was a realistic policy option.<sup>12</sup> The EPA project provided the advocates of positive discrimination with 'an organisational base for the first time'.<sup>13</sup>

### **Research Aims and Questions**

This thesis has three aims. The first is to assess the impact of the projects in relation to their objectives and to consider the extent to which they met their goals. The second aim is to interpret the beliefs and ideological positions of key characters to determine whether their beliefs resulted in any distinctive practices. The actions taken by the EPA teams may reveal continuities in ideology and a longer tradition concerned with the issue of inequality. How did their ideology relate to the policies of the New Labour government for example? How influential was the ideology held by the teams on the life and times of the project, and to what extent were the individuals involved an integral part of any subsequent success? Was the EPA

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, paragraph 174-175.

<sup>12</sup> A.H. Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Keith Banting, *Poverty, Politics, and Policy: Britain in the 1960s*, (London: MacMillan, 1979)134.

project a unique approach to the problem of educational underachievement and poverty? Did the EPA project represent an example of, what Tyack and Cuban would define as a 'transitory' challenge to the relatively unchanged 'organisational forms that govern instruction?'<sup>14</sup> Or, was it a genuine challenge to the nineteenth-century template for schooling?

The third aim is to consider the historical legacy of the work carried out. The thesis will contribute to existing understanding of why governments are so reluctant to make a long term commitment to any educational provision that is considered additional to the mainstream. The thesis asks whether there are ideological and pedagogical threads linking the 1960s to twenty-first century policy? What, if any, are the lessons from the past, and can the EPA project help us to understand the dilemmas of the present? Ultimately, this thesis seeks to provide an historical analysis of an innovative, perhaps 'novel' policy response, to seemingly intractable problems that continue to 'haunt' education.<sup>15</sup>

The EPA project was concerned with community education. It challenged both traditional notions of the curriculum and the nature of a school's relationship with the home. This raises questions concerning teacher professionalism and autonomy over curriculum matters. Did the EPA project present a realistic opportunity to pursue a new relationship between professionals and the community they served? Or, was it no more than a policy innovation, framed within the existing social democratic consensus dominating educational politics? Was the relationship between the professional and the community unalterable because of teachers' pursuit of professional status?

The EPA project was part of the Labour government's response to poverty and one of its symptoms, educational underachievement. Investigation of the two projects in the north of England will shed light on more recent attempts to solve the same problem. Initial reading revealed similarities in policies used in the 1960s and 1990s. This offered an opportunity to assess whether recent initiatives were likely to

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<sup>14</sup> David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*, (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 5.

<sup>15</sup> Reay, D. (2006) 305.



succeed where they had failed to do so in the past. Personal experience drew the author to the argument that the school could play a part in generating citizens capable of transforming the conditions under which they lived. A childhood spent in an area with similar problems to an EPA and many years of teaching in EPA primary schools made this a particularly interesting topic. The author had studied the period during completion of an MA in the History of Education during the 1990s and was aware of the shifting popularity of progressive and traditional perspectives on the purpose of schools and education. Awareness of parallels with 1960s policy led to the idea of an historical study of the EPA project. The persistent nature of educational underachievement inspired dual motivations. The first was a desire to better understand the use of innovative or 'experimental' solutions to the problem of educational failure. The second was a belief in the need for further discussion of the impact that the deep structures of the education system has on our poorest citizens. The historical analysis presented in this thesis attempts to, in the words of Gardner, reach out 'not to recover, to reconstruct that which is over, lost and gone, but to connect with a persistent past that can be completed only later, with the passage of time'.<sup>16</sup>

The application of an historical lens to the EPA projects allows their legacy for subsequent policy initiatives to be considered. We cannot revisit the past, but historical investigation may identify similarities with the present that are useful. The EPA project has not been ignored by educational literature but a history of the two projects is yet to be written. The richness of the available documentary evidence and access to its authors presented a great opportunity to produce a detailed study of the Liverpool and West Riding projects for the first time. The northern EPA projects were not immediately chosen above the other three. This decision was made following background reading which indicated that the outcomes of the work in Liverpool and Yorkshire were more significant than the other three projects. Halsey's final report in 1972 drew far more on evidence from these two than the other three.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Philip Gardner, 'Oral history in Education: teacher's memory and teachers' history', *History of Education*, 32, no. 2 (2003) 175-188. 183.

<sup>17</sup> A.H. Halsey, *Educational Priority volume 1. EPA Problems and Policies*, (London: HMSO, 1972).

The study and practice of 'positive discrimination' is, in historical terms, a relatively new development, originating in the USA in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Glennerster and Hatch claimed that positive discrimination had become one of those fashionable concepts with 'an aura of righteous sentiment, but little rigorous analysis of its possible applications'.<sup>18</sup> This was certainly the case at the inception of the EPA project, but critiques of area-based work produced from the 1970s onwards allowed an in-depth assessment of the pioneering work of the 1960s to be made.<sup>19</sup> The social, economic and political context is very different today, yet there are similarities in the political processes through which policy is formed. In 1967, policy was influenced by a handful of advisers to the Education minister, Anthony Crosland. Policy today is also influenced by high-profile academics, though the process by which ideas are disseminated to politicians has changed. Despite this, the ideas at the heart of policy have been enduring. Similarities in the rationale presented since 1997 suggested policy had come full circle. Silver and Silver sum up the importance of looking for examples of similar events from history:

The processes of the 1960s raised questions about strategies and the motivations of participants, intentions and expectations, ideological positions and changing vocabularies, in ways similar to earlier developments around popular radical education movements and other periods of pronounced social change and reform responses.<sup>20</sup>

The EPA project emerged from events that followed the Plowden Report. In October 1967 Crosland had declared his willingness to consider proposals for an action research project to demonstrate effective positive discrimination strategies in selected areas. In November, the Education Research Board of the SSRC officially approved the idea and subsequently, in May 1968, the DES confirmed a grant of £100,000 and the SSRC agreed to provide £75,000. Halsey was National Project Director, Dr Eric Midwinter directed the Liverpool project, supported by research

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<sup>18</sup> Howard Glennerster and Steven Hatch, Eds. 'Positive Discrimination and Inequality', *Fabian Research Series*, 314 (London: Fabian Society, 1974). 25-28.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, Phillip Robinson, *Education and Poverty*, (London: Methuen, 1976), John Edwards and Richard Bately, *The Politics of Positive Discrimination: an evaluation of the urban programme 1967-1977*, (London: Tavistock, 1978), Jo Mortimore and Tess Blackstone, *Disadvantage and Education: Studies in Deprivation*, (London: Heinemann, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Harold and Pamela Silver, *An Educational War on Poverty. American and British policy-making 1960-1980*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 4.

officer, Keith Pulham, while in the West Riding, Mike Harvey and George Smith were Director and Research Officer respectively. A full list of characters is provided on page six. A national steering committee chaired by Michael Young would oversee the teams and local steering committees were appointed to generate a sense of partnership between the schools, the team and the LEA. The teams were to begin work on January 1 1969 and their final reports would be submitted on December 31 1971.

The contexts of the locations were very different. The Liverpool 8 postcode area contained 108,000 people and the West Riding villages of Denaby Main and Conisborough around 17,000. Each team was free to respond to the particular needs of their location but they were working towards the same four national objectives: to raise educational performance, to improve the morale of the schools, to increase home involvement and to generate a sense of community responsibility. These objectives were designed to bring about greater equality in outcomes over the long-term by exploring the concept of 'community education'. As a concept, community education is central to an evaluation of the EPA projects. The definition of community education is elusive but the EPA project took child-centred pedagogy and equality in outcome to be its ideological foundations.

### **Theoretical issues**

The subject of this thesis is an episode from the recent past. It is therefore important to explain the benefits a historical perspective offers. McCulloch makes a strong case for analysing struggles from the educational past. He argues that studying past events deepens our understanding of history and contributes to our ability to 'comprehend better' the nature of education, in order to 'help to improve it'.<sup>21</sup> The present author shares this philosophy. Hansot and Tysak provide further justification for historical study. They point out that there is an inevitability about historical influences acting on policymakers:

The issue is not whether people use a sense of the past in shaping their lives but how accurate that historical map is. Present action and plans for the future flow

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<sup>21</sup> Gary McCulloch, *The Struggle for the History of Education*, (London: Routledge, 2011) 2.

ineluctably from beliefs about what went before. Whether individual or collective, whether haphazard or collective, a sense of history clearly has an impact on education policy.<sup>22</sup>

The history of education is located within three 'broad areas of study': education, history and social science. According to McCulloch, these three disciplines offer 'a common and integrated mission for the history of education rather than divergent and competing paths'.<sup>23</sup> The historical perspective presented here offers, what McCulloch defines as 'a grown-up conversation, aware of contradictions and complexities, [and] prepared to confront problems and doubts'.<sup>24</sup> It offers more than 'an instrumental, functional and prescriptive set of lessons'.<sup>25</sup> Due to the quality of the sources consulted, the analysis presented in this thesis avoids what McCulloch calls history, which is 'unverifiable, speculative . . . retrospective wishful thinking'.<sup>26</sup> However, there are challenges facing the historian when attempting to identify theoretical frameworks with which to locate a historical account.

The historian cannot ignore theory because the history of education sits at the juncture of the social sciences and education, as well as history. This thesis applies theory where appropriate rather than as a 'ready-made' framework, but theories provide tools to understand the concepts at the heart of the contemporary 1960s debates about education, its potential *to* change, and its potential *for* change. Theoretical knowledge can be utilized by the historian during the process of scrutinising empirical evidence. Scrutiny of evidence is a dialogical process, which produces multiple, not infinite interpretations of an historical event. As Evans points out, historical study is an empirical discipline concerned with 'the content of knowledge rather than its nature'.<sup>27</sup> Evans correctly questions the postmodern claim

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<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Hansot and David Tyack, 'A usable past: using history in educational policy', in A. Lieberman, M.W. McLaughlin. Eds. *Policy Making in Education*, (National Society for Study of Education: Chicago, 1981) 1-21. 21, in McCulloch, G. (2011) 59.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 2-4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Gary McCulloch, 'Virtual history and the history of education', *History of Education*, 32, no. 2 (2003) 145-15.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Evans, *In Defence of History*, (London: Granta Books, 1997) 249.

that objective knowledge of the past is unobtainable.<sup>28</sup> This thesis moves beyond chronicle, to a history that identifies the 'interconnectedness' of events and reflects more than the 'voice' of the author.<sup>29</sup>

In a 2003 article Armstrong addressed the challenges posed to the validity of historical research by poststructural ideas. The accusation from poststructuralists was that existing historical accounts 'privilege the role of social actors as the dynamic of change.' This thesis recognizes the danger of using 'individual consciousness' as the centre of 'historical action'.<sup>30</sup> The approach adopted draws on oral accounts as 'part of a wider historical analysis of social and political legitimacy'.<sup>31</sup> It does not serve as an attempt to put the record straight by celebrating the work of the EPA teams and overstating their significance. This historical study contributes to our understanding of the way the social order is constructed. It is concerned with the effect education has on society and the effect society has on education.<sup>32</sup>

An evaluation of the EPA project requires some consideration of the sociological concepts of structure and agency and the impact of each on the formation of identities. The author made the decision to utilise the work of French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in order to analyse the potential and limitations of the EPA project. Initially, Althusser's notion of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) seemed most appropriate to apply to an intervention concerned with challenging the way inequalities in educational outcome are reproduced.<sup>33</sup> Althusser developed Gramsci's argument that the economic relations of production alone could not secure the domination of the working class. The ISA was Althusser's explanation for the process by which the consent of the dominated is secured. In Althusser's view, the ISA acts to crush individual agency. Bourdieu's concepts of *cultural capital*, *habitus*

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<sup>28</sup> See Evans (1997) 233-238, for an account of poststructural objections to empirically-based history.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>30</sup> Armstrong, D. (2003) 207.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

and *field* seemed to be more pertinent to the thesis because they bring out the social consequences of the way inequality is reproduced.<sup>34</sup>

The relationship between habitus and field raises questions concerning the degree of agency held by individuals and whether it was sufficient to overcome the predetermined responses that habitus implies.<sup>35</sup> Habitus, and the way it results (despite the best intentions of schoolteachers) in the 'misrecognition of cultural capital as individual ability,' is crucial.<sup>36</sup> The relationships between the home and the school and the way teachers in the EPA schools viewed their own professionalism had a direct bearing on the ability of the EPA teams to fashion a change in relationships.

There are other theoretical perspectives relevant to the thesis. Some draw on Bourdieu's ideas but others are more concerned with the policymaking process and the conceptual complexities of the term 'community'. For example, Ball's ideas on the processes of education policy formation takes the state to be a 'practical and institutional entity' that is identifiable through agencies and individuals.<sup>37</sup> Ball claimed that the 'ideological, economic and political parameters of policy' should be related to the 'dynamics of policy debate and policy formulation'.<sup>38</sup> Though the state holds power, its relationship with education policy reveals an ever-present conflict over 'control of the meaning and definition of education'.<sup>39</sup> This stems from the position taken by policymakers in relation to economic and political ideology. The resultant 'paradigm of discourse' constrains the repertoire of policy options that are 'thinkable' by the major actors.<sup>40</sup> Warren took the view that policy and policymaking were 'influenced by inertia, the weight of established practices, familiar ideas, and

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<sup>34</sup> For further information on habitus and cultural capital see, Gary McCulloch and David Crook, Eds. *The Routledge International Encyclopedia of Education*, (London: Routledge, 2008), 285 for habitus and 147 for cultural capital.

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean -Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, (London: Sage, 1977), Michael Grenfell, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, (Florence KY: Taylor and Francis, 1998) 161.

<sup>36</sup> Bob Lingard, Shaun Rawolle and Sandra Taylor, 'Bourdieu and the study of educational policy: introduction', *Journal of Education Policy*, 20, 6 (2005) 663-669. 665.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Ball, *Politics and Policy Making in Education Explorations in Policy Sociology*, (London: Routledge, 1990) 19.

<sup>38</sup> Ball, S. (1990) 8.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Ball, S. (1990)108.

traditional approaches to policymaking'.<sup>41</sup> Both of these perspectives serve as useful criteria for evaluating the EPA project. McCulloch provides a further interpretation. He claims that the 'imperatives of the electoral cycle . . . led to poorly written policy proposals' that 'rose without trace to appease a passing mood . . . and regularly reinvented the wheel'.<sup>42</sup>

## Methods and Sources

The robustness of the analysis presented in a historical thesis is dependent on the richness of the source materials consulted. Where the subject is a recent event, this can be problematic due to issues of data protection and restrictions on access to archived materials. Fortunately, this thesis has benefited from unfettered access to its two most significant sources, former members of the EPA teams and their papers. Following a review of existing literature, Internet searches allowed Eric Midwinter and George Smith to be tracked down. Once they were located, so were their papers. In recent years Midwinter has been a prolific publisher of books on sport (specifically cricket and Manchester United) and Music Hall comedy, and was located via his publisher. George and Teresa Smith were found to be working in the same Oxford department in which they had started their careers under A.H. Halsey. All three were open, encouraging and willing to be interviewed more than once.

Once a correspondence link was established, an EPA network began to unfold. Former team members were interviewed, in some cases on several occasions, leading to new challenges associated with meeting people in various parts of the country and finding opportunities to read many hundreds of uncatalogued documents, the vast majority of which were stored in George Smith's Oxford home. Smith had rescued the papers from a corridor outside Halsey's office in the mid-1970s. They are stored alongside many other papers including those of the philosopher, R.G. Collingwood, Teresa's father. The basement is, therefore, a place of regular scholarly activity. The papers are stored in large cardboard boxes and contain a multitude of uncatalogued sources.

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<sup>41</sup> Donald Warren, 'A past for the present', in Donald Warren Ed. *History, Education, and Public Policy: Recovering the American Educational Past*, (McCrutchan: Barkley, 1978) 1-20. 16.

<sup>42</sup> McCulloch, G. (2011) 57.

The author lives 150 miles from the main EPA archive in Oxford thus visits had to be planned well in advance. When they were accessed, it invariably meant access to George Smith and opportunities for impromptu interviews relating to the papers read during that visit. The use of a digital camera allowed documents to be viewed away from the archive. The Smiths anticipate that the collection will, at some future point, be professionally catalogued and stored in a suitable archive. All documents accessed from this source will be cited as 'George Smith, personal EPA papers'. The same is applied to Eric Midwinter's papers. For the purposes of executing this research, however, the author developed his own classification of the papers in the following way.

*Table 1: the EPA papers*

Official documents:

Minutes of the national and local EPA steering committees and papers relating to them, inspection reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) and Social Science Research Council, communication between DES officials and Halsey, including Anthony Crosland and Margaret Thatcher, conference papers.

Internal papers:

Proposals for funding, planning documents, records of meetings with significant characters such as headteachers, HMI, local inspectors, local councilors.

Correspondence:

Team members, external agencies (media companies, journalists, academics, prospective students, newspapers, headteachers, Local Education Authority (LEA), Chief Education Officers (Clegg in the West Riding and Clarke in Liverpool) and members of the public.

Publicity:

Contemporary press reports and journal/magazine articles, television programme reviews.

Personal:

Diary entries, private correspondence, requests for job references, completed applications for EPA posts, records of interviews.



Some of the sources from this list were particularly important. The minutes from steering committee meetings supported the creation of a time-line for framing the narrative structure of Chapters Three, Four and Five. Papers relating to interactions with policymakers helped to explain the national context and inform the evaluation presented in Chapter Seven. Papers written by team members were crucial for uncovering the motivations and ideology discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Six. Personal papers and correspondence between everyone involved raised as many questions as they answered but helped the author to interpret individual actions. In particular, communication between Michael Young, A.H. Halsey and the Project Directors helped to illuminate the broad strategic policy context, as did the reports in the national press and professional and academic journals. Further archived materials that they had retained, were identified in Cambridge and Liverpool Universities and Doncaster Public Records Office, and former team members passed on private papers. The list above is not exhaustive but does indicate the richness of the materials.

As a policy initiative the EPA project is a closed episode. This lessens the danger of a 'snapshot' effect. The advantage for the historian in this case is that there is little danger that participants will fear indiscretions or revelations. The thesis therefore benefits from personal disclosure by all interviewees. Interviews took place between 2008 and 2010. They ranged from two to four hours and were conducted in the private residences of interviewees and the University of London, except Halsey, who was interviewed at Nuffield College, and Midwinter, in a Greek restaurant. All interviews were audio recorded with permission. The archive materials determined the focus for interviews. Preparation involved reading project documents written by the team or an individual. A list of topics for discussion was drawn up in advance and forwarded to the interviewee. Many of the documents consulted had never been published. This raised important ethical considerations. Several documents referred to specific actors and organisations so their use had to be balanced with a sensitivity to persons named in the documents, particularly those still living.<sup>43</sup> Interviews were only partially structured to allow the interviewees space to focus on the things that stood out in their mind. It is difficult to recall details of day-to-day events from 40

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<sup>43</sup> Gary McCulloch and William Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000) 104.

years ago and the data generated tended to be concerned with relationships, processes, principles and generalized reflections.

Midwinter was interviewed four times, and the Smiths, Harvey and Halsey once. In some instances, interviews were not possible. For example, Alan Brimer, the national EPA Research Adviser and his assistant Roger Dale were contacted, but neither felt that they could add anything useful, given the length of time since the events. Further information was gathered through email correspondence, which was maintained throughout the writing of the thesis. This has enabled the author to address any queries arising in an unobtrusive manner. Where team members were quoted directly they were sent drafts to ensure authenticity was retained. All statements subsequently included in the thesis have been approved by the interviewees and remain open to external scrutiny. Here the researcher was guided by standard British Education Research Association guidelines and the practice recommended by the Oral History Society.<sup>44</sup> Interviewees agreed that all recordings should be deposited in the Institute of Education Archive Department in London.

Using oral history as a research method to evaluate the EPA projects brings its own methodological issues. The quality of evaluations is partly reliant on the memory of interviewees. Gardner notes that although memory may offer accounts that 'are at times confused, contradictory or even demonstrably fallacious' this 'need not lessen their utility for historical analysis'.<sup>45</sup> Oral history has a 'capacity for depth and authenticity by comparison with the capacity of the official document to offer breadth and authority'.<sup>46</sup> Although the analysis is constrained by a subject's memory, combining oral testimony with documentary evidence can enhance its robustness. The author asked interviewees to consider events 'from a prospective rather than a retrospective standpoint', relating a 'particular series of events from the past whilst seeking to suspend for a moment the knowledge of how the story actually turned out'.<sup>47</sup> The request for 'prospective' reflections was necessary because it was always

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<sup>44</sup> 'Oral History Society ethical guidelines', [ohs.org.uk/ethics/index.php#conf](http://ohs.org.uk/ethics/index.php#conf), (last accessed January 2011), and 'Bera ethical guidelines 2004', [bera.ac.uk/files/2008/09/ethical1.pdf](http://bera.ac.uk/files/2008/09/ethical1.pdf), (last accessed January 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Gardner, P. (2003) 175-188. 179.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 185.

likely that interviewees would make comparisons with the ABIs deployed by New Labour.

The use of oral history brings uncertainties for the researcher. One is described by the Silvers, as the elusiveness of the changing vocabularies used by interviewees to emphasise their version of events.<sup>48</sup> In other words, there is a need to be aware of the motives of interviewees when defending past positions and current commitments. Meanings must be 'disentangled' in a terrain which inhabits a middle ground between educational analysis and historical perspective.<sup>49</sup> This is where the value of the present thesis is to be found. The thesis will 'interpret the interpretations'. It will take into account the 'problems of memory and accuracy when evaluating interview data' but it will also attempt to weigh the influence of wider contemporary economic and political forces as well as the existing regulatory constraints and the pressures placed on actors by the state. The analysis presented in this thesis weighs the 'interplay between figure and landscape . . . empirically and theoretically'.<sup>50</sup>

The recollections of interviewees were triangulated with written records wherever possible in order to strengthen conclusions. The data gathered from interviews and scrutiny of documents had to be viewed with the effects of the passing of time in mind. There are several challenges that the historian must bear in mind when scrutinising data gathered from interviews. For example, vocabularies evolve and priorities are subject to change over time. This has implications for the interpretations of events offered by interviewees in relation to their recollections. According to the Silvers 'to rescue complexity from the oversimplifications and amnesia which rapidly overcome events' is the challenge for all historical research.<sup>51</sup>

The ideologies found within the sources consulted had to be understood with regard to the changing vocabularies of social class, poverty and education. During the 1960s these vocabularies were part of a new framework of ideas developed within the sociology of education. It is important to guard against underestimating

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<sup>48</sup> Silver, H., and Silver, P. (1991).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 324.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 112-118.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 337.

the importance of conceptual diversity found within oral and documentary evidence. The challenge is to disentangle the different possible meanings of concepts in order to 'interpret motives in relation to the actor's world view', without distortion.<sup>52</sup> By acknowledging the fluidity of vocabularies and changing definitions the analysis presented here effectively interprets a fragment of the past.

In LEPA and WREPA stakeholders brought different demands, expectations and influences to bear on the teams. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to move beyond the 'voices of official policy makers' and the 'professionals who have implemented and sometimes contested policies'.<sup>53</sup> The voices dominating this thesis are those of the team members. Voices beyond those of the team were consulted where there was availability. This was not always possible however. For example, Halsey's final report to the SSRC could not be compared to an equivalent because the SSRC did not expect formal written evaluations of funded projects until the mid-1970s.<sup>54</sup> The reliance on professional voices does not detract from the robustness or reliability of the analysis because the thesis concentrates on the complexities involved in ABI policy.

Of particular interest were statements that justified actions taken during the project. The written records produced by key characters provide evidence of the ideology, publicly stated and privately held, that informed their diagnosis of the problems faced by the EPA. By relating the evaluations made by the teams to the ideological rationale they claimed to have pursued it is possible to search for consistency. It is also possible to determine whether the evaluations shed any light on the complexities of relationships between teacher, parent and child.

Thompson outlines two further methodological issues that must be addressed by a historical study.<sup>55</sup> First, there is the danger of over-reliance on correspondence, and its similarity to published memoirs. Though correspondence does allow some cross-examination of the witness, the results are still something of a controlled

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Derrick Armstrong, 'Historical Voices: philosophical idealism and the methodology of 'voice' in the history of education', *History of Education*, 32, no. 2 (2003) 201-217. 201.

<sup>54</sup> ESRC archivist, email correspondence with the author, February 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past Oral History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

public confession and the historian should be wary of overstating the significance of statements.<sup>56</sup> Second, the thesis must acknowledge the stage of life of the main characters involved. Events of 40 years ago meant that EPA team members were offering recollections at their 'life review' stage. Here there can be less concern with identifying the correct order of events and their significance, and more with the remembrance of achievement. The author was aware of the possibility that interviewees might be writing themselves into history.<sup>57</sup>

Aldrich points out that it is the duty of the historian of education to avoid the trap of advancing, consciously or otherwise, 'contemporary causes' through the misuse of evidence.<sup>58</sup> This includes the recollections of characters involved in events. The fragment of the past recovered by this thesis is inevitably 'positioned by the background and values' of the author but this does not mean that the conclusions drawn will preclude others from continuing to search after the truth. In the words of Aldrich, 'the gap between history as happened and history as written' does not 'absolve the historian from searching for truth'.<sup>59</sup>

## Structure

This thesis is a historical study presented in eight chapters. Together, the chapters offer an addition to existing understandings of the potential and limitations of area-based intervention policy. The question of whether small scale, experimental action research successfully identified a new set of strategies, 'likely to be effective in the pursuit of equality' is still relevant today.<sup>60</sup> These issues remain unresolved and worthy of investigation. As the Silvers acknowledge:

The roles of government, public agencies, private finance and people, in relation to education and participation in educational processes, while

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<sup>56</sup> Thompson, P. (1978) 95.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Aldrich, 'The three duties of the historian of education', *History of Education*, 32, no. 2, (2003) 133-143, in Richard Aldrich, *Lessons from history of education: the selected works of Richard Aldrich*, (London: Routledge, 2006) 20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Silver, H., and Silver, P. (1991) 1.

differently contoured, remain to be argued over . . . issues as sharp and persistent as these are bound to find their way centre stage.<sup>61</sup>

Chapter two reviews the existing literature. The thesis draws on literature from three fields: educational disadvantage and social class, analysis of relevant government policies and philosophical perspectives on the role education plays, or could play, in society. The review will orientate the reader ideologically and historically. The texts reviewed will confirm the validity and appropriateness of the chosen research aims and acknowledge the limits of the thesis. By examining key writing, silences within the existing body of literature will be identified and the contribution this thesis can make will be revealed. Literature from the tradition of quantitative empirical studies, or, 'political arithmetic', and sociological perspectives emerging during the 1960s will be examined to identify the links between research and policymaking. This enables the thesis to search for continuities within policy. Literature explaining significant themes is discussed, including community education, the social curriculum and the nature of the relationship between education and society.<sup>62</sup>

Chapters Three to Five will examine in detail the work of the Liverpool and West Riding projects. These are empirical chapters which use the relatively untouched primary sources identified by the author, to analyse and evaluate the projects. Chapter Three explains the national educational and policymaking context from which the EPA project emerged. It builds on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and positions the project ideologically. Chapters Four and Five offer an original exploration of the day-to-day life of the two projects. They offer a new perspective on the practices explored by the EPA teams.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>62</sup> For example, David Donnison, *Educational Priority Areas: the genesis of the Plowden Committee's proposals*, (London: London School of Economics, 1967), Richard A. Chapman, Ed., *The Role of Commissions in Policy making*, (London: Allen&Unwin, 1973), Banting, K. (1979), Ball, S. (1990b), Silver, H., and Silver, P. (1991), Eva Gamarnikow and Anthony G. Green, 'The third way and social capital: education action zones and a new agenda for education, parents and community?', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 9, no.1, (1999) 3-22. Barry Franklin, Marianne Bloch, and Thomas Popkewitz, *Educational Partnerships and the State: The Paradoxes of Governing Schools, Children, and Families*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), Pete Alcock, 'Maximum Feasible Understanding - Lessons from Previous Wars on Poverty', *Social Policy and Society*, 4, no.3, (2005) 321-329.

Chapter Six will return to the pedagogical and ideological views of the EPA teams introduced in Chapter Three. It will examine the premise that, above all, the individuals involved account for the success of the projects. The chapter examines the actions and subsequent reflections of all key players. All aspects of the project will be considered to draw out their beliefs and subsequently to align them with any ideas that seemed to underpin the project in relation to equality of opportunity and social justice.

Two concluding chapters complete the thesis. Chapter Seven will evaluate how successfully the EPA teams met their national objectives. The analysis presented will be constructed with reference to differing theoretical perspectives on the potential of area-based policy. This chapter considers the position of the EPA project in relation to the notion of a continuing tradition, involving public initiatives that attempted to alter social circumstances, and even society, through reform of the relationships between the home and the school. The return to area-based policy under New Labour indicated that the EPA project was not a dead end but a precursor for a much larger enterprise.<sup>63</sup>

Chapter Eight will present emerging findings arising from the three aims of the study. It considers whether the historical evidence presented in the thesis identifies the EPA project as an innovative post-Plowden development carried out by practitioners who were ahead of their time. The thesis will reveal the continuation of a tradition in challenging inequality within the history of education. Chapter Eight will set out the lessons from the past which should be consulted by educationists concerned with both the potential of the ABI and the relationship between parent and professional. The thesis asks what the lasting impact of each project was, on schools, families and policy. The main focus however, will be on analysing what happened and why. The Silvers sum up the questions this thesis aims to answer:

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<sup>63</sup> George Smith and Teresa Smith, 'Whatever Happened to EPAs? Part 2: Educational Priority Areas - 40 years on', *Forum*, 49 no.1 & 2 (2007) 141 - 156.

What kind of society did they seek? Could they answer in terms of ideals or were they caught up in the enthusiasms, critical moments, opportunisms and opportunities, in order to take vaguely conceived next directions/steps? <sup>64</sup>

The chapters that follow can be viewed with the question of legacy in mind. As the story of the northern EPAs is told can we draw any lessons from their experiences? Is there an identifiable EPA project legacy?

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<sup>64</sup> Silver, H., and Silver, P. (1991) 338.



## Chapter 2 Review of Literature

### Introduction

This chapter will identify the gaps in existing literature on ABIs that can be filled by a historical perspective. In order to identify those gaps, texts produced over an extended period will be reviewed. The texts are drawn from the fields of education policymaking, pedagogical relationships, the curriculum, and philosophical questions regarding education's role in society. The review will consider the extent to which ABIs can be viewed as an example of the swinging pendulum of government policy. It will identify whether there is any evidence of continuity in policy or practice and if so, whether this signifies that there is a limited policy repertoire available to policymakers? Policy will be viewed as 'a politically, socially and historically contextualised practice or set of practices'.<sup>1</sup> The intention is to ascertain how the EPA project has been represented. Is it positioned by research as a part of the nineteenth-century tradition of liberal reform, or, is it represented as a new departure that drew on more radical pedagogical and political interpretations to explain why children underachieve. Keith Banting points out that although the 'industrious historian can undoubtedly find earlier parallels to any new policy . . . EPAs provide a fascinating view of the emergence of a new idea, its diffusion in the political world, and its transformation in the policy process'.<sup>2</sup>

The literature is reviewed in three sections, each sharing two objectives. The first is to identify what has and has not been covered thoroughly and to consider whether there are significant recurring themes. This will reveal the gaps which the thesis can fill by drawing on new sources. The second objective is to consider what kinds of writing emerged in different time periods, and what was significant about them.

The first section is concerned with the politics of government intervention in education. This section focuses on the dynamics of the education policy process and

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Olssen, John A. Codd, Anne-Marie O'Neill, *Education Policy. Globalisation, Citizenship and Democracy*, (London: Sage, 2004) 3, cited in Simon Pratt-Adams, Meg Maguire, Elizabeth Burn, *Changing Urban Education*, (London: Continuum, 2010) 82.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Banting, *Poverty, Politics and Policy: Britain in the 1960s*, (London: MacMillan 1979) 12.

the relationships between key characters and the ideas shaping the policy agenda. The social democratic consensus dominating education politics and administration is analysed, as is theoretical work from the sociology of education. This includes both the political arithmetic tradition responsible for producing quantitative critiques of the education system, and, what became known as the 'New Left'. Interpretations of how the ideological ground shifted in the post-war period are considered in order to explain why the EPA project happened.

The second section discusses community education and the deployment of ABIs as a policy tool during the 1960s and 1990s. It reveals the continuities and discontinuities in the way the concepts of community education and ABI were defined, valued and critiqued. The way particular explanations of problems are translated into policy will be examined. The potential of the ABI is explored through the critical perspectives, interpretations and judgements offered by research. Of particular significance will be Pierre Bourdieu's work on habitus and cultural capital.<sup>3</sup> These concepts are particularly pertinent to a thesis concerned with the pursuit of area-based policies, equality and the teacher-parent relationship.

The third section will focus on philosophical interpretations of the relationship between home and school, the notion of a social curriculum and the question of what education's role in society should be. Key terms are interpreted, particularly definitions of community, and their significance for education. The discussion will consider literature on the school curriculum and the 'scope and limitations of teachers in defining their knowledge base, or what they teach, and how they teach it'.<sup>4</sup> The curriculum has long been a contested terrain and the review will draw on work that underpinned the approach taken by the EPA teams to the 'what' and 'how' of teaching. This allows the thesis to identify continuities in the ideology and pedagogical practices of the EPA teams in comparison with the recent return of the ABI, discussed in section two.

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, (London: Sage, 1977), Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital' in John Richardson, Ed. *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Gary McCulloch, Gill Helsby and Peter Knight, *The Politics of Professionalism Teachers and the Curriculum*, (London: Continuum, 2000) 16.

The primary and secondary evidence consulted will bring to the surface, what McCulloch described as, the relationship 'between past and present' and between 'public and private', in order to create an original perspective on a previously overlooked educational episode.<sup>5</sup> The combination of sources and the possibilities of 'methodological pluralism', where public papers can 'take us into intimate, personal, everyday concerns' and a private note 'can illuminate affairs of state', offers the possibility for new insights and greater 'clarity of understanding'.<sup>6</sup> The remainder of this chapter will examine the relationship between ABIs and the pursuit of equality.

### **Education policymaking and the influence of ideas**

This section takes into account literature produced over an extended period to demonstrate how ideas travel across time. There are a number of key sources written after the 1960s which present an overview of why a social democratic consensus emerged and was sustained throughout the decade. This consensus is explained by according significance to specific groups, individuals and ideas. Texts produced during the decade itself present a further category and includes writing produced by individuals directly involved with events. The final category covers work produced prior to the 1960s which influenced the individuals and groups involved. Although relevant policy developments are briefly recounted, the discussion will concentrate on identifying gaps in analysis which the thesis seeks to address.

The early 1960s was a period of optimism. In the words of the Silvers, there was still a feeling that poverty was being 'organised out of existence'.<sup>7</sup> However, claims that the Welfare State had alleviated the effects of poverty were increasingly questioned as the decade progressed. So, when the Plowden Committee reported its recommendations in 1967, it represented confirmation that poverty had returned to the policy agenda. The policy developments that followed, including the EPA project, meant that 'new conflicts, particularly over the boundaries of reform and revolution, of change and accommodation to the status quo' would be part of

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<sup>5</sup> Gary McCulloch, *Documentary Research in Education, History and Social Science*, (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004) 10.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 128-129.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Titmuss, *Essays on the Welfare State*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958) cited in Harold and Pamela Silver, *An Educational War on Poverty. American and British policy-making 1960-1980*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 148.

education discourse well into the next decade.<sup>8</sup> The Silvers provide a thorough account of poverty's journey back to the policy table, identifying significant causal factors. They cite the impact of Titmuss's 1958 *Essays on the Welfare State*, which challenged 'some of the assumptions of social policy thinking'.<sup>9</sup> Titmuss had criticized the workings of the Welfare State for its 'conceptual inadequacy, operational inefficiency, insufficient funding, lack of direction and data, optimistic reliance on the working of affluence and economic growth and confusion between intention and practice'.<sup>10</sup>

This critique was a key contribution to a discourse which questioned the notion that the post-war educational settlement represented a linear progression towards meritocracy. Contrasting views on the role and potential of the Welfare State were to 'dictate the direction of the critiques' that followed.<sup>11</sup> The appointment of Titmuss to the London School of Economics was described by Banting as 'one of the most significant events of post-war social policy'.<sup>12</sup> Under his guidance, and that of later protégés, including Michael Young and David Donnison, a new agenda for social reform was established. Elsewhere, a more radical trend amongst left-thinking intellectuals was contributing to the shifting ideological landscape.

New critiques emerging from British socialism began to filter into intellectual discourse from the late 1950s. This literature was influential in framing debates surrounding inequality and education's potential for challenging it. Raymond Williams and, from 1964 onwards, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University (CCCS), developed new ways of seeing the relationship between capitalism and British society.

The 'New Left' analysed the relationship between language and culture and considered it to be a key site for struggle. The education system was therefore a prime location for the playing out of this struggle. Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* reflected two currents within sociology. The first was a concern for the condition of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>12</sup> Keith Banting, *Poverty, politics, and policy: Britain in the 1960s*, (London: MacMillan, 1979), 7.

the working class and the persistent inequalities they faced. The second was the theme of 'vanishing' communities. That is, a belief in the degradation of working-class culture as a consequence of the growth of mass, consumer culture.<sup>13</sup> Hoggart pointed to the once great communities in the north of England to deflect the argument that working-class culture and values were somehow deficient. According to Lin Chun there was a strong sense of the romantic/humanistic tradition of anti-utilitarianism in Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*, as seen elsewhere in the work of Morris, Owen, Carlyle, Tawney and Orwell.<sup>14</sup> Williams' work ran counter to the determinism of British Communist Party thinking. He focused on human productivity rather than reproduction. The New Left applied their analysis to the relationship between state institutions and working-class communities. This new literature contributed to a growing feeling that educational opportunities were being denied to working-class children at a cost to the nation. Their influence on intellectual debate, which coincided with growing unease at the meritocratic claims of the post-war educational settlement, is relevant to a historical thesis.<sup>15</sup> Both the Liverpool and West Riding EPA projects operated in working-class communities.

The New Left considered the position of working-class people in relation to culture and, therefore, to the role of education in shaping culture. There was a shift in thinking towards what Lin Chun describes as the socialist humanism of E.P. Thompson. This led to the replacement of the 'ritualistic denunciation of capitalism' with 'more subtle and astute analysis of the polity, economy and balance of forces in society generally'.<sup>16</sup> The New Left explored the 'interrelations of moral, political and cultural questions through the 'totality of the social process', of which education was a part.<sup>17</sup>

It is important not to overstate the influence of the New Left. Although the EPA teams were aware these new ideas they were not directly motivated by New

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957).

<sup>14</sup> Chun, Lin, *The British New Left*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991) 39.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of working class life with special reference to publications*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society. 1780-1950*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958) and Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961).

<sup>16</sup> Chun, Lin, (1991) 158.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Kenny, *The First New Left*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995) 210-211.

Left thinking. The adoption of positive discrimination by policymakers during the 1960s was more closely tied to the growing persuasiveness of a new wave of educational sociology. Sociologists began to focus on 'the relationship between educational structures and processes on the one hand, and the class experience of children on the other hand; how children carried their experience of social class into the school'.<sup>18</sup> These were concerns with a long history. They found their voice in R.H. Tawney's *Equality*, published in 1931, and have their roots not in post-world war two educational research but Fabian socialist politics and sociological ideas that can be traced to the work of Karl Mannheim.<sup>19</sup> Mannheim claimed that ideology served to obscure the real conditions within society to both the dominant group and others. He believed that ideology could lead to utopian responses to perceived problems. Mannheim's rationale can be seen in the recommendation for the use of positive discrimination, made by Halsey and others within the political arithmetic tradition. Advocates of positive discrimination acknowledged its limited potential to change conditions within a capitalist system of production. Thus, an understanding of the influence of sociological research and longstanding Fabian ideas is crucial for explaining the social democratic consensus of the 1960s and its impact on the parameters of policymaking.

From the late 1950s onwards the argument that educational performance was the result of a combination of inherited intelligence and environmental factors gathered pace. Silver's anthology, *Equal Opportunity in Education*, presents the researcher with a list of essential texts to investigate the empirical, quantitative work of A.H. Halsey, Jean Floud, J.W.B Douglas and J.B. Mays in the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> Heath identified Lancelot Hogben's 1938 essay on access to grammar schools, *Political Arithmetic: a symposium of population studies*, as a landmark from which the aforementioned developed a particular form of quantitative research that focused on

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Henry Tawney, *Equality*, (London: Unwin Books 1931), Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948).

<sup>20</sup> Harold Silver, *Equal Opportunity in Education*, (London: Methuen, 1973), James William Bruce Douglas, *The Home and the School*, (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1964), Jean Floud and A.H. Halsey 'Homes and schools: social determinants and educability', *Educational Research*, 2, no. 2 (1961) 83-88, John Barron Mays, *Education and the Urban Child*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1962), John Barron Mays, *The School in its Social Setting*, (London: Longman, 1967).

class inequalities.<sup>21</sup> George Smith, defined the EPA project as ‘the concluding stage of a long series of research studies and reports focusing on . . . social inequality and the key role of education’ in addressing this problem.<sup>22</sup>

Various government reports preceding the Plowden Report indicate the growing influence of empirical sociological research or ‘political arithmetic’. Particularly important were the Crowther and Newsom Reports.<sup>23</sup> Newsom highlighted the implications of slum housing conditions for children’s educational success. It was an example of the impact that empirical findings were beginning to have on policymakers. Quantitative data was gradually moving the ideological ground from a campaign for equality of opportunity to one of equality in outcome. Newsom also concluded that the linguistic limitations found in some working-class homes decreased the educability of children. The CCCS interpreted this as acceptance that schools needed to consider adjusting their teaching programmes in order to overcome this linguistic barrier and ‘prepare them [the children] for life’.<sup>24</sup> According to Bately, both Plowden and the Seebohm Commission gave impetus to the development of a major British poverty programme. These reports broadened the argument by suggesting that areas deprived in one public service, were often equally deprived in others.<sup>25</sup> All of these reports must be considered alongside the sociological, empirical studies that influenced them. This political arithmetic tended to let the facts speak for themselves, preferring ‘hard evidence to theoretical speculation’.<sup>26</sup> The policy context into which EPA emerged was increasingly concerned with addressing the unjust outcomes of the post-1944 tripartite system.

Sociological studies provided evidence that supported ideological convictions within the 1964 Labour Government that are traceable to the ‘Christian Socialism’ of R.H. Tawney. Tawney believed that all men shared a common humanity and

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<sup>21</sup> Anthony Heath, ‘The Political Arithmetic Tradition in the Sociology of Education’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 26, no’s. 3 & 4 (2000) 313-331.

<sup>22</sup> George Smith, ‘Whatever Happened to Educational Priority Areas?’ *Oxford Review of Education*, 13 no.1 (1987) 23-38.

<sup>23</sup> Central Advisory Committee for Education, *15 to 18 (The Crowther Report)*, (London: HMSO, 1959) CACE *Half our Future, (The Newsom Report)*, (London: HMSO, 1963).

<sup>24</sup> Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *On Ideology*, (London: Hutchinson, 1977) 165.

<sup>25</sup> Seebohm Committee, *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Mnd 3703 (London: HMSO, 1968), Richard Bately, ‘From poor law to positive discrimination’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 7, no.3 (1978) 313.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 314.

possessed qualities worth cultivating. Education and all of the social institutions of society should be organised so that 'all its members may be equally enabled to make the best of such powers as they possess'.<sup>27</sup> The interview data gathered for this thesis confirm that Tawney's ideas overtly influenced the EPA teams. The EPA project can be ideologically situated not with the New Left, but within the political arithmetic tradition.

There is an international dimension to the literature published prior to the EPA project. Pratt-Adams et al claim that during the 1960s 'an influential change in social consciousness crossed the Atlantic which had critical implications for urban education'.<sup>28</sup> President Johnson's 'war on poverty' indirectly helped to facilitate the development of an EPA proposal and, later, to inform some of the strategies deployed by the teams. Smith and Little carried out a comprehensive review of American compensatory strategies on behalf of the OECD in 1968.<sup>29</sup> They identified four categories of innovation that could deliver positive discrimination: programmes aiming to alleviate economic and social disadvantage, programmes aiming to change the learning situation, programmes aiming to change relationships between schools and other institutions, and programmes aiming to evaluate the results of other programmes.<sup>30</sup> Smith and Little were looking for evidence that compensatory education was not just a 'panacea for a range of social and economic problems' but a realistic policy tool.<sup>31</sup> Their experience had a significant impact on the strategies subsequently adopted in the EPA.

According to the CCCS the quantitative sociological work of the 1960s focused on the macro level and was relatively atheoretical.<sup>32</sup> However, during the 1960s there was a paradigmatic shift within educational research. The focus of research moved from the macro level to the micro level, from statistical correlations relating to outcomes by class, to the impact of school norms and values on specific

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<sup>27</sup> Tawney, R. H. (1931). 46.

<sup>28</sup> Simon Pratt-Adams, Meg Maguire and Elizabeth Burn, *Changing urban education*, (London: Continuum, 2010). 86.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Little and George Smith, *Strategies of Compensation A Review of Educational Projects for the Disadvantaged in the United States*, (France: OECD, 1971).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1977) 314.



groups of children. This new focus was concerned with the connections between different elements of the social system and, particularly, the relationship between education, the economy and the class system. This led logically to interest in specific groups within the system. Together, the 'experts' became what has been described as 'peculiarly' close to the Labour Party in an advisory capacity. The CCCS claimed that new trends in the sociology of education helped to generate a political consensus on education policy and legitimated the Labour government's policy rationale.<sup>33</sup> In the Plowden Report, much of this research found its voice.

The Plowden Report was based on extensive research data and marked a turn toward research-informed policymaking. Since the personnel on the Plowden Committee included a strong social science presence, it also allowed the developing critique of the current system to 'make its voice heard'.<sup>34</sup> Michael Young, A.H. Halsey and Basil Bernstein came to the fore following the Committee's establishment in 1963. The Silvers described Plowden as a report that 'gave prominence to social science explanation' and 'prominence to a different approach to policy formulation'. They felt that it was difficult to define Plowden's policy recommendations as 'liberal or radical or conservative' because a 'permanent tension [existed] between grand ideological schemes and a concern with people in contexts'.<sup>35</sup>

The decision to set up the Plowden Committee was reputedly taken during an informal dinner attended by Sir Edward Boyle, the Conservative Education Minister and Lady Bridget Plowden.<sup>36</sup> Some years later, the Conservative MP George Walden felt this was indicative of 'the casual clubby way the educational destiny of the children of others [could] be decided'.<sup>37</sup> This observation is more than an interesting aside. It supports Kogan's description of the policy arena during the 1960s, as one of a 'contrived pluralism' which supported 'accepted institutional patterns'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 159-167.

<sup>34</sup> Silver, H. and Silver, P. (1991) 219-222 for details of composition and full terms of reference for working party two, and 224-225 for an outline of the significant research that fed into their deliberations.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 253.

<sup>36</sup> George Walden, *We Should Know Better*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1996) 135.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>38</sup> Maurice Kogan, *Educational Policy-Making A Study of Interest Groups and Parliament*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1975) 229.

Plowden Working Party Two was responsible for the chapters on EPAs and the importance of the home as an educative influence. The Silvers suggest the EPA recommendations were the work of either Michael Young or Professor J.M. Tanner of the University of London. The correspondence between Halsey and Young stored in George Smith's house confirms it was predominantly Young's work.<sup>39</sup> Both chapters drew heavily on Young's visit to American compensatory projects and the research he undertook for Plowden.<sup>40</sup> Banting talks of a 'transatlantic flurry' of research evidence that led to the acceptance of the EPA concept.<sup>41</sup> This flurry of activity was largely one sided as a small number of social scientists absorbed new solutions to underachievement pioneered in the USA.

Basil Bernstein's high-profile, groundbreaking work was also influential. He linked psychological and sociological explanations of underachievement to linguistic forms. Bernstein was consulted by HMI and by the Newsom Committee and his work was heavily funded by the DES during the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> His findings suggested the cultural transmission process was linked to curriculum content and delivery. Bernstein's work on elaborated and restricted linguistic codes implied that language was a conduit through which the structuring dispositions of teachers and pupils were formed. Bernstein's work raised questions about the pedagogic process and its impact on the identities and attitudes to education, of both the providers and recipients. Alongside Piaget's developmental theory, Bernstein's ideas had a powerful influence on pedagogical discussions. These ideas took centre stage very quickly, firmly establishing the relationship between social class and literacy. It helped to move the focus from specific age-phase transfer points, linked to selection and the impact of IQ tests, to the educational process as a whole.

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<sup>39</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter from Young to Halsey, October 20 1970.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Young and Patrick McGeeney, *Learning Begins at Home: A Study of a Junior School and Its Parents*, (London & Boston: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Banting, K. (1979) 115.

<sup>42</sup> The Newsom Report, *Half Our Future A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office 1963), Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control: Vol 1. Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language*, (London & Boston: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1971).

Lodge and Blackstone felt Plowden had acted on an 'ill-defined association' between social and educational deprivation because it did not attempt to rank by order of importance the social criteria used to identify EPAs.<sup>43</sup> In a speech to the House of Commons, Edward Boyle stressed that above all, EPA funding was concerned with keeping a roof over children's heads. Lodge and Blackstone described this as a muted response.<sup>44</sup> It can be argued that Boyle's emphasis on the urgent need to improve school buildings demonstrates how politicians are more attracted to policies that are easily quantifiable than those concerned with complex pedagogical relationships. However, Boyle was focusing on a very important issue. As late as 1975 a government study claimed £150 million was still needed to bring all school buildings up to scratch.<sup>45</sup>

Banting provides a detailed account of how the Plowden Report's recommendations were translated into policy.<sup>46</sup> He stated that, despite the social services budget taking up around 40 per cent of public expenditure in the 1960s, poverty remained an identifiable problem, and working-class children performed worse at every stage of the system.<sup>47</sup> EPAs were one of a number of similar innovations: the Home Office Urban Aid Programme, launched in May 1968 and followed by the Community Development Project, Housing Action Areas and the Community Action Programme. These initiatives were new forms of response by various government departments. The introduction of ABIs was described by Bately as 'part of the same stage in the development of the Welfare State'.<sup>48</sup>

The EPA concept demanded unequal provision of resources in order to achieve more equal outcomes. This implied a change to the 'principles of universality upon which the [education] system [was] based'.<sup>49</sup> However, Bately argues that the EPA project subsequently put in place was 'fundamentally remoulded

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Lodge and Tessa Blackstone, *Educational Policy and Educational Inequality*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982). 116.

<sup>44</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Hansard Vol. 743 col. 740 cc734-847, March 16 1967, speech by Sir Edward Boyle, MP for Birmingham Handsworth.

<sup>45</sup> Department of Education and Science, *A Study of School Building*, (London: HMSO, 1975).

<sup>46</sup> Banting, K. (1979).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Bately, 'From poor law to positive discrimination' *Journal of Social Policy*, 7, no. 3 (1978) 314.

<sup>49</sup> Banting, K. (1979) 110.

to fit the existing contours of administrative and political life' and was 'a pale reflection of the original idea'.<sup>50</sup> In terms of scale this is undoubtedly true, despite the relatively high levels of funding from the SSRC and the DES. The issue of educational inequality was moving to the top of the policy agenda yet the recommendation for a national commitment was reduced to an experimental action research project based in only five locations.

Banting's explanation was the complex interplay of forces competing in the policymaking process. Pressure groups, including the teacher associations, were receptive to the concept of positive discrimination but concerned to protect their own priorities. Politicians were ambivalent. Few were knowledgeable about social science theories but most acknowledged that poor children were environmentally compromised. Hence, 'unlike in the US, compensatory education never emerged in elite thinking in Britain as the mechanism of social change'.<sup>51</sup> This lack of knowledge was crucial as it allowed the other key stakeholders in the policy process, interest groups and administrators, to 'improve the EPA proposal at will'.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, the expansive programme envisaged by Young did not materialise.

According to Banting this situation was compounded by several factors. First, LEAs had considerable discretion to administer the national system. Second, radical educational change requires the compliance of the teaching profession. Third, the DES was 'bound by considerable resource constraints' due to the baby boom impact, the expansion of Higher Education, school building commitments and the raising of the school-leaving age. In the words of Bately, the idea of a national programme 'died an instant death' because it would have required 'a shift in the power relationships in education, with a considerable expansion of the role of the DES'. These interpretations demonstrate the fragility of the EPA concept but they do not marginalize the contribution this thesis can make. The focus here is on ideological and pedagogical interpretations of the potential of area-based policy.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 123-126.

Dodds' dissertation study of how the West Riding was chosen as a project base provides particular insight into the narrow consultation processes that resulted in the scaling down of the EPA project.<sup>53</sup> He used interview data to investigate the networks linking individuals and groups at macro level (the origins of the project), medio level (how West Riding came to be involved) and micro level (why Denaby Main came to be chosen). Dodds emphasized the importance of the role played by key characters at each stage of the process. For example, Alec Clegg the Chief Education Officer (CEO) played an important role in the decision to replace the original choice of Manchester with the West Riding as one of the five projects. It was Clegg who identified Conisborough and Denaby Main as the two villages that would host the project. At national level Shirley Williams, then a junior minister at the DES, had requested support translating research into departmental guidance on the teaching of deprived children. D.H. Leadbetter, an assessor in the Children's Branch of the DES, was given this task and the portfolio he developed included the work from Basil Bernstein and the review of American programmes carried out by George Smith. This chain of dependence illustrates the way some voices were heard and others not.

Banting's analysis encapsulates the tensions between intellectual and institutional ambitions and expectations.<sup>54</sup> These tensions were present in all three phases of the policy process: awareness of the problems based on empirical evidence; definition of the problem, as theory 'penetrates' the political world and a consensus emerges within subconsciously agreed parameters; the specification of policy alternatives is decided within these confines. Banting sums up the policymaking context from which EPAs emerged. It was, he claimed, the work of a 'handful' of social scientists and educational professionals 'operating on the margins of politics'.<sup>55</sup>

According to Ball, education policymaking during the 1960s was 'hardly about policy at all', and was described in texts of the period as administration.<sup>56</sup> Ball

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<sup>53</sup> D.H. Dodds, 'The Origins of the EPA at Denaby. The Anatomy of a decision', (University of Leeds: Unpublished MA dissertation, 1975).

<sup>54</sup> Banting, K. (1979) 139.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 140-141.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 387.

argued that when the Labour government re-introduced the ABI in the 1990s, academics had far less influence on policy than they had during the 1960s. In his words, the 'academy [had] been tamed' and research funding increasingly tied to policy agendas.<sup>57</sup> He identified the 'policy entrepreneur' as a more important influence on the policy process in the 1990s. The policy entrepreneur was 'committed to the application of certain technical solutions to organisations and contexts which are taken a priori to be in need of structural and/or cultural change'.<sup>58</sup> In 1968, Young and Midwinter used a similar term, the 'social entrepreneur', to describe their approach. The 'social entrepreneur' could utilise the growing acceptance of the argument that changes to the home-school relationship offered a solution to the problem of underachievement. Ball accurately sums up Halsey and Young's belief that if

. . . extrinsic sources of inequality could be removed or ameliorated then the repeatedly evident and apparently tight bond between educational attainment and social class could be broken.<sup>59</sup>

Ball's view is essentially an updated New Left critique. He argued that the approach to research in the 1960s, and its relationship to policy 'set within the grooves of an unproblematic, progressive, utopian modernism'.<sup>60</sup> By the 1970s more radical poststructural interpretations of school and the effects of schools on pupils led to accusations that the research informing policy was complicit, and, negative in its impact.<sup>61</sup> The impact of the more radical intellectual critiques of education was felt after the EPA project was over. By the mid-1970s a small network of policymakers, in government and academia, became the focal point for literature about ABIs.

EPAs represented the continuation of two powerful streams in British intellectual life, the tradition of careful empirical study of social problems, and the egalitarian tradition of Fabian socialism. The literature considered so far suggests

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<sup>57</sup> Stephen Ball, 'Educational studies, policy entrepreneurship and social theory', in Roger Slee and Gaby Weiner with Sally Tomlinson, *School Effectiveness for Whom? Challenges to the School Effectiveness and School Improvement Movements*, (London: Falmer Press, 1998) 72.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 72.

that policymaking is responsive to political tensions, which lead to compromises between established political interests. The result in this case was the downsizing of the EPA project compared to the ambitions of its architects. What Ball and each of the sources reviewed in this section had not addressed was the pedagogical contribution made by the project. It is this space which the thesis seeks to fill.

### **Positive discrimination, ABIs and community education**

This section examines literature concerned with positive discrimination, area-based policy and community education. Ideological interpretations of the demands for change to structures and relationships implied by all three will be considered. This allows the project to be viewed in its broadest context.

The question of whether education is a transformative, socializing or oppressive force in relation to society has been addressed by several authors<sup>62</sup> During the 1960s there was a widespread belief in the transformative power of education. Yet, the concept of positive discrimination generated tensions amongst social scientists. Tensions surrounded the implied deficit in the child, the home culture of the working classes and the relationship of teachers and schools to the community. At the heart of the debate was the question of whether schools act as a conduit through which inequalities could be challenged or whether they reinforced existing inequalities?

Bourdieu questioned whether education maintains, or reproduces, existing social divisions.<sup>63</sup> He believed agency was limited by the interplay of habitus, field and the acquisition of social and cultural capital<sup>64</sup> Charlesworth identified habitus as 'socio-historical conditioning', or as Bourdieu put it, 'the presence of the past in the present' that secures relatively similar dispositions in the future.<sup>65</sup> The concept of habitus is a useful tool with which to analyse the EPA project because it can address

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<sup>62</sup> For example, see Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin, 1970), Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1976), and Bourdieu, P. and J.C. Passeron (1977).

<sup>63</sup> See Richard Jenkins, *Key Sociologists. Pierre Bourdieu*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>64</sup> For a definition of cultural capital see, Gary McCulloch and David Crook Eds. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Education*, (London: Routledge, 2008) 147.

<sup>65</sup> Simon Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 210.

the issue of identity from the point of view of the working-class parent and the professional teacher.

Habitus can be applied to the question of whether the teacher is predisposed to certain actions within their field of practice, in order to determine whether it is possible to alter professional identity. Habitus can also be applied to the question of whether some working class parents have an aversion, to schools. According to Bourdieu, the pressures of life restrict the opportunities of working-class parents to acquire the forms of speech and knowledge that are valorised in the school. The education system is seen to mirror the language of the dominant culture, elevating 'one form of linguistic habitus to the status of legitimate'.<sup>66</sup> The relationship between parent and teachers is therefore structured by the habitus of both and the existence of a linguistic hierarchy. Thus, habitus should reveal both the processes of reproduction and the possibilities for change. However, the extent to which the intersection of habitus, and the field of education, is as structuring and limiting as Bourdieu suggested remains an area of contestation. Whether agency is significant enough to overcome the predetermined responses that habitus supposes is also contested. If one accepts that social stratification occurs in school then the continued use of the ABI offered little more than a compensatory or palliative response. Although Bourdieu's work did not influence the actions or thinking of the EPA teams, any attempt to assess their value cannot ignore his ideas.

Bourdieu's perspective is not without its critics. Jenkins, Nash and Giroux make the case that his account of socially differentiated educational attainment is inadequate.<sup>67</sup> According to Giroux, Bourdieu's work rested on mechanistic notions of power and domination, an overtly determined view of human agency and the over-simplification of class-cultures and their relationships to each other.<sup>68</sup> He was referring to the extent that education regulates, develops and manages itself

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>67</sup> Roy Nash, 'Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 11, no. 4 (1990) 431-447, Henry Giroux, 'Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis', *Harvard Educational Review*, 53, no. 3 (1983) 257-293, Henry Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education*, (USA: Bergin and Garvey, 1983), Richard Jenkins, *Key Sociologists. Pierre Bourdieu*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>68</sup> Michael Grenfell, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, (Florence Kentucky: Taylor and Francis, 1998) 16.



independently of other social fields. The degree of agency held by individual teachers and the tension between curriculum control and teacher professionalism are crucial issues and require elaboration.

According to Grenfell, Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* leads us to act and think in certain ways, excluding certain possibilities from the discourse between social actors within and between fields. Schools and local authorities, teachers and parents represent 'a structured system of social relations at a micro and macro level'. Furthermore, 'the habitus acquired in the family underlines the structuring of school experiences, and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlines the structuring of all subsequent experiences'.<sup>69</sup> If Bourdieu's theory is accepted then the practice ABIs engage in 'will render any attempt to radically change structural positions impotent'.<sup>70</sup>

The rationale for use of the ABI functions on the basis that it is the disadvantaged themselves who are largely responsible for the cycle of poverty, or, the 'intergenerational transmission of deprivation'. This has been a recurrent theme used by researchers to critique the rationale on which the ABI is premised.<sup>71</sup> This critique identifies the danger that ABIs may lead to discrimination by recognition. Another view is that the ABI is not an efficient use of resources because of the variation between households even in small communities. To address these critiques of the potential of the ABI requires a clear understanding of key terms. The most important of these is the notion of 'community'. Much of the public discourse of post-1997 policy was based around the idea of crisis in urban communities and claims that community spirit had declined. However, recent research suggests there is a need to consider the rationale on which area-based policy is based. Policy can target communities by context (for life chances and educational trajectories) or, by spatial aspects of disadvantage?

Lupton's work has explored the spatial nature of community. She draws on the 'spatial turn' which occurred in the social sciences at the start of the twenty-first

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<sup>69</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1986). 87.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>71</sup> Sally Power, Gareth Rees and Chris Taylor, 'New Labour and Educational Disadvantage: the limits of area-based initiatives', *London Review of Education*, 3, no. 2 (2005)101-116. 104.

century. Her analysis of ABIs adds another dimension to an assessment of the EPA. Lupton explored the relationship between space and place to reconceptualise the way they combine with poverty to impact on educational outcomes.<sup>72</sup> She claimed that space extends beyond geographically imposed boundaries, whether it is the space inside the home or the school. Lupton argued that governments have not acknowledged that 'spatial processes and spatial relations have an active role in educational relationships and the construction of knowledge'.<sup>73</sup> Thus, 'in and through space' the discourse of policymakers determines both what 'constitutes valid and useful knowledge', and who has the credentials to acquire such knowledge.<sup>74</sup> So although it may be possible to accurately deploy resources by area, this will not change educational dispositions. The EPA strategy was based on the belief that the disadvantaged could be reached in a specific area by targeting all children whether they were at risk or not.<sup>75</sup> This would allow a series of 'related educational developments designed for the particular needs of a small area'.<sup>76</sup> George Smith developed this argument in series of papers published between 1977 and 2007.<sup>77</sup>

During the 1980s EPAs continued to suffer the effects of multiple deprivations. Smith argued that low skill and qualification profiles of the populations, and requirements of future job markets, meant it was difficult to conceive of any long-term solutions that did not involve a 'heavy educational component'.<sup>78</sup> He felt that the 'net cast by the phrase "educational disadvantage" [was] surely too wide to be explained by a single, simple theory' whether this was the 'blaming the victim' theory or more structural explanations.<sup>79</sup> Smith claimed future policy should be based on a firm quantitative index that identified the criteria for allocation of resources. This was a call for continuation of the 'political

<sup>72</sup> Ruth Lupton, 'Area-Based Initiatives in English Education What Place for Place and Space?', Chapter 8 in Carlo Raffo, Alan Dyson, Helen Gunter, Dave Hall, Lisa Jones, and Afroditi Kalambouka, Eds. *Education and Poverty in Affluent Countries*, (New York: Routledge, 2010)110.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>75</sup> George Smith and Sonia Exley, 'The influence of overseas policy examples on DES policy-making for the school system in England, 1985 - 1995', *Oxford Review of Education*, 32, no. 5 (2006) 280.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> George Smith, 'Positive Discrimination by Area in Education: The EPA Idea Re-Examined', *Oxford Review of Education*, 3, no. 3 (1977) 269-281, George Smith, 'Whatever Happened to Educational Priority Areas?' *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, no. 1 (1987) 23-38, George Smith, Teresa Smith, Tom Smith, 'Whatever Happened to EPAs? Part 2: Educational Priority Areas - 40 years on', *FORUM*, 49, no.1 & 2 (2007) 141-156.

<sup>78</sup> Smith, G. (1987) 35.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

arithmetic' tradition. It can be seen in the work of the Social Evaluation Unit that emerged from the original EPA project. This work was later developed into a basic multiple deprivation index by the Inner London Education Authority and, eventually, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).<sup>80</sup>

The publication of Ofsted's *Access and Achievement* in 1993 had been a significant marker for the return to ABIs.<sup>81</sup> George Smith was a significant influence on the content of this crucial report, which highlighted the persistence of social and educational deprivation.<sup>82</sup> This report helped to shape the education policy of the Labour Party. Targeting resources by area was an attractive proposition to a government which placed social justice and the pursuit of a meritocratic society at the heart of its programme. The government used the IMD instrumentally to identify locations and to ensure that there was an auditable trail with which to hold ABIs to account. What the IMD lacked was the qualitative data about the community on which the EPA teams planned their strategy.

The series of papers published by George Smith were pragmatic responses to the context in which they were written. Smith's later interpretations were based on a more sophisticated rationale than in 1972. He incorporated the critiques of ABIs that developed after the EPA project, and, utilised the availability of more complex area-based data. Smith argued that despite demographic, political and economic changes, there was still a role for the ABI. His analysis recognised the need for a 'more coherent theory of educational disadvantage that pulled together the complementary elements in the structural, individual and educational explanations of low attainment in such areas'.<sup>83</sup> The recommendations he made were more circumspect in their claims for the potential of the ABI. If we look back to the original EPA report published by A.H. Halsey in 1972, we see more ambitious, optimistic claims made

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<sup>80</sup> Alan Little and Christine Mabey, 'An Index for the Designation of Education Priority Areas' in Alan Shonfield and Steller Shaw Eds. *Social Indicators and Social Policy*, (London: Heinemann, 1972), Michael Noble, Wright G, Dibben C, Smith G, McLennan D, Anttila C, Barnes H, Mokhtar C, Noble S, Avenell D, Gardner J, Covizzi I, Lloyd M. *The English Indices of Deprivation, 2004*, (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> Ofsted, *Access and Achievement in Urban Areas*, (London: HMSO, 1993).

<sup>82</sup> See George Smith, 'Research and Inspection: HMI and Ofsted, 1981 - 1996 - A Commentary', *Oxford Review of Education*, 26, no.3 & 4 (2000).

<sup>83</sup> Smith, G. (1987) 36.

for the ABI. That report had a more confident ideological voice and was a reflection of the optimism of the 1960s.

Halsey was aware of the complexity of the forces acting upon school and community. He felt that the EPA idea was drawn from a 'coherent, theoretical model of how society operates'.<sup>84</sup> Halsey believed schooling should be more than the 'transmission and competitive testing of academic skills'.<sup>85</sup> He argued that the current relationship between community and school could and should be altered. To Halsey it was a question of the 'level of ambitiousness of social engineering . . . required to change an undesired state of affairs'.<sup>86</sup> This required a willingness to re-define education in relation to other social organisations responsible for educative and cultural transmission such as family, home, class, locality and ethnicity.<sup>87</sup> Halsey acknowledged the significance of economic growth in this process, and recognised that success was also dependent on the political structure and the will of the political leadership.

This returns the discussion to the question of agency and whether appropriately motivated individuals had sufficient autonomy to manufacture a change in policy or pedagogy. Halsey claimed there was room for the strong individual, like Crosland, who 'bring with them decisive power which can make or retard a major policy development', but as Widlake points out, sometimes it is a matter of waiting until 'the time, and the people, are right for them'.<sup>88</sup> Thus, there was an element of 'futurology' about Halsey's 1972 recommendations, 'at least as prediction if not design'.<sup>89</sup> Halsey's optimism was not misplaced. There was more freedom for the EPAs to manoeuvre, there was less accountability for research actions, there was no school effectiveness movement or neo-liberal economics. There is a recurring theme within critiques of positive discrimination which runs through literature produced over the last 40 years. This is the question of whether

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>86</sup> Halsey (1972) 4.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Paul Widlake, *Reducing Educational Disadvantage*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986) 237.

<sup>89</sup> Halsey (1972) 4.

professionals intervening in the deprived community pathologise individuals, despite their best intentions.

Widlake reminds us that 'any kind of programme administered for the benefit of others is in danger of being interpreted as addressing the deficits of recipients and thus rejected, overtly or covertly, by its target audience'.<sup>90</sup> The EPA project largely escaped the 'deficit' trap because it focused on communication rather than compensation and was 'less fixated on the question of IQ gains' than with improving home-school relations.<sup>91</sup> Education was widely accepted as a social good, but Widlake asked whether in reality this meant 'parents helping teachers to achieve goals specified by teachers in ways specified by teachers'.<sup>92</sup> He questioned whether it was possible for policies of this type, to approach children, families and communities without adopting a deficit perspective. Was the real problem the inadequacy of the school as an institution capable of meeting the needs of all children?<sup>93</sup>

The American cultural critic Henry Giroux warned that attempts to challenge current arrangements would be seen as a threat by groups with vested interests. He argued that 'the notion of cultural deprivation served to designate in the negative sense forms of cultural currency that appear disturbingly unfamiliar and threatening when measured against the dominant culture's ideological standard regarding what is to be valorised as history, linguistic proficiency, lived experience, and standards of community life'.<sup>94</sup>

The pursuit of equality through community education was flawed on three counts according to Giroux. First, it 'fail[ed] to view working-class culture as a terrain of struggle and contradiction'. Second, 'the culture that such students bring to the schools may be in dire need of critical interrogation and analysis', and third, the

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<sup>90</sup> Widlake, P. (1986).13.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>93</sup> See Basil Bernstein, 'A critique of the concept of compensatory education', in David Rubinstein and Colin Stoneman, Eds. *Education for Democracy*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Education Special, 1970)110-121.

<sup>94</sup> Henry Giroux, foreword, in Paolo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy Reading the Word and the World*, (London: Routledge, 1987) 2.

community curriculum did not deal with the relationship between knowledge and power because it was 'fundamentally related to forms of political and ideological ignorance that function as a refusal to know the limits and political consequences of one's view of the world'.<sup>95</sup> Giroux argued that the present curriculum and the place of literacy within it prevented schools from overcoming the 'ideological and social conditions that prevented 'the possibility for forms of community . . . organized around the imperatives of a critical democracy'. To achieve this pedagogy needed to become 'more political'.<sup>96</sup> Partnerships inspired by 'emancipatory visions of community' were the long term EPA ambition. In Giroux's words there was a need to 'recognize that all aspects of politics outside of the schools also represent a particular type of pedagogy, in which knowledge is always linked to power . . . and all interaction contains implicit visions about the role of the citizen and the purpose of community'.<sup>97</sup>

Further concerns with the use of ABIs were outlined by Power and colleagues in 2005. They identified the ABI as a 'key component of [the Labour Government's] policy repertoire'.<sup>98</sup> The ABI represented a 'reinvigoration of policies with a long history in Britain,' and raised the question; why has their use proved such 'an enduring feature of state policy in this field?'<sup>99</sup> Labour policy identified education as the key mechanism for overcoming social and economic inequality. In reality, ABIs were part of the government's broad strategy to overcome barriers to a minimum of social goods rather than an attempt to produce equality. Although the use of ABIs was on a much larger scale than during the 1960s the 'efficacy of human capital acquisition' was 'the key mechanism for alleviating problems of disadvantage'. This 'echo[ed] the earlier attributions of responsibility for disadvantage to the disadvantaged themselves'.<sup>100</sup>

Raffo argued that the return of ABIs occurred within a context very much about 'preparing and enabling local people to be more competitive in the existing

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Power, S., G. Rees, et al. (2005) 101.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 106.

local labour market'.<sup>101</sup> The deployment of ABIs was suggestive of a 'particular position about the nature and purpose of education'.<sup>102</sup> New Labour's approach combined a standards agenda, 'a powerful cocktail' of target setting, curriculum and pedagogical development, with targeted initiatives applied to 'those learners who [were] seen as at risk of social exclusion by virtue of their poor achievements'.<sup>103</sup> Raffo identified three foci for initiatives: at risk groups, the areas these groups were concentrated in and the institutions serving them.<sup>104</sup> Raffo's work mirrored the analysis of the 1970s. He claimed that

... the basic premise still holds that the more disadvantaged an individual's background the less well he/she will achieve in education and the more that social hierarchies are reproduced through generations'.<sup>105</sup>

This statement reminds us of the persistence of the problem. Raffo lists a number of explanations advanced by research: differential distribution of educational opportunities, the cultures of poor communities, the dynamics of poor families and the quality of schooling in disadvantaged areas.<sup>106</sup> He found that much of the research concerned with why educational failure persists focused on immediate social contexts such as familial patterns, peer groups and schools, as opposed to the macro level of wider social structures and global developments.

The philosophy driving the EPA teams was what Raffo defines as the socially critical perspective. This view 'assumes that education is potentially beneficial', but 'to be realized, a form of education is needed which is critical of existing arrangements'. Again, he is re-visiting critiques developed in the 1960s. Raffo repeated the earlier assessment that education 'reflect[ed] and replicat[ed] unequal distributions of power and resource', and was unlikely to 'challenge existing power structures and enable democratic development'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Raffo et al (2010) 74.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Carlo Raffo, 'Interrogating poverty, social exclusion and New Labour's programme of priority educational policies in England', *Critical Studies in Education*, 50, no. 1 (2009) 66.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Jo Blanden and Stephen Machin, *Recent changes in intergenerational mobility in Britain. Report for Sutton Trust*, Retrieved March 18, 2008, from <http://www.suttontrust.com/reports/mainreport.pdf>. Cited in Raffo, C. (2009) 68.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 68-69.

Many critiques of ABIs draw on the concept of cultural capital. For example, Gamarnikow and Green claimed that the real objectives of policy targeting the 'deprived' was 'to turn parents and local communities into good consumers of education services, with positive attitudes towards schools and education, and to engage them actively in children's learning'.<sup>108</sup> They identified a 'potentially repressive agenda of social and cultural deficit thinking which [was] unlikely to make a significant contribution to strengthening inclusive democracy and social justice'.<sup>109</sup> Gamarnikow and Green argued that people living in materially deprived communities have as much social capital as those in more affluent areas. The problem lies in the 'hierarchical valorisations' that act on social capitals, and their subsequent 'intrinsic differential' performativities which results in less productive educational outcomes.<sup>110</sup> Positive discrimination by area is not without benefits, but it is unlikely to result in radically different outcomes for the majority. As Gamarnikow and Green point out, the outcomes of Labour policy re-imagine the dominant political economy without reforming it.<sup>111</sup>

New Labour policy was accused of 'pseudo egalitarianism' by Jack Demaine. He felt that the absence of a radical politics and the commodification of education resulting from neo-liberal policies were not likely to 'seriously challenge social segregation and inequality of opportunity'.<sup>112</sup> For example, if Children's Centres were to have their desired impact, building 'virtuous circles' in communities, they required 'better funding, staffing and better forms of accountability to users and to . . . government'.<sup>113</sup> Richard Hatcher was equally disparaging of the potential of New Labour ABIs. His comparison of New Labour's Education Action Zones (EAZs) with the 'Zones d'Education Prioritaires' in France concluded that neither were likely

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<sup>108</sup> Eva Gamarnikow and Anthony Green, 'The third way and social capital: education action zones and a new agenda for education, parents and community?' *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 9, no. 1 (1999) 3-22. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>110</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1986) 248 in Gamarnikow and Green (1999) 7.

<sup>111</sup> Gamarnikow and Green (1999) 384.

<sup>112</sup> Jack Demaine, 'Education and the politics of selection: radical policies for those set to fail in the twenty-first century?', *International Studies in the Sociology of Education*, 16, no. 3 (2006) 203.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



to alter existing relationships.<sup>114</sup> Why ABIs have endured as a ‘central element in state policy over such a long time’ remains a significant question.<sup>115</sup>

The continuity within critiques of ABIs seems to be mirrored by claims made regarding their potential. Two reports illustrate this. The first is the ‘Halsey Report’ published in 1972 and the second is the evaluation of the Early Learning Parental Partnerships policy (ELPP) in 2008. ELPP was part of ongoing work aiming to lift children out of poverty ‘through the provision of integrated services for children; support for parents as first educators and funding initiatives for interventions across education and health care’.<sup>116</sup> The findings make interesting reading to anyone interested in the continuity of ideas underpinning policy. ELPP claimed that by 2008 it was widely accepted that ‘the link between disadvantage and achievement is cumulative: when poorer children enter primary school, despite early indications of potential, they tend to fall behind’. However, the effects of disadvantage could be alleviated through a range of ‘protective factors’ including strong relationships, high expectations, recognition, and ‘active involvement in family, school and community life’.<sup>117</sup> In 1972 Halsey concluded that ‘pre-schooling [was] the outstandingly economical and effective device in the general approach to raising educational standards in the EPAs’, and, that there were ‘practical ways of improving the partnership between families and schools in EPAs’.<sup>118</sup>

Despite a gap of 36 years, both reports emphasise the potential of early years education and the crucial role parents play as first educators. Both see the ABI as a convenient framework from which to develop the community school’.<sup>119</sup> Halsey recognised preschooling as ‘*par excellence* a point of entry into the development of the community school’ since the preschool interventions had the greatest ‘multiplier

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<sup>114</sup> Richard Hatcher and Dominique Leblond, ‘Education Action Zones and Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ in S. Riddell and L. Tett, *Social Justice and Inter-agency Working Joined-up or fractured policy?* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>115</sup> Power, S. (2005) 108.

<sup>116</sup> Halsey, A.H. (1972), Maria Evangelou, Anne Edwards, Teresa Smith, *Supporting Parents to Promote Early Learning: The Evaluation of the Early Learning Partnership Project (ELPP)*, (London: Department of Education, University of Oxford and Department of Social Policy and Social work, University of Oxford for DCSF, 2008) i.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Halsey, A.H. (1972) 180.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 181.

effect' on the 'overwhelmingly important educative influences of the family and the peer group to which the child belong[ed]'.<sup>120</sup>

The targeting of disadvantage by area is far from discredited yet there has been no real analysis of what happened in Liverpool and the West Riding. The contribution this thesis can make is to use the records available to highlight their unique and currently unrecognised importance for pedagogy and the organisation of learning.

### **Relationships, Curriculum and Equality**

The final body of literature reviewed is concerned with the nature of the relationship between the home, the school and the community. This section considers whether the work carried out by the EPA teams has been adequately represented. It examines the notion of a social curriculum, and asks whether the success of initiatives aiming to make structural changes to relationships and to the curriculum, depend on the impact they have on teachers' professional identity. Once again, the literature discussed is drawn from the 1960s and the decades that followed.

During the 1960s there were three sources of literature offering perspectives on education's relationship with equality and democracy. New Left and political arithmetic critiques have been discussed. The third was inspired by the work of R.H. Tawney and John Dewey. Dewey explored the relationship between education and democracy so a discussion of his work is essential in order to understand the longevity of ideas central to the EPA project.<sup>121</sup>

According to Carr and Hartnett, Dewey was concerned that, during the nineteenth century, the 'interests of individuals had been increasingly privatised and

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 183.

<sup>121</sup> See for example, John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, *Schools of tomorrow*, (London: JM Dent, 1915), John Dewey, *How We Think: a restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*, (Boston: D.H. Heath, 1933), John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, (New York: MacMillan, 1938). Francis William Garforth, *John Dewey: Selected Educational Writings*, (London: Heinemann, 1966).

depoliticised and public life eroded'.<sup>122</sup> This demise of public life led eventually to a reconceptualisation of democracy based on the notion that only minimal public involvement was required. Dewey felt social progress and individual freedom were

... best understood as the growth of the social intelligence that is developed when individuals participate intelligently and cooperatively in search of solutions to the problems created by social change.

In Dewey's view, growth was a 'dynamic and dialectical process of self-transformation'.<sup>123</sup> Dewey's ideas are recognisable in the EPA teams' rationale for the community school. The teams agreed that to develop people's social intelligence education should be democratically organised. The purpose of the school was to provide pupils with 'opportunities to develop the social attitudes, skills and dispositions that allowed them to formulate and achieve their collective ends by confronting shared problems and common concerns'.<sup>124</sup> The EPA teams were exploring the possibility of remodelling the school as a democratic institution.

As Carr and Hartnett point out, one must take a 'philosophical and historical understanding of the relationship between education and democracy' if one is to contextualise particular patterns of reform. They argue that during the course of the twentieth century, educational 'traditions' evolved because 'the classical conception of democracy as an educative form of social life had been replaced by the contemporary conception of democracy as a mechanism for selecting a political elite'. The question arising from Dewey's work was whether the EPA project's efforts to move schools towards a socially-based curriculum were 'reduced to pedagogical techniques whose relevance to the creation of a democratic society [was] no longer apparent'. The current thesis contributes to a historical narrative which explains the development of this 'non-educative and non-participative' democracy. It can help us connect the 'nineteenth century educational traditions through which contemporary educational ideas, structures, policies and practices

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<sup>122</sup> Wilfred Carr and Anthony Hartnett, *Education and the Struggle for Democracy. The politics of educational ideas*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996) 56.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 58 - 59.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 63.

have been constructed, to the process of political, cultural and economic change through which the liberal democratic tradition has evolved'.<sup>125</sup>

In 1970 Basil Bernstein claimed that to provide a curriculum where the pedagogic action of the teachers and the norms of a 'deprived' community were appropriately matched, 'the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher' if 'the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child'.<sup>126</sup> The professional identity of teachers and its impact on the construction of the curriculum is, therefore, a crucial issue. McCulloch et al identify a 'socio-cultural tradition of teacher autonomy in the curriculum domain' which 'exerted a strong influence on the kinds of reform that [were] permitted' in the 1960s.<sup>127</sup> The Plowden Report advocated progressive pedagogy so in primary schools the issue was curriculum content. This would have a profound impact on conceptualisations of what a school's role should be.

Bernstein encapsulates the crucial issue of what the school is, or could be, for anyone concerned with re-conceptualising the school as an institution:

A school metaphorically holds up a mirror in which an image is reflected . . . The question is: who recognises themselves as having value? What other images are excluded by the dominant image of value so that some students are unable to recognize themselves.<sup>128</sup>

The success of the community school was directly related to the aims and content of its curriculum. The children in EPA schools needed to be provided with the knowledge and skills that would enable them to engage with the political and social realities of their environment, in order to transform it.<sup>129</sup> Richard Hauser did much to develop the social curriculum at the Centre for Group Studies established in Manchester in 1959.<sup>130</sup> Hauser's approach 'entail[ed] a joint response on the part of

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, all 64 - 66.

<sup>126</sup> Basil Bernstein, 'Education cannot compensate for Society', *New Society*, 26 (1970).

<sup>127</sup> McCulloch, G., G. Helsby and P. Knight, (2000) 26.

<sup>128</sup> Basil Bernstein, *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: theory, research, critique*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1996) 7.

<sup>129</sup> Halsey, A.H. (1972) 11.

<sup>130</sup> John Rennie, *Social Education: an experiment in four secondary schools*, (London: Evans/Methuen Educational, 1972) 8.

parents, teachers and pupils to ensure what is done in school should be relevant even after they have left'.<sup>131</sup> The community school Halsey envisaged would engage all age phases and it would value the experiences children had beyond its walls. Halsey's conception of the community school stood up to de-schooling arguments.<sup>132</sup> Halsey wanted to take education beyond the school walls. This necessitated a different relationship between educator and learner, and between professional and parent. Schools would no longer institutionalise education as Illich had argued.

Franklin and McCulloch direct us back to the nineteenth-century to consider the nature of professionalism as it developed amongst English schoolteachers. The *laissez-faire* and voluntarist attitude of government towards education during that century led to a tradition of teacher professionalism, 'rooted in [an] acknowledged freedom to develop and manage their own curriculum'.<sup>133</sup> The result was partnerships which could not 'challenge the grammar of schooling' and 'underestimate[d] the accepted managerial and pedagogical practices of educational setting[s]' resulting in a failure to 'escape from inherited attitudes and structure'.<sup>134</sup> Their work suggests that partnerships need to be assessed historically within their social, cultural and political context.

The EPA teams acknowledged that the home environment was a much bigger influence on children's learning than the school. Research such as Tizard's, carried out during the 1970s and 1980s, seemed to confirm that achievement was the product of a complex interaction between inherited ability and environment, not just the physical, but the educative environment of the home and peer group.<sup>135</sup> This represented a shift from the accepted importance of genetic factors and was the result of work by sociologists, such as Stuart Hall, who charted the progress of different social groups from the 1960s. The environmental perspective had the upper hand by the 1960s.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>132</sup> Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) 17.

<sup>133</sup> Barry Franklin and Gary McCulloch, 'Partnerships in a 'cold climate': the case of Britain', in Barry Franklin, Marianne Bloch, Thomas Popkewitz, *Educational Partnerships and the State: The paradoxes of governing schools, children and families*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) 83-107. 102.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Barbara Tizard, Jo Mortimore, Bebb Burchell, *Involving Parents in Nursery and Infant Schools*, (London: Grant McIntyre, 1981).

Despite this shift in thinking, research into the way teachers communicate with parents suggests that only superficial progress has been made.<sup>136</sup> The relationship does not appear capable of transforming to the equal-partner approach. Hargreaves and Lasky claim teachers want 'silent respect at a distance' when making academic judgements, and 'back-up' on behavioural decisions.<sup>137</sup> Hughes summarised the relationship between parents and schools as unchanged and gloomy. He described them as living in 'two very different worlds'.<sup>138</sup> Hughes cited Tizard's research of the home-school relationship, agreeing that the main stumbling block to parental involvement in children's learning was teachers' professionalism. Tizard found that because teachers felt they had skills and expertise that parents did not (and presumably could not gain without teacher training) they were reluctant to engage in, 'genuine two-way dialogue with parents'.<sup>139</sup> Unfortunately, the willingness of teachers to acknowledge the importance of the parental role is not necessarily reflected in their practice. To date, there has been an inadequate acknowledgement that the EPA project was an attempt to address the issues raised by these critiques, particularly those relating to communication.

Edwards and Alldred claimed that the 'political, practitioner and academic consensus, developed over the past four decades' is the cause of a blurring of the boundaries between home and school.<sup>140</sup> They argued that 'a lack of dissonance between home and school, and parents' involvement in their education in both settings, is in children's best educational interests'.<sup>141</sup> Blackstone and Mortimore identify three perspectives which explain the rationale for involving parents in the education system in England. The citizenship perspective draws on Dewey's idea of democratic participation. Here, parents have the right to control their social institutions, including the school. The policymaker's perspective draws on the idea

<sup>136</sup> Andy Hargreaves and Susan Lasky, 'The Parent Gap: The Emotional Geographies of Teacher-Parent Relationships', in, Fernando Hernandez and Ivor Goodson, *Social Geographies of Educational Change*, (Netherlands: Kluwer, 2004).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>138</sup> Martin Hughes, 'Parents, Teachers and Schools' in Basil Bernstein and Julia Brannen, *Children, Research and Policy*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996) 96-110.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>140</sup> Ros Edwards and Pam Alldred, 'A Typology of Parental Involvement in Education Centring on Children and Young People: negotiating familialisation, institutionalisation and individualisation', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 21, no. 3 (2000) 437.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

that building social capital in families lacking certain educative qualities will result in better outcomes for their children. The administrative and managerial perspective is pragmatic, recognizing that building better relationships will make life easier for all parties.<sup>142</sup> The EPA project was an example of the first perspective.

It is important not to overstate the impact of the EPAs on everyday life in school. This can be the case with retrospective discussion. As Judge commented, 'it is only through the most tinted of retrospective spectacles that the 1960s can appear as a golden age, and least of all in the deprived areas'.<sup>143</sup> Research suggests that change in school is a gradual process. For example, Browne claims that college of education students introduced to new ideas during their training were rapidly retrained in school to accept conventional objectives and methods. This left trainers feeling 'emasculated'.<sup>144</sup> The colleges, which had expanded rapidly during the 1960s, were struggling to find meaningful practical experiences that gave a point to new theoretical perspectives introduced on college courses.<sup>145</sup>

## Summary

Before the thesis can embark on its exploration of the empirical evidence, a summary of the four key themes raised by the review above is required. The themes position the thesis within the field and highlight the contribution it makes.

The first three themes identified all relate to the role of government and the formation of policy. The first is the process by which government policy is, or is not influenced by educational research. Denis Lawton saw the Labour Party's response to the recommendations of Plowden as a 'leap forward' from their previous demands for equality of opportunity.<sup>146</sup> However, the Labour government, including Anthony Crosland, who Lawton claims was 'extremely superficial [and] often inconsistent',

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<sup>142</sup> Jo Mortimore and Tessa Blackstone, *Disadvantage and Education: Studies in Deprivation*, (London: Heinemann, 1982) 128.

<sup>143</sup> Harry Judge, *A Generation of schooling English Secondary Schools since 1944*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) 85.

<sup>144</sup> Joan D. Browne, *Teachers of Teachers A History of the Association of Teachers in Colleges and Departments of Education*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979) 198.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>146</sup> Denis Lawton, *Education and Labour Party Ideologies 1900 - 2001 and Beyond*, (London: Woburn, 2005) 77.

failed to grasp the importance of the nature, quality and content of the curriculum as a key area where change was required.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, due to Labour's failure to present a rigorous defence of the concept of positive discrimination, the EPA idea had only limited influence on the practice of schools and LEAs during the 1970s.<sup>148</sup> The superficiality of the pedagogical knowledge of Harold Wilson's government was matched by their Conservative successors. This lack of knowledge was an important factor in deciding the fate of Halsey's ambitions to secure a national EPA policy.

One of the consequences of the Plowden Report was a strengthening of the view that the 'deprived' could only prosper with the help of professionals to advise and guide them. Regardless of their intentions this was the impression the EPA teams would have given in some quarters. This is an argument consistently present in literature. However, the EPA project also offered the community a tool, and a voice, which this thesis argues was to outweigh any deficit perspective generated.

The second theme arises from sociological literature and relates to the relative levels of agency held by teachers and families. Even allowing for the favourable context into which the EPA project emerged, the reality was that the parameters of potential action were constrained. The binary relationship between teacher and parent acted to limit agency. The possibilities open to policymakers were also constrained. Policymakers respond to pressures that are immediate and events that are unknown and unfolding. In this sense they are opportunistic. Their actions produce the circumstances of the present from past actions. It is very difficult, therefore, to predict outcomes since it is impossible to weigh accurately the other forces impacting on society at the time any policy is determined.

The third theme arising from the literature is the general agreement that a consensual partnership relationship operated within the field of education during the 1950s and 1960s. While the work of the EPA project was never likely to break up existing administrative discourses and processes it emerged because circumstances dictated that sufficient agency existed for certain individuals to pursue their

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 77.



ambitions. The pedagogical significance of the EPA is far greater than their scale and current recognition within the history of education suggests.

The fourth theme is the continuing scepticism within literature regarding the potential of the EPA project, indeed any use of ABIs, to change existing relationships. Power et al claim ABIs do have the potential to ‘impact on educational attainment’ and combat social disadvantage, if based on ‘careful evaluation of past experiences and the development of sufficiently robust evaluation based policy-making’.<sup>149</sup> The majority of the critiques outlined here argue that this is unlikely to be the case. Many of these critiques fail to acknowledge the significance of the EPA project. Sally Tomlinson’s brief comment on the project encapsulates this problem. She said of the EPA project: ‘the sums involved were very small and the scheme was not supported for very long’.<sup>150</sup> This would be an accurate comment on a national EPA scheme, but for the experimental project it is anything but. However, the more important point is the brevity of attention paid to the project within Tomlinson’s analysis, and in much other literature.

The remainder of this thesis will argue that there is more to be said about the north of England EPA projects. The thesis makes use of non-published materials to make a timely contribution to our understanding of a period when positive discrimination by area was adopted by governments as the solution to educational failure. The timely nature of the thesis can be summed up by the following conclusions offered by Raffo in 2011. The continuity present in his diagnosis is matched by the persistence of the problem. Raffo claimed that government policy in urban, disadvantaged schools

is about bringing the community into schools and about developing curricular and pedagogical relationships in the classroom that give voice, choice and independence to young people and . . . ensuring that teachers move beyond a ‘pedagogy of indifference’ in order to create appropriate bridges from young people’s narratives . . . into the codified curriculum knowledge of schools.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Power, S. et al (2005) 109.

<sup>150</sup> Sally Tomlinson, *Education in a post welfare society*, (Maidenhead: OU Press MacGraw Hill, 2005), cited in Pratt-Adams, S. et al *Changing urban education*, (2010) 88.

<sup>151</sup> Raffo, C. (2011) 13.

In the chapters that follow, several questions will address the gaps identified in this review of literature. Can change occur where new approaches are added on to the existing education structure, or, are new institutions required? How far is success or failure due the individuals involved? Do we need to move beyond old policies which, Pratt-Adams claimed ‘once roused merely bring off small measures of redistribution within a policy discourse of ‘blame’ and ‘deficit’ that then seems to make very little difference’?<sup>152</sup> Finally, does the story of the EPA project tell us anything new about the potential or the limitations of education as a transformative agency?

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<sup>152</sup> Pratt-Adams, S. et al (2010) 95.

## **Chapter three The emergence of the EPA project**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will present an account of how the EPA concept was translated from a recommendation in the Plowden Report into a practical project. It will highlight the roles of A.H. Halsey and Michael Young as architects of the EPA project. A commentary on the Plowden Report is included because it was Plowden that introduced the concept of positive discrimination to a broad audience, and raised the profile of inequality and underachievement. Plowden provided the political impetus that allowed key individuals, in government, universities and local authorities, to convince policymakers to commit to the EPA project.

The discussions that took place prior to the launch of the EPA project are analysed, particularly the tensions surrounding the different conceptualisations of ‘action research’, the rationale for choice of locations and the strategies subsequently adopted by the two teams. Finally, the political and educational landscape of the locations is explored since the approaches taken were shaped by the geographical, demographic and political circumstances the teams faced. The analysis presented should ensure that the decisions and actions of the two projects are understood within the context of the 1960s. It will enable the reader to more fully appreciate the relevance of the work of the EPA teams, and the originality of this thesis. The first section outlines the policy context of the 1960s.

### **Politics and policymaking in the 1960s**

Brian Simon claimed that, the ‘world of education boomed during the 1960s’.<sup>1</sup> He was referring to the increase in expenditure on education and to its higher public profile. Sociological, psychological and political ideas each led to greater interest in the potential, purposes and outcomes of the school system. Primary education began to reflect the more relaxed humanist ideals of the 1960s

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1991) 338.

and, for the first time, education spending as a percentage of GDP outstripped defence spending: in 1969 they were 4.9 and 4.8 per cent respectively.<sup>2</sup>

There were two particularly significant developments for primary education during the 1960s. The first was the move away from the 'almost complete hegemony of streaming' as comprehensive reform gathered pace.<sup>3</sup> One of the effects of the post-world war two tripartite system was on primary school organization. Schools were streaming children as young as seven as a response to the selective process and growing demands for a comprehensive education system drew attention to this fact. The abandonment of streaming opened the door for mixed-ability teaching.

The second development, was the rapid growth in the school population. Increasing numbers of pupils and teachers accounted for much of the growth in education expenditure during the decade. This meant that schools did not have room to make rapid changes, even if they wished to. However, on pedagogical and curriculum matters the 1960s was a time when teachers had enough autonomy to embrace ideas emerging from research.

If the 1960s was the decade that finally put primary education on the map, it was the Plowden Report that kept it at the heart of the debate. Plowden stimulated new thinking and approaches in primary education. It encapsulated the ideals taking hold of education and some elements of society during the 1960s. For the first time, primary education was looked upon as, to quote Simon, 'the major stage of importance within the whole education cycle'.<sup>4</sup> Simon described the speed of change during the 1960s as 'so rapid as to be almost unbelievable'.<sup>5</sup> Cunningham agreed that Plowden 'provided a battleground on which all sorts of tensions in popular culture and professional practice were engaged'.<sup>6</sup> However, he warned the historian to be cautious when contextualising a specific event, such as the EPA project, because

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 601.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 344.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 353.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 346.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Cunningham, 'Plowden in History: popular and professional memory', *Forum*, 49, no.1 and 2, (2007) 22.

. . . Both professional memory and popular memory are at play in the historical re-presentation of events, not only Plowden as a professional text, but also the 'Swinging Sixties' more generally as a decade of change.<sup>7</sup>

Cunningham cites Arthur Marwick's assessment of education during the decade to suggest that the influence of progressive education was surrounded by myth, often with regard to its ruinous effect on primary education.<sup>8</sup> The historical documentation of the 1960s is a relatively recent development and Simon's assessment may prove to be contentious. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that the timing for the EPA project was favourable.

During the 1960s experiments with curriculum and pedagogy began to take place. Some of these had a national impact such as the 'new maths' created by Biggs and Dienes at Leicester University and the Nuffield Foundation's major curriculum project. Generally, however, the frequency of experiments was in proportion to the degree of enthusiasm within a LEA. The decentralized nature of school administration meant powerful individual chief education officers and inspectors could encourage innovation. High-profile individuals such as Alec Clegg in the West Riding wielded great power. Due to their long careers and profound interest in the processes of education they were often able to persuade education committees to back their ambitions. At school level this allowed innovative teachers to explore new pedagogical practices. It was often in rural schools where the pioneering work of individual teachers drew attention to experimental approaches to the organization of learning. For example, Sybil Marshall's account of her work in a small rural Cambridgeshire school, later published as *An Experiment in Education*, drew attention to the potential of new ways to structure learning.<sup>9</sup>

These examples were the exception, not the rule. The Hadow Reports of 1931 and 1933 preceded the birth of primary education in England. Despite their call for activity, experience and a child-centred, creative curriculum, the sheer numbers in classes made this seem impossible for most schools. However, through the gradual

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: cultural revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c. 1974*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).498, cited in P. Cunningham, (2007) 22.

<sup>9</sup> Sybil Marshall, *An Experiment in Education*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963).

influence of the ideas and example of progressives, such as Susan Isaacs, John Dewey, Maria Montessori and Margaret MacMillan, the 'soil had been prepared' and, by the 1960s, these ideas were in 'full flower'.<sup>10</sup>

The high profile of primary education during the 1960s provided one of several reasons for the teaching profession to be optimistic. The teacher associations were well represented on the recently-created Schools Council and, therefore, had a pedagogical voice within the policymaking process.<sup>11</sup> The Schools Council achieved a consensual working practice even if some agreements were reached by the 'lowest common denominator'.<sup>12</sup> The National Union of Teachers (NUT) largely supported the recommendations of the Plowden Report, including the need for child-centred education and partnership with parents. However, their views on parental involvement at a pedagogical level suggested a tension between the twin ambitions of greater equality for children and full professional status for their members. The NUT had campaigned for the expansion of nursery provision but their opposition to the expansion of teachers' aides, a recommendation of the Plowden Report, was an indication that professionalism was a potential barrier to partnerships.<sup>13</sup> There was a tension between their public position and their private interests. For example, one NUT memorandum to the Plowden committee advocated training more nursery teachers but not recruiting parents as aides.<sup>14</sup> The EPA teams would be faced with the immediate challenge of getting the local schools ideologically aligned with the objectives of the project and, from there, to convince individual teachers to experiment with new practices. If this could be achieved, teachers possessed enough agency to make new innovations a reality.

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<sup>10</sup> Simon, B. (1991) 363.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Plaskow, *The Life and Death of the Schools Council*, (Barcombe: Falmer Press, 1985) 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>13</sup> National Union of Teachers, *Plowden: the Union's comments on some of the major issues of the Plowden Report*, (London: NUT, 1969) 2.

<sup>14</sup> National Union of Teachers, *'First Things First' a memorandum to CACE*, (London: NUT, 1964).

## The Plowden Report

The Plowden Report, published in 1967, accelerated the entire progressive movement.<sup>15</sup> The optimistic view that progressive pedagogy could improve outcomes for children was reflected in the theoretical and practical recommendations of the report. There was confidence in some quarters that expansion of the state system would continue and a more egalitarian society would eventually emerge. The sense of optimism was, for a brief moment, almost universal within the social democratic consensus.

Lady Bridget Plowden steered the Committee through the three years of its enquiries. The Committee's personnel was well qualified and more than adequately equipped to interrogate the knowledge of the practitioners and administrators consulted.<sup>16</sup> Once the results were published, the few voices of caution expressed were concerned more with direction rather than principle. Questions were asked however. In a 1967 *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) article, Jean Floud, eminent sociologist and colleague of Halsey, questioned the validity of the research into parental attitudes on which much of the enthusiasm for EPAs was based.<sup>17</sup> This research was given particular prominence by Plowden, but Floud was concerned that not enough was known 'about the formation of attitudes to children and their education' nor how attitudes make an impact on outcomes.<sup>18</sup> The fact that 12 per cent of the population survived on a weekly income of less than £12 10s net was, Floud argued, more pressing than alignment of attitudes. Floud questioned whether anything more could be done by teachers other than to reinforce the 'good' attitudes of 'converted' parents. According to Floud, in the short term it might be a better investment to target resources on the new towns to which families were migrating. It can be argued that using attitudinal scales rather than social class to analyse pupil performance, was a victory for the educationists over the sociologists on the Committee.

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<sup>15</sup> Central Advisory Committee for Education (CACE), *Children and their Primary Schools*, (London: HMSO, 1967) 365.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 342.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Floud, 'Perspectives on Plowden II', *The Teacher*, February 10 1967, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

In a 2003 book, Jones claimed that Plowden was a recognisable philosophy of education used to guide the training of teachers for many years.<sup>19</sup> Gerry Bailey, a retired headteacher interviewed by the author, began his first year of teaching in one of the Liverpool EPA project schools. Bailey confirmed the influence Plowden had. He recalled that the feeling amongst his peers at a college of education was that to be successful as teachers they had to 'put the Plowden Report into practice' in their schools.<sup>20</sup> Plowden was an attempt to 'rethink the relationship between students learning and their social and cultural conditions outside school'.<sup>21</sup> This was the theoretical gateway for the EPA project.

The Plowden philosophy was later criticized by a more radical strand of sociology for its 'normative' presentation of middle-class subjectivity as a 'universal rule' for pedagogy, and for neglecting the way class and gender affected processes of learning.<sup>22</sup> Other critics saw the Plowden philosophy as a symbol of the 'failings' in primary education. According to Jones, it signified 'the opening of a wide gap between the social and economic design for education that was favoured by long-established elites, and the preferences of educators'.<sup>23</sup>

### **Public reactions to Plowden**

In Parliament, the Plowden Report, and the EPA concept, was welcomed during debates in the Commons on January 16 and in the Lords on March 14 1967. Although attendance was poor, both Houses welcomed the introduction of EPAs and only Lord Newton (Conservative) expressed any reservations over allocation of extra resources to EPA schools: 'I do not think more generous staffing in priority areas . . . should be allowed to result in levelling down over the whole field'.<sup>24</sup> He wanted fairer chances but not at the risk to excellence. This reflects the view later to be given a high profile by the Black Papers, a series of articles aiming to protect

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<sup>19</sup> Ken Jones, *Education in Britain 1944 to the present*, (Oxford: Polity, 2003) 80.

<sup>20</sup> Gerry Bailey, (retired headteacher), interview with the author, Edge Hill University, July 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, K. (2003) 82.

<sup>22</sup> Basil Bernstein and Brian Davies, 'Some sociological comments on Plowden', in R.S. Peters, *Perspectives on Plowden*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) 78.

<sup>23</sup> Jones, K. (2003) 84.

<sup>24</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Unauthored report on reactions to Plowden.



tradition and standards from the threat of progressive, child-centred education.<sup>25</sup> The Black Papers were symbolic of what Sandbrook refers to as the increasing 'politicisation' of education during the decade.<sup>26</sup> Generally, however, the Conservatives felt positive discrimination fitted with their demands for selectivity and accountability in public services.

There was general endorsement of the positive discrimination principle in the House of Commons, though doubts were expressed about designation criteria and the distribution of salary increments to teachers. The government showed hesitancy in committing itself to carrying out the recommendations. The Secretary of State, Patrick Gordon Walker, refused to make a statement on December 7 and again on December 15. He refused to commit to giving strong advice to LEAs on identifying their schools, stating that they should retain discretionary power over funding distribution. This reflected the 'national system, locally administered' philosophy, which endured until the 1980s.

Further reaction came in the 1967 conference season. At the Conservative Party Annual Conference the only direct reference to Plowden was in the closing speech of the education debate. Sir Edward Boyle welcomed the idea of positive discrimination and called for proportionately more resources to be allocated to primary education. The TUC gave enthusiastic backing to Plowden's recommendations at their conference, but noted that £16 million was an inadequate sum to service the school-building needs of the nation. The County Councils Association was also supportive but again noted that application of positive discrimination measures would be limited given current financial limits.<sup>27</sup> The Association of Municipal Corporations reiterated this view.<sup>28</sup> The Association of Education Committees was more cautious. Its General Secretary, Sir William Alexander, stated that asking for more money was not realistic and the real challenge

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<sup>25</sup> Brian Cox and Anthony Dyson, *Fight for Education. A Black paper*, (London: Critical Quarterly, 1969).

<sup>26</sup> Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, (London: Abacus, 2006) 589.

<sup>27</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Observations on the Plowden Report, Minutes of the Executive council, July 1967.

<sup>28</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, AMC Municipal Review Supplement Report of Committees of AMC.

was to establish an adjusted set of priorities. The real solution, he felt, was to increase the wealth of the nation and the elements of the education system that impacted most on productivity should be given priority over less productive investment. Charging for school milk and meals was the type of initiative that could help to pay for Plowden's recommendations.<sup>29</sup> While Alexander did not speak on behalf of the AEC, his view is indicative of an innate conservatism inherent in local bureaucracy.

The professional association most supportive of Plowden was the NUT. They called for the designation of EPA schools to be the responsibility of local authorities and teachers. The Burnham Committee granted an allowance of £75 to all teachers employed in EPAs (not the £120 recommended by Plowden). However, the lists of schools submitted to the DES by local authorities would have created anomalies in the distribution of the £400,000 available.

### **The EPA Recommendation**

Of the 197 recommendations made by the Plowden Report, the call to designate EPAs was the first. As George Smith noted, the DES called it one of the Report's 'most imaginative proposals'.<sup>30</sup> Within these areas 'priority' schools should receive additional resources to combat the effect of multiple deprivations. For example, more teachers' aides, more books, improved buildings, salary increments for teachers, expanded nursery provision, the capping of class sizes at 30 and 'research programmes to inform future developments'.<sup>31</sup> The focus on the importance of involving parents in their children's education was most prominently highlighted. The Report noted that

Teachers must be constantly aware that ideas, values and relationships within the school may conflict with those of the home, and that the world assumed by teachers and school books may be unreal to the children . . .<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Unauthored report on reactions to Plowden.

<sup>30</sup> George Smith, 'Whatever Happened to Educational Priority Areas?' *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, no. 1(1987) 23-38.

<sup>31</sup> CACE, (1967) Para 367.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 137.

As an institution, the school was not yet fully adapted from its nineteenth-century form to meet the requirements of contemporary society. The Report claimed that children

... face a future in which they must expect during their working lives to have to change their job, to learn new skills, to adapt themselves to new economic conditions and to form new human relationships.<sup>33</sup>

Plowden called for a new distribution of resources 'to avoid the doors closing early on disadvantaged children'.<sup>34</sup> Resources were already allocated by need to fund building work at LEA level, but this was not happening at the smaller unit of the borough where wealth and poverty were concentrated in pockets. The committee recommended local diagnosis of EPA schools and suggested criteria that LEAs might use to identify them. The criteria were occupation, family size, benefit levels, overcrowding, levels of truancy and attendance, proportions of retarded, disturbed or handicapped pupils, incomplete families and numbers of children who spoke English as an additional language.<sup>35</sup> The initial target was to identify two per cent of pupils with this rising to ten per cent by 1972. Training colleges would provide new initiatives and placements, new teachers' centres would be set up to disseminate good practice, and 'community' schools would be trialled in such areas.<sup>36</sup> Finally, 'research should discover which of the developments in the EPAs [had] the most constructive effects, so as to assist in planning the longer term programme to follow'.<sup>37</sup> This last recommendation opened the door for Young and Halsey.

### **The application for funding**

Michael Young and A.H. Halsey jointly authored the successful application for funding from the SSRC.<sup>38</sup> The application was a response to encouragement from Crosland. Halsey was happy to respond because he was well aware of the 'enormous

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 142.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>38</sup> For a full account of the policy process see Keith Banting, *Poverty, Politics and Policy: Britain in the 1960s*, (London: MacMillan 1979).

variation between districts and towns in all of the democratic variants: longevity, morbidity, mortality'.<sup>39</sup>

Halsey and Young were convinced of the potential of ABIs and of positive discrimination. Extra resources offered an opportunity to pursue their long-term vision of community education. This was not their first attempt to establish an experimental project. Young had applied, unsuccessfully, for funding from the Ford Foundation in 1966.<sup>40</sup> The EPA application is an important document because it presents an opportunity to understand Halsey and Young's ideological ambitions. The opening paragraph of the EPA application, typically succinct, cited Plowden as the motivation for requesting £100,000 from the DES and £75,000 from the SSRC. Halsey drew the reader to the fact that children in these run-down areas had, in the words of the Plowden Report, 'learnt only how not to learn'.<sup>41</sup> He stressed the need for urgent action and evaluation. The application acknowledged that, 'in the current economic climate', a national policy could not be implemented. This did not mean that nothing more could be done. Action research projects were proposed in London, Liverpool, Sunderland, Birmingham and the West Riding of Yorkshire.<sup>42</sup> The sometimes emotive response to Plowden presented an opportunity for action.

The choice of LEAs was partly a reflection of a desire for geographical spread and partly pragmatic. Expressions of interest from LEAs indicating a willingness to offer financial support were treated favourably. Sunderland was eventually dropped in favour of Liverpool because the Liverpool LEA offered financial backing and Halsey had served as a junior academic at the university and possessed knowledge of the city.

Halsey proposed that initial discussions with the LEAs would focus on the attachment of EPA schools to the project. There were to be no fewer than three and no more than nine, including a secondary school. Other issues discussed were the value of an educational social worker, ideas on increasing parental involvement, the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, G. (1987) 27.

<sup>41</sup> CACE, (1967) 51.

<sup>42</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Application to the DES and SSRC for the EPA programme, not dated.

appointment of playgroup leaders, the involvement of secondary school girls to increase their knowledge of young children, links to colleges of education in the area, and the purchase of extra books and equipment. Halsey and Young's application did not contain any area specific plans. This was to avoid the 'premature crystallisation' which might threaten creativity.<sup>43</sup> The LEAs involved had been asked beforehand to indicate what they wanted to prioritise however. For example, the application noted that the West Riding had already started to plan for a 'social education centre' which Alec Clegg described as a centre for 'socially down and out' children.<sup>44</sup> This centre was later to become Red House. This thesis argues the Red House was the most significant development to come out of all five of the EPA projects, and that the role of the director in each case was to be crucial, as will become clear in Chapter Six. Halsey felt that for a project to succeed, the individuals involved had to succeed as well. Although area specific details were absent from the application it was approved by the SSRC.

The action research measures proposed in the application were designed to do justice to the specificities of the action. Reading tests would be used to measure pupil attainment, attitude tests and teacher turnover for teacher morale, parental involvement by the frequency of visits to schools, and community responsibility by monitoring engagement with community activities.<sup>45</sup> Data collection was to occur before, during and at the end of the projects.<sup>46</sup> The data was to be supplemented by a descriptive account of events to add a qualitative dimension in the form of a research diary kept by the team.

### **The project is approved**

Securing official agreement for the project was a lengthy process. In July 1967 Anthony Crosland approved an extra £16 million of funding for school-building projects in designated EPA schools on top of a national figure of £54 million. By December, a total of 92 LEAs had applied for a share. At the same time,

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> George Smith, Ed., *Educational Priority. Volume 4: The West Riding Project*, (London: HMSO, 1975) Appendix 1, 260.

<sup>46</sup> Joan Payne, *Educational Priority Volume 2: EPA Surveys and Statistics*, (London: HMSO, 1974).

5,000 extra nursery places were approved as part of the Urban Programme (also announced in 1968).<sup>47</sup> Eventually, 572 schools were labelled EPA by LEAs. The principle of local determination was to prove significant. Halsey's final report claimed local diagnosis was an essential requirement of successful intervention. However, by upholding this principle the longevity of successful schemes was compromised because funding was not tied to central government funding. Consequently, projects would remain additional to what was considered mainstream provision.

In October 1967, Crosland declared a willingness to consider an action research proposal to identify effective positive discrimination strategies. Government was accepting the principle of positive discrimination albeit on a limited scale. In November 1967 the Education Research Board of the SSRC officially approved Halsey's proposal. The funding offered by the DES and SSRC represented a tiny proportion of the overall education budget but was the biggest grant ever approved for a single project. By May 1968 the five areas had been finalised and HMI John Gregory was seconded to the project.

A national steering committee would oversee the project and approve funding for actions. The committee was chaired by Michael Young and included Basil Bernstein, Halsey, HMI Chief Inspector James Forsyth, and Professor Jack Tizard. Only Tizard, a powerful voice on the SSRC, was openly critical of the EPA concept. According to Halsey, Tizard followed 'the old communist party line' and saw EPA 'as an establishment ruse to add a new frill to the gentling of the masses'.<sup>48</sup>

Local steering committees were established to generate a sense of partnership and to support the director in formulating his choice of actions rather than to 'steer' as such. Committees would include two LEA officers, the Project Director and Research Officer, a local university representative and two high-profile representatives from business. Midwinter felt the structure of the committee

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<sup>47</sup> The Urban Programme was actually approved before the EPA project but was launched, by the Home Office, after the EPA began.

<sup>48</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College Oxford, January 6 2010.

provided 'plenty of room to manoeuvre'.<sup>49</sup> He was referring to his own role as the project director who, if dynamic enough, would be able to instigate a range of actions. At the beginning of 1968 Halsey and Smith attended a conference of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This was an opportunity to draw on the experience of their American counterparts and identify whether any American strategies would successfully crossover to the EPA project. In England, two plenary conferences were held in Oxford and Birmingham to discuss inter-project cooperation and the balance between action and research appropriate to each project.

Despite the large grants from the DES and the SSRC the EPA project was small in scale. This was partly due to the innate conservatism of public servants who were not comfortable committing public funds to a project premised on inconclusive American research. The myopia of elected politicians and the pressures of economic circumstances were also influences. In particular, the rapid increase in teacher supply and the corresponding cost held ambitions in check. Halsey confirmed this economic reality during an interview with the current author:

I'd like to have had more and you can never expect any researcher to be satisfied but in 1967 there was devaluation and problems with sterling balances. I knew, and Crosland knew better, that Roy Jenkins [Chancellor of Exchequer] was going to be difficult about providing government funds. Crosland was pleased with his £16million; he felt he was swimming against the tide. From the SSRC Young gave us as much as he thought was politically possible.<sup>50</sup>

### **Planning the project: the initial view of A.H. Halsey**

Prior to the launch of the project Halsey considered the key issues regarding the recruitment, organisation and objectives of the teams. First, he warned against constant reference to Plowden, since this might create 'inflexibility' in the team's approach.<sup>51</sup> This was such a concern that Halsey felt it might be more fruitful if the

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<sup>49</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Memorandum from John Gregory to Alec Clegg.

<sup>50</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>51</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Educational Priority Action Research Programme, General Point, Halsey, not dated.

director and research officer were recruited from outside teaching. He believed this might secure a fresher, more innovative, approach. Trained research officers would be essential to ensure validity of data collected. Second, Halsey did not believe money was the key issue and noted that in any EPA area, some schools were highly-successful. Third, Halsey felt schools were not making enough demands on their communities. As a long-term goal, he foresaw a range of committees governing all aspects of a school's life from buildings to curricula, staffed equally and with equal status between teachers, parents and citizens. This was a radical idea, particularly since he stressed it should be obligatory, like jury service, though presented in more 'palatable terms'.<sup>52</sup> It also indicates the long-term vision behind the project. Fourth, he called for close involvement of colleges to ensure a better local supply of teachers in the EPAs, and for greater professional development opportunities for existing teachers through an expansion of year-long secondments.

Halsey's priorities are revealed through the questions he raised when considering what the project's objectives should be. First, he asked why some schools perform so well in EPAs, despite the awful conditions in the home and community. This question pre-empted the school improvement movement which was to undermine the idea of positive discrimination by area during the 1970s.<sup>53</sup> Second, he asked why his own morale was so high, as a university don, compared to the low morale of a teacher, and called for investigation of teachers' perceptions of their status. Third, he questioned how serious teachers' were about involving parents, and suggested that perhaps teacher attitude was part of the problem. He accused educationists of displaying a professional arrogance that was preventing schools from making more demands on their community. He cited 'bingo and whist' as the limit to parental participation in many schools.<sup>54</sup> The project would be an opportunity for more imaginative experiments.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



## Recruitment and financial planning

Halsey's initial financial concerns were with the remuneration of the Director and Research Officer for each EPA. This would account for the lion's share of funding and had implications for the type of person who might be appointed. Halsey had accepted the Director would have to be someone with an educational background. He thought the director might be

a Head in his 40s in a middling size of school getting about £3,000 pa at the moment, or a local inspector in the ordinary grade getting the same, or a university senior lecturer with an average salary of around £2,800.<sup>55</sup>

The plan was not to pay any more than £3,000 a year. The Research Officer would cost no more than £2,000. The original budget, for staffing is presented in table 1 below.

*Table 2: Proposed budget for EPA staff<sup>56</sup>*

Resource	Cost (£)
Project Directors x 4	36,000
Research Officers x 4	24,000
Secretaries x 4	10,800
HMI	765
Secretary at Oxford	1,350
Miscellaneous Expenses	3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,915</b>

The costs would be split between the SSRC, paying £32,535 and the DES paying £43,380. The rest of the £175,000 budget would be costed in the detailed local action plans that were due to be presented to Halsey on October 1 1968. The teams would begin work on January 1 1969, with final reports submitted on 31 December 1971.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Application to the DES and SSRC for the EPA programme.

## Action Research - theoretical and methodological tensions

Before the projects became operational a number of theoretical and methodological tensions regarding action research had to be resolved. The balance between action and research was discussed during a two-day conference held at Nuffield College, Oxford, in September 1968. This was the first time the EPA teams had met to discuss the aims of the project. Representatives from each of the four English teams were present as well as the key members of the national steering committee, Halsey, Young, Gregory and Alan Brimer (the National Research Officer from Bristol University Education Department), whose role was to advise on the choice of methodology for the national research element, preschool reading. Halsey's opening comments raised two key methodological issues: a three-year project may be too short a time to carry out the project satisfactorily, and on-going communication between the project teams was essential. Forty years after the event, Halsey's reflections on the appropriateness of the action research methodology in relation to the objectives of the project, still reveal uncertainty:

I don't think I ever made up my mind that it had to be a research programme because part of me was thinking back with regret and resentment to the education system I had experienced growing up myself. It was a terribly rusty engine for selecting talent from the proletarians. When it came to the crunch I would always prefer a bit of action that was aiming to get rid of the old system, to a clean piece of research that could be presented to the academic world as proof that there were inequalities and that you could improve the output of the proletarians. I just knew that, it was common sense.<sup>57</sup>

At the conference four questions dominated discussions. What should be the range of action? Should it extend to community action or limit itself to 'strictly educational action?' How could the action be evaluated and to what extent were the findings emerging from the USA significant for the British programme?<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>58</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Report of the Conference held at Nuffield College, Oxford 13 and 14 September 1968. 1.

There was debate as to whether the best approach was an action-based community project, followed by a full discussion of the action, or a tightly planned and evaluated set of national experiments for all five teams. The ability to evaluate would be undermined by the needs of the action, which required flexibility and freedom for the teams to adjust programmes. What emerged was a middle ground with different types of action and evaluation within an overall framework. The thesis questions whether this compromise weakened the chances of success in the longer term.

The minutes from the conference suggest that the final direction reflected Young and Halsey's vision. Their voices were prominent because they needed to both inspire and control the teams. The discussions demonstrated a command of practical, pedagogical and ideological issues. Smith drew on his knowledge of American innovations to suggest that enhanced motivation, rather than cognitive development, would be the most likely result of actions implemented. Eric Midwinter, Liverpool Project Director, stressed the need to consider the class-based nature of the existing education system, and Young claimed that, without complementary reforms in other areas of society, the education system was an inadequate tool for pursuing social reform.

In his concluding remarks, Halsey returned to the unavoidable tensions between an action-based community project designed to generate new forms of partnership between schools and families, and the demands upon researchers to evaluate some of these actions scientifically. He called for goodwill between the directors and the researchers. In Liverpool and Yorkshire goodwill certainly existed and the latter provided much of the quantitative evidence that Halsey cited in his final report.<sup>59</sup>

At a second conference held in Birmingham in November, members presented their interpretations of how to approach action research and produce valid, transferable data. While several delegates highlighted the difficulties of identifying common measures, Eric Midwinter claimed that action should be its own

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 4.

justification. He felt that the number one priority was to ensure that new networks of communication remained in place after the teams were withdrawn.<sup>60</sup>

George Smith identified two categories of area-based projects.<sup>61</sup> First, 'those that attempted to improve the internal efficiency of the educational system': the deficit approach, where broken educational products are fixed, and new initiatives are 'additions' to the existing system.<sup>62</sup> Second, projects seeking to make structural changes such as altering the relationship between teacher and child through parental involvement. This type of project attempted to change the focus of the system by redirecting the curriculum from academic to community studies.<sup>63</sup> The former looked at improved efficiency and were therefore easier to measure. Researchers could draw on an established methodology designed to examine the processes involved in the actions that took place. The dynamics involved in the latter presented greater challenges to the researcher, yet this type of project was more appropriate for an EPA.

Following the Birmingham conference, separate teams took on responsibility for designing elements of the 'likely' programme. Preschool design was taken on by Liverpool and Dundee, curriculum enrichment by London, with support from Birmingham, and the problem of collecting common baseline assessment was the responsibility of George Smith with support from Alan Brimer and Alan Little, the London Research Officer. The West Riding team would also consider the links between school and community. These plans were to be produced using the methodology suggested by Alan Brimer at the Birmingham conference. Actions had to be planned with clearly stated aims and with a robust methodology for the collection and evaluation of data.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Report of the Conference held in Birmingham 1 and 2 November 1968.

<sup>61</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Educational Priority Areas: Some Proposals on 'Parents and Communities', 1.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, 'A Consideration of the problems of Evaluating the Outcomes of the EPA programme', 5.

Brimer stressed that the primary aim of the teams was to improve the attainment of children by improving their 'skill mastery'. This was dependant on four factors: perseverance, aptitude, time for learning and quality of the learning situation.<sup>65</sup> Plans required clear specification of the action and its objectives, the means by which the objectives were to be achieved, a detailed programme outline, a list of research measures and a list of the background variables which may affect the outcome. Halsey provided clear guidance to ensure the designs were available for the next meeting, in January 1969.<sup>66</sup> At this meeting the plans were presented to everyone involved in the project.

The design of the research was problematic. From the established academic point of view, it was questionable whether the investment in time and money would produce measurable outcomes that could be defended in a public arena. This was important because the DES and SSRC expected the project to provide evidence of strategies that could be replicated in different geographical areas. The extent to which the project managed to do so might determine whether a national EPA programme could be justified.

### **Local issues – the political, educational and geographical context**

The area designated as Liverpool EPA was, according to Midwinter, an 'entire community at social and educational risk'.<sup>67</sup> It was a community in transition and the LEPA team sought to 'assist that transition'.<sup>68</sup> The criteria listed in Plowden paragraph 153, for identification of EPA schools, were all 'manifest' in Liverpool to some degree, from dilapidated buildings to immigration and poverty. It was a community in transition, 'from a horizontal...to a vertical one'.<sup>69</sup>

The momentum for change in Liverpool came originally from the schools. Headteachers in the EPA area had written to Liverpool's CEO, C.P.R. Clarke, in November 1967. This letter became known as the 'Granby Memorandum' though in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>66</sup> A meeting of the Directors took place in Liverpool on December 2, and one for the Research Officers on December 6 in London.

<sup>67</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA project progress report, May 1969.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Gerry Bailey, interview with the author, Liverpool, June 29 2008.

typically conservative fashion it contained 'suggestions' to the CEO, regarding the implementation of the Plowden recommendations. A year earlier in 1966, the head of Granby Street Secondary Modern, later the head of Paddington comprehensive, the base for the EPA team, stated in his annual report to parents that his school needed to 'become even more outward looking: to play our part in the community to which we belong'.<sup>70</sup> Liverpool City Council had been in favour of some form of intervention in its struggling schools before the EPA project was announced. Once the request for expressions of interest was released by Halsey, Clarke wrote to Michael Young to confirm his interest in participating.<sup>71</sup>

In 1967 Liverpool's inclusion in the EPA project was far from certain. When Halsey had visited Tom McManners, Liverpool's Chief Inspector, McManners was of the opinion that additional funding should target teacher supply. His view was unlikely to have enhanced the likelihood of Liverpool's inclusion. McManners believed that children faced a restricted environment outside school. The most realistic response was well qualified teachers reading stories like *Winnie the Pooh* to help them 'escape to the richer environment of their imagination'.<sup>72</sup> Blyth, Mays and Finlayson from the University of Liverpool also attended this meeting. Halsey described them as 'dryly academic' but nevertheless enthusiastic to establish a project with clear quantifiable 'before and after' measures.<sup>73</sup> Halsey's record of this meeting is evidence that there were different interpretations of what constituted appropriate EPA policy.

In May 1968 Manchester and Sunderland both looked more likely locations for the project. However, John Gregory, the HMI seconded to the project, returned to Liverpool to meet with Clarke, his deputy Mr Birley, McManners and Blyth. The purpose of the meeting was to consider whether there could still be a place for Liverpool. The decision on where to base the projects was influenced by the existence of genuine EPA schools within a compact area alongside financial support

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<sup>70</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Headteachers report to governors and parents Granby Street School 1966.

<sup>71</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter, Clarke to Young March 12 1968.

<sup>72</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Halsey report on his visit to Liverpool and Manchester on 12 and 13 December 1967, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 2.

from the LEA. Liverpool's application had not satisfied the latter condition. Gregory's report was frank and his intention was to cajole the LEA into a firm financial commitment. Gregory sympathised with the financial challenges currently facing authorities but stressed the importance of a financial contribution. Clarke wrote to Michael Young outlining the financial support he would request from his Education Committee in June and Liverpool was subsequently included.<sup>74</sup>

The project was based in the Granby, Princes Park and Kensington wards of the Liverpool 8 postcode area.<sup>75</sup> This was an area overprovided with pubs and shops yet lacking green spaces or social amenities. Voluntary migration and overspill schemes were rapidly reducing the population of the city's inner ring. In 1968 over 30,000 slums were planned for clearance. It was difficult to achieve school and community rejuvenation in such circumstances. The area was also home to Liverpool's most diverse ethnic community and the LEA had a poor track record for overcoming institutional racism. Fifteen years after the EPA project, the Swann Report was highly critical of the LEA, citing a 1973 Select Committee report that 'found that the Black community was disadvantaged both inside and outside school'.<sup>76</sup> Liverpool had left the Select Committee with 'a profound sense of uneasiness'.<sup>77</sup>

Using the Plowden criteria local headteachers were asked to identify their own schools as 'EPA', much to the frustration of local steering committee member Margaret Simey.<sup>78</sup> Simey was concerned that certain headteachers might not comply because of personal objections to the label EPA. This illustrates the dilemma of the balance of control between centre and locality. Twenty-nine schools and three nurseries were designated priority schools and in October 1968, seven schools and one nursery were identified as the project schools. A precise description of the schools is impossible since small area data is not available to the researcher.

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<sup>74</sup> Eric Midwinter, interview with the author, Institute of Education, London, April 2008.

<sup>75</sup> All but one of the project schools were contained in this postcode area.

<sup>76</sup> The 1973 Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration on education (1), cited in The Swann Report, *Education for All Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1985) 735.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Handwritten note from Councillor Simey to A.H. Halsey October 1968.

However, the concentration of EPA type schools meant the area chosen was appropriate. It had, according to Simey, the area's councillor, 'the highest rate of illegitimacy, educational subnormality, children in care, unemployment, possession orders and debt - hence multideprivation - life is not in line with the traditional school ethos'.<sup>79</sup>

The image of desperately deprived, high-density, multi-ethnic urban squalor that Plowden equated with the EPA does not match the image of Conisborough that George Smith presented in his original description of the villages of 'Halsby' and 'Denniston'.<sup>80</sup> These were nineteenth-century pit villages, typical of many others. The main pit shaft was sunk in Denaby Main in 1864 and this led to rapid population growth and an influx of mineworkers who were housed in tight, two-up-two-down terraced streets. The area was undergoing major redevelopment in 1968, with modern estates replacing the terraces and resulting in the same sense of dislocation that existed in urban EPAs. Gosden and Sharp claim Denaby and Conisborough were chosen because they best fitted the EPA criteria described in Plowden.<sup>81</sup> Although this is accurate, other villages could have been chosen and the choice of location was partly based on Alec Clegg's enthusiasm. Clegg's interest in disadvantaged children saw the West Riding become 'one of the country's leading exponents and practitioners of compensatory education'.<sup>82</sup> Halsey confirmed that it was Clegg's 'fame' that drew his attention to the West Riding.<sup>83</sup>

The demographic stability and homogeneity of the two villages was in stark contrast to Liverpool 8. This stability was largely due to the sense of community that had developed from single industry dependence. Smith's description is very thorough.<sup>84</sup> He makes it clear that the area was 'radically different from the popular stereotype of an EPA'.<sup>85</sup> The population was stable; it was predominantly skilled/semi-skilled in social class (87 per cent) due to the dominance of minework.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> George Smith, *West Riding Educational Priority Area Project Final Report 1971, Volume 1*.

<sup>81</sup> Peter Gosden and Paul Sharp, *The Development of an Education Service: The West Riding 1889 to 1974*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1978).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>83</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, G. (1975) Chapters 1-4.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 9.



Housing was single-family occupant not shared and new development meant that over 55 per cent of households had exclusive use of bath/toilet. Thus, the 'traditionally tight kin and friendship networks remain[ed]'.<sup>86</sup> Most families had strong vertical and horizontal roots. Gender roles were strongly demarcated and the fact that women 'looked after the children' meant there was less demand for preschool facilities than might be expected. A range of clubs provided community facilities plus social and welfare benefits. However, the area was changing. Mining as an industry was still the main employer but its position was being eroded and as Smith reflected in 1975, 'local orientation can mask the effects of this until it may be too late'.<sup>87</sup>

There were ten separate schools in the area, two primaries, two junior and two infant on separate sites, plus two further junior and infant schools on shared sites but with different heads. The size varied from 100 to 350 pupils and all were mixed-sex apart from the Catholic school. The schools employed 120 teachers and, as such, were collectively one of the largest employers after the pit. All schools were pre-1950s establishments, though the situation was changing due to funding for new buildings and modernisation. Although the area was very different from Liverpool, Birmingham and London it was still a suitable base for an EPA project. The attainment of children was well below the national average and the close knit nature of the community made it a prime location for testing the effectiveness of practices targeting home-school relationships.

### **Local strategy dilemmas**

The contextual differences between the two areas meant each team experienced different tensions when planning their strategies. The evidence provided by documents produced before and during the projects indicate a deep engagement with the methodological dilemmas they faced.

The greatest methodological challenge identified by the WREPA team was that, even with clear objectives it is difficult to accurately measure the outcomes of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 15.

actions designed to generate institutional change. George Smith felt it may be more realistic to accept that the focus should be on providing information on the relationships between objectives, processes and outcomes. This would add to the growing evidence base in favour of area-based responses. The research design in the West Riding focused on providing 'attractive' additions to existing provision and their proposals were designed with a sound knowledge of the methodological difficulties likely to be encountered during the project's life.

George Smith felt the WREPA team's initial strategy was 'no more than thoughts on paper'.<sup>88</sup> The area was not known to the team and their lack of primary school experience meant a predetermined plan was inappropriate. The team hoped to identify a coherent set of activities that would persuade schools to cooperate. This would be achieved by building on ideas emanating from the schools, providing financial support and assuming that staff held a 'fair degree of independence'. This way, even if actions failed, the teachers sense of ownership would engender a sympathetic response. All schools in the area were to be approached and those showing a 'positive attitude' were to be given financial assistance to develop their ideas on how to 'improve the performance' of their children. Primary schools would be given £300 and secondary schools £600. The 'ideas' would be developed during the first year of the project through meetings between the team, the LEA and the heads. The resulting plans would be piloted on a small scale. Smith's initial 'thoughts on paper' were very different than what transpired, as Chapter Four will demonstrate. The school-focused nature of the plan indicates a lack of confidence on the team's part. It did not acknowledge that the existing habitus of the teachers might be part of the problem. Aligning the EPA project with fellow professionals, rather than families who might be victims of exclusionary practices induced by teacher professionalism, would have had a bearing on its success.

A series of consultative meetings were held with headteachers and other significant individuals whom the team felt could support their objectives. Doctors,

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<sup>88</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, WREPA initial plan. 1-2.

pre-school playgroup associations, nurseries and Harry Rée, Professor of Education at York University, were all engaged in the early weeks of the project.<sup>89</sup>

In January 1969 Mike Harvey, Director of the WREPA project, met with the LEAs Divisional Education Officer, Mr Timothy, to discuss the project. The divisional officer was responsible for all schools in Division 18 of the West Riding, which included Denaby and Conisborough. Timothy was the WREPA team's main point of contact with the LEA, thus it was important to establish a positive relationship with him. Harvey's record of this meeting suggests that although Timothy's attitude toward the team was outwardly supportive, it was tempered somewhat by his scepticism towards the unrealistic nature of the EPA idea. Timothy felt that improving the performance of the schools would be very difficult because the area suffered from a lack of middle-class children and an accumulation of the 'dregs' of society.<sup>90</sup> Harvey suspected Timothy's attitude was more to do with his resentment of the team's ability to bypass him 'in getting equipment or materials'.<sup>91</sup> George Smith had a different perspective. He felt Timothy was initially wary of the team, but only because he was protective of 'his' schools.<sup>92</sup> For a project to thrive it requires a supportive network and although Alec Clegg was an enthusiastic supporter, there was some distance between him and the project on the ground. The backing of the Divisional Officer was therefore crucial. Despite his cynicism toward the team's ambitions, Timothy's support would demonstrate to the schools that the WREPA team was backed by a practical commitment from the LEA. Since the project was on the Divisional Officer's agenda the team would be able to secure a high profile in schools.

In Liverpool, Eric Midwinter's account of the project gave the impression of a man who was assured of his ideological convictions.<sup>93</sup> His ambitions for the long-term future of the school system can be summed up as one where it was 'more truthfully the people's system' and deployed 'more beneficially as a support and as a

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<sup>89</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Various written records of meetings some unsigned, others by Teresa Smith.

<sup>90</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Meeting with Mr Timothy January 13 1969.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Email correspondence with George Smith November 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Priority Education: An account of the Liverpool project*, (London: Penguin, 1972b).

keystone for grassroots democracy and community development'.<sup>94</sup> The EPA project was to form a part of a 'spiral process' that would 'provoke articulate and valid pressures for reform through an improved utilization of existing possibilities'.<sup>95</sup> Midwinter felt that the implicit acceptance of the structure of the current system was wrong. The Plowden Report's ambition to make EPA schools as good as the best in the country was unrealistic because there was solidity in the correlation between poverty and academic underachievement. Midwinter saw the EPA project as part of a reappraisal of the aims of education.

At the heart of Liverpool's initial strategy was curriculum reform. The aim was to encourage schools to experiment with the social and environmental curriculum and involve parents in the delivery. Without the participation of the community, 'interventionist' policies lost their potency.<sup>96</sup> This is arguably the ideological dimension that differentiates community education from compensatory education. The LEPA strategy required schools to raise parental awareness of the social curriculum experiments they were carrying out. However, considering the scale of material deprivation in Liverpool 8 the team was aware of the difficulties this posed and the likelihood that some teachers may feel threatened. Therefore, the team would work on 'public relations' to allay fears of a threat to teacher professionalism.

## Summary

The late 1960s was an opportunistic time for the EPA project and the experimental pedagogy that it demanded. Primary education had become the focus of research and policy. This increased interest in primary education had extended out of the ideological battle against the inequalities of the tripartite system. Sociologists disseminated their findings in rapidly-expanding teacher-training colleges and here, interest in child development theories turned attention toward the primary school. The Plowden Report's lengthy and comprehensive investigations sustained this focus and helped to create an opportunity for Halsey and Young to pursue their ambitions

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>96</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Projections. An educational priority area at work*, (London: Ward Lock, 1972 a) 24.

for a restructuring of the relationship between the school and the family. Halsey and Young wanted government to commit to a national 'Plowden policy'. This failed to materialise due largely to economic factors and institutional conservatism. The EPA project they secured represented a compromise.

In Chapters Four and Five detailed accounts and analysis of the actions taken by the teams are presented. The response of teachers, parents and local administrators to those actions is discussed. Both chapters draw on uncatalogued and relatively untouched primary sources, as well as extensive interview data. The chapters will reveal what was at stake in the northern EPAs. They will consider what the evidence suggests was, and was not achieved, and in doing so they will demonstrate why there is value in this historical study.

## **Chapter Four The West Riding Educational Priority Area Project**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a detailed account of the major activities that occurred during the three years of the WREPA project. The main aim is to analyse the record of the team and attempt to quantify their contribution to our existing understanding of the potential of ABIs. When this chapter is viewed alongside Chapter Five (LEPA) and Chapter Six (the role of key individuals) the contribution made by the northern EPA projects will become clear. The WREPA team were presented with the opportunity to establish what will be described as an *intermediate* educational institution, the Red House Education Centre. To the local community, Red House was synonymous with the project. Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be on its role as the base for the WREPA team's actions.

The chapter is sub-divided into five sections. Section one outlines the administrative and educational context of the West Riding and recaps on the selection of Denaby and Conisborough. Section two focuses on the first six months of the project when the team established themselves within the two close-knit communities. Ideological influences on the teams will be discussed and their strategy in relation to action and research outlined. Section three introduces Red House as the physical base for the project and explains the ideological rationale for the intermediate educational space. Section four provides a detailed account of the team's actions in relation to the four aims of the project. Section five evaluates the impact made by the project and assesses the potential of Red House as a possible model for a new educational institution.

At a time when the validity and effectiveness of the compensatory education practiced in the USA was being questioned, the WREPA project was an example of the way concerns with educational inequality crossed geographical boundaries. While American education departments evaluated projects across their urban downtown zones, a project with similar aims, but a qualitatively different approach, was acted out in a small English mining community.

## **The West Riding of Yorkshire and the arrival of WREPA**

As Chapter Three explained, the choice of locations was largely the decision of A.H. Halsey and Michael Young. The fact that two semi-rural mining villages were included over more obvious alternatives like Sunderland and Manchester, requires some explanation. Halsey made the decision to include a contrasting location because it suited the project's experimental remit. During the planning stage, Halsey was made aware of Alec Clegg's enthusiasm for the project. Shirley Williams, a junior minister within the DES, informed Halsey that Alec Clegg, CEO for the West Riding LEA, would be able to offer a suitable isolated base.<sup>1</sup> The EPA project was expected to identify rigorously evaluated strategies that could be applied on a national basis. The inclusion of Denaby and Conisborough presented an opportunity to strengthen the claims made by the project's final report. This appealed to Halsey because he had ambitions to persuade the government to adopt a national EPA policy. The argument for a nationwide approach would be strengthened if strategies were identified that appeared to be successful in contrasting locations. However, the enthusiasm of the LEA was the overriding reason for the inclusion of Denaby and Conisborough.

The villages were situated in the Don valley, near to Doncaster, in administrative Division 18 of the West Riding. They had a combined population of about 17,000, evenly split.<sup>2</sup> The area was undergoing major regeneration of its housing stock; 275 new houses were planned for Denaby as nineteenth-century 'miners cottages' were cleared and replaced by modern public housing, some semi-detached. This change impacted on the community in different ways. It increased optimism but, equally, it caused unease as neighbours were uprooted, even if only to different streets. The team hoped the physical changes would create a feeling of new beginnings and allow them to engage local people more successfully in order to challenge what they perceived were low aspirations.

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<sup>1</sup>George Smith, Private EPA papers, Note made by Halsey following meeting with Shirley Williams, December 19 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Note made by T. Smith following meeting with Mr Ward, Clerk to Consiborough Urban District Council, September 23 1969.

In 1969, Alec Clegg, with support from the Joseph Rowntree Trust, secured the purchase of a doctor's surgery in Denaby. Clegg had originally envisaged the creation of a respite centre for children in distress, but the WREPA team persuaded him that a physical base could play an essential role in the project. The surgery became the base for the project's experimental programmes.

The new centre opened several months later than planned due to refurbishment and alteration work. Its facilities consisted of a multi-purpose room, hall, office, dining room, workshop, kitchen and gardens. The building was small but its close proximity to the centre of Denaby provided the team with an immediate profile. The team felt that to have a lasting impact the centre needed to be seen as valuable by the whole community. The programmes developed at Red House were designed to engage all groups, from pre-school children to college of education students, working in partnership with local schools and involving parents wherever possible. The rationale was that children would see education as a social process involving collaboration between adults, while their families would see the educational establishment together in one base.

The two villages were administered by LEA Divisional Officer Mr Timothy. Timothy met with the WREPA team early in January 1969 and made it clear he would support their work.<sup>3</sup> He did not make the decision to accept the EPA but he was pragmatic and not averse to using the EPA label if it would attract extra funding into the area. He believed the research element would provide evidence to sway the LEA that positive discrimination was a justifiable policy. Timothy anticipated that there would be an element of defensiveness amongst some older teachers. He claimed that long-serving teachers were aware of the problems in their schools and feared the project may portray them as complacent. Timothy was impressed with the project's four objectives and felt the expansion of preschool provision with greater parental involvement could easily be taken on by the LEA after the project. The EPA team recognised that Timothy was an important ally who would need to be kept informed of plans.

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<sup>3</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Minutes of meeting between Mike Harvey and Mr Timothy held January 13 1969.



## Establishing the project

In November 1968, a progress report was sent to the national steering committee. It confirmed Mike Harvey as Director, George Smith as Research Officer and Teresa Smith as Action Assistant. Red House wardens, Lin and Geoff Poulton and Educational Home Visitor Gina Armstrong would be recruited later to complete the team. The report confirmed the official start date as January 1 1969, a term later than in Liverpool.<sup>4</sup> The WREPA team were unknown and spent the initial months establishing trust with schools. Nine schools were to be engaged in all: Ivanhoe Primary, St Albans Roman Catholic Primary, Rowena Infants, and, Denaby Main, Balby Street and Station Road were separate junior mixed and infants schools. They were given access to an office and by the beginning of 1969 had established a working relationship with Timothy.

During the early months of the project an exhaustive series of meetings took place between team members and local professionals. The meetings had a diplomatic and intelligence gathering purpose. The team was establishing avenues of support and identifying potential barriers. For example, a meeting with Harry Rée, the Academic Adviser to the project from York University, raised the team's awareness of tension existing between Alec Clegg and the local Health Visitors (HV).<sup>5</sup> Clegg had expressed displeasure at the proposed changes to social services recommended by the Seebohm Committee.<sup>6</sup> He had been critical of local children's welfare services and was not happy that he would lose managerial control of the HVs. This was likely to weigh upon the cooperativeness of the HVs, who had access to particular families and a good deal of local knowledge. Rée saw this as a possible area of opportunity and advised the team to make links with the HVs. He was enthusiastic and sympathetic toward the team's objectives and expressed an interest in meeting with the team on a monthly basis.

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<sup>4</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, WREPA Progress report, November 1968.

<sup>5</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Notes from team meeting with Rée, January 17 1969.

<sup>6</sup> Seebohm Committee, *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, (London: HMSO, mnd 3703, 1968).

It is not surprising that Alec Clegg was discussed at the meeting with Rée. Clegg had been CEO since 1945 and had an almost paternal influence on schools and administrators. Once he had publicly committed to the EPA project the team were free to operate with minimal interference from local bureaucracy. Newsam illustrates the attitude Clegg took to developments he considered to be exciting and important:

In 1970, at the Red House in Denaby . . . the workers were full of new ideas and practices. Alec Clegg visited and came back enthused. Half the office then wanted to visit. His response was to tell everyone to keep away for six months. 'One of you is bound to find that they are breaking the law and believe you have to stop them', was roughly how he put it.<sup>7</sup>

Freedom from local bureaucracy was important and the team took every opportunity to raise their profile and reiterate their pedagogical rationale to the school workforce. This continued throughout the three years. For example, in October 1969 Mike Harvey and Teresa Smith delivered a presentation during a conference on reading attended by the staff of all local primary schools.<sup>8</sup> The presentation stressed the importance of capitalising on parental enthusiasm during the preschool years. Harvey and Smith explained how preschool experience could help to insulate the child from the effects of negative labelling that could occur as the child progressed through the school system. The session generated discussion about the qualitative differences between playgroups and nursery classes. Significantly, the local secondary school, Northcliffe, chose not to attend. This illustrated the compartmentalised nature of the school system, a major challenge to a project committed to cross-phase collaboration.

### **Strategy and ideology**

The team's philosophy was evident in their initial action plan.<sup>9</sup> The strategy outlined in the plan reflected the discussions that took place at national steering committee meetings. It emphasised the dangers of holding 'predetermined ideas'

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Newsam, 'What price hyacinths? An appreciation of the work of Sir Alec Clegg', *Education* 3-13, 36, no. 2 (2008) 110.

<sup>8</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Notes by T. Smith following reading conference, October 31 1969.

<sup>9</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, WREPA initial plan signed by Mike Harvey, October 1968.

about an area none of the team knew.<sup>10</sup> All schools were to be approached and £300 offered to those responding positively to the objectives of the project. The team would then meet with headteachers and staff, away from school if possible, in order to develop plans which could be taken to the divisional officer for approval and costing. Meeting to discuss strategy away from the school was evidence of the power vested in managerial structures and the need to create a more democratic space for debate. Strategies which produced measurable outcomes would be favoured and by the end of the summer term in 1969, a set of strategies were to be ready to run. Once underway the strategies would be monitored in a series of weekly, monthly or termly meetings, culminating in a conference attended by all school staff in summer 1970. It appears from this plan that the team lacked the confidence to lead the local teachers in the way Midwinter did in Liverpool. Midwinter's academic background and personality enabled him to make an immediate impact on the schools and local inspectors. In the West Riding the approach was more circumspect but, ultimately, both were successful. The second strand of the project plan, the creation of 'some form of social education centre in the Denaby area', meant the team would not have something to offer schools beyond their own services.<sup>11</sup>

The proposed centre had the potential for overcoming the problem of rootlessness by allowing the team to be identified with the area. A physical base offered greater insurance that work could be continued beyond the life of the project. The centre would serve a number of purposes: as a teachers' centre, in the absence of a local base for teachers' professional development due to constraints on LEA funding, as a playgroup and clinic offering child guidance services and an emergency hostel for families in need of support, and as a homework centre to alleviate the pressures of overcrowded housing. As far as possible it would be a resource for the community, but with a research focus, exploring whether schools could 'be stimulated into change, and for ways of extending the role of community education'.<sup>12</sup> The initial planning document was budgeted on £10,210: £3,000 on the community centre, £1,000 on a minibus, £2,500 on preschool work and £300 each on

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>12</sup> George Smith and Teresa Smith, 'The Community school - a base for community development?' in, John Raynor and Elizabeth Harris, *Schooling in the City*, (London: Ward Lock in association with the Open University, 1974) 53.

a number of school projects.<sup>13</sup> This was a considerable injection of funds into one small location.

George and Teresa Smith both believed that an area-based approach was appropriate because community was a 'definable entity sufficiently robust to be developed from within' and existing 'independently of the administrative structures created to service it'.<sup>14</sup> They recognised the significance of longevity. The idea of entering into financial partnership with the LEA was central to the strategy. Interviewed by the present author in October 2008, Harvey explained:

Keeping things in place after we'd gone was always my obsession so we'd never do anything we felt was the LEA's responsibility. We'd involve them financially so the thing had a future. Geoff and Lin [Poulton] remained in Red House after we left and that was the view we took all the time. We weren't some group going in then pulling out.<sup>15</sup>

His attitude reduced the likelihood of a suspicious response from headteachers who may otherwise have felt WREPA was a vehicle for the team as much as an attempt to change the educational culture of their schools. Headteachers were the gatekeepers to children, families and teachers, and as such, their support was essential. WREPA was reliant on the continued financial commitment from the LEA. Both of these factors illustrate how fragile any additions to accepted state education are. It was felt that if a project's finances were subject to the same political and pragmatic forces as the school this may threaten to compromise its independence.

During the first year of the project all efforts went into engaging schools. The idea of multi-agency practice was not under consideration. In fact, it was not even a recognised term during the 1960s. Professionals serving the area were compartmentalised and their responses were framed by hierarchical forces operating within the norms of current practice. A meeting with a local doctor highlights the issue of professionalism as a barrier to new partnerships between different

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, G. and Smith, T., (1974). 50.

<sup>15</sup> M. Harvey, interview with the author, September 2008.

agencies.<sup>16</sup> Dr Crusiter 'suspected' that there was a disproportionate level of educational special needs amongst local children, possibly as a result of 'inbreeding amongst the Irish Catholic labourer group'.<sup>17</sup> He claimed that despite the problems this posed, local schools were reluctant to notify the health authorities of individual need, preferring to cope alone when a special school was a better option. Crusiter's opinion may or may not have been representative of the medical profession at this time but it does suggest that the creation of multi-profession partnerships would be problematic.

The main focus of partnership was with schools and parents. The team's notion of partnership questioned the assumptions made by teachers and parents regarding each others roles. Even minor alterations to the home-school relationship were fragile due to the existing balance of power between the two parties. This was demonstrated by the furore that followed the broadcast of a BBC television documentary made about the WREPA project in November 1971.<sup>18</sup> Geoff and Lin Poulton travelled to London the day after the broadcast to discuss the programme on the BBC 2 topical discussion show 'Late Night Line Up'. After the broadcast, George Smith wrote to the programme director Edward Goldwyn stating, 'it was not only what was said about the schools and the area, but the idea that parents were as good as teachers which upset a number of infant teachers'.<sup>19</sup> The fire-fighting response of the team emphasises how much work had gone into establishing a degree of trust from the schools. Theoretically, their response introduces the question of whether professional identity, or habitus, is an immovable barrier to the alteration of the relationship between the family and the school.

### **The approach to action and research**

The West Riding project supplied A.H. Halsey with much of the quantifiable data for his final report to the DES and SSRC. This was partly due to the social research training his own department had provided for George Smith, or, in Halsey's

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<sup>16</sup> George Smith, personal EPA papers, Notes from a meeting with Doctor Crusiter, Feb 24 1969, no author named.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Goldwyn ( Director) 'If at first you don't succeed, you don't succeed', (*Horizon*. UK, BBC, 1971).

<sup>19</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter from G. Smith to E. Goldwyn, November 4 1971.

words his ‘constant nattering’ to Smith in college each week.<sup>20</sup> George Smith had been proactive at the first meeting of EPA project research officers in Birmingham. He was critical of the ‘confirmatory research’ he had witnessed on his tour of Headstart projects in the USA, questioning its validity and reliability. Smith claimed that only the proposed preschool programme offered the opportunity to control variables rigidly enough to develop the type of overall national research design that adviser Alan Brimer wanted.<sup>21</sup>

Following the Birmingham conference Smith and the team responded to the challenges laid down by Brimer regarding the robustness of the research design.<sup>22</sup> The content of the document produced in response to the discussions at Birmingham revealed a research officer very well informed by the existing literature. Smith cited Fantini and Weinstein’s research to illustrate the differences between types of intervention projects.<sup>23</sup> This research had identified contrasting rationales. One approach identified a need to rehabilitate ‘faulty educational products’ and resulted in the generation of additions to the conventional processes of the school. But a second type of project sought to alter the focus of the existing system and was more conducive to achieving institutional change. The West Riding team identified with the latter. However, their plan acknowledged that there were issues with the research model that could be applied to this type of project. Initiatives that focused on additions to the existing process required clear objectives to measure attainment. A large body of literature was available to inform this methodology. The same body of work was not available to researchers engaged in projects seeking community development through institutional change.

The team advocated the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. They believed that a form of measurement could be achieved by describing very closely what happened after strategies were implemented. For example, strategies aiming to increase community involvement in education could be evaluated by observing changes in the organisational abilities of people involved. The team were not

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<sup>20</sup> Halsey, Interview with the author, Nuffield College, January 6 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Teresa Smith, notes from meeting of EPA research officers, November 1 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, ‘EPA: Some proposals on parents and community’ unsigned.

<sup>23</sup> Mario Fantini and Gerald Weinstein, *The Disadvantaged: Challenge to Education*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) 186.

confident of achieving the degree of control this required. They chose this approach because they believed it might provide information about future change, over the longer term.

The outcomes of strategies would be measured as far as possible. For example, contact and communication between parents and schools could be measured using frequency counts, parent knowledge through questionnaires, parental attitudes using the attitudinal scales used by the Plowden research, and attainment using performance tests. Baseline data was collected in 1968 consisting of 1966 census material, school records, three surveys of teachers, parental attitudes via home interviews, and literacy testing. They utilised the English Picture vocabulary test, Bristol achievement test and the National Foundation for Educational Research, Reading test A, all commonly used by schools to assess aspects of literacy. The result of the tests confirmed that attainment levels were low. By the time local children entered school many were five-to-six months behind national literacy averages and they would continue to fall behind. The strategy was therefore informed by a realistic view of what measurable outcomes could be achieved.

The team's initial strategy had two strands: communication and participation. Schools would be encouraged to communicate with parents in a number of ways. Additional meetings with parents would be introduced to allow staff to explain their teaching methodology. These meetings would be followed up by home visits, open days showing school in normal operation and newsletters to provide information in an informal manner. Actions to introduce a participatory role for parents were planned. For example, utilising parental skills to study the local environment, accompanying children on trips and short residential breaks, taking part in holiday schoolwork, helping in class as aides and assistants, covering teachers routine administration tasks such as play duty and making or renovating equipment. The team felt that participation in the learning process would increase parental knowledge of how to respond to children's questioning in a way that would extend the child's interest and motivation. Teachers would have the opportunity to model pedagogic skills and higher-order thinking skills if they were in contact with parents and children at the same time. These practices were relatively unusual in the 1960s.

Further strategies aimed to link the schools to groups in their community. For example: the introduction of community study and service with older pupils teaching younger, opening the school up as a playcentre and homework centre, residential work away from school, holiday programmes, joint work with other agencies, the appointment of teacher/social worker and teacher/youth worker, the use of health visitors in class, contact between teachers and social workers and links with local commerce and industry. It was felt that developing links between school and social services might reduce social problems like truancy and delinquency, an outcome that would appeal to teachers and parents.

The general objectives of the WREPA team, therefore, were to provide parents with more information on the aims and methods of the school, to increase parental contact with teachers and to demonstrate particular ways in which parents could help improve motivation and cognitive development. The team was attempting to prove that the family was an under-utilised educational resource. This seemed a logical strategy because 'in contrast to other services', and despite the apparent gap existing between the values of the school and the working-class home, the school was a 'universal and accepted institution'.<sup>24</sup>

### **Red House**

Red House was the WREPA project's most important outcome. It is defined in this thesis as an intermediate educational institution because it sat outside statutory provision but engaged families and schools. Red House was a physical space accessible to, but not the responsibility of, teachers, children or families.<sup>25</sup> It became the hub for the team's efforts to move teachers towards a community-focused approach to education. The WREPA team used Red House to spread their message that if children in the EPAs were ever to overcome the effects of deprivation, a more radical approach to relationships and curriculum content was needed. Halsey explained the logic of the intermediate institution during a 2010 interview with the present author.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>25</sup> This term is borrowed from George and Teresa Smith's analysis of Red House in, *Schooling in the City*, J. Raynor and E. Harris Eds. (1974).



You can make the case that the best teacher is not necessarily found in the school. If you started from that position you wouldn't be so much in favour of reforming the school, you'd be looking to a wider set of possible influences, and that's the reason why Red House was invented. I think Harvey and the Smiths also believed that fundamental fact that children are moulded by teachers other than those in school.<sup>26</sup>

Red House opened its doors in January 1969 and by this time it was already well known to local schools. Groups of children began to attend from all schools and worked with their teachers, with college students and with the Red House team. The team's ambition was to immerse the local schools in the rationale of a collaborative centre, normalising the concept of parents and children working together.<sup>27</sup> The centre was eventually to provide a base for the coordination of a range of innovative, collaborative practices between the education, medical and social welfare departments in Division 18.

The team's objective was to provide services that were useful to the entire community. For example, a preschool group was set up and places made available to all two-to-three-year olds from Denaby. An educational home-visiting service was introduced to establish a pedagogical link between Red House and families. Assistance was offered to families under stress including the offer of temporary residential accommodation. The centre offered general assistance and support to primary schools, such as free transport and additional workspace. It developed links with students at local teacher training colleges to promote mutual assistance between colleges and schools, and made connections with the youth service in the area. The result was that Red House succeeded in fostering general community development.<sup>28</sup> The impact was limited and short-lived but Red House successfully demonstrated the possibilities offered by an intermediate centre. The groundbreaking nature of this work and the similarity in remit to contemporary Children's Centres suggests that a

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<sup>26</sup> Halsey, Interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Geoff Poulton and Terry James, *Pre-school learning in the community*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>28</sup> Peter Gosden and Paul Sharp, *The Development of an Education Service: The West Riding 1889 to 1974*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1978) 150.

historical analysis will be useful for anyone analysing the potential of area-based policy to challenge underachievement.

What Red House offered that schools were unable to was the organisational flexibility to stimulate the links between the various elements of the workforce. Halsey believed that an intermediate institution was a necessary development because teachers were like any other workers. They did not want to spend more time in their workplace than other sections of the workforce. His view was unchanged 40 years after Red House was launched:

I'm still in favour of the idea but if you have booms and slumps in the economy these are the first things to go and the old-fashioned professionalism of the teachers is often in favour of that. Teachers are not necessarily fully subscribing members of the community. They want a more restricted definition of what their duties are, they don't want to be coming back on a Saturday.<sup>29</sup>

At Red House, the possibility of multi-agency cooperation became evident because of the potential for staff to work to different patterns than teachers were able to.<sup>30</sup> This was an attempt to begin to re-structure the dispositions of all three members of the educational triumvirate, the child, the family and the school, through an exploration of what was possible within a new physical base.

Red House sought to establish itself as an 'institutional intermediate between schools and community, with obligations to both'.<sup>31</sup> Its aim was to become an additional resource for the entire community. According to Teresa Smith, the team believed that the power of education was not adequately harnessed by the school system. They were

. . . interested in what would now be called the educational processes of the community, what was recognised and not recognised by families and parents as

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<sup>29</sup> Halsey, Interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 58.

educational levers that they could be involved in, that they could call on and that those might or might not operate with the school.<sup>32</sup>

The WREPA team believed that school had an individualizing effect on a child. The routines and traditions of schools led to the working class child forming a negative impression of his own worth in relation to the attributes he believed were required to be a successful learner. This happened because classroom pedagogy tended to focus on individual tasks and assessments. Therefore, Red House sought to establish relationships that would raise and sustain the child's confidence levels. According to Poulton, children and their teachers attending the centre took part in project work in order to 'develop a range of communication skills and in the process to raise their confidence and belief in their own ability to achieve good results'.<sup>33</sup> This appears to imply that a deficit model underpinned the approach. However, the deficit was on the part of the school not the child and her family.

The work at Red House raises three key questions introduced in Chapter One. Can schools be re-positioned so that they offer the community an opportunity to develop as active participants in the democratic process, or does this require a new institutional form? Was Red House really a neutral space where parents and professionals shared a sense of ownership? Or, did the structuring power of habitus and professional identity limit Red House to a role as an additional physical resource? This thesis argues that if one follows Tosh's analysis of analogous 'thinking with history', the events at WREPA may enable us to 'refin[e] our understanding of the present' and may therefore be of use to educationists looking at the potential outcomes of contemporary Children's Centres.<sup>34</sup> The remainder of this section will explore the innovations emerging from Red House and their relevance to contemporary pedagogy.

### **Innovative work and 'growth points' at Red House**

As the project progressed, the team gradually explored new practices. Geoff Poulton claimed the development of the work was 'ecological' because Red House

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<sup>32</sup> Teresa Smith, Interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Geoff Poulton, telephone interview with the author, April 2007.

<sup>34</sup> John Tosh, *Why History Matters*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008) 77.

enabled schools to explore the cross-curricular, discovery-based learning some of them were already experimenting with. He claimed that 'nearly every teacher and student who worked at the centre was positive about the way children responded, and all schools followed up or adopted this approach to some extent'.<sup>35</sup> This is plausible, but it is difficult to assess how far this was due to Red House. As Chapter Two pointed out, the EPA project coincided with the spread of progressive pedagogical practice in the colleges of education.

In order to generate community involvement a degree of flexibility was required from the WREPA team. They needed to be able to respond quickly to demands made upon them. This meant adopting a different focus than the school. George Smith noted in 1974 that

Instead of trying to improve the educational process in school by encouraging parental involvement, the direction was reversed: the aim should rather be to strengthen the educational resources of home and community.<sup>36</sup>

This section provides a critical account of how various programmes attempted to achieve this radical change in direction during the three years of the project.

### **The preschool playgroup**

The preschool playgroup at Red House had a clear pedagogical rationale. The WREPA team challenged the widely held view that preschool should be about developing the 'whole child'. They acknowledged that preschool should promote social mixing and communication, motivation, physical skills, co-ordination, intellectual and emotional development, but they believed that in some circumstances particular areas of development should receive greater attention. The WREPA team wanted to know what these areas were and what form of preschool was best suited to the needs of children in an EPA. They were aware of the main areas of contestation amongst researchers. In 1968, the two main approaches to preschool were academic oriented programmes focusing on linguistics, and, child-

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<sup>35</sup> Geoff Poulton, telephone interview with the author, April 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, G. and Smith, T. (1974) 57.

centred, free-choice programmes. The former carried the danger of pressurising children, resulting in illusory academic advances that faded away. The latter lacked structure and placed a different type of pressure on the child who was effectively seen as waiting to be ready to learn. The team was aware of the argument that interactions between adult and child in a typical preschool context were restrictive and had a depressive impact on the development of a child's language flow. The typical 'listen and respond' interaction nurtured a guarded response from children, particularly when delivered by teachers using a middle-class linguistic code. Teresa Smith believed that the type of interaction a child had in the home was more varied and more complex than in a nursery. Involving parents directly in preschool was a logical step. When this happened it was essential that the team avoided the danger of displaying an implicit cultural bias towards the mothers attending.

Evidence suggests that the WREPA team did not assume deficits on the part of families. Lin Poulton and Teresa Smith assumed that the children arriving each morning already possessed a degree of sophistication to their functioning. The programme they designed was an individually adapted response to learner needs based on an understanding of the way language development took place.<sup>37</sup> Several local nurseries were consulted during the development of the programme. Teresa Smith met with the Rotherham Preschool Playgroup Association.<sup>38</sup> This group felt that there was a good deal of negativity from teachers towards reading and writing activities undertaken by children in preschool groups. According to the Rotherham group, teachers complained that they had to spend time undoing the damage caused by poor practice at playgroups. This implied a degree of mistrust within schools that the WREPA team would have to overcome. Smith noted that the groups were failing to reach those most in need. In Rotherham it cost three shillings per morning session and despite the availability of free places many were not being taken up. According to Smith the association appeared 'very middle class'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Notes on nursery programme, no author named.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Notes from meeting with Rotherham PPA February 1 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

In May 1969, Harvey sent a progress report to the SSRC updating them on the preschool plans.<sup>40</sup> The team intended to provide 100 places for all children in the catchment area of Rossington and Balby Street schools. The LEA had agreed to finance a nursery class at one school and five other preschool groups would run, two in each school for half a term each. Each group would develop a language programme drawing on the results of the experimental pilot already underway. This ten-week pilot had cost £250 and the costs of the planned groups would be £1,750 in the schools and £1,250 at Red House.<sup>41</sup>

The preschool plan outlined the technical aspects of the programme and demonstrated Smith and Poulton's knowledge of child development, particularly the way in which children acquired new concepts. Smith and Poulton listed the concepts that the adults would focus on. For example, properties and relational properties would include, comparison and similarities, processing and changing, representing and sequencing, focussing, selecting, predicting, evaluating and generalising. The adult would share an objective with each child at the beginning of an activity and focus on developing their understanding of the relevant concept.<sup>42</sup> Parents were deployed in teacher roles and encouraged to use strategies that would develop children's conceptual understanding through adult-child interactions. One-to-one time would be planned into each session to overcome the evasion tactics children can employ in a group situation. Lin Poulton, the only experienced early years practitioner in the team, was drawing on child-centred pedagogical practice to organise the activities and encourage parents to develop their children's innate readiness to learn.

In a lecture given to the National Children's Bureau in 1992, Gillian Pugh, one of England's foremost early childhood academics, claimed that the intervention programmes of the 1960s were examples of professionals looking to overcome 'parental deficits'.<sup>43</sup> Pugh's critique is useful because it allows the thesis to demonstrate how research-informed practice and foresight underpinned the WREPA

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, M. Harvey's Progress Report to Mr Baker the Secretary at SSRC May 15 1969.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, Preschool planning document outlining the programme content.

<sup>43</sup> Gillian Pugh, 'An equal start for all our children', Speech reported in *Times Educational Supplement*, (Editorial November 13 1992).

team's preschool programme. Pugh questioned the assumptions on which the rationale for parental involvement in any intervention was premised. She asked whether professionals viewed parental involvement as an opportunity to enhance children's development or, whether it was nothing more than an additional resource to exploit.<sup>44</sup> Pugh was asking professionals to consider their motivations and the likely effect on outcomes for children. The sources consulted in this thesis suggest Pugh's assessment of the 1960s was not accurate.

The key difference at Red House was an emphasis of the use of parents 'as' teachers.<sup>45</sup> This was a radical strategy at the time given the typically limited involvement of parents within schools. Geoff Poulton referred to the approach as a 'therapeutic step', possibly representing 'the first step towards a community consciousness and a realisation of self-helping processes'.<sup>46</sup> Basil Bernstein noted in 1971 that the language typically used in interactions between middle-class parents and children was more expansive than those in working class homes. As Hess and Shipman put it, 'the meaning of deprivation, is the deprivation of meaning'.<sup>47</sup> The pedagogic discourse of the school was the elaborated linguistic code of the middle classes, disadvantaging working-class children when they entered school.<sup>48</sup> The preschool groups were therefore of great importance in preparing children for a more positive experience of school. As parents gained confidence, they were able to take on responsibility for groups of children during the sessions. This does not suggest that professionals were working 'on' the deficiencies of parents. The preschool group was a 'hybrid' form of nursery that combined the playgroup movement's voluntary, parent-based ethos, with the school-attached nursery led by a trained teacher. The Red House approach was one of engagement with, rather than transformation of, identities. The parents were engaged as teachers but there was no attempt to alter the power relationships. The team recognised the fragility of their position. Their work can be considered as something of a tentative first step.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, G., (1975).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Hess and Virginia Shipman, 'Early experience and the socialization of cognitive modes in children', *Child Development*, 36, no. 4 (1965) 885.

<sup>48</sup> Basil Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control: Vol 1. Theoretical Studies Towards Sociology of Language*, (London & Boston: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1971).

Perhaps the most significant point arising from interviews and correspondence with the WREPA team is that some parents involved with the playgroups began to look at Red House as something 'they' could use, as opposed to an institution provided by the state, that they were 'expected' to use. This occurred because the team did not approach parents as somehow deficient. A feeling of trust and togetherness was generated between the community and the team. In turn, this created an atmosphere where parents would see the interconnectedness of new initiatives as they were introduced. These are the 'growth points' which Smith refers to in his 1974 evaluation, suggesting that an educational initiative could generate community action and in turn produce community development.

### **The educational home visitor programme**

In September 1970 a pilot project for a home visiting scheme was set up. The idea for the scheme was drawn directly from George Smith's tour of similar American projects in 1968.<sup>49</sup> The pilot was a feasibility study to gauge the reaction of parents, and, if appropriate, to develop a suitable programme.<sup>50</sup> A rationale for the programme was originally put to the steering committee in 1969.<sup>51</sup> The objectives were to

. . . introduce materials in the home that developed conceptual and perceptual understanding of children due to attend nursery class; to encourage parents to see their role as educators; to form a realistic bridge earlier in the child's educational career; use the visit to advise parents on the social and emotional development of their child; to keep parents informed of useful toys books and games; to learn first hand of difficulties facing families and sometimes alert colleagues in social agencies; monitor each child's progress and develop an individual programme to match their responses.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Gina Armstrong and Felicity Brown, *Five Years On. A follow-up study of the long term effects on parents and children of an early learning programme in the home*, (Oxford: Social Evaluation Unit, 1979).

<sup>51</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Educational Visitors Programme rationale document outlining the rationale for the scheme, author, G. Poulton.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



The scheme was an experiment designed to see if parents with 18-month to three-year-old children could be encouraged to adopt more educationally productive interactions by supplying them with the requisite educational 'know how'. This is an interesting phrase. There is a danger that the historian might be guilty of retrospective labelling, by implying that 'know how' can be seen as synonymous with an assumption of parental deficits. In fact, it refers to efforts to inform parents of specific pedagogic skills they would be unlikely to acquire without teacher training. For example, most parents would not be aware of the pedagogic power of questioning as a tool to develop higher-order thinking skills.

An initial visit was undertaken to establish whether parents were willing to take part. If they were, a kit containing educational toys would be left for the parents to use. The home visitor would follow-up with a one-hour weekly visit for 12 weeks. The cohort size would be limited to 20 families. The level of progress made would depend on each parent's confidence to implement the strategies and activities introduced during the visits. It was the visitor's responsibility to ensure that parents recognised them as a normal member of Red House staff and the visits were to take place at the family's convenience. From the outset it was stressed that social standards were not to be judged. Detailed records of progress would be kept and possibly pre and post programme tests such as the Reynall Language Development Scales used alongside a control group. It was felt that the ideal visitor must have good knowledge of child development although not necessarily qualified teacher status. The visitor would be responsible for developing the content of the programme. The programme was expected to cost £4,000 over two years, a considerable proportion of the WREPA budget.

In November 1969, Teresa Smith wrote to Gina Armstrong, then a social work student in Halsey's department at Oxford. Smith offered the Home Visitor role to Armstrong once she graduated. Gina Armstrong was the team's choice from the start, so much so that Smith claimed she might drop the idea if Armstrong was not interested. Smith explained the rationale behind the programme. She claimed it was 'an obvious extension of a preschool programme; all the time one is looking for

ways to catch the mother and child earlier and earlier'.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, 'by working in the home, the visitor could evaluate the home environment . . . much more correctly than in a centre'.<sup>54</sup> She would be able to match her programme more closely to the needs of the family, thus individualising the programme. The catchment area chosen for the programme was that of Ivanhoe School. Ivanhoe had not chosen to participate with WREPA at that point but it had originally expressed an interest in preschool provision.<sup>55</sup>

The visitor was to be non-judgemental. However, Gina Armstrong used a recording sheet which detailed a range of information relating to the mother-child relationship and the home environment.<sup>56</sup> This document does not appear to match the non-judgemental rationale stated in the plans for the scheme. The document used a scale to measure the number of books, visual materials, noise level, child safety, arrangement of the home environment and an overall rating for 'educational stimulation' in the home.<sup>57</sup> It measured mother-child interactions using the same scale. For example, type and frequency of interactions, type of censure, type of questioning, use of short negative reinforcement, use of physical discipline, amount of mother/child initiated activities and overall educational stimulation provided by the mother were all recorded. The danger with such an approach is that parents and families are labelled as deficient. The judgements made using this form of record reveal the subjective position of the Home Visitor in relation to parenting. Since the project team sought to identify strategies which could be replicated nationally this has obvious implications for the outcomes for the families involved in interventions elsewhere. It suggests that the social and cultural capital endorsed would be the types valorised by the professional.

The home visiting programme was developed following a consultation process which included a range of individuals. As well as the local steering committee and headteachers several other voices were consulted, including: the County Council Inspector, HMI, the LEA divisional officer, Dr Simpson-Smith and

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<sup>53</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter from T. Smith to G. Armstrong, November 15 1969.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Home Visit Checklist, not dated.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Dr Robertshaw from the County Health Department, the Chief Nursing Officer and local health visitors. Professor Illingsworth from Sheffield University and Dr Earl Shaefer from the National Institute of Mental Health, Washington D.C. were consulted to determine the optimal age for engaging the children. There was some dispute as to whether it was better to visit families during the child's first year of life, as Dr Simpson-Smith claimed, or whether it should be at 18 months, as Dr Robertshaw recommended. The latter was chosen so that the child would transfer seamlessly to nursery and because at three, the closer temporal proximity meant parents would be more convinced of the utility of the idea.

There were a number of reasons why the team felt this would be a suitable strategy. At this time, innovations in preschool work had tended to encourage parents to participate in the learning process 'within' a school. The team believed this strategy over-emphasised the importance of the institution over the home as the key determinant of a child's future educability. The parent faced practical problems in attending nursery as visits to local playgroups had demonstrated. Thus, it seemed possible that by taking materials to the home 'the' key resource would be more effectively utilised.

The initial pilot was followed by a main project running for 18-months. The aims of the project were identical to those outlined in the original plan: to explore the mother-child relationship, to examine stages of development in play and learning, to ascertain whether there were any difficulties in the child's progress and to work out a programme that would be acceptable to families.<sup>58</sup> During the visits Gina Armstrong offered opportunities for children and mothers to engage in semi-structured play. She recalled, during a 2008 interview, that many of the children had never seen a book:

One mother told me her three-year old was too young for the book of nursery rhymes I had brought and, when I suggested that her five-year-old might like it, she said she was too old.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Armstrong, G. and F. Brown, (1979) 5.

<sup>59</sup> G. Armstrong, interview with the author, Institute of Education, London, May 2008.

Armstrong gradually introduced activities that the mothers 'never thought their children would do' because, as one mother commented, they were activities for schools to introduce.<sup>60</sup> However, she was conscious of the need to nurture a partnership which aimed to explore what the children could do at each stage of development, rather than to 'teach' the mothers. The scheme's success was partly attributable to Gina Armstrong's interpersonal skills. She was, according to the project's final report 'unbiased, non-judgmental, able to work in any conditions, knowledgeable without being dictatorial, helpful without being patronising, able to listen, sensitive to needs without probing into people's affairs'.<sup>61</sup>

The report went on to define the attributes of the ideal home visitor. The role was not necessarily one which required a social scientist or teacher. Someone 'with a real interest in people and a desire to listen and help [was] more important than a degree, and respect for mothers who have already achieved a great deal [was] worth more than criticism based on a theory of what mothers ought to do'.<sup>62</sup> These comments can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the restricting effects of the relationship between parents and professionals. With the right attributes the home visitor could circumvent these barriers to partnership. The WREPA team believed that the home visitor could have a 'reassuring effect on child and family' provided they had knowledge of the community and a good deal of tact.<sup>63</sup> This demonstrated the importance of recruiting the right people for the right roles, a challenge to the feasibility of a future national EPA policy.

The home visiting work focussed on activities that met the needs of individual children. Due to the nature of the housing stock and family size, children in Denaby spent much of their time outdoors. Some children displayed an imbalance between gross and fine motor skills and powers of perseverance. They could run, jump and play together but not hold a pencil or complete a puzzle. This demonstrates the importance of being able to respond flexibly to the community's needs. Her evaluation of the programme's outcomes suggested there had been gains in

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> George Smith, *WREPA Project Report volume 5 The Home Visiting Project*, (unpublished 1971) 37.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Poulton, G. and T. James, (1975) 46.

children's language development, problem solving, concentration and ability to communicate with adults, as well as an increase in the amount of time the mothers spent on structured play. A follow-up study in 1977 showed that these gains were no longer apparent. However, Armstrong claimed that the results implied further research was required to identify why, rather than accepting there were no benefits from carrying out such work.<sup>64</sup> Use of home visiting has continued. For example, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the home visiting concept was deployed with young parents at Children's Centres using a model developed in America by Professor David Olds over a 25 year period.<sup>65</sup>

### **The Denaby market stall**

In May 1970 the WREPA team launched a weekly stall in Denaby market. The stall was open every Friday and its purpose and rationale are discussed in George Smith's account of the project.<sup>66</sup> It reflected the team's determination to be responsive to the needs of the community. Smith considered the stall to be a 'growth point' that sought to take on similar work elsewhere, particularly the Liverpool EPA 'Education Shop'. This crossover of ideas was a reminder that despite the contrasting approach to public relations between the two projects there was a great deal of similarity in the strategies used to enhance the flow of information between professionals and families. The stall had a practical value because many of the homes Armstrong visited possessed few books or educational toys and Denaby did not have a shop selling these resources, Doncaster being the nearest outlet. The market stall was designed to provide this service. It was a focal point for Red House to disseminate information and strengthen relationships because the market provided a ready made pitch and accessible audience. The team wrote to all major suppliers of toys and books and managed to establish a supply line as well as favourable terms. This response was necessary because commercial interest was acting in a

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<sup>64</sup> Armstrong, G. and F. Brown, (1979) 7.

<sup>65</sup> Smith and Olds were influenced by the early US home visiting type projects developed in various Universities and similar to the work of Headstart. See, David L. Olds, Charles R. Henderson, Harriet J. Kitzman, John J. Eckenrode, Robert E. Cole, Robert C. Tatelbaum, 'Improving the delivery of prenatal care and outcomes of pregnancy: a randomized trial of nurse home visitation', *Paediatrics*, 77, 16-28, (1986), Jacqueline Barnes, Mog Ball, Pamela Meadows, Jenny McLeish, Jay Belsky and the FNP Implementation Research Team, *Nurse Family Partnership Programme: First Year Pilot Sites Implementation in England Pregnancy and the Post-Partum Period*, (London: DCSF, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Smith, G. (1975) 167-172.

discriminatory manner towards a small community. It was not financially viable for large educational suppliers to establish a presence in areas of low population, and low demand.

The average weekly takings were £6 so the stall was not commercially viable without subsidy but its main purpose was to build relationships and offer advice on educational, and eventually welfare matters. Each of the Red House staff manned the stall on a rota basis, as did parental helpers. Local teachers were frequent visitors. The schools were happy to support the venture, evidenced by their willingness to advertise the stall in advance. It was an innovation that would be difficult for a school to sustain given their working patterns and staffing structures. Nevertheless Smith suggested that the stall could become a permanent fixture, an educational presence in the community that schools could share and utilise until no longer required.

#### **Collaborative courses: Schools, colleges and Red House**

Schools responded positively to the idea of engaging in collaborative courses at Red House. The first course began in January 1970 and a variety of formats were subsequently explored. Formats tested included courses that were a response to a specific request, those developing a product or service and those involving older children working with younger.<sup>67</sup> Smith described the courses as ‘intensive’. They involved large numbers of student teachers from local colleges of education working full-time, for a week, with groups of children. The content of the courses was not heavily prescribed but most involved a weekly visit to a local place of interest to stimulate investigation.<sup>68</sup> During the first year, courses were organised on a cross-school basis with children from three schools participating in mixed-ability groupings. In the second year this approach was abandoned to allow the attendance of whole classes along with their teacher. As with the playgroup, the teacher’s pre-eminent role as the ‘professional’ was not under any threat although Smith suggested

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>68</sup> For a detailed account of the courses see Smith (1975) chapter 12.

they would take on the role of ‘servicing agent’.<sup>69</sup> The courses were seeking to normalise the concept of collaboration.

Courses attempted to reduce ‘the distance between different age levels and levels of education as well as between education and related social and welfare services’.<sup>70</sup> Each programme recognised the centrality of language as a tool for thinking and extending understanding. The national EPA project required the WREPA team to experiment with a preschool reading programme. Courses therefore started from the premise that focusing attention on vocabulary and constructive play activities would raise children’s verbal and social competencies prior to entering school. According to Geoff Poulton, the involvement of parents was crucial:

By raising parental confidence in their abilities to teach their own children using play, books and educational materials the children’s learning was substantially improved. But this often meant helping to resolve the social problems faced by many parents. So we moved from identifying and acting upon specific educational targets . . . to looking at the wider social implications, which impacted on their learning.<sup>71</sup>

The courses relied on the involvement of college of education students. This, as Smith notes in his final report, was ‘crucial’ because it increased the team’s limited resources.<sup>72</sup> It was an attractive option for teachers who may have found the traditional ‘teaching practice’ relationship burdensome. Courses offered a developmental experience, allowing teacher, student and older child an opportunity to ‘develop their teaching style or method’ in partnership.<sup>73</sup> However, there is no evidence that colleges altered their teacher training courses along community education lines.

Courses delivered at Red House started out as purely educational but moved towards social and community work. The WREPA team believed that current attempts to extend the scope of education were inadequate. The courses showed that

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 252.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>71</sup> Geoff Poulton, telephone interview with the author, April 2007.

<sup>72</sup> Smith, G. and T. Smith, (1974) 210.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 243.

schools were 'willing to engage in new types of programmes' involving groups from outside the school.<sup>74</sup> The boundaries of the teacher-pupil dynamic, shaped and constrained by the school, could be tested because Red House was a neutral, physical space.

### Emerging roles

The work at Red House had another benefit. It created 'intermediate' roles as a by-product of the method of working.<sup>75</sup> The boundaries between teacher, social worker, and counsellor became blurred as workers were required to react to developing situations. Students, secondary pupils and parents occupied these intermediate roles and recent research suggests this remains an unusual occurrence.<sup>76</sup> Teachers' professional identity, and the professional development of the whole school workforce, has maintained the boundaries that disable more collaborative partnerships. Poulton recalled that in order to overcome this divide Red House sought to develop practices that were

... highly relevant for their own [students] eventual teaching practice. The key message was have a positive attitude towards the children's imaginative and creative abilities and see how this results in their improved learning and confidence. The focus was on learning rather than on effective control and resource allocation in the classroom.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the neutrality offered by Red House there was only limited impact on the day-to-day practices of teachers. Poulton describes a somewhat 'paternalistic' relationship between schools and families, with some teachers having taught three generations. The Red House experience may have altered the dispositions and practice of certain individuals but cannot claim to have shifted the professional identity of the local teachers en masse. However, as a demonstration project it did succeed in providing evidence for debate.

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<sup>74</sup> Smith, G. (1975) 230.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>76</sup> Andy Hargreaves and Susan Lasky, 'The Parent Gap: The Emotional Geographies of Teacher-Parent Relationships', in, Fernando Hernandez and Ivor Goodson, *Social Geographies of Educational Change*, (Netherlands: Kluwer, 2004).

<sup>77</sup> G. Poulton, telephone interview with the author, April 2007.



The WREPA team's ambition to leave a permanent presence in the community was dependent on the willingness of existing benefactors to continue to provide funding for Red House. The LEA did continue their financial commitment and the SSRC agreed to extend their funding for the home visitor programme.<sup>78</sup> It would be continued by Liz Worden, and evaluated by Terry James, both appointed to work in Red House after Harvey, the Smith's and Armstrong moved on. Some of the other programmes were also to continue. A social worker, Mr Ayr, was employed. Ayr engaged a further twenty families to extend the Home Visiting programme. He planned to develop the market stall into a welfare rights information point because all social service agencies were outside the Denaby area. An additional funding stream of £150 per year was secured from the Joseph Rowntree Trust to support preschool groups and the area received a boost from ESA Ltd who supplied the twenty playgroups in Division 18 with half a tonne of toys. Seeking out funding for innovations would become increasingly important in the years after the project as central government spending began to dwindle.

The WREPA team were already exploring potential funding during the project. Harvey wrote to Michael Young in April 1969 expressing disappointment at the second year financial allocation from the SSRC. The outcome was that year two could do no more than repeat year one. WREPA received £21,000 from central EPA resources, £15,000 from the Joseph Rowntree Trust and £7000 from the LEA. Harvey called the SSRC allocation disappointingly small by comparison but he was not in favour of money being held back for research evaluation at the expense of action. The financial account of expenditure on research to April 1970 was £2,688.<sup>79</sup>

At Red House, the WREPA team successfully moved the focus of attention away from the schools and onto the wider social influences on educational achievement. Thus, a consideration of theoretical critiques of the potential of positive discrimination is appropriate. This is addressed in Chapter Seven utilising a

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<sup>78</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter from SSRC to Halsey, July 14 1971, confirming funding to continued evaluation of home visiting.

<sup>79</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers. Letter from M. Harvey to M. Young, April 15 1969.

range of critical perspectives. The final section of this chapter will present an assessment of the WREPA project's work within its historical context.

### **The WREPA project at Red House— an assessment**

The WREPA project can be assessed using two sets of criteria. Its activities and outcomes can be measured against the original national EPA project objectives, or, its historical significance can be considered. Both are attempted here. The actions of the WREPA team are assessed in relation to their impact on practices, locally and nationally. The assessment disentangles the influence of the team from the physical establishment of Red House, which outlived the WREPA project by many years.

The WREPA team had no experience of working in a community like Denaby. They had not witnessed intergenerational failure as some teachers had, or experienced frustration at the lack of cooperation between different agencies. However, it is possible that the freshness and enthusiasm of a team parachuted into a small, close-knit community provided an energising spark, galvanising some of the teachers they engaged with. If a culture of negativity and cynicism did exist amongst teachers, the WREPA team were not afraid of meeting it head-on. It will be argued in Chapter Six that their energy, skills and political motivations were all important. These qualities combined with the 'intermediate' base which Red House provided, enhanced the effectiveness of the actions.

Even if one agrees in principle that the deployment of teams like WREPA, in centres like Red House, was a policy capable of success, the response of the community would determine effectiveness in the long term. Minutes from an early Red House Steering Committee meeting suggest the local teachers' assessment of the project was not wholly positive.<sup>80</sup> The minutes discussed reactions to the final WREPA report and noted the misgivings of some local teachers, as expressed by Mr James, a local headteacher who was angry at the suggestion made in the *Horizon* documentary, that the area was a 'barren desert' prior to 1969. This allegation was refuted in the minutes.<sup>81</sup> James did acknowledge that Red House was the most

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<sup>80</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Red House Steering Committee minutes, June 1971.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

important development to come out of the project but his initial comments can be taken as an example of the professional defensiveness of teachers.

Red House is historically significant because of the innovative work it carried out. An awareness of the developments at Red House adds a new perspective for scholars to draw on when trying to make sense of more recent policy. Red House attempted to offer parents and professionals the opportunity to improve educational outcomes in a neutral space, where both felt a sense of ownership. Denaby Main and Conisborough were atypical of EPAs but the question on which the theoretical rationale for institutions like Red House should be evaluated, is whether they approached the community from a deficit perspective. Did Red House label local people as somehow inadequate, while at the same time, providing additional resources to other people who did not require them?

Red House underlined the necessity of ‘mobilising the community and of relating the school to its community’.<sup>82</sup> It was more than an exercise in compensatory education. It had a direct impact on the schools it partnered, with some schools becoming more militant in demanding extra resources. It created an ‘atmosphere in which schools were willing to experiment with new techniques and developments’.<sup>83</sup> It demonstrated that an educationally driven initiative could influence people’s experiences of other social agencies. Geoff Poulton claims Red House was ‘in line with the emerging welfare rights movement, speeding up the process of benefit claims’.<sup>84</sup> In some instances this led to parental volunteers becoming employees at Red House. Poulton recalls that ‘because they enjoyed the work so much – they went on to get qualifications to work in the field’.<sup>85</sup>

The WREPA team had the flexibility to tailor actions to the needs of its setting. This freedom, combined with the physical location of the centre, allowed the team to take advantage of their links with schools. At the same time it provided an identity and prevented Red House from being looked on as just a satellite of

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<sup>82</sup> Gosden, P., and Sharp, P. (1978) 150.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>84</sup> Geoff Poulton, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

mainstream provision.<sup>86</sup> Poulton did not suggest Red House was a template for a national policy precisely because this level of responsiveness was required. He called for further experiment in an action research context looking at possible variants on Red House and its relationship with schools. If the community school concept was to be advanced, more information on possibilities and limitations was required. Poulton emphasised this during an interview with the author.

In summary we moved from seeing the need to introduce specific educational programmes to enhance the learning of children with low academic and social achievement. Instead we saw the importance of raising the expectations of parents, teachers and children in their ability to learn. So our focus for change began to shift to parents and teachers.<sup>87</sup>

Red House operated in favourable local and national conditions yet its impact on practice was limited. This is not surprising for a three-year intervention and is not an appropriate point on which to judge the project. However, an assessment can be offered. Red House provides evidence that an intermediate institution based on joint ownership is a realistic strategy. It also suggests that it might be possible to progress the nature of partnership achieved beyond the professional treating the family as 'social casualty'. If a more meaningful form of partnership is to be achieved the actions of the professionals involved must be driven by a political commitment to greater levels of equality and participatory democracy. Since some teachers may choose not to align themselves with community development or the altered dynamics of the parent-teacher partnership this implies, political strategy also becomes important. The WREPA project had only a limited impact on the practices of local teachers. Extending the life of the WREPA project or increasing the level of investment in its practices might have made a difference but it is not possible to say so with any degree of confidence.

George Smith conceded that it was 'not likely' that teachers 'radically changed' their pedagogical style because of Red House. The team did engage

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<sup>86</sup> Gosden, P., and Sharp, P. (1978) 58.

<sup>87</sup> Geoff Poulton, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

teachers effectively, but any change to their practice was on an individual basis.<sup>88</sup> However, organizational change was the main objective during the lifetime of the project. Red House tried to complement what schools were offering by providing experimental space for the development of innovative pedagogical work. Smith claims the major success of Red House was to increase existing knowledge of the 'learning problems' faced by children'.<sup>89</sup> Red House stood 'outside the normal school situation' and was able to 'organise courses that cut across the normal boundaries set by other institutions'.<sup>90</sup> Smith felt that if preschool was developed in 'imaginative ways' it might lever the school system into one which was 'responsive to both individual and community needs'.<sup>91</sup> According to Geoff Poulton, the educational partnership idea had 'evolved into a realistic and operational strategy by 1972'.<sup>92</sup> The WREPA team's legacy was not its immediate effect on schools but the provision of a set of practices, some of which could be replicated elsewhere.

Although there was no proliferation of intermediate centres during the 1970s there is little doubt that the pioneering aspects of home-school work introduced by Red House had diffused into normal practice by the 1980s. Red House was utilizing parents as a crucial resource, in a new form of partnership, whereas contemporary approaches, such as the EAZs, Children's Centres and Parental Advisers, target the 'deficits' of 'at risk' families and do not appear to advocate the restructuring of the professional's relationship with families.

Red House demonstrated that the effective integration of community, social and educational work could be achieved. This was the result of the dedication and ideological commitment of the WREPA team, the degree of autonomy they held and the positioning of the centre as a neutral space. For the proponents of community education at Red House the challenge was, as A.H. Halsey put it, 'to integrate school and life'.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Smith, G. (1974) 242.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 243.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Poulton, G., and James, T. (1975) 51.

<sup>93</sup> Halsey, A.H. (1972).

At Red House the WREPA team demonstrated that it was very difficult for individual institutions to affect changes to practice given the existing power balance between home and school. The real message of Red House therefore, was to remind us to look at the bigger picture. As the economic crisis unfolded in 1973, educational expenditure contracted. Red House only survived because of the ongoing commitment of the local authority. The potential for innovation faced pressures from national financial constraints and the inflexible professional identity of local teachers.

## Chapter 5 The Liverpool Educational Priority Area Project

### Introduction

This chapter examines the LEPA project. It explores the project's contribution to our existing understanding of the relationship between the school and its community. Interview data and documentary evidence will be used to interpret the significance of events. The LEPA project attempted to persuade teachers that it was in the interest of their pupils for schools to work 'alongside other social and communal elements for the regeneration of community life'.<sup>1</sup> In the short term this meant the LEPA project's role was to work with schools to develop strategies that would generate a 'harmonious' home-school relationship for the benefit of the child.<sup>2</sup> The record of the team's work presented here will demonstrate that independent project work can be embedded, organisationally and ideologically, within wider administrative structures. Evidence reveals how LEPA brought together people and organisations working toward similar goals who had previously worked separately.

The chapter is sub-divided into six sections. The first two sections recap on the establishment of the LEPA team and explain why Liverpool was chosen as a location. The position of the team within the city's educational and political landscape is outlined. Section three explores the unveiling of the action research strategy during the autumn term of 1968, and considers the response it drew from schools. This is followed by a detailed account of the strategies introduced. Section four explores the LEPA team's notion of community education and interprets the significance of the formation of the National Institute for Community Education, commonly known as 'PRIORITY'.<sup>3</sup> Section five recounts the remarkable demise of PRIORITY four years after the LEPA project. This addresses one of the main questions asked by the thesis: is the professional identity of teachers a barrier to partnership between home and school? The final section summarises the impact LEPA made on schools before evaluating its successes and failures.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, *The Journal of the Liverpool Educational Priority Area Project*, *Projectile*, no. 5 (1971) 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> 'PRIORITY' is presented in uppercase to differentiate it from the use of the name Priority to badge various publications the centre was to produce and the journal, 'Priority' launched in 1971.

The chapter highlights two outcomes from the LEPA project, both of which can be considered as its historical legacy. First, strategies pioneered by the LEPA project demonstrated that it was possible to involve parents more closely with their children's schools. The analysis of the LEPA project therefore contributes to discussions surrounding the nature of partnership between the home and the school and what exactly constitutes a closer relationship between the two. Second, and perhaps more important, LEPA came close to establishing an organisational structure within the LEA which could have embedded community education practices across the city on a long-term basis. However, the all too brief life of PRIORITY, established in the wake of the project, highlights the fragility of any additions to the education system that challenge the vested interests of teachers, administrators and politicians. The Liverpool story provides evidence to support the argument that the interests of the professionals will always outweigh impetus for radical change.

### **The educational and political landscape of Liverpool in the 1960s**

The area chosen for the project was one of several in the inner ring of the city matching the EPA criteria suggested by the Plowden Report.<sup>4</sup> The population of the Liverpool 8 postcode area faced multiple economic and social deprivations. Poor housing, above average unemployment levels, crime, a transient population, immigration, poverty and low percentages of adults holding qualifications of any type, meant local schools faced severe pressures. This impacted on their ability to achieve results that were in line with more suburban neighbours. The area was also the city's most ethnically diverse and the problem of unemployment was compounded by racial prejudice as the 1968 report of the Liverpool Youth Organisation of Liverpool City Council showed. Only 75 out of 10,000 retail employees in the city were black, for example.<sup>5</sup> In every respect the area matched the Plowden report's description of an area facing multiple disadvantages.<sup>6</sup> As the

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<sup>4</sup> Central Advisory Council for Education, *Children and their Primary Schools*, (London: HMSO, 1967) 51.

<sup>5</sup> Liverpool Youth Organisation Committee Special, but not separate report, for Liverpool Council for Voluntary Services 1968, cited in, *Liverpool City Council Jobs, Education and Training (JET) report 2006/7*, (Liverpool: Liverpool City Council, 2007) 1.

<sup>6</sup> CACE (1967) para 153.



Plowden Report noted, Liverpool had ‘the highest rate of illegitimacy, educational sub-normality, children in care, unemployment, possession orders and debt - life [was] not in line with the traditional school ethos’.<sup>7</sup>

Local headteachers were asked to identify their own schools as EPA, immediately introducing the dilemma of discrimination by recognition, whereby some headteachers might be reluctant to apply the label to their own schools. However, 29 did so along with three nurseries. In October 1968 the EPA project was allocated seven schools and one nursery. The schools taking part were: Salisbury County Primary (in L7), St Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Junior Boys and Girls, Harrison Jones County Primary, Chatsworth County Primary, St Margaret's C of E JMI, Windsor County Primary and Granby County Primary (two schools).<sup>8</sup>

### **The establishment of the Liverpool EPA Project**

Liverpool was chosen primarily because the LEA made it clear that they would support an EPA project with financial backing and accommodation.<sup>9</sup> During an interview conducted in 2010, A.H. Halsey recalled that this was really how all of the projects were chosen. The final choice was made in response to the guarantees made by the LEA.<sup>10</sup> Councillors Stan Thorne (Chair of Schools Sub-committee) and John Hamilton (Chair of Education Committee) both of the ruling Liverpool Labour Party, had made it clear they would back C.P.R Clarke, Liverpool’s CEO, who had requested permission to offer the city as a base.

The key local officials, C.P.R. Clarke, his deputy, Derek Birley, Tom McManners the Chief Inspector and the school headteachers, did not necessarily share the philosophical vision of Halsey and Young, but there was some common ground. Headteachers were very receptive to any additional revenue stream regardless of their views on parental involvement. However, even where headteachers were enthusiastic the attitude of their staff was a significant variable in determining the extent to which practices could be changed. The headteachers had

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Description of the EPA, Keith Pulham, October 1968.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Letter from C.P.R. Clarke to Michael Young, March 1 1968.

<sup>10</sup> A.H. Halsey interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

called for the LEA to action Plowden's recommendations as well as to change the unfair single funding formula and expand preschool preparation groups to ensure 'adequate social training at school entry'.<sup>11</sup> The schools viewed their children as inadequately prepared for formal education. They saw the Plowden Report's recommendations as a call for compensatory education. Plowden had called for community schools to help people who couldn't see the value of the already excellent primary education on offer rather than a new conception of the school. Writing in the first edition of the LEPA team's journal, Bridget Plowden revealed such intentions:

We have been fairly successful in educating those of our young who want to be educated. The great break-through will come when we can see that we have made education relevant to all our children – and to their parents.<sup>12</sup>

This view of parents and EPA children was not unusual in 1968. It implied that professionals needed to work 'on' people rather than 'with' them. In the same article Plowden used the term 'compensate' to highlight the inadequacy of some parents. However there was a more politically inspired motive operating in Liverpool – the development of community education as a vehicle for changing society.

The headteachers saw Plowden as recognition of the special problems faced by schools in urban areas and were keen to engage with an initiative that promised access to an extra funding stream. Midwinter, cites Mrs Pallot from Granby Infants, Mrs Hughes from Chatsworth Infants, Mrs Bergson from SFX Infants and Mr Vaux, as particularly receptive.<sup>13</sup> It does not follow that they believed radical and permanent change should, or could be brought about, however. In January 1968 Jack Reynard, Headteacher at St Margaret's, made the point that although he could be counted as an enthusiastic supporter of the project his school was already working along the lines Midwinter was keen to explore.<sup>14</sup> In 1973 Midwinter's reflective assessment was that the schools were 'motivated less by . . . educational factors than by reasons of social expediency and social justice', but, Reynard's comments

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<sup>11</sup> Papers of Margaret Simey, Liverpool University, Sydney Jones Library Archives, D396/49.

<sup>12</sup> LEPA, *Projectile*, *Journal of the Liverpool Educational Priority Area Project*, 1, no. 1 (1969) 5.

<sup>13</sup> Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

suggest that in 1968 there was work to be done to persuade schools that they could do more.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that the project combined research along with action caused concerns among headteachers to begin with. Many of the same schools had engaged with a research project led by Professor J.B. Mays of the Liverpool University Sociology department, in 1962. The findings published by Mays caused outrage amongst the schools because of the blame it attached to teachers for the poor academic attainment of pupils.<sup>16</sup> The result was that when the EPA team was appointed, it was several weeks before Midwinter felt confident enough to send the Research Officer, Keith Pulham, into schools to collect baseline data. Midwinter used his introductory meeting with the heads to offer reassurance. His position was undoubtedly compromised by the presence of J.B. Mays on the local Steering Committee. However, soon after the Steering Committee's first meeting Mays disassociated himself from the project in a national newspaper article. Mays argued that despite the best intentions of those involved in the project, small scale action research would not provide the solution to educational underachievement in the EPA.<sup>17</sup> The real solution lay in improving the quality of education offered in the schools.

Mays resigned from the Steering Committee and Midwinter was quick to inform the local headteachers. The removal of Mays along with the opportunity to access extra resources, opened the door for effective collaboration. The motivations of headteachers were not a concern for the project initially. Their remit was to experiment and identify strategies which showed the benefit of involving parents more actively in the education of their children. At the beginning of the project, and considering the intergenerational underachievement in the EPA, it was unlikely that teachers would feel comfortable engaging parents beyond the traditional role of fundraiser and partner in management of the child's behaviour. Parents were not expected to inform the professional knowledge of the teacher during the 1960s.

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<sup>15</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers. *Priority, The EPA Community School*, (Liverpool: Priority, April 1973) 18.

<sup>16</sup> John Barron Mays, *Education and the Urban Child*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1962).

<sup>17</sup> John Barron Mays, *The Research Smokescreen*, *The Guardian*, Manchester, May 1 1969.

The LEPA team distributed a journal throughout the project's life.<sup>18</sup> *'Projectile'* provides a useful documentary record. Interview data, records of meetings, including the Local and National Steering Committee minutes, reports to the National Steering Committee and correspondence supplement this record and inform the analysis presented below.

### **September – December 1968 The first term**

The first three months was a 'period of reconnaissance' during which Midwinter presented his rationale to the schools and developed links with the local community.<sup>19</sup>

Following a period of consultation, the headteachers agreed to implement three 'mini- projects', one curricular, one a home-school link and one 'community slanted'.<sup>20</sup> The LEPA team also started to think about what Midwinter described as 'spectaculars', that is, one-off high profile events to get the whole community and media talking about the LEPA project. To Midwinter the EPA project was a first step. His long-term ambition was to explore the concept of community education, while establishing a base for the different strands to be developed across the whole city. In the first edition of *Projectile* he posed the question, 'what is community education?' to initiate dialogue with his audience.

The LEPA team's first phase of action focused on curriculum experimentation. They wanted experimentation with the social curriculum to become routine for project schools and then to extend this practice across the city. The content of the curriculum projects was not as radical as some contemporary pedagogic experiments. The late 1960s saw a development in libertarian thinking amongst some educationists. This led to the emergence, in the early 1970s, of a number of Free Schools, including the Scotland Road Free School in Liverpool, which rejected the existing conception of the school and were inspired by Freire,

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<sup>18</sup> *Projectile* 1, no. 1 (Liverpool: LEPA, 1969).

<sup>19</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Priority Education: An account of the Liverpool project*, (London: Penguin, 1972b) 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> *Projectile* 1, no. 1 (Liverpool: LEPA, 1969) 1.

Althusser and Neill.<sup>21</sup> LEPA was seeking to challenge accepted practices but it was attempting to do so from within the existing system rather than risking marginalisation by stepping outside it.

Strategies to develop teacher and secondary school involvement and wider community action, were planned for the second phase of action.<sup>22</sup> The budget for the project's first year was approximately 25 per cent short of Midwinter's request to the national committee. However, support from the LEA meant the project's finances were healthy. Table 3, below, details planned expenditure for the first year.

*Table 3: Financial allocation from central EPA funds 1969*<sup>23</sup>

Item	Requested	Provisional re-allocation
Primary school community projects	£1,075	£1,000
Pre-school action projects	£5,950	£4,500
Secondary school, Teacher support, WEA Officer	£7,300	£5,500
Research expenses	£3,750	£2,000
Total	£21,850	£16,500

By the start of the summer term in April 1969 all of the agreed projects were underway with the support of teacher training college teams. The experimental nature of the project meant Midwinter had to acknowledge that some might fail to deliver and would be allowed to 'run their course'.<sup>24</sup>

### **The project in action, 1969 - 1971**

Following what Midwinter described as the 'probings and explorations' of the first term, a clearly defined set of programmes was drawn up.<sup>25</sup> He claimed 1969

<sup>21</sup> Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin, 1970), Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), Robin Barrow, *Radical Education: A Critique of Freeschooling and Deschooling*, (London: Martin Robertson, 1978) Mark Vaughan, Ed. *Summerhill and A.S.Neill*, (Maidenhead: Open University, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA Progress Report, May 1969. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972b) 81.

was a year of 'phenomenal activity' with 12 out of 13 school departments engaged. Only one department withdrew, amicably, as the head felt it was too much and was diminishing the main focus of the school, language teaching.<sup>26</sup>

The team recognised the need to sustain the progress made during the first year and to document the outcomes before the funding ended. The LEA committed to providing £1,500 of funding to the original project schools to continue the experiments.<sup>27</sup> The school departments, which gained grants between £50 and £300, used the funds effectively and in line with the LEPA project's objectives. Accounts were returned in due time, complete with valid certification. All of the schools agreed to sign a supportive statement forwarded to the LEA by LEPA to request that funding was continued after 1971.

This letter was signed by schools to show support for the LEPA team's continuation strategy. During the final year the team developed a Project Extension Programme (PEP). The aim of PEP was to draw as many schools as possible into the practices introduced to the project schools. However, of the 32 school departments invited only 13 initially took up the offer. There are several possible explanations for this. Some heads may not have recognised their schools as appropriate participants, rejecting the EPA label. They may have been wary of committing to what they perceived to be additional work. The church schools may have felt that they were answerable to the Diocese not the LEA. Or, as Midwinter suggested, they just might not answer letters.<sup>28</sup> Despite the initial refusals 22 schools did eventually engage, implementing a range of the strategies tried out during the first year and a half of action.<sup>29</sup> Below is an account of these strategies.

### **Building links between home and school**

During the first year, a number of ideas for building home-school links were discussed and four variations introduced: the class coffee morning, landscaping of school grounds, the publication of bespoke school magazines and the exhibition of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>28</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Interim report to National Steering Committee, 1970, 2.

<sup>29</sup> See Midwinter (1972b) 85.

schoolwork in shops. Two committees were set up to coordinate and refine this work, the Headteachers' Standing Committee and the Teachers' Liaison Committee. The latter was particularly significant as it gave the team a voice in every staffroom. All four strategies proved successful. For example, by 1971, 30 schools were involved in the project to some degree and the production of individual publications became impracticable so a four-page journal, *Back Home* was developed, and a run of 10,000 copies produced. As well as providing news of forthcoming school events *Back Home* contained guidance for parents on how to enhance their child's development. For example, issue six contained an article, 'Helping them with their enquiries', which provided information on how to respond positively to children's questions, stressing the benefits for learning.<sup>30</sup>

A number of *Projectors* were developed as resources for teachers. These packs were a mixture of information and activity. For example, the first *Projector* offered details on the social curriculum, listing 45 potential topics and a schedule for teaching them.<sup>31</sup> *Projector* three, 'Home-School Horse Sense', outlined strategies for improving parental understanding of educational aims and methods moving hierarchically from information sent home, to teacher-parent run projects deploying trained parents. Midwinter acknowledges that the strategies were not all original but attempting to draw them together as a coherent rationale was. The guidance provided addressed the practical questions teachers were likely to raise regarding expense, discipline, teacher workload and resistant parents.<sup>32</sup>

### **Preschool playgroup support**

Preschool work was prioritised during the first phase of action.<sup>33</sup> Preschool playgroups had expanded during the 1960s but mostly in the suburbs. Midwinter described this as a 'middle class phenomenon' widening the gap between rich and poor.<sup>34</sup> The EPA faced a shortfall of 5,500 places. Only 1,400 preschool places were

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<sup>30</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, *Back Home*, no. 6 (LEPA: Liverpool, June 1972).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 'Social Environment and the Downtown School', *Projector*, no.1 (LEPA: Liverpool).

<sup>32</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, 'Home-School Horse Sense', *Projector*, no. 3 (LEPA: Liverpool).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, Progress report, May 1969, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, *Liverpool and its under-fives, a report for the Advisory Centre for Education*, (Liverpool: Association of Multi-racial Playgroups, April 1971).

available in 1969: 575 in LEA nursery schools and primary schools, 400 in day nurseries of the Medical Officer of Health, and 450 in private facilities. The strategy adopted was to develop a range of additional provision and form a loose federation of new and existing groups to facilitate the sharing of ideas, aid fundraising, allow bulk purchase, offer training and develop friendship.

The first priority was not to research the effects of new provision but rather to explore what resources could be utilised to expand it. However, the initial plan did identify aspects of the preschool's work as areas for evaluation: sensory, linguistic, social and emotional development, the educational objectives for group leaders, and the satisfaction and involvement of parents.

A range of provision was envisaged and, as in the West Riding, efforts were focused on utilising parents, secondary school children and college students. The LEPA team argued that playgroups could be attached not only to schools but also to factories, colleges, religious/community organisations and 'probably the most important', voluntary groups attached to blocks of flats.<sup>35</sup> The waiting list of 300 for the nursery school attached to the EPA project indicates the urgency of the situation and explains why action was prioritised over research. However, only four new groups were started and Midwinter acknowledged that their efforts were 'slow to mature'.<sup>36</sup> The limit to expansion was due largely to the challenges imposed by the small size of the team. As a result, by the second year, the team changed their strategy to support for existing provision rather than expansion.

During the course of planning the preschool work Keith Pulham, with the support of Mrs Brown of the Liverpool Save the Children's Fund playgroups, had organised a parental survey of more than 20 existing groups to better identify their requirements. The outcome was an allocation of £1,000 to set up the Liverpool EPA Playgroups Association. Eleanor Connor, employed by LEPA as John Moores pre-school fellow, was the main organiser and point of contact. The Association held monthly meetings to remove the sense of isolation experienced by group leaders. The meetings were well attended and provided useful information on issues such as

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, LEPA Preschool programme, December 1968.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, LEPA Progress report ii August 1969.



resources, provision of art and music and children's books. Connor was aware of the need to encourage activities which did not depend on the financial support of the project.<sup>37</sup> An alternative to the Peabody language kit, which all five EPA teams were obliged to use, was developed by the team with input from the Association and distributed to all groups. Named 'Wotever Next', the kit drew on the local environment for the setting of stories delivered by the puppet 'Dr Wotever'. Midwinter claimed this was an 'approximate attempt to offer a realistic and structured aid to the playgroup workers rather than a nationwide kit', which was not popular with local teachers.<sup>38</sup>

It was in preschool work that the team delivered their first 'spectacular', the 'Paddington Playmobile'.<sup>39</sup> The 'Playmobile' was a mobile nursery unit created from a converted ex-corporation double decker bus and was used to plug gaps in local playgroup provision. Eleanor Connor oversaw its use and advised on its design. This initiative was possible thanks to the presence of Tom Ward on the steering committee. Ward represented the John Moores Foundation and he provided access to an extra funding stream to cover the costs.<sup>40</sup> By August 1969 the team had managed to secure a deal with the Liverpool Corporation to reduce the standard licence fee from £200 to £25, and an arrangement for garaging and servicing for a nominal fee. The conversion was carried out by final year pupils from the new Paddington Comprehensive School and was introduced to service in autumn 1969. Kirsten Cubbit, writing in *The Times*, called the Playmobile a 'small stroke of genius'.<sup>41</sup> As well as its genuine practical use, particularly when based at the foot of the EPAs many high rise blocks, the Playmobile was a beacon for media attention. Its numerous appearances in the printed press and television eventually led to the concept being replicated in other areas of the country.<sup>42</sup> The Playmobile's significance was in drawing attention to the severity of the problem rather than presenting a long-term solution.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, *Projectile*, no. 3, (Liverpool: LEPA, 1971) 15.

<sup>38</sup> Midwinter (1972) 90.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> John Moores owned the Littlewoods company, the second biggest employer on Merseyside after the City Council.

<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, November 18 1970.

<sup>42</sup> [www.workingonwheels.org](http://www.workingonwheels.org), accessed June 21 2011.

A further outcome of the preschool work was the coming together of organisations previously working separately towards the same goals. The Liverpool Council of Social Service, Save the Children Fund and the Liverpool Health Department each worked with LEPA through their preschool work. This was already beginning to happen in anticipation of the Seebohm Commission's call for cross-agency work.<sup>43</sup>

### Curriculum projects

In the opening months of the project, following consultative meetings with headteachers and their staff, an original list of 27 curriculum enrichment projects was reduced to nine. They were implemented for a term or half term, and in every case with participation of college student teams. Midwinter claimed this was a success, given what must have seemed the 'bizarre nature' of some.<sup>44</sup> The pedagogical objectives of the projects were oral English enhancement, cultural enrichment, creative expression, environmental familiarisation, development of number skills, social work (through BBC Radio Merseyside's *Pied Piper* programme), physical development through outdoor play and awareness of the animal and plant life of the city.

The curriculum enrichment projects are listed below in table 4 along with the local college designated to work with the school.

*Table 4: curriculum projects*

School	Project title	College attachment
Granby Street Infants	Oral and Verbal Language Development	St. Katherine's
Granby Street Juniors	Cultural Enrichment	F. L. Calder
Harrison Jones C.P.	Use of Local Radio	Ethel Wormald
Chatsworth C.P.	Mathematics for the Urban Child	Kirkby Fields

<sup>43</sup> Seebohm Committee, *Report by the Committee on Local Authority and allied social service*, (London: HMSO, 1968).

<sup>44</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA Progress Report II, 2.

Salisbury C.P.	Animal/Plant life	Edge Hill
Windsor Street Infants	Number for Infants	C.F. Mott
Windsor Street Juniors	Creative Expression	Christ's
St Margaret's C. of E. C.P.	Leisure Pursuits	I.M Marsh and Ethel Wormald
St Francis Xavier R.C.	Environmental Studies	Notre Dame

In summer 1969 the LEA announced that one of the project schools, Harrison Jones Primary, was to be included in Phase II of the Home Office funded Urban Programme. This allowed the LEPA team to create a base within the LEA's Teacher and Community Centre planned for the refurbished school.

One of the central arguments for the adoption of a social curriculum was the need for education to have both a social purpose and relevance to children's interests. It was argued that the social environment was the key resource for building the child-centred curriculum and that if this was achieved, the outcome would be both socially aware citizens with a responsible attitude to their community, and motivated learners more likely to attain highly.<sup>45</sup> It was not just the teaching methods which were important, but also the content. A good example of this was the mathematics project developed at Chatsworth School. Midwinter provides a detailed account of this work in his final report but here the project is analysed using the account of the Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Hughes.<sup>46</sup>

The staff of Chatsworth chose the topic of money as their project focus. Impending decimalisation appealed to the school and was relevant for their children. The idea to create a replica supermarket within the school emerged through whole staff discussion. 'Chatty Stores' was launched in the autumn term 1969 and, with the support of the students, children experienced all aspects of running a supermarket, from marketing to stocktaking. Midwinter recognised the enthusiasm for the concept and was able to use the status of the project and its resources to 'fit out' the shop with real shelving and other authentic materials donated by Tesco's.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>46</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, *Projectile*, no. 3, (Liverpool: LEPA, 1971) 19-20.

Many aspects of the mathematics curriculum were delivered using the inspiration of Chatty Stores. Hughes cites market research, graphical accounts of expeditions, area and shape work as examples.<sup>47</sup> Her final comment was significant. She saw the supermarket as a 'useful teaching aid' but did not comment on the idea that social purpose was one of the underlying principles of curriculum planning. This attitude reduced the significance of the supermarket to an example of the type of child-centred thematic teaching being transmitted to student teachers in colleges across the country rather than a shift toward a social curriculum. One cannot conclude that the LEPA team had persuaded teachers of the need to re-direct their teaching principles from this example. Given the static nature of the curriculum during the previous hundred years, it is not surprising that a small local project was unable to make great headway in this respect.

By the end of the project it emerged that experiments had highlighted the enormous potential of the creative arts in project-based work to tap into the potential and interest of parents. The curriculum with a social purpose, relevant to the lives of the families, appeared to be inspired most effectively using 'creative ventures'.<sup>48</sup> Again, this was not revealed by LEPA. Many colleges of education were teaching students the importance of a thematic approach to curriculum planning based on the notion that children don't compartmentalise knowledge but view it holistically. It was the emphasis on *socially useful* knowledge rather than, what LEPA college link tutor, Norman Garner, referred to as 'archaic and irrelevant aims', which was the important aspect of the LEPA approach.<sup>49</sup>

In practice, the four *Projectors* are evidence of the LEPA rationale in action: 'Streets Ahead', 'Cityscenes', 'Seven' and the 'Down Our Way' workbooks developed by educational adviser to the project Frank Harris. These 'kits' were a means of disseminating good practice and formed part of the expansion strategy for the second year. Other examples of this approach were the commitment to providing a curriculum resources workshop for EPA teachers and the theatre in education workshops led by the city's Everyman theatre. The workshop, 'Day of the Disaster',

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 13.

became LEPA's second 'spectacular'. It was led by the Theatre's Education Director, Paul Harman, and three other actors. Over 20 schools were involved in a play that was a sociological and environmental interpretation of a housing related problem.

The projects were a 'reappraisal' of curriculum content and 'good primary practice'.<sup>50</sup> LEPA was questioning what is deemed to be socially useful knowledge and who should determine this. The success of this work demands a different role from the teacher, more in line with Freirean practice as guide and facilitator. This approach required confident, experienced teachers capable of changing their practice. Newly-qualified teachers sometimes lacked the confidence to do so, often falling back on their own experience of school.

Midwinter's view was that the socially relevant curriculum was superior to the existing model because it was created rather than prescribed. This view differed from many process-driven models of the curriculum because of the emphasis on ensuring its relevance to the child and her family. The project schools involved had little difficulty adapting to the project work introduced but Midwinter acknowledged that embedding a community education philosophy was challenging. Midwinter saw the development of the 'correct critical tolerance' amongst some teachers as difficult given teachers' historic role as protectors of the status quo.<sup>51</sup> For Midwinter, the pressing social needs outweighed those of traditional approaches to literacy and numeracy. He argued that literacy and numeracy teaching would be best served if embedded in the context of social need.

### **Links with teacher education colleges**

Midwinter's background in teacher education enabled him to make rapid headway in engaging the city's six teacher education colleges. A college liaison tutor committee was set up to coordinate the deployment of students. Its chair, Norman Garner, claimed that some colleges had created a cultural distance between themselves and their local schools by carefully controlling any contact with their

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

students. This was not to be the case in Liverpool.<sup>52</sup> Local environmental projects were not new, but what Garner felt was unique about the LEPA approach was a spirit of cooperation in 'an atmosphere of equal responsibility' and the involvement of many inner city schools from one area as opposed to the usual 'model' schools that colleges would collaborate with for new ventures.<sup>53</sup>

Garner felt students who took part in the project became more engaged than their peers but there is no evidence to confirm this. Individuals who choose to volunteer for extra mural studies have a tendency to be motivated already. Garner cited other benefits. Students were able to spend extra time in classrooms with small groups of children in a relatively stress free situation and their understanding of group work and the dynamics of team work had been enhanced. They had the opportunity to identify the links between theory and practice through reflection. This point extended to student understanding of the impact of social conditions on schools and children.<sup>54</sup> From the schools' perspective there was also the benefit of improved pupil-teacher ratios. Headteacher of St Francis Xavier, Miss Bergin, hoped the experience would lead to students 'clamouring to staff EPA schools, instead of hankering after the Elysian fields of the eastern and southern suburbs of this salubrious city'.<sup>55</sup>

The colleges continued to be fully involved in the curriculum projects. Notre Dame became the first in the country to develop a full EPA option with 28 students spending their entire second year on EPA work. CF Mott and Ethel Wormald made EPA study a year three option, while Edge Hill students spent two days per week in EPA schools. In all, six colleges mounted 14 projects during LEPA's second year.

In the final year, Midwinter planned his own EPA course aimed at teacher educators and headteachers: 'EPA Thought and Practice for Tutors and Organisers'.<sup>56</sup> Participants would complete a series of half term blocks, attend an EPA school one day per week, and produce a contribution to EPA thought and/or

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<sup>52</sup> *Projectile*, no. 3 (Liverpool: LEPA, 1971) 11.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Projectile*, no. 2 (Liverpool: LEPA, 1970) 11.

<sup>56</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, EPA course proposal, Midwinter, January 1970.

practice. The course would start with philosophical and sociological study of the EPA concept and eventually cover all practical aspects of work designed to develop the community school. The course never ran in the year- long format proposed by Midwinter, though a short version was delivered at the Salisbury Community Centre.

In March 1970, the *Times Educational Supplement* carried a report on the college work, 'Students at the battlefield', to add to LEPA's public profile.<sup>57</sup> Garner's assessment suggests the reality was a limited impact on colleges. He claimed that there was no change 'in college policy' resulting from the EPA link and certainly no 'institutionalisation' of new practices.<sup>58</sup> Adaptation of courses was a result of socially concerned individuals rather than adoption of community education as an objective.<sup>59</sup> The introduction of course options only extended to the groups forming the student attachment teams rather than an integral part of any courses. Colleges faced many external and internal pressures, not least the perceptions of their staff as to what was appropriately reflective of professional status and the hierarchical structure of the education system. Garner was far from positive in his assessment of colleges status:

Society as a whole disregards them; their students complain of irrelevance; the schools regard them as unrealistic and the employing authorities frequently regard them as irresponsible and dilettante.<sup>60</sup>

He agreed with Midwinter's assertion that teaching through the environment and adopting 'discovery' learning would not alter outcomes if the curricular content remained the same 'geographically and historically remote' material.<sup>61</sup> The use of the local environment had been exploratory, experimental and allowed for choice and discrimination at a local level. Teachers, Garner argued, needed to 'analyse community need, and how to develop curricular programmes to satisfy it'. This was a challenge to the assumption that the same facts were equally relevant to all and that 'some of these facts were reinforced by some kind of universal moral authority'.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, *Times Educational Supplement*, March 13 1970.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, *Projectile*, no. 2 (Liverpool: LEPA, 1970) 12.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Garner was viewing his colleagues as the guardians of cultural capital. Colleges were unlikely to take action that possibly undermined their subject-based expert status as historians, geographers and so on. While Garner's views can be considered highly subjective they suggest that colleges occupied a key strategic position from the LEPA team's perspective. The ambition to develop 'Plowden' teachers was partly in their hands, thus effort to involve them in the work of the project was appropriate both pragmatically and strategically.

### **Community links**

Actions taken to extend the involvement of the wider community with local schools, overlapped with efforts to build home-school links. The LEPA team recognised the importance of public relations exercises and their success in generating interest amongst the community drew a great deal of national interest. The most significant strategy in this respect, other than the display of children's work in local shops, was the third of LEPA's 'spectaculars', the TJ Hughes exhibition.

Roughly halfway through the project, from March 6 to 19 1970, 'The Child in the City' exhibition took place in local department store, TJ Hughes. The objective was to raise the profile of the project within and beyond the EPA through celebration of the schools and their work. It was a major undertaking involving all schools and students from Edge Hill and C.F. Mott Colleges. As well as daily 'shows', where teachers gave demonstration lessons in front of a live audience, there was an Education Shop offering 11 information leaflets, a preschool corner, a secondary school display and music from Paddington Silver Band. The exhibition was opened by Liverpool's CEO C.P.R. Clarke and attracted over 10,000 visitors. Writing shortly after the exhibition, Bill Costigan, local teacher and liaison officer for the event, noted that the store executives considered it to be the most successful held in their exhibition area.<sup>63</sup> The Edge Hill students collected 400 completed questionnaires and the message was that the exhibition did help to inform people about teaching methods and curriculum content. The education shop sold more materials than had been anticipated and raised the question of whether a permanent

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 7.



'shop' could be sustained in the city centre. This resulted in a portable educational kiosk for use at other public events. Costigan stressed that the event had proved that parents do want to know more about their children's education.<sup>64</sup> It was evidence that EPA professionals did not need to overcome the damage done by uninterested or hostile parents.

### **Adult education**

In September 1969 Tom Lovett was recruited to the team to explore whether new forms of adult education could be developed within the EPA. Lovett was sponsored by the Workers Education Association (WEA) so came with a separate funding stream and was an additional resource for LEPA. By the end of the project Lovett felt that a 'breakthrough in the provision of adult education' had been achieved.<sup>65</sup> Lovett offered himself as a community resource, assisting local people in their dealings with Liverpool City Council, advising on the establishment of play schemes and working with them on a local housing scheme. Lovett was not bound by WEA organisational restrictions, which allowed him to be more responsive to community needs.<sup>66</sup> His work was divided into three areas: visits to existing adult provision, experimentation with new schemes to assess demand, and analysis of non-formal community activities in order to work out realistic provision.

Lovett's experiments were not unique and similar work took place elsewhere during this period. The Coventry Community Development Project developed his work further for example.<sup>67</sup> However, the approaches used to engage local people were innovative and, perhaps equally importantly, they were free. Lovett experimented with new approaches to 'listening, organising, teaching and learning' but he was more concerned with developing what today might be termed a positive attitude to the idea of lifelong learning.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>66</sup> Tom Lovett, *Adult Education Community Development and the Working Class*, (Nottingham: Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1975) 145.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. See p144 for a full list.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

The strategy adopted was to offer advice to existing community groups, cater for spare-time interests and encourage discussion amongst residents of the numerous problems they faced. Lovett felt that to be a 'dynamic centre for . . . regeneration and growth', the community school had to immerse itself in the variety of problems the community faced, not just increase the educational know-how of parents.<sup>69</sup> Lovett set out to increase human activity in relation to adult education, to enable people through 'doing'. His strategy cut across traditional institutional boundaries.

Lovett felt there was an untapped demand for adult education amongst working class people. His survey of the Earle Road area, a soon-to-be demolished block of 700 terraced houses, was an attempt to ascertain levels of participation and demand for adult education. The survey returned 424 completed questionnaires which revealed that no adults were engaged in any kind of education course at all.

Consequently, the strategies he employed had to be innovative if they were to engage people. Lovett devised six scripts titled 'Talk Gentlemen Please', delivered by BBC Radio Merseyside as part of the *Living Today* series. He used the broadcasts to generate ten groups in pubs and community centres to discuss the content of each show. The discussion groups illustrated the potential for action to be generated by a committed individual. However, the amount of energy required meant it was unlikely to generate significant change on a long-term basis.

Lovett became aware of an old handicraft centre owned by the LEA. At this time it was used only by a preschool playgroup organised by local priest, Father Woodhall. Lovett's use of this centre became the catalyst for the growth of adult education in the EPA. Woodhall was keen to generate use of the building by the community and Lovett was able to establish a mothers' group from parents of nearby Salisbury school. He recognised the Church's longstanding influence on community activities and persuaded the group of the centre's potential. Lovett was developing an alternative to what could be seen as inadequate opportunities for adult education by utilising existing resources.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 17.

The mothers' group canvassed the local area to gauge support for the development of the building as a community centre and within four weeks a committee had been formed and 'The Salisbury Centre' established. The outcome was a number of new activities including a twice-weekly dance for teenagers, a boxing club, a hairdressing class, a jumble sale and a meeting with local councillors to discuss residents' concerns. Lovett claimed that the distinctive feature of these developments was 'the fact that it succeeded because of the initiative of local people utilising their skills and experiences.'<sup>70</sup> He had acted as a facilitator but the activities were chosen, organised and run by the community. Lovett contributed to the development of links between home, community and school. His work could be viewed as an attempt to change local attitudes. However, as Lovett pointed out, the rapid growth of the new centre and the parents' insistence on offering activities and events for young people suggests that no such change was required.<sup>71</sup> What people needed was opportunity and the LEPA project provided it. Lovett acted as a stimulus in what is an interactive, 'spiral' process. People were being educated through involvement in activities with social purpose. They recognised they had a degree of responsibility for solving social and educational problems in their neighbourhood.<sup>72</sup> Lovett acknowledged that formal adult educational opportunities should be offered, but prior to this, local people had to see its relevance to their personal and communal needs. The results of the Earle Road survey suggested he was right. From September 1970 Lovett facilitated the provision of conventional and thus recognisable courses to the community. Where possible, Lovett employed local people possessing the necessary skills to deliver the classes. This approach strengthened the partnership he sought to nurture. There is a potential crossover effect on schools here. The involvement of interested and talented people in schools was an effective way of encouraging teachers to adopt a less defensive view of their professional role.

The adult education work was highly significant. LEPA recognised that attempts to generate parental involvement in school life would be compromised not by parental apathy but by the pressures of housing, crime and unemployment. It was

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<sup>70</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, *Projectile*, no. 3 (Liverpool: LEPA, 1971). 18.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

argued that adult education often failed to draw in the disadvantaged because of its abstract and classroom-bound nature. Often, the only thing informal about adult provision was classroom techniques; otherwise, it remained a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure.<sup>73</sup> The result was that provision was determined by dominant groups with those in control often the 'first to alienate and be alienated by the working class'.<sup>74</sup> Lovett's solution was to develop a network of local groups and agencies. The LEPA team was one of a number of formal and informal agencies working to generate elements of community life. A network emerged within the EPA with Shelter, Child Poverty Action Group, the LEA Welfare Department and Marriage Guidance Council all involved in the delivery of courses and provision of services for the community.<sup>75</sup> However, success required a supportive financial climate and a much closer relationship with people than was, and is, normal.<sup>76</sup> If these criteria were met, the result would be an enlarged 'frame of reference' for community development at neighbourhood level.<sup>77</sup>

### **The contribution of LEPA to the pursuit of Community Education**

LEPA hoped to create a 'climate of opinion' that would persuade the LEA to take the work forward beyond 1971.<sup>78</sup> In the final year the signs were good. The LEA asked Midwinter to draw up a detailed plan to estimate the costs of extending the project. He obliged by producing the PEP mentioned earlier, and requested £15,000 per annum to maintain the current provision, later reducing this to £10,000.<sup>79</sup> PEP aimed to embed and extend the work of LEPA, enabling children to challenge the conditions of their community as future citizens not compensating for their deficiencies.<sup>80</sup>

In a letter to Liverpool's 32 EPA schools, Midwinter acknowledged that there was still controversy surrounding the concept of the community school,

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<sup>73</sup> Lovett, T. (1975) 127.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>79</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Progress report on the establishment of a National Institute for Community Education, Spring 1971.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, LEPA Progress Report no. 3 1970.

including 'downright opposition'.<sup>81</sup> Despite the high profile LEPA had achieved there were still some misgivings surrounding the implications of the EPA and community school concepts. LEPA's standing benefited from a timely publication for the NUT in October 1970.<sup>82</sup> Midwinter's NUT pamphlet defended the social curriculum, claiming it was neither parochial nor dumbed down. He recognised that the home and local environment were a crucial influence on conceptual development, and, since children constructed knowledge through experience, it made sense to bring the two together. However, the pamphlet was more significant for the positive national platform it gave to the EPA project. This was partly due to the heroic manner in which Midwinter described EPA teachers. The deliberately emotive tone caught the attention of the national press. The *Sun* noted that EPA was an attempt to change urban schools in order to support 'social casualties', The *Daily Mirror* spoke of the 'tragedy of slum children' and the *Liverpool Daily Post* of 'twilight children'.<sup>83</sup> In the *Guardian*, Ernest Dewhurst wrote of the 'tragic backcloth to the classroom' and in the *Daily Mail*, Roy Nish called it a 'shock-horror' report.<sup>84</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed in the *Daily Sketch* and the *Morning Star*. *Teachers World* claimed the pamphlet 'grips the reader by the scruff of the neck and forces him to listen'. It also noted that EPA teachers already demonstrated compensatory behaviours; by providing as much individual attention as possible and by looking to praise and demonstrate affection for children, actions which would be taken today as normal professional behaviours today.<sup>85</sup> Alongside the withdrawal of J.B. Mays from LEPA's steering committee the pamphlet was a key moment.

It appears that feedback from participating schools towards the PEP was positive. For example, the teams of students were seen as an invaluable resource because they brought enthusiasm and open mindedness, and because they were introduced to a planned, structured project, as in the supermarket development at Chatsworth. This allowed the school to experiment with new practices that were beyond the capabilities their normal staffing structure would allow. Although

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, Letter from Midwinter to EPA schools April 1970.

<sup>82</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal LEPA papers, *Education – A priority area*, (London: NUT, October 1970).

<sup>83</sup> *The Sun*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Post*, all October 16 1970.

<sup>84</sup> *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail*, both October 16 1970

<sup>85</sup> *Morning Star*, *Daily Sketch*, *Teachers World* all October 16 1970.

alteration of the adult-child ratio cannot be classed as innovative, the closer relationship between school staff and college tutors and the concept of joint planning, offered the potential of embedding a new form of partnership. Curriculum development had largely been project-based with schools allocating time to carry out the projects but not changing their traditional focus on the 'Three Rs'. Midwinter acknowledged only halting steps had been made, but where successful strategies had occurred, the team intended to offer guidance to schools in 'kit' form.<sup>86</sup>

It is unlikely that the distribution of 'kits' or even participation in community focused curricular activities can lead to increased critical awareness in relation to the social structure. The school operated under the pressures of more powerful influences than any prescribed curriculum. At no point did the LEPA team make any claims that this was achievable during the life of the project. LEPA was exploring strategies that supported a particular conception of community education. The use of tested kits was simply a technique for spreading this philosophy across the city. Midwinter's view was that the curriculum a child receives inculcated knowledge, skills and values, but unless these were delivered within a closely corresponding community ethos, it was unlikely to translate into behaviours and actions in later life.

The LEPA team was at its most innovative working to strengthen the links between home and school. Midwinter was confident that the project had 'nailed the myth of the apathetic working-class parent'.<sup>87</sup> Parents were not disinterested just ill-informed, and the emphasis on modern child-centred methods and terminology, such as 'discovery learning', was unrecognisable to most parents. LEPA set out to implement public relations exercises to provide parents with the educational know-how they lacked. The LEPA strategy was pragmatic and recognised that better informed parents and teachers could be drawn closer together.<sup>88</sup>

The class 'at home' was the most successful strategy for informing parents. It involved parents attending their child's class to join in with the lessons, once or twice a term, seeing first hand the pedagogic actions used by teachers. However, this

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Projectile*, (1971) 9.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

approach risked a sceptical response from teachers who had undergone professional training in child development and possessed pedagogical knowledge which parents [in their view] could not. It is possible that parents were really only observing how proficient their child's teacher was at managing a class. This might increase parental respect for teachers but does not add up to a new partnership. A change in the consciousness of the teacher was needed if they were to accept a role as a manager or facilitator of learning. They would need to devolve power over pedagogic actions to the community. This implied an ideological commitment and a range of communication skills that not all teachers would be able to acquire. In order to address this the PEP recognised the importance of building links with colleges of education. Midwinter claimed that the overall package, if implemented across all 32 EPA schools would amount to 'quite an interesting change'.<sup>89</sup>

A grant of £150 was offered to the 22 participating schools, provided they came up with plans for a suitable strategy relating to community education. After 1971 all schools agreed to distribute 'Back Home', 12 attempted parental liaisons, eight site development, two exhibitions in local shops, six used 'City Scenes' and 18 accepted student teams.<sup>90</sup> A range of reasons for not participating were offered but three schools, each Catholic, objected on the principle that they did not want to accept the EPA label.

Once the LEA agreed to support the recommendations made in the PEP, the process of establishing a national EPA base began to gather momentum. A document was produced by Michael Young's organisation, the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE), outlining the rationale and practicalities of what would 'probably' be the country's first 'National Institute for Community Development'.<sup>91</sup> The new Institute was to be funded for a period of five years from 1971, to continue the success of Liverpool, but with a much stronger research base to offer replicable schemes nationwide.<sup>92</sup> The Institute, which was eventually named 'PRIORITY'. It would involve a mixture of voluntary and statutory efforts, publicly and charitably funded,

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>90</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972b) 85.

<sup>91</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Proposal for a national EPA centre, (Cambridge: Advisory Centre for Education) 1. See also, *Times Educational Supplement*, February 5 1971.

<sup>92</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Proposal for a national EPA centre, (Cambridge: Advisory Centre for Education) 2.

to support the growth of local initiatives. According to Young, the Institute would build a national profile through publication of a range of reports and newsletters.<sup>93</sup> Professionals from colleges, schools, the adult education movement and community relations would be involved, but it was crucial that the Institute was a 'non-partisan independent body'.<sup>94</sup>

A national Institute was likely to be the most realistic outcome of the EPA project. Following an impromptu conversation during a shared taxi ride with Margaret Thatcher the Secretary of State for Education, Midwinter reported that, while sympathetic to the importance of preschool, Thatcher was more keen to publicise the work of the EPA projects than commit to an EPA expansion.<sup>95</sup> A single base was, therefore, the only realistic, achievable aim. Since Liverpool LEA had been consistently supportive the city was a logical location. The proposal made in the PEP was timely. The LEA had provided financial support in kind, amounting to £50,000.

At the fourteenth and final meeting of the LEPA Steering Committee in September 1971, Midwinter outlined the proposed rationale and constitution of the centre and a grant of £2,500 from urban programme funds by the LEA was confirmed.<sup>96</sup> A conference for senior education officers was planned at Edge Hill College in April 1972, to maintain momentum in anticipation of Halsey's national report, due in 1972. Attending and presenting were Lady Plowden and Halsey as well as various Liverpool educationists.<sup>97</sup>

The new centre, 'PRIORITY', was a composite of the LEA, ACE, John Moores Foundation, the WEA and Liverpool Council of the Social Services. PRIORITY continued the 'PR' work of LEPA, providing a speakers' panel whose usual format was a one-day conference with presentations and a film. A journal, *Priority*, was launched and the centre had a crucial training role, linking closely to

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter, Midwinter to Halsey, May 28 1971.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, LEPA Steering Committee minutes, September 24 1971.

<sup>97</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, EPA Conference programme, April 15 1972.



the colleges of education. PRIORITY was active from the beginning of 1972 until its rapid demise in 1975.

LEPA offered a 'third way' between the escape route for the few or social revolution. The LEPA team were not attempting to provide a compensatory education but a 'differentiated' one, in form and content. Their strategy was developed from a commitment to the community and the urgency of its needs. This is perhaps why LEPA failed to provide a blueprint of the community school, despite the extension of its work for four more years.

### **The unraveling of PRIORITY**

At this point the thesis steps outside of the time period indicated by its title. Although the discussion below relates to a brief period between 1975 and 1976 it is an essential part of the analysis. The changes that occurred within Liverpool LEA during 1975 demonstrate the challenges facing small-scale interventions and provide an opportunity to apply some pertinent critical perspectives. The demise of PRIORITY reveals the tendency of established political and administrative bodies to respond to short-term economic and political pressures.

The changes that occurred in Liverpool were identified from the national EPA papers held in Oxford, and a subsequent interview with Eric Midwinter. The interview was inspired by an unpublished paper presented to Midwinter in 1976 by C.M. Darcy, an American student seconded to the PRIORITY centre under sponsorship by the Fulbright Foundation in 1974.<sup>98</sup> Darcy's account is evidence of the structuring effects of habitus and the manoeuvring of vested interests operating within the local educational field. Darcy's version of events is supplemented with Midwinter's unpublished reflection.<sup>99</sup> However, some contextual information on the three years following the LEPA project is necessary in order to grasp the importance of the changes that occurred.

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<sup>98</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, C.M. Darcy, Notes on Priority's Demise, not dated.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, 'The Vulnerability of Innovation, or, but look what happened to Rolls Royce', unpublished, not dated.

As a result of the PEP, the support of the LEA and the ambitions of Young and Halsey, Liverpool was chosen to continue the work of the EPA project, in Midwinter's words, as 'a report-in-action'.<sup>100</sup> PRIORITY was formed and charitable status acquired. By 1973 PRIORITY had a staff of over 30 with a commitment in more than 50 schools. It had published eight books, taken part in three full-length television programmes and delivered nearly 300 conference lectures and seminars. The Conservative and then Labour-controlled Liverpool City Council had been generous in their backing with Urban Aid and its own 'Exercise Positive Discrimination' initiative. Thus in autumn 1973 efforts were made to secure more formal recognition from the LEA.

Midwinter proposed that PRIORITY was transferred to LEA control as a home-school development unit. This coincided with his appointment as Principal of the Liverpool Teachers' Centre during a process of amalgamation intended to unify the LEA's services. PRIORITY took its place as one of four centres alongside an in-service training unit, a curriculum development unit and a resources unit. PRIORITY was led by Midwinter, who was answerable to a management committee of 30 plus, including eight LEA officers. So, by the end of 1973, there was a teachers' centre 'exerting firm leverage on the professional development facilities offered [to] the city's five thousand teachers'.<sup>101</sup>

In an article in the first volume of the *British Journal of In-Service Education*, in autumn 1974, Midwinter made the case for the teachers' centre as the key vehicle for preparing teachers capable of delivering community education. He argued that Higher Education did not have the capacity to engage in the level of 'professional recycling' required.<sup>102</sup> Midwinter felt the major 'modernizations' of the 1960s, such as comprehensivisation, de-streaming, and cross-curricular teaching, would not have been approached by other professions with so 'cavalier disregard for recycling of its members'.<sup>103</sup> The strategic backing of the LEA would enable

<sup>100</sup> A.H Halsey, *Educational Priority volume 1. EPA Problems and Policies*, (London: HMSO, 1972).

<sup>101</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, 'The Vulnerability of Innovation, or, but look what happened to Rolls Royce', unpublished, not dated.

<sup>102</sup> Eric Midwinter, 'Teachers' Centres: The Facilitators', *British Journal of In-Service Education*, 1, no. 1 (1974) 11.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

teachers' centres to deliver the level of in-service training required. Teachers' centres had expanded thanks partly to the work of the Schools Council which, according to Plaskow, had generated 'a sense of creative excitement' and had been 'largely instrumental' in encouraging their growth.<sup>104</sup> Midwinter was using the journal article as a vehicle for generating publicity. He recognized the fragility of his position.

Darcy's initial impression of the Liverpool Teachers Centre was one of dynamic, if uncoordinated, activity.<sup>105</sup> On arrival, in August 1975, he was introduced to a full range of activities: the home school development unit built bridges between parents and schools, the 'Toy Truck' took educational toys into the community loaning them to families, a course for women operating preschool groups was running, an educational technology unit was developing new materials for schools, a major environmental education project was underway and research was taking place into the teaching of language in the city's schools. As Darcy noted, the problem was that 'there were a number of people working on a number of projects and not a team of people'.<sup>106</sup>

During a seven-week period crossing Christmas and New Year 1976, the context changed completely. Midwinter had accepted a post with the National Consumer Council in London but continued to direct PRIORITY, commuting north each week. His now vacant Principal role was not advertised by the LEA. At the same time the LEA disbanded the Teachers' Centre Management Committee and replaced it with an advisory committee of teachers. Members of the LEA's advisory staff were given a managerial role in each of the centres (other than PRIORITY) and the concept of a unified centre, in one location, was abandoned. Midwinter used the term 'obliterated' to describe the structural changes and eradication of PRIORITY's power base. PRIORITY remained, but one had to look elsewhere to see the benefits of the project since in Liverpool, 'all [was] gone'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Maurice Plaskow, *Life and Death of the Schools Council*, (Barcombe: Falmer Press, 1985) 7.

<sup>105</sup> Darcy, C.M. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>107</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, 'The Vulnerability of Innovation, or, but look what happened to Rolls Royce', unpublished, not dated, 3.

Midwinter's initial thought was that it might be something to do with the difficulties of the national economic climate inducing a swing in attitudes from the 'anti-poverty mood of the sixties to a less sympathetic atmosphere in the seventies'.<sup>108</sup> By not replacing posts as they became vacant, the LEA saved approximately £25,000 out of a total centre budget of £120,000 per annum. However, this does not explain why the cuts were targeted at the reorganization and continuation of the work inspired by the LEPA project. Midwinter asserted that relations with politicians were positive, and those with the teacher unions, amicable at worst. His interpretation was that there was a lack of attention paid to changes in the attitude of the local inspectors and advisors.<sup>109</sup>

LEA Advisers were a highly influential group. They had access to schools, they were consulted by the Education Committee and had a role in teacher promotions. The changes in managerial structure, giving teachers a voice on the Centre's committee, might have been a source of tension. Also, 'the proportion of adviser-convened in-service courses plummeted from 90 per cent in 1974 to 30 per cent in 1975'.<sup>110</sup> This created a sense of anxiety amongst advisors. They did not all share the LEPA philosophy and Midwinter accepts that 'we' failed 'hopelessly' to address these concerns.<sup>111</sup> Ultimately, any project or group operating within an established professional hierarchy must be 'eternally vigilant' in order to avoid manoeuvrings from disgruntled parties who perceive the innovators as a threat. This, as Midwinter conceded, 'doesn't leave an awful lot of time for innovation'.<sup>112</sup>

The outcome of the changes was that Midwinter's role was reduced to overseeing projects reliant on non-LEA funding streams. Those within the remit of the Teachers' Centre were physically and administratively distributed across the city. None were abandoned immediately, but geographically they were marginalized and the result was that many staff sought new positions. They were no longer given strategic direction or the feeling that they were part of a philosophical attack on educational disadvantage.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>109</sup> Eric Midwinter, interview with the author, Harpenden, July 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, 'The Vulnerability of Innovation, or, but look what happened to Rolls Royce', unpublished, not dated, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

The turning point in this shift away from the ideals of PRIORITY had been the unsuccessful application by Midwinter for the post of Director of Education for Liverpool. Midwinter lost out to Kenneth Antcliff, possibly because of the shift of political control within the City Council. Darcy saw this as a sign that the Council was rejecting the idea of schools as agents of social change.<sup>113</sup> The response of the LEA was a reflection of both the 'conservatism' inherent within the English liberal educational tradition, and, changed economic realities. The LEA was reluctant to appoint a new principal for the Teachers Centre while there was a lack of clarity regarding its remit. Meetings took place between the staff of PRIORITY and the rest of the Teachers' Centre but, according to Darcy, as a relatively neutral observer, they were 'unable to define a common purpose', at least not enough to demand a single organizational structure.<sup>114</sup>

The end of Priority as a force within the LEA raises questions about professional identity and power. In Chapter Seven the thesis returns to the events in Liverpool as it explores notions of professionalism in relation to habitus and field. The remainder of this chapter returns to the LEPA project and attempts to draw together its achievements.

### **Assessing the outcomes**

Before the achievements at LEPA are evaluated the two major criticisms of the project are discussed: its approach to the application of action research as a methodology, and its unrealistic claims on behalf of the potential of community education.

In 1969, education journalist, Anne Corbett, wrote a critique of the Plowden Report and community schools. She questioned whether claims made for the LEPA project and community school were overambitious because, as Plowden had argued, the school was less important than parental interest, aspirations, family stability, money and norms of class and community. The problem lay not with the school but

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

with the inadequacies of the family. She claimed that the LEPA project had not proven if any single or combined set of interventions offered a meaningful solution, particularly since the work was poorly evaluated.<sup>115</sup> Corbett questioned whether Plowden was correct in supporting a policy that directly targeted the school, since it appeared that schools were not such a powerful force for change. This was an inaccurate interpretation of the LEPA strategy, which aimed to add value to the school by offering space and stimulation to the factors she outlined, in order that a new partnership between equally committed parties could be forged in the long term.

Establishing a shared conception of action research was an issue for all EPA teams and the dilemmas of action research had been discussed at length prior to the project. Midwinter claimed that action and research were a 'unified entity' and the process of evaluation and innovation advanced together.<sup>116</sup> He pointed out in his final report that the communication networks established would take years to come to their 'most fruitful fulfillment'.<sup>117</sup> The research was an intelligence gathering exercise concerning an already proven correlation, that is, increase parental involvement in educational interactions, and benefits would accrue for the child. The action was the priority, or, as Halsey put it, it was the ripples in the pond that really mattered.

Keith Pulham did evaluate performance using traditional methods such as control groups and testing of a single variable, but for the most part the thrust of the LEPA project was community development and this required measurement of change over the long term. Writing in *Projectile* in 1970, Pulham pointed out that while many questions could be asked about the validity of his research, 'how do you evaluate the playmobile?' for example, the dilemma he faced was encapsulated by the fact that 'one is not really in control of the actions one would like to evaluate.'<sup>118</sup> Pulham was expressing a shared concern since both the team and the school had a responsibility for what was happening. The problem, methodologically, was that actions had 'ramifications beyond their original intent' but the researcher could not

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<sup>115</sup> Anne Corbett, paper at Anglo-American Conference of Education for the Less Privileged, February 20-23 1970, in *Society*, November 13 1969.

<sup>116</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA Progress report, May 1969, 5.

<sup>117</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972) 82.

<sup>118</sup> *Projectile*, no. 3 (Liverpool: LEPA 1971) 14.

always accurately predict what the outcomes would be.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, what Pulham refers to correctly as ‘contamination’ effects were an undermining influence and probably disheartened his efforts to evaluate. He was aware of the pressure to evaluate along acceptable methodological lines but felt there was no way of doing this. Success, according to Pulham, was justified ‘by the enthusiasm with which others adapt these ideas to their particular situation and he was happy to contaminate his research with actions.’<sup>120</sup> Corbett claimed that Pulham did not want to follow-up the baseline attainment data in case it did not show improvement and undermined the action.<sup>121</sup> LEPA was open to accusations that its approach was a sidestepping tactic to avoid criticisms from academics that the work was not valid evidence on which to base policy. In his first Research Officer’s report to the National Steering Committee Pulham stated that although the project would be judged by a small, select audience on the quality of its preschool design, decisions had to be made on ‘the basis of hunches, and then on lessons learnt’.<sup>122</sup>

In October 1969, Midwinter presented a paper to an Anglo-American conference on educational action programmes at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire.<sup>123</sup> The paper produced a response from American sociologist, James S. Coleman. Coleman’s paper illustrated the contentious reception action research received at the time. He accepted that there was cogency to Midwinter’s view, that controlled evaluation of action schemes using attainment was inappropriate.<sup>124</sup> However, Coleman listed several reservations about Midwinter’s assessment. First, he argued, if we expect to evaluate a programme, the assessment of those carrying it out hardly constituted the ‘disinterested observer’ and the assessment must be drawn from something tangible, or observable, now, not in the ‘distant future’.<sup>125</sup> Second, judgements made from observations should be free from contamination by the interested observer and should allow comparison with other similar programmes.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>121</sup> Corbett (1969) 7.

<sup>122</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Keith Pulham, Report to the National Steering Committee, January 1969.

<sup>123</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers. Paper by James S. Coleman, Anglo/American conference on the evaluation of social action programmes, Ditchley Park and, Eric Midwinter ‘The Liverpool EPA project. A Local Director’s view’, both October 1969.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, Coleman, Anglo/American conference paper, 4.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 5.

Coleman's answer was to clarify the project's objectives in advance so that collectable, measurable observations could take place. For example, if a goal was to increase community support for schools, specify what constitutes support and then quantify it. His criticism was directed at Midwinter's argument that, for example, the display of children's work in shops represented something more important than the original aims of the project. Findings needed to be valid if funding bodies were to make an informed decision on future financial support. Coleman pointed out that for this to be achieved the nature of the programmes must have many of the characteristics Midwinter disliked and few that he liked.<sup>126</sup>

Midwinter's first report to the national steering committee was over-optimistic regarding the research element. The deployment of university resources never materialised. The team had a strained relationship with the University throughout, other than with Professor Blyth who sat on the Steering Committee.<sup>127</sup> It can be argued that, despite their residual expertise, universities were not the best partner for intervention projects since they revolved around patterns of work that were out of step with the school year, leading to a stop-start effect.

Given such critiques what does the evidence presented here tell us about the legacy of LEPA for community education? Midwinter points to the employment of Tom Lovett and Eleanor Connor and the establishment of an EPA Teacher Centre at Harrison Jones Primary School as two examples of the success achieved in terms of longevity. However, the most significant outcome was the decision to open a national base for EPA work in Liverpool. This decision, backed by Halsey and Young, is a tribute to the impact of the LEPA team. The project received a favourable reception to begin with and Midwinter was quick to pay tribute to the 'outpouring of imaginative and creative energy' of local educators and the LEA's 'hospitable reception'. However, even allowing for this, the establishment of PRIORITY occurred because of the LEPA team's determination, collaborative skills and imaginative strategies.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 6.



There were sometimes criticisms from participating schools. Often these criticisms were directed at the operability of schemes rather than principled objections. A number of criticisms were fed back to the team via end of project evaluations, including, poor communication between the team, schools and colleges regarding home-school links was a 'serious drawback'. One respondent referred to the need for 'a more rigorous specification', another was concerned that the two hours per week on project work risked damaging young children's acquisition of basic skills. One school did not see itself as a priority 'establishment' just a school with 'some fine young people', and businesses were 'hardly aware of the project'.<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, Liverpool had been a success. LEPA was responsible for generating more publicity and networks than any of the other projects.

The LEPA project was, according to Midwinter, a 'politico-administrative' project as well as an academic one. Thus, mobilisation of the latent interest within the community and fluidity on the part of the team were central to a successful outcome.<sup>130</sup> Liverpool focused on action and publicity at the expense of evaluated research but considering the initial defensiveness that resulted from the schools experience of J.B Mays, this is understandable. Midwinter felt that the main thrust of the project was about the action. In this respect, as Professor W.A.L. Blyth pointed out, he 'did not need any help'.<sup>131</sup>

Liverpool demonstrated that there was potential for embedding independent project work at a philosophical level within administrative structures. It also demonstrated the fragility of such developments. The future role of the local advisory teachers was raised by a member of the LEAs Education Committee, who noted in feedback to the team that the project 'underlines the need for a review of the function of Advisers' who should have seen EPA work as 'run-of-the-mill' but apparently did not.<sup>132</sup> It was the local advisers who had the key role in removing PRIORITY.

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<sup>129</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA Interim Report 1970, 7-8. These views were expressed by teachers, college tutors and the LEA Education Committee.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, LEPA Progress Report May 1969, 2.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, Letter from W.A.L. Blyth to Halsey, September 17 1971.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, LEPA Progress Report, May 1969, 7.

LEPA united people and organisations working towards similar goals. They demonstrated that, given the right context, a small project could act as a catalyst, generating the momentum that could lead to changes in practice unlikely to happen if directed from central government. Some of the practices introduced by LEPA were genuinely radical in 1968 and the fact that some local teachers recognised the social significance of their role reflects well on their efforts. This was an achievement. Many local teachers had refused to complete the EPA teacher attitudes survey in 1968 because some of the questions were 'insulting' to their professionalism.<sup>133</sup> Views on community education differed. Some of the heads claimed the EPA actions were their ideas in the first place while others refused to take part at all.

In the introduction to the final issue of *Projectile*, Ken Vaux, Headteacher of Paddington Comprehensive, praised the LEPA team personally. He singled out the dynamism of Midwinter calling him the 'gentlest of revolutionaries', a man who used people but who were the better for it.<sup>134</sup> Midwinter 'stimulated many and irritated none' and thus was effective in his role as 'catalyst comprehensive'.<sup>135</sup> While Vaux was expressing a personal opinion it does appear that the local headteachers responded positively to the work of the LEPA team. This was reflected in the determination of the LEA to develop some of the work within the PRIORITY Centre.

Halsey claimed that the work in Liverpool was 'nothing short of a new conception of the whole purpose and meaning of education in the city'. In Liverpool the team had demonstrated how the local community could supply curriculum content based on real life rather than 'meaningless abstracts' and parents could see how they could both 'learn from and teach their children'. Teachers would move away from a 'proprietor' role to a management role. Halsey acknowledged that the ambitions in reality remained an ideal but Liverpool had shown what was attainable.

Midwinter acknowledged that the project had not left much 'pure gold for the academic researcher' but argued that the intention was to address the teachers,

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<sup>133</sup> Corbett, A. (1969) 8.

<sup>134</sup> *Projectile*, (Liverpool: LEPA, Autumn 1971) 1.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

officers and administrators who made the system 'tick' on a daily basis. The end product was a 'checklist of action for community education'.<sup>136</sup>

LEPA had achieved its success because of the 'manoeuvrability and flexibility' afforded the team through the *laissez faire* attitude of A.H. Halsey and the benevolence of the LEA.<sup>137</sup> This allowed the team to make such a big impact from essentially 18 months of innovation and 12 of research and consolidation. The timescale was criticised as far too short to test the validity of their findings. There was always an element of compromise due to limited time and funding and because of the urgency of the situation. Ten years would perhaps have been more appropriate for the production of carefully evaluated research into the action programme but for the people living in, working in, or responsible for the EPA, the sense of social dislocation was strong. Some may reflect on the fact that, a decade after the project, the Liverpool 8 area was the setting for the worst public disorder seen in England in peacetime.

Tom Lovett offered a cautionary note in his assessment of the LEPA project. He felt that community education had failed in the past 'because of the narrow, formal and traditional approach adopted by those in charge' and also because of failure of the organisers to avoid becoming unrepresentative of the people with whom they identify due to the domination of articulate groupings within the community. The true community school had to listen and assist rather than tell 'them' what 'we' think they should do'.<sup>138</sup> Lovett's suggestion of a new professional role for a 'community adult educationalist' was radical in 1972 and remains so. Midwinter's view was that community education had to fit alongside 'similar reappraisals of all the other social economic and political services and agencies'.<sup>139</sup>

The LEPA project was a 'philosophic enquiry into the nature of education in an EPA', an area where the problems had been 'two hundred years in the making'

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, all 1-5.

<sup>137</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA Interim Report (1970) 18.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 23.

not just the result of underfunding and inadequate teachers.<sup>140</sup> The strategies developed by LEPA to link families to their children's schools hardly seem radical when viewed from the vantage point of today but they were groundbreaking during the 1960s. Ultimately, the power balance between home and school remained unchanged. Parents often take an instrumental view of schools and other public institutions. The school is there to produce results and teachers are the professionals with the skills and responsibilities to make this happen. LEPA was a historical marker in an ideological sense but its significance on practice was limited, despite the efforts of the individuals involved which are addressed in the next chapter.

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<sup>140</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, LEPA Progress Report to National Steering Committee, May 1969, 7.

## Chapter Six EPA Characters and Ideas

This chapter will examine the ideas and actions of the characters that formed the LEPA and WREPA teams. The need for a chapter expressly concerned with the individual team members became apparent during the interviewing process. It became clear that the individuals involved had a significant impact on each project. This chapter examines the link between the ideological commitment of those individuals and the outcomes of the EPA project.

Key roles will be analysed in relation to motivations, actions, relationships and leadership styles. Acknowledging Kerckhoff et al's typology, the individual, particularly where change is the primary goal, can be either 'enabler' or 'impediment'.<sup>1</sup> In this case it is argued that the individuals demonstrated that it was possible to alter the relationship between professionals and parents, and the content and rationale of the curriculum. The key roles in this case were Director and Research Officer and the personal reflections of Eric Midwinter, Mike Harvey, and George Smith are examined along with relevant documentary sources relating to their positions.

As Chapter Two explained, previous accounts of the EPA project have been restricted to explanation of the policymaking process and the demise of area-based initiatives (ABIs) after the mid-1970s.<sup>2</sup> Less well explored is the part played by team members in identifying new ways of working. This chapter seeks to address this silence. It will relate the underlying reasons for strategy choice back to the people who made the decisions. The focus will be the individuals occupying the key roles of director and research officer: Eric Midwinter, Mike Harvey and George Smith. Keith Pulham was contacted but had retired to Australia and was in poor health so the voice of the researcher is provided by George Smith's experience in the West Riding. The interview transcripts resulting from the interviews provided rich data. The thesis has been enriched throughout by the recollections of interviewees. This

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Kerckhoff, Ken Fogelman, David Crook and David Reeder, *Going Comprehensive in England and Wales A Study of Uneven Change*, (London: Woburn Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Philip Robinson, *Education and Poverty*, (London: Methuen, 1976), Keith Banting, *Poverty, Politics and Policy: Britain in the 1960s*, (London: MacMillan, 1979). George Smith, 'Whatever Happened to Educational Priority Areas?' *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, no. 1 (1987) 23-38.

chapter, in particular, has benefited from the author's opportunity to meet the EPA teams. Discussing events with the people who were there provided historical context and enabled the researcher to develop a sense of what happened and what it was really like.

Each of the individuals contacted responded positively to the aims of the research. They agreed to be interviewed and provided access to personal papers. This raised a methodological issue. Is the researcher's objectivity compromised from the close involvement of these characters? Or, does the opportunity to discuss the significance of documentary sources with the individuals who wrote them make the analysis more robust?<sup>3</sup> On balance, the latter carried less risk since even seemingly straightforward documents can be misinterpreted or subtle nuances contained in a text inadequately assessed. Using the surviving papers from the EPA projects to frame interview questions had the advantage of avoiding misinterpretations of the event to which it related. This allowed the author to produce a more robust consideration of the impact of each individual.

The methodological approach was to track the views of team members on all aspects of the project. The analysis draws on contemporary documents, post-project writing and interview transcripts, to identify changes in tone and emphasis and to address a number of fundamental questions. What were the educational beliefs of those responsible for developing and delivering the projects? Did they believe it was possible to use the ABI approach to produce a fundamental and permanent change in the home-school relationship and the rationale for the primary school curriculum? Did their viewpoint change during and after the project?

There are two aspects of an individual's actions that can be considered. The first relates to the theoretical perspectives they held, and the influence this had on their actions. The second is concerned with the relationships they established and the way in which the local community responded to them as individuals. It is difficult to assess the two separately because the micro-practices of our day-to-day behaviour do not always mirror the ideological positions we would declare allegiance to.

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<sup>3</sup> Gary McCulloch and William Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings*, (Buckingham, Open University Press, 2000).

There is no attempt in this thesis to provide individual biographies of team members but where the work of the project is closely associated with an individual, their background will be highlighted. This allows the thesis to identify whether a distinctive set of political and pedagogical values were dominant. For example, the experiences and beliefs Mike Harvey brought with him to the WREPA project impacted on his contributions to strategy planning, as did his day-to-day contact with the community. Harvey's ideological perspectives on pedagogy, child development and the nature of the relationships between home, school and community impacted on his interpretation of his objectives, as did his personal suitability for the role. These factors were underpinned by his political views in relation to the concepts of equality of opportunity. These views played a major role in the strategies adopted and the rigour with which they were pursued.

During an interview with the author, Eric Midwinter recalled an incident which highlights the complexities in the relationships that develop during project work. Midwinter had attended a meeting with local playgroup leaders who were planning to establish a playgroup association in the EPA. At the end of the meeting a local community project officer expressed his concerns to Midwinter. The officer felt that things were moving too fast and that further meetings were required for the group to establish their plans in a truly independent way. He feared the group would become dependant on their professional status as advisors. It was this concern that convinced Midwinter that members of a project team do not just have a key role in directing, monitoring and evaluating the action, they are part of the action. Midwinter recalled:

He suggested we had a drink after the meeting but I really needed to be getting home. Then he tells me he thinks things are moving much too quickly. So I had that drink! They needed to establish a constitution and he felt we needed to allow them to come to it in their own time and of course in a way that was part of what we were trying to do. But I realised that we were part of the action. We were part of the group and they were looking to us, but true to his liberal principles he was trying to back off and wished he wasn't there hoping these

‘Joan’s of Arc’ would emerge. I argued that there was a role for us, to encourage and give them confidence.<sup>4</sup>

One recurring theme in the application of ‘experimental social administration’, as George Smith termed it, is the argument that discourse becomes dominated by the researcher, by the expert, and by the professional.<sup>5</sup> Local democratic participation of the socially excluded is squeezed to the margins as the concerned expert intervenes and directs in a paternalistic manner. The playgroup workers recognised Midwinter and his colleague as a resource they could tap into. They were looking to the experts for advice and opinion, but not for leadership. There is a fine line, almost a tightrope to walk for the action researcher, to ensure that their efforts have the multiplying effect they seek, while ensuring that the generation of action is independent of their presence. The ‘multiplier’ effect implied strategies which had an exponential influence in comparison to the resources deployed. The individual team member becomes an action-resource.

The remainder of this chapter will determine the extent to which the success of the projects was the result of the talents of the team members. The backgrounds and motivations of the directors are discussed to highlight whether there were any significant attributes brought to bear. The leadership strategies adopted by each director are then analysed using the typology developed by Powley.<sup>6</sup> This is followed by a section incorporating the views of the team members on their challenges and achievements. The final section offers an interpretation of what the voices and sources tell us about the individuals involved.

### **Project Directors: Backgrounds and Motivations**

#### **Dr Eric Midwinter**

Dr Eric Midwinter’s views are recorded at length because of all the individuals involved in the EPA projects they were the best documented. They are

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2007

<sup>5</sup> Ray Lees and George Smith, Eds. *Action Research in Community Development*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> Terry Powley, ‘The Perspective of an EAZ Director’ *School Leadership and Management*, 21, no. 2 (2001) 158-167.



not assumed to be more valid than other voices, but they do allow the thesis to provide a sense of the ideological and pedagogical issues that were significant at the time. Midwinter's voice is used because his recollections are broad and detailed enough to reflect the views of all of his peers to some degree.

Midwinter had been awarded a DPhil in social history from York University at the beginning of the 1960s and not surprisingly adopted a long-term perspective on the problems of the EPA. He was aware of the longevity of the ideas that he was embracing as a solution. The ideas of R.H. Tawney and John Dewey influenced Midwinter's interpretation of community education. Equally important were his 13 formative years spent in teaching. As a teacher of history and then of student teachers, he had first hand pedagogical experience. During Midwinter's early teaching career at Wythenshawe Secondary Modern School his involvement in musical theatre gave him a taste of 'community education'. Producing tailor-made shows seemed like 'common sense' and generated a sense of community in what 'previously presented as an 'institution''.<sup>7</sup> These experiences led to his advocacy of the community school and the social, child-centred curriculum.

Midwinter cited Halsey and Floud's research as 'pedagogically critical' and he was also influenced by Michael Young, R.H. Tawney, John Dewey and by the research that informed the Plowden Report.<sup>8</sup> He was inspired by the 'fraternal school', a mixture of utopian and ethical socialism traceable to Robert Owen's work at New Lanark, and beyond to continental thinkers like Saint-Simon and the French Revolution. Tawney's ethical socialism emphasised 'the need to take 'fraternity' as seriously as liberty and equality'.<sup>9</sup> Midwinter became optimistic that, if used in the right way, the school could be a catalyst for change. He felt that school was a place where children should be happy and enjoy themselves and he was guided by John Dewey's principle that for the child, education's function should be participation in, rather than preparation for, life.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Floud and A.H. Halsey, 'Homes and schools: social determinants and educability', *Educational Research*, 2, no. 2 (1961).

<sup>9</sup> Eric Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Although a Mancunian by birth, Midwinter was, in an educational sense, a Liverpool man. His knowledge of the local education system provided a platform for a confident high-profile approach to the role of LEPA director. Midwinter's style was distinctive and his confidence as an orator and writer drew a good deal of media attention to the LEPA project. He spent a decade prior to the project working in teacher education at three colleges of education: Edge Hill in Lancashire, Northumberland College and Ethel Wormald in Liverpool. As a recognisable face amongst the network of local colleges Midwinter was confident that he would be able to access student support. This was a valuable asset when it came to making guarantees to the project schools. However, it was the impact of college experiences on Midwinter's pedagogical viewpoint that was most significant. Although he was not a trained primary school teacher, years of visiting students on teaching practice convinced Midwinter that much of the curriculum was irrelevant. He was highly critical of the uniformity of the primary school curriculum, where every morning was spent 'worshiping at the altar' of 'holy maths' and the new fangled 'literacy'.<sup>11</sup>

The second major influence on Midwinter's pedagogy was the developmental theory of Piaget. Piagetian theory swept through the expanding teacher training colleges during the 1960s. Piaget's work on conceptual development in relation to time (and therefore in relation to understanding of place and personal history) convinced Midwinter that much of the curriculum was irrelevant to children because they simply could not understand it. This compounded the individualising effect that school processes had on the child, leading to disaffection and demotivation.

Midwinter presented his interpretation of the community school on a number of occasions but most comprehensively in 1972.<sup>12</sup> His starting point was a conviction that the aims of state education were to produce citizens who were well-balanced individuals able to make a useful contribution to society.<sup>13</sup> This implied a largely social role for schools where the social environment became the most important aspect of teaching and 'all other subjects flow from and to it'.<sup>14</sup> In 1968 this was not

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<sup>11</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Priority Education: An account of the Liverpool project*, (London: Penguin, 1972b) 13.

<sup>12</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Projections an educational priority area at work*, (London: Ward Lock, 1972a)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

the case. Midwinter synthesised his historical knowledge with his reading of existing ideas on child development theory and community education. His critique outlined a case for a social curriculum. The social curriculum was infinitely preferable because it was the only way to ensure children would receive education that was enjoyable and understandable. Acquainting children with their social environment would, in the long term, enable them to make informed and rational decisions about the society they wanted. Teaching about the social environment had to link closely to that environment in order that the children develop not only skills but also appropriate attitudes. So, the 'coupling' of curriculum with home and community was essential.<sup>15</sup>

At Edge Hill College Midwinter began to explore what he saw as the school's custodial character. He saw state schooling as a response to the rundown of child labour, consequent upon increased industrial technology.<sup>16</sup> Technological advances meant the labour market needed fewer youngsters as the twentieth-century progressed. This alerted Midwinter to the possibility that what actually happened inside them was peripheral. In other words, while it might be directly important to gain exam results, the actual content had little or no utility.<sup>17</sup> This is a line of argument which has similarities with neo-Marxist analyses of state education discussed in Chapter Two. The challenge, as Midwinter saw it, was to alter the relationship between education and society.

Midwinter was convinced that the development of modern, discovery methods of teaching was of little consequence. He was forceful in his criticism of the 'indigestible and worthless knowledge' fed to children claiming controversially that 'what was rubbish when rote learnt still remains when 'discovered'.<sup>18</sup> His slightly inflammatory rhetoric was presumably to stress the urgency of the need for curriculum reform. The criteria identified for planning a new curriculum are listed and explained in *Social Environment and the Urban School*.<sup>19</sup> The content of any curriculum must be, he claimed, understandable, interesting, first-hand and

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<sup>15</sup> Eric Midwinter, (1972b) 8.

<sup>16</sup> Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972b).

<sup>19</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972a).

developmental.<sup>20</sup> Midwinter's view was, he claimed, 'sometimes rubbished as inward looking', but he argued that current practice was not 'widening' the 'horizons' of children, merely 'exchanging them'.<sup>21</sup>

Midwinter anticipated criticisms that the changes he called for would result in a 'dumbed down' curriculum.<sup>22</sup> He defended the social curriculum as an attempt to open the eyes of urban children 'dynamically and critically' to the reality of urban life. By embedding the content of the curriculum in what was 'real and immediate' the 'traditional attainment norms' of reading and writing were 'unlikely to decline and could conceivably rise'.<sup>23</sup> Midwinter believed this was a pragmatic response grounded in child development theory. Children should be prepared for the life they would like to lead but also for the life they were likely to lead. The case was made at a philosophical rather than practical level. He argued that 'there is nothing so far from down to earth, nothing so unpractical and unrealistic and unprofessional, as teaching without an aim and a vision'.<sup>24</sup>

The social curriculum, 'dignified the child with the feeling that education and knowledge are about him and his place'.<sup>25</sup> Thus it required the implementation of a pedagogy based on problem-solving. However, what Midwinter was suggesting was a change in emphasis rather than a complete departure since teachers were already including social and environmental work in their curriculum. What they were not doing was involving parents in the process. From the vantage point of today one can see how radical this rationale was.

Involving parents in the education of their children was vital because without it, change would not and could not occur. Parents were a more powerful influence on a child's educational experience than schools, so contact with them should be 'well-organised, regular and purposeful'.<sup>26</sup> The first task of the LEPA team was to recognise that the home environment educates children 'for good or ill, whether you

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> See R.S. Peters, *Perspectives on Plowden*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).

<sup>23</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972a) 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 36

like it or not'. The second task was therefore 'to win the confidence of parents and welcome them into the school, as a preliminary to them being engaged in the schooling side'.<sup>27</sup> If this were achieved it would then 'make sense to deploy material that was familiar' to parents.<sup>28</sup> In 1968 the challenge facing the LEPA team was whether it was possible to get parents into the school because no one had really tried to do so before. Midwinter saw this as 'basic arithmetic' since 'there was no point assessing the impact of home-school relations if there weren't any!'<sup>29</sup>

There is a confluence of two arguments emerging from Midwinter's analysis. First, children were being served up an indigestible curriculum and second, even if it were replaced, the long-term impact on children's attainment would be negligible unless it was harnessed to the power of the community. The 'political arithmetic' of A.H. Halsey and colleagues convinced Midwinter that the school could be a key institution for transforming the urban community. Through his enthusiastic backing, Halsey gave Midwinter the confidence to push the profile of the Liverpool project. The Plowden Report chapters drafted by Michael Young, encapsulated Midwinter's views. Midwinter believed that it was

... self evident that there was a cultural alliance, some of it unconscious, in the suburban areas between school and community – it seemed our purpose should be to replicate such an alliance in our neighbourhood. We spoke of deprofessionalising the teacher and professionalising the parents.<sup>30</sup>

This last statement is an indication that Midwinter felt teachers needed to change the way they engaged with parents if the child was to experience a more seamless transition between school and home. Midwinter realised that parents were actually very keen to support their children but neither they nor the teachers had the confidence to make this happen. By the time Midwinter was appointed to the position of director he was convinced his analysis was correct and was able to argue his case for the community education with passion, tenacity and, drawing on his love of comedy and light theatre, a sense of humour.

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<sup>27</sup> Eric Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

## **Michael Harvey**

In 1968 Mike Harvey had unsuccessfully interviewed for a job in a college in Yorkshire but was contacted shortly after and asked to apply for the EPA post by a close colleague of Alec Clegg, who had been part of the interview panel. It may be that Harvey was headhunted by Clegg who was interested in developing a residential centre in the area and saw the relevance of Harvey's experience. Harvey's appointment, unorthodox as with most EPA recruitment, meant that the team had a good blend of practitioner and researcher skills.

Unlike Midwinter, Harvey actively avoided personal publicity throughout the project, choosing to return to the school sector rather than pursue the possibility of working on other projects. Harvey was a perfect foil to the Smiths. His experience as a practitioner was invaluable, as George Smith acknowledges:

Every time we did something we did it well, effectively, and it lasted for the time we planned it to last. Thanks to Michael we were very good at turning things into workable schemes, without him we wouldn't have been able to put things into practice on the scale that we did.<sup>31</sup>

According to Smith, Harvey was a brilliant innovator, and very much the leader. Very confident and protective of the team, Harvey was concerned that national steering committee decisions did not prevent the team from pursuing their objectives. He once banged his fist on the table in frustration when objecting to a Halsey decision, something Halsey generally did not encounter as an Oxford don. He was, according to George Smith, deliberately self effacing and 'the sort of bloke who doesn't like to take the plaudits . . . He never became the public figure that Eric [Midwinter] did'.<sup>32</sup> His insistence on maintaining a low-profile throughout the three years of the WREPA project may also have had a bearing in terms of his employability. The project became more associated with the research side than the

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<sup>31</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

action side. Consequently, by the end of the project George Smith's role as Research Officer was more widely known than Harvey's, in stark contrast to Liverpool.

Harvey was confident in his ability to produce workable schemes out of the germ of an idea. During a 2008 interview he informed the author that his strength lay in recognising that if an 'idea was good enough [he] could make it work – I could put the meat on it and work out the practicalities.'<sup>33</sup> The fact that he could do so virtually overnight was another factor in the success of the project. He was a practitioner rather than a researcher, but factors in his background meant he shared a similar ideological outlook to the Smith's.

Harvey's views on equality were formed through the overtly political influences of his family rather than knowledge of political and pedagogical research. Harvey recalls:

Politics in my family was always important. My grandfather was Secretary of the Gasworkers' Union in Leicester. We were left wing . . . challenging inequality was a big thing and remains so. My aim was always to get people up the system.<sup>34</sup>

Harvey's unorthodox recruitment, his lack of experience in primary pedagogy and of underpinning sociological theory, was not the inhibitor one might suppose. Alec Clegg wanted a teacher in charge and Harvey had worked as a youth tutor in a Cambridgeshire village college and as a housemaster at a Cumbrian boarding school for boys with emotional problems. The choice of Harvey as director was conducive to a successful outcome. Harvey lacked Midwinter's academic background but his practical attributes were exactly what was needed to make an impression within an inward looking educational community. Harvey felt that the most important thing was to listen to the community, and, when strategies were decided upon they should meet two key criteria. The first was that strategies adopted by the team must demonstrate that the team had listened to the stated needs of the community:

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<sup>33</sup> Mike Harvey, interview with the author, Nottingham, September 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

I drank a hell of a lot of tea and listened a lot . . . They got the idea that this wasn't going to be imposed on them it was something they'd got some input on. So the talking and nattering was critical.<sup>35</sup>

Chapter Three recounted the initial meeting between the team and the LEA Divisional Officer for the Denaby area, Mr Timothy. This meeting illustrated the fragility of the position the WREPA team were in. When the author interviewed Harvey in 2008 he brought up this meeting without prompt, to emphasise how important it was that he [Harvey] was seen to be open and willing to accept advice. Harvey felt Timothy's attitude was sceptical but he recognised the value of his advice regarding the way schools should be approached. The low levels of attainment of local children meant that some teachers may be defensive.<sup>36</sup> Harvey pointed out that, 'people don't like to be told they are failing', which is what the label EPA implied to some.<sup>37</sup> It was essential the WREPA team got the schools on their side but at the same time they did not want to offer their budget directly to schools that may not share their objectives.

Harvey's second criteria for deciding on which schemes to adopt was that they should, if possible, continue beyond the life of the project. He points to the Red House as a good example of this strategy:

Keeping things in place after we'd gone was always my obsession so we'd never do anything we felt was the LEA's responsibility. We'd involve them financially so the thing had a future. Geoff and Lin [Poulton] remained in Red House after we left and that was the view we took all the time. We weren't some group going in then pulling out.<sup>38</sup>

This belief was part moral obligation and part pragmatic. Harvey felt obligated to the community. He also believed that the schemes implemented by the team could have a tangible impact on educational outcomes. The team did not implement any of their strategies for the first six months, not on Harvey's say-so but because they realised

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Notes from meeting with Mr Timothy signed by M Harvey, 1968.

<sup>37</sup> Mike Harvey, interview with the author, Nottingham, September 2008.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



they were a small team who would have to prove themselves to the schools in a practical way. Harvey was sensitive to the educational politics of the area. According to Halsey he possessed a good deal of 'political nous'.<sup>39</sup>

LEPA drew a great deal of publicity to EPA nationally, and both projects had many hundreds of visitors encouraged by the growing national profile and the enthusiasm of Halsey, Young and Clegg. Harvey's approach meant the team could get on with the work, building a genuine sense of partnership without the suspicion of headteachers, who may otherwise have felt WPREA was a vehicle for the team as much as an attempt to change the educational culture of their area. The importance of demonstrating that you were there to work hard alongside people was not a strategy as such; it was genuinely how Mike Harvey saw his role. Combined with the excellence of the Smiths as researchers, the outcome was that WREPA left more evidence and examples of workable schemes than the other EPA projects.

### **Project Directors: Leadership style and strategy**

This section draws out the distinctive aspects of each project by interpreting the unfolding of events through an analysis of the project directors' actions. Actions were reflected in the public statements of the two directors. These statements were the result of the consultation, reflection and evaluation that occurred between the director and his colleagues. Access to the directors and their papers made it possible to examine these statements. Neither of the directors views are taken to be representative of all team members but the public statements they made are likely to reflect a degree of consensus within the team. Actions were a collaborative effort and the voice of the director is not taken to be dictatorial.

Although written 30 years after the EPA project, Powley's reflections on the Director's role in the Education Action Zone project (EAZ) provides an excellent typology with which to draw out the strengths and distinctive qualities of the EPA directors and their colleagues.<sup>40</sup> The similarity of the aims of the EAZ and EPA projects (the three main aims of EAZs were to raise educational achievement,

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<sup>39</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Terry Powley, 'The Perspective of an EAZ Director', *School Leadership and Management*, 21, no. 2 (2001) 158-167.

promote social inclusion and search for new forms of educational governance and accountability) suggested similarities in the roles required of the Project Director. Powley identified the following aspects of the director's role: strategist, implementer, partnership broker, entrepreneur, ambassador, diplomat and bureaucrat.<sup>41</sup> This section takes each role in turn to consider the extent to which Midwinter and Harvey fulfilled it successfully, to identify the distinctiveness of their approach and to highlight the contribution of the team as a whole.

### **The Director as strategist**

In New Labour's EAZs the Director held responsibility for the overall strategic development of the zone. He had to convert, 'generalised and tentative aspirations into a coherent and tangible strategy' and was answerable to a local steering committee.<sup>42</sup> In 1968, the *laissez faire* attitude of Halsey meant local strategy was ultimately the responsibility of the Director. George Smith recalled that Halsey's attitude was almost fatalistic:

He felt that you stood by the decisions you made. Once the Director was appointed you really had to let them get on with it and if they failed to deliver that was for their conscience, provided you were sure you had appointed someone who was capable of doing the job successfully.<sup>43</sup>

Midwinter's approach to strategy had a simple logic. He felt that schools would pick up on each other's successes and eventually 'the school that, so to speak, incorporated everything would have come close to a true community school'.<sup>44</sup> Midwinter's strength of conviction was evident in his essay of application for the director role. The application was very much last minute. Midwinter had promised Tom McManners, Head of the Liverpool Inspectorate, that he would stay at Ethel Wormald [as Deputy Principal] for three years and had not intended to apply for the post. This had been conveyed to Halsey, who was aware of a 'rising star' in

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>43</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

Liverpool.<sup>45</sup> Two days before the interview McManners urged him to apply. McManners had previously met with Liverpool CEO C.P.R. Clarke and the HMI linked to the project, John Gregory, and had informed them he had a local man in mind for the post. Midwinter, therefore, was Liverpool's choice. The essay demonstrated his knowledge of the issues and the similarity of his views to Halsey and Young. His views on the community school in 1968 were almost identical to those he expressed in his final report submitted to Halsey in 1971.<sup>46</sup> Midwinter outlined the frustration and subsequent teacher demoralisation caused by [in his view] an inappropriate curriculum and he knew that to have any impact the director would need to build trust with the teachers. Midwinter knew he was well placed to achieve this but was also aware of the challenge he would be making to accepted norms of teachers.

Midwinter recognised the historical role of the school as reproducer of the existing relations of production and as a tool for social control. The LEPA project was about revising and revitalising the ethic of the school. LEPA was potentially a catalyst and Midwinter recognised the importance of the director's role as galvaniser and motivator. He was also aware of the need to limit his own interventions because ultimately, people needed to identify their own needs and priorities. This caution and self-awareness refutes the allegation that intervention is about targeting some or other deficiency in local people.

LEPA required a director who could have an impact on the whole community and demonstrate an ability to change the way the area was perceived by outsiders. In WREPA, the situation was very different. There was no need for Midwinter's high-profile approach, since the community was small and isolated. Harvey was a practitioner and recognised that he could only put in place demonstrative schemes, act on them and be there as a resource for the schools. In each case the strategy appears to have been well chosen given the lack of opposition and subsequent success of the schemes introduced. The determination of strategy at local level was of paramount importance. The EPA project provided the degree of autonomy and flexibility required to achieve this.

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<sup>45</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Midwinter, E. (1972b).

### **The Director as implementer**

As first point of contact Midwinter and Harvey were accountable for the effective implementation of strategies. Producing a workable strategy depends on the effectiveness of collaboration within a team, and negotiations with schools and other partners from which a consensus can be built. As Powley noted, the incentive of extra resources 'will not suffice to persuade schools to participate unless they are convinced of the relevance and benefits of the proposed programme'.<sup>47</sup> In Liverpool, Midwinter started from a strong position. The local schools had been campaigning for several years for preferential treatment from the LEA in recognition of the extra pressures they faced. So, an interdependent rather than hierarchical, relationship could be established. The same level of partnership was eventually achieved in WREPA. As Director, Harvey had to take responsibility as mouthpiece of the team. A great deal of work went into this with all members of the team playing a part. The record of meetings that took place in late 1968 and early 1969 is testimony to the hard work and awareness of the team. The EPA papers contain many written records of visits undertaken by the WREPA team, sometimes more than one per day, to nursery groups, the LEA, and schools. The notes made regarding attitudes towards to the EPA concept show how the team were mapping areas of support and opposition. For example, Harvey visited Mrs Ward, Headteacher of Balby Street Infants in February 1969. He formed a very negative impression of the potential for partnership with Mrs Ward. Harvey believed she was hostile to new ideas and possibly hostile to her own staff: 'The only way she felt her lot was improved was good staff and time to roam around as a sort of policeman'.<sup>48</sup> Regardless of the accuracy of this assessment the point is that Harvey was aware that his team needed to understand the pedagogical and managerial philosophy of headteachers they were going to engage with.

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<sup>47</sup> Powley, T. (2001) 162.

<sup>48</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Notes made following meeting with Mrs Ward, not dated.

### **The Director as partnership broker**

Less than welcoming attitudes towards the EPA concept from some teachers was a challenge for the director. As Powley pointed out, ‘partnerships do not develop out of thin air; they need to be nurtured and developed’,<sup>49</sup> In Liverpool this was achieved through Midwinter’s ‘Barnum-ringmaster’ public persona.

Midwinter used the message of the Plowden Report to engage the local heads. At the outset of the project it quickly became apparent that the schools in the area were keen to receive extra support. The local context was positive but the challenge of moving the way teachers viewed their practice is again important to highlight. Midwinter recognised the potential barrier this presented. The issue of teacher professionalism as a potential barrier to partnership is a recurring one. It is highlighted in the work of Freire and Bourdieu. As Freire points out, teachers are not neutral and nor are the outcomes of state education:

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the ‘practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their worlds.<sup>50</sup>

While radical interpretations are useful for critiquing the potential of ABIs they are not useful for interpreting the motivations of the directors. These were developing ideas in 1968 and certainly not influential within the mainstream social democratic consensus the EPA project was a part of.

### **The Director as entrepreneur**

The need for the director of a publicly-funded project to possess entrepreneurial attributes is something of a recent development. It reflects the influence of neoliberalist economics and their application to public expenditure. This

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<sup>49</sup> Powley, T. (2001) 162.

<sup>50</sup> Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin, 1970) 15.

was not the case in 1968. The EPA director, unlike his EAZ counterpart was not required to match public funding with private investment. In 1968 there remained much faith in the ability of the public sector to deliver solutions to social problems. However, that is not to say entrepreneurial skills were not important. The ‘social entrepreneur’, a phrase coined by Michael Young and one that Midwinter felt fitted his approach in Liverpool, also needs financial acumen in a tightly-funded project. When painting wall murals was decided upon as a strategy for enlivening dreary Victorian school buildings, Midwinter accessed damaged tins of paint from Woolworths.<sup>51</sup>

The project director acted as intermediary between the business sector and the schools. The logic of community education extends the school, not just to partnership with families, but to all groups in the local area including commercial ones. Mike Harvey demonstrated his financial acumen during the purchase of Red House. Harvey encouraged the Joseph Rowntree Trust to insist on a clause in the contract which ensured that the joint purchasers, the West Riding Education Department, would not make any profit from re-sale of the building after WREPA ended. He took this action with the principle of a long-term commitment in mind. All profit would have to be returned to Rowntree, thus lessening the attractiveness of a sale should the Council’s financial situation deteriorate. The idea of entering into financial partnership with the LEA was central to both Midwinter and Harvey’s strategy. They both felt was felt to be the best guarantee that work would be continued beyond the three years of the project.

### **The Director as diplomat and ambassador**

The EPA director was required to act as both diplomat and ambassador within the community, disseminating the theoretical rationale driving the project. In Liverpool, the ambassadorial role quickly extended to a national audience. Once Priority was established Midwinter travelled the country explaining the problems of the EPA and the community school solution to audiences of teachers, heads and local authority partners. The ambassadorial role involved accepting delegations of

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<sup>51</sup> Eric Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

interested and often influential visitors. Thanks to the enthusiastic promoting of Halsey and Clegg, the EPA teams were inundated with visitors, to the extent that it was sometimes a strain to accommodate them all. The process was fairly consistent. Halsey would write to the director telling him that he had either directed an interested party his way or invited them directly to a particular project. He then left it to the team to look after them. It was during one such visit that Midwinter noted how much of an impact the team was having:

Headteachers who at first were cautious somehow went on to suggest they invented it [the strategy]. I took Brian Jackson to Chatsworth and Mrs Hughes [Head] is saying 'When Eric Midwinter asked us what we wanted to do I said I know lets have a wall mural'. I thought, I'm winning here.<sup>52</sup>

The EAZ director appeared to have faced the same diplomatic challenges as Midwinter and Harvey. According to Powley, the director had to find ways of 'reconciling the pressure for immediate results and 'quick wins' with the longer-term developmental tasks of creating a higher quality and pertinently relevant pattern of educational provision' in their area.<sup>53</sup> It is ironic that Powley goes on to cite Midwinter at this point since there is barely any mention of the EPA 'philosophy' in the national literature on EAZs. The fact that he refers to Midwinter's summary of the challenge for educationalists to embrace the community approach suggests a lack of awareness of the roots of the strategies they [EAZs] were reviving. The EPA director had to steer a course between the tensions generated by the questioning of assumptions deliberately stimulated by the project's work. Midwinter acknowledges the importance of the protection accorded him by a benevolent local authority. At the same time this highlights the fragility of new policy initiatives. Tom McManners was protective of Midwinter, but when he moved on, Midwinter's position as the head of Priority became increasingly fragile, eventually resulting in its remarkably rapid demise.

Harvey's insistence on maintaining a low public profile in WREPA was his wisest example of diplomacy and a further example of the fragility that the director

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<sup>52</sup> Midwinter, email correspondence with the author, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Powley, T. (2001) 165.

had to manage using diplomatic and ambassadorial skills. The importance of this strategy was demonstrated by the furore that followed the broadcast of a BBC television documentary made about WREPA in 1971, which was discussed in Chapter Four.<sup>54</sup> This was a critical moment and justified the previous efforts to keep a low profile considering the great efforts made to develop preschool provision.

### **The Director as bureaucrat**

The EPA project leader had a central role in the administration, financial management and servicing of the local steering group of their project. However, in 1968 these responsibilities did not hinder the EPA directors. They had greater autonomy than their EAZ counterparts 30 years later. As Powley notes, 'there is now a real sense in which public bodies spend so much time accounting for their work that they no longer have time to do it'.<sup>55</sup> The sheer scale of pioneering initiatives LEPA and WREPA delivered is testimony to both their hard work and the freedom afforded them by the national director. What is consistent between the two periods is the 'rollercoaster' experience of directing action-research projects. As Midwinter put it, one day he was dealing with national policy considerations or debating theoretical perspectives with Basil Bernstein, the next, small scale project maintenance issues or 'humping sacks of birdseed into Salisbury for the animal project'. To Midwinter the job of project director was really about 'getting your hands dirty and involved'.<sup>56</sup> Harvey claimed that the lack of accountability expected at the centre and their loosely defined job descriptions meant the teams were able to 'get on with it'.<sup>57</sup> George Smith recalled that the 'balloon went up' over Harvey's conversion of a disused store cupboard in Balby Street school, carried out without planning consent from the LEA.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Edward Goldwyn, 'If at first you don't succeed, you don't succeed', *Horizon*, (UK: BBC, 1971).

<sup>55</sup> Powley, T. (2001) 167.

<sup>56</sup> Midwinter, interview with the author, Harpenden, July 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Harvey, interview with the author, Nottingham, September 2008.

<sup>58</sup> George Smith, email correspondence with the author, 2011.



## Reflections on challenges and achievements

This section draws on the personal reflections of key characters to explore what they saw as their achievements in the face of challenges to be overcome. This approach will identify what each team prioritised and why. It allows the author to search for internal consistency between recollections and documentary records.

The primary sources left by the teams suggest that both projects worked as hard as physically possible in the pursuit of their objectives. Initially, this was to generate momentum, but by the end, it was to try to keep pace with the interest they had created. Yet, as George Smith notes, the WREPA team were not confident to begin with. The mining villages they were working with were tight-knit communities that were largely satisfied with the schools that served them. It is understandable that the WREPA team did not wish to draw external attention to themselves until they had established the trust of the local schools. The supportive attitude of Alec Clegg was important. It provided the team with space to operate in without feeling pressurised to answer to LEA bureaucracy. Harvey cites Clegg's benevolence as the crucial factor in the project's success. The support of the LEA was demonstrated by their commitment to continued financial support of Red House after 1971.

To identify what the teams saw as challenges and achievements an understanding of the way they explained their strategy is required. Did they prioritise one objective over another for example? George Smith's explanation of the strategy adopted by the WREPA project is very similar to Harvey's:

Our argument was you had to concentrate the project to make an impact, which I think was correct, especially if you wanted to measure something: so we concentrated on small groups of people, whereas Eric's argument was the opposite; money is like muck and should be spread.<sup>59</sup>

There is a relationship between the strategy direction and the motivations of those involved. During interviews, the author therefore focused on formative

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<sup>59</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, April 2008.

educational and political experiences. These experiences provide motivation on pedagogical matters addressed by the EPA project objectives. A clearer understanding of why the teams chose the actions they did can be obtained by relating these experiences to the social and political context present in each location.

George and Teresa Smith's intellectual journey was directed by a mixture of passion to overcome social injustice and an intellectual belief in the potential of education for economic and social development. Both had changed career direction following overseas teaching experiences. George spent two years in South India and Teresa a year in Thailand. Their first degrees had been a mixture of classical history and languages and George had accepted a journalist post with a national newspaper on his return to the country. However, George was 'very interested in the notion of education and development' and reading the literature available in Trivandrum library in Kerala, helped him to make the decision to change career direction. He enrolled on the MPhil Sociology course at Oxford and this eventually led to the WREPA project. George and Teresa became students of A.H. Halsey and Jean Floud. Halsey and Floud's ability to encapsulate and articulate answers to questions arising from longstanding, unresolved educational issues inspired the Smiths, especially regarding the lack of equality of opportunity and the waste of talent it resulted in. At Oxford, Floud and Halsey became George's supervisors and it was Halsey's somewhat indiscreet attitude to telephone conversations that fuelled Smith's EPA ambitions

If you were in a tutorial and Crosland phoned, he [Halsey] wouldn't ask you to leave and would rather play to the gallery.<sup>60</sup> So you were party to things, and I knew something was afoot. It was really whether it was going to happen or not, and by early '68 it seemed that it was . . . and it became a question of which project would we join.<sup>61</sup>

Teresa had just completed a diploma in social administration under Halsey. She was passionate about 'social justice' and, she recalled, 'knew a good deal about

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<sup>60</sup> In 1967 Halsey was a close advisor to Anthony Crosland and helped him to formulate the response to Plowden.

<sup>61</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, April 2008.

the disparities between different social groups and between different geographical areas'.<sup>62</sup> This experience shaped her views on the questions asked by EPA.

Once the EPA project had been confirmed it became a matter of where they would be placed. They were both excited to have an opportunity to challenge the social injustice that they had studied at college. Their destination was decided by the adventurous spirit of youth as much as any other factor. George Smith recalled that his view was that since he'd never been to the West Riding, why not go there?

The Smiths were amongst a number of people who shared similar views and were motivated by the same broad philosophical and political issues. Formative experiences are unique, as are the contexts of different communities. It would be unrealistic to claim that there was a cadre of identically minded individuals waiting to step into the EPA roles. The EPA teams were bonded by the desire to challenge an unequal educational playing field.

The Plowden Report research and the political arithmetic described in Chapter Two were significant influences. To the Smiths, many of the ideas contained in Plowden were familiar from the essential reading on their courses in Oxford. The evidence in Plowden confirmed what the teams already felt: there was a considerable amount of wasted talent in Britain due to the unfairness and unsuitability of the existing school system. To the Smiths, the system appeared unable to change quickly enough and was failing to harness the educational resources of the home.

In 1968 neither George nor Teresa Smith saw themselves as academics. They identified themselves more as practitioners with knowledge of research literature and methods. They were interested in what might work and why. From Tawney, they took the idea of a level playing field for all, and from Plowden they took the idea that the power of education was not contained in the school. Teresa Smith claimed that the WREPA team were

. . . interested in what would now be called the educational processes of the community, what was recognised and not recognised by families and parents as

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

educational levers that they could be involved in, that they could call on and that those might or might not operate with the school. That for us was a very open idea. So the home-school relationship to us was a broader idea.<sup>63</sup>

The Smiths recognised that a physical plant was unavoidable. The type of physical model they identified with was that of Henry Morris's Village colleges. This physical plant would be the community school. The community school would be the hub, from cradle to grave, for learning, thinking and doing for all sections of the community. It would operate a more radical pedagogical approach to relationships and curriculum content than anything that had been seen before within mainstream state education.

### **Contribution and longevity**

Longevity of influence is an important indicator of the success of the individuals in any field. The continued influence of the characters involved in LEPA and WREPA beyond 1971 suggests that they were very well chosen. Midwinter remained a significant influence on community education throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. Others, Geoff and Lin Poulton, Gina Armstrong, Celia Burn (awarded an MBE in 2009 for her services to children) and, particularly, the Smiths have spent most of their careers in this field. It could be argued that they were able to remain in the field because the profile of the project altered their career trajectories and opened doors for them. This may be true, but the evidence suggests the quality of the individuals involved and their shared perspective on what the project was about led to success in their work and subsequent career opportunities. Even more significant is the consistency with which they have all applied their EPA ideals in later work. Teresa Smith highlights how their approach to the project was a unique learning experience:

By 3 am you have finished reading the latest research on early years and at 9 am you went in to meet the local Divisional Officer and you have to persuade him of your case. That was training and a skill I now recognize as unique and

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<sup>63</sup> Teresa Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

has never left us. In terms of a policy impact that is terribly important and I think it is a skill not many politicians or academics understand.<sup>64</sup>

This attitude demonstrates a determination to get things done once a strategy was agreed and explains the volume of activity Halsey was able to report in 1972.

The EPA teams were trying to change the way parents thought about their educational role. Changing the culture of the school was a longer-term goal. One could argue that this was a shortcoming since it was the school as an institution that required change. However, it is very difficult to impose change on existing institutions and the focus on bringing parents and teachers together presented as mutually beneficial, was the most logical approach if real partnership was to emerge. George Smith was primarily a researcher and recognized the importance of getting workable schemes up and running as models. Mike Harvey was the quality controller in terms of weighing the practicability of their schemes. This combination meant they were able to focus on creating testable models that could be considered for use elsewhere, as opposed to a generalized effect or movement like Liverpool. One such model was the home visiting scheme outlined in Chapter Four.

Home visiting was a successful transfer from America and its success was due to George Smith's knowledge of American innovations and the undoubted talents of Gina Armstrong, the country's first home visitor. Armstrong was recruited via Oxford but had grown up in nearby Dewsbury and was, according to Teresa, 'a one off'.<sup>65</sup> She was ebullient, confident and remained a prominent figure in the field for a decade after the project. The mix of people and their talents was a major factor in WREPA's success.

The individual who had the most longstanding influence was George Smith. George Smith's career following the WREPA project made a considerable contribution to understandings of the potential of the ABI as a policy tool, in both an advisory and participatory capacity. In the 1990s the publication of *Access and Achievement in Urban Education*, along with Michael Barber's edited volume,

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<sup>64</sup> Teresa Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

*Raising Educational Standards in the Inner Cities*, both represent a significant return to ideas explored in the 1960s.<sup>66</sup> It can be argued that Smith's chapter in the latter had more influence on policymakers than all of his WREPA work. This book was a powerful influence on New Labour's decision to return to the ABI approach. Smith's chapter was very much at the cutting edge of research into social policy and was a response to a report instigated by HMI Tom Wylie. It can be argued that civil servants look to engage with those likely to be influential on the formation of a future government so the publication of this book was significant due to the influence Barber was already having on Tony Blair and his inner circle. When New Labour returned to the re-cycled idea of ABIs the presence of George Smith represents a continuous thread between the two periods. The consistency of his views over time, in relation to the root causes of the problem of educational disadvantage, is also worthy of note.

EPA work was ultimately geared towards re-positioning the school in-line with the notion of community education. It followed that the teams would be drawn to a pedagogy and curriculum conducive to supporting this ethos. Together, the records the team members have left provide us with an understanding of what the EPA vision was. In his final report to the DES and SSRC, Halsey was highlighting how valuable some of the team members had become:

Some of the staff, and especially the younger research workers, are now highly valuable resources. They are the first generation of what I hope will become an important branch of the social sciences with its great potential utility for government, administration and constructive social criticism.<sup>67</sup>

As Midwinter had recognised during his encounter with the playgroup workers, the EPA team members were, indeed, valuable resources. They were the embodiment of action research, available to the community they were based in and, through their work, the generators of actions. While it is wrong to claim that the projects in Liverpool and Yorkshire were successful because of the team members

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<sup>66</sup> Ofsted, *Access and Achievement in Urban Areas*, (London: HMSO, 1993), George Smith, 'Urban Education: Current Position and Future Possibilities', in M. Barber and R. Dann, Eds. (1996) *Raising Educational Standards in the Inner Cities: Practical Initiatives in Action*, (London: Cassell, 1996) 27-55.

<sup>67</sup> Halsey, A.H. (1972) X.

alone, the evidence suggests that they fulfilled their role as 'enablers'. They were the key factor in ensuring both projects are worthy of investigation 40 years later.

The WREPA and LEPA teams managed to take advantage of favourable local and national conditions to leave a significant legacy. The work of the people involved deserves a more prominent place in the history of education. As a visitor to WREPA on behalf of the SSRC, Basil Bernstein was highly impressed with the project, calling it the best he had ever seen.<sup>68</sup> However, Bernstein's analysis questions the potential of EPA type projects to lead to structural changes in educative relationships, without broader changes to economic and social policy. He also questioned the uniformity of thinking within the EPA teams. Following a one-day seminar with the EPA teams, held in January 1970 at the Institute of Education, University of London, Bernstein wrote to Halsey. While offering his support to the EPA project in principle, he was 'struck that nobody who spoke had any criticism whatsoever to make about the work that they or their colleagues were doing'.<sup>69</sup>

Bernstein's observation implies that the teams held almost identical views. They were not identical, but the teams did share a belief that the existing education system was both inefficient and unfair. The outcome was a legacy that provides educationalists and government with important lessons for contemporary policymaking. The positive attitude towards the Plowden Report nationally, the benevolence of the CEOs, the loose control from Oxford by Halsey and the challenging day-to-day contexts faced by local teachers all helped to make conditions favourable. Ultimately however, it was the blend of people, their knowledge, skills as leaders and researchers, and their sheer determination to make thing work that explains why the teams in the north of England were by far the most successful of the five EPA projects.

In contrast with contemporary ABIs, the attempts by LEPA and WREPA to build the educational resources of families did not descend into hierarchically driven social capital building. The team members concentrated on engagement that started from the cultural norms of the community and their personal motivations and

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<sup>68</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Basil Bernstein, Personal papers, University of London, Institute of Education Archives, Letter from Bernstein to Halsey, January 19 1970.

qualities ensured they had an impact beyond what their small scale suggested would be possible. Whether they can be seen as operating outside the constraints imposed by Bourdieuan analysis will be explored in Chapter Seven. The success of both teams poses a dilemma. If success was because of the membership of those teams, what does this imply for any attempt to replicate this policy approach on a national scale? If government had opted to implement Halsey's recommendations through a national roll-out of EPA projects, would such effective partnerships have been attainable, or, would the potential for democratic engagement of parents have been lost within a professionally dominated discourse? These questions are at the heart of the assessment that follows in Chapter Seven.



## Chapter 7 The North of England EPA projects and their legacy

This chapter returns to questions discussed in preceding chapters in order to illustrate the historical significance of the WREPA and LEPA projects. Why was the EPA philosophy able to flourish in Liverpool and the West Riding yet face rejection as a national policy, despite the high profile of Halsey's report to the DES in 1972? Why was the ABI flame briefly re-ignited in the 1990s, and what were the similarities and differences between the EPA model and New Labour policy? Finally, what is the legacy offered by the EPA project? It will be argued that researchers interested in education policy owe a debt of acknowledgement to A.H. Halsey and his teams.

The questions reveal the significance of the projects in two ways: first, as examples of publicly funded, experimental attempts to address educational failure in deprived areas, second, as an opportunity for educationists to apply analogous thinking; to contrast between 'then' and 'now' and make possible a 'better grasp of what is distinctive about the present'.<sup>1</sup> The analysis presented adopts Tosh's view that historical analogy is not as 'profoundly unhistorical' as G.R. Elton suggested.<sup>2</sup> This chapter seeks to reveal both 'contrast and convergence' in order to 'expand our options and free our senses from the rigidities of current discourse', and to help to identify what the current context is not, rather than what it is.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, this thesis will help to 'refin[e] our understanding of the present' and consider the potential outcomes of more recent policies, such as, Children's Centres.<sup>4</sup> It offers an important contribution to our existing historical knowledge and understanding of government efforts to challenge educational failure.

The questions are timely. The education policy of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government, elected in May 2010, could signal the end of another episode in public efforts to challenge educational failure utilising ABIs and new institutions. The government appears to be moving toward allocation of

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<sup>1</sup> John Tosh, *Why History Matters*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008) 67.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

resources by group rather than area. Their key strategies to attack educational failure are the 'pupil premium' paid directly to schools with disadvantaged children, and enhanced freedoms for teachers.<sup>5</sup> A similar shift in policy occurred in the early 1970s and is a significant part of the explanation for the demise of the ABI that time around.

This chapter concerns itself with the question of legacy. It argues that contemporary policy, and research on policy, can benefit by reflecting on the 1960s experiences. There is no attempt to draw parallels between the EPA projects and New Labour policy other than at an ideological level, but it is hoped that the historical perspective presented here might inform future analysis of an enduring problem. Theoretical perspectives, from the 1960s and beyond will be applied to community education and positive discrimination to assess their ideological robustness. Methodologically, the framework for analysis is constructed around two key developments from the projects: the demise of the Liverpool Teachers' Centre in 1975 and the establishment of Red House in 1969. Both events are used to demonstrate the unique qualities of the EPA project. Analysis of these two key developments will help to explain why the EPA approach was not developed into a national policy in the 1970s and why it appealed to New Labour in the 1990s. The conclusions drawn are related to the apparent fragility of attempts to alter the professional habitus, and the way power relationships play out within the local educational field.

The return to area-based positive discrimination, partnership building and local capital generation under New Labour was a reminder that despite the efforts of the EPA teams, little was achieved for the children living in deprived communities. The rest of this chapter will explore the reasons for this in five sections. The first returns to the significance of the broad policy context drawing out the key factors which allowed a small project to attain such a high profile. The analysis then turns to the rejection of the proposal for a national EPA project followed by a consideration

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Education, Response to public comments on the coalition agreement on families and children, July 30 2010, <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/a0063444/df-response-to-public-comments-on-the-coalition-agreement-on-families-and-children>, accessed 19th October 2010, and, Spending Review statement, The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon George Osborne MP, October 20 2010, [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spend\\_sr2010\\_speech.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spend_sr2010_speech.htm) accessed 21st October 2010.

of what the outcomes might have been if the government had pursued an expansion of the EPA concept. The next section looks critically at the ABIs return during the 1990s. It asks whether this represented something qualitatively different. The final section asks whether there is an identifiable legacy for the north of England projects. The conclusions drawn will show that the model of practice developed represents a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding both the potentialities of ABIs and to the efforts of those working in the expanded children's workforce to achieve the outcomes they desired. This historical perspective enables anyone interested in theorising current practices to enhance the quality of their analysis.

### **The EPA projects flourish in a warm ideological climate**

The main features of the 1960s political landscape were highlighted in Chapter Three. The election of a Labour Government in 1964, the increase in spending on schools and higher education, the prominence of the Plowden Report and even the relationship between Anthony Crosland and Halsey, all contributed to a climate in which opportunities for new policy innovations became more likely. In order to demonstrate why the EPA teams were able to pursue their ideas relatively unhindered, it is important to outline the theoretical perspectives and ideological debates that opened up the intellectual space from which the EPA project emerged. The educational expansion of the 1960s was, according to Brian Simon 'the direct outcome of widespread local, popular activity determined to put an end to the fractured, diversive system of the past and to substitute something more generous, more equitable, more suited to the growing aspirations of the mass of the parents'.<sup>6</sup> It was also, Simon claimed, the first 'serious recognition of the importance of primary education as a phase of crucial significance'.<sup>7</sup> The historical perspective offered here recognises the 'central importance of ideas in the determination' of educational change.<sup>8</sup>

One significant strand of thinking came from the ideological debate within British socialism. Interpretations, diagnoses, and solutions offered by the New Left

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Simon, *The State and Educational Change*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994) 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 9.

were in the intellectual ether; they drifted in and out of thoughts and actions of the key characters even where personal recollections on events do not identify them as motivations. New critiques of class relationships deepened the intellectual debate over the potential of the ABI to break the link between poverty and education. The debate surrounding working-class culture and the question of classlessness provided a political context for educationists on the left to redouble efforts to pursue equality of opportunity during the 1960s. This was, according to Chun Lin, a major event in the early history of the New Left. Concerns over educational inequality, despite the extension of education after World War II, were part of a growing belief that a more classless society was failing to emerge. Hoggart raised concerns that at the same time class consciousness was declining in the face of 'mass opinion'.<sup>9</sup> A consensus emerged around two issues; the need for national efficiency in the postwar economy and growing concerns for equality of opportunity.

The New Left had empathy with modernity and 'its modernistic zeal was potentially elitist and Fabian in inspiration, anticipating the culture of expert planning which came to dominate social provision in the 1960s'.<sup>10</sup> New Left intellectuals offered new ways of thinking about the way certain concepts were defined. For Williams in particular the concept of community was significant. He explored the differences of interest and perspective within communities often romantically idealized by trade unionists and Fabians.<sup>11</sup>

This idealized view of community was often 'premised on the conflation of individual with communal fulfillment' and was, according to Williams a 'simplistic, one-dimensional concept of community'.<sup>12</sup> In Williams' hands 'community became a metaphor for addressing social subjectivity' and any extension of participatory democracy through community based means had to acknowledge a diversity of cultural and political perspectives'.<sup>13</sup> However, community education was valuable in so far as it could support the common culture inherent within working class areas. Hall claimed changes to the older patterns of community life 'had been transformed

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<sup>9</sup> Chun Lin, *the british new left*, (Edinburgh: University Press, 1993) 44.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Kenny, *The First New Left*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995) 108.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 95.

by a new matrix of values concerning individual prosperity, status and the culture of consumer acquisition'.<sup>14</sup> Increasing communal experiences could act as a bulwark against this matrix. Hall called for schools to become social as well as educational centres.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the intellectual climate in which EPA ideas were formed fits within Williams' call for a 'long revolution' where a higher post-capitalist morality would permeate civil society, guiding working class people to transform their communities through participation based on alternative values. Clearly, education had a central role to play in this transformation.<sup>16</sup> The ideological context was such that teachers were open to new ideas on child-centred pedagogy and expanded preschool provision, while at the same time, increasingly confident in their ability to drive forward better terms and conditions of employment. These developments were significant because one of the key assertions of this thesis is that to define the EPA project as 'compensatory' is inaccurate. The teams were not focusing on any perceived individual or familial deficit, rather, they were asking the teachers to look at their own practices and to question the extent current relationships contributed to the de-motivation of children. The professional identity of teachers ultimately determined the long-term potential of the EPA concept because teachers were the gatekeepers who ultimately decided the value of working-class culture and its role within the curriculum.

From the government's point of view EPA ideas were a possible solution to problems affecting the national interest. Concerns with the suitability of the future workforce, and the 'realisation of individual potentialities', meant it became a 'moral and economic imperative to modernize and expand education'.<sup>17</sup> Also, actual classroom practice remained within the teachers' 'autonomous domain'; a domain which was 'rarely questioned in the 1960s'.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>17</sup> Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *On Ideology*, (London: Hutchinson, 1977) 177.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

The NUT pursued professional status vigorously during the 1960s but its pedagogical voice was less prominent than campaigns for better resourcing, partly because despite an increase in educational expenditure from 3.2% of GDP in 1955 to 5.9 % in 1968, most of the extra funding was spent on teacher salaries, new buildings and the growing school population.<sup>19</sup> Teachers engaged in their first ever national strike action in 1969, breaking the Labour government's prices and incomes policy, and in 1970 the NUT joined the Trade Union Congress in anticipation of the 'impending economic crisis'.<sup>20</sup> Their priorities were also partly determined by the question of whether pursuit of a more defined professionalism would result in less strategic manoeuvrability when industrial disputes arose. Barber points out that even though the NUT and the other associations appeared to be in a strong position during the 1960s, the multidimensional nature of power may not have offered greater agency. Power can be observed not only at the decision-making level but in excluding and including particular issues as the dominant voice demands.<sup>21</sup>

This perspective is shared by Ozga and Lawn, who argue that professionalism and professional autonomy is an 'extraordinarily complex' concept which must be 'located in a specific historical context'.<sup>22</sup> They relate this to the contested terrain of curriculum control and cite Michael Apple's interpretation of proletarianisation.<sup>23</sup> The engagement of teachers becomes artificial because government and some educationists distance the 'craft' of teaching from day-to-day actions so that execution is separated from the point of delivery. Professionalism becomes a 'form of occupational control' which can be used by government to 'manipulate and co opt teachers'.<sup>24</sup> The Schools Council and teachers' centres therefore become part of this proletarianisation process. However, the logic of professional autonomy means teachers are at liberty to ignore recommendations of new practices.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, spaces such as the teachers' centre can play a significant role in developing a critical attitude towards what Simon refers to as the

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Barber, *Education and the Teacher Unions*, (London: Cassell, 1992) 38.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>22</sup> Jenny Ozga and Martin Lawn, *Teachers Professionalism and Class*, (London: Falmer Press, 1981) 123.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>25</sup> CCCS, (1977) 174.

‘social determinants of education’.<sup>26</sup> Teachers can challenge the constraining impact of ‘routinism’ and innovate ‘in order to fulfil education’s primary objective which is to contribute to social change, which was its ‘raison d’etre’.<sup>27</sup>

Teachers’ centres can be seen as an ideological battleground. In Liverpool, Midwinter recognized how important their role was. As Chapter Three demonstrated, Midwinter’s NUT pamphlet made a good impression in Liverpool. The tone adopted was one of admiration for EPA teachers combined with indignation at their lack of support from government. As this was a national publication it could be associated with the other EPA teams. In the West Riding, the schools did not recognise themselves as part of an EPA. There was already a familiarity with child-centred pedagogy, particularly at Balby Street Junior, which Alec Clegg celebrated as a model of good practice.

### **Government rejects the EPA idea**

On 25 February 1972 Halsey circulated a note to all project directors updating them on the points he intended to make to DES officials before meeting the Secretary of State, Margaret Thatcher. His final report would make more of adult and secondary education, it would acknowledge that the government had provided the 15,000 nursery places recommended by Plowden, the model of pre-school [his preferred term] advocated would be a ‘hybrid’ of the professional nursery and amateur playgroup, home visiting was probably cheaper than nursery places so should be implemented and the prominence given to local diagnosis of need was paramount.<sup>28</sup> Despite a positive reception from the DES, the meeting with Thatcher did not produce the response he had hoped for. She politely refused to commit to Halsey’s recommendations stating that

I am not convinced that a further major action research programme is required on the EPA front. The recommendations that you and your colleagues made

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<sup>26</sup> Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991) 17.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>28</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, EPA Project: The Policy Implications. A Further note, A.H.Halsey, February 25 1972.

have received wide publicity, which will be reinforced as your later volumes appear, and all the signs are that local authorities are acting on many of them in a very encouraging way.<sup>29</sup>

During an interview with the author, Halsey recalled that Thatcher was keen to expand free nursery provision. He felt that her motivations for doing so were not inspired by the results of the EPA project.

She was influenced by Keith Joseph. He admired the EPA project because he could put his own stamp on it. EPA showed up what he privately believed. That is, there was a hereditary strain of low standard people highly concentrated amongst the poor. He conveyed to Thatcher that there was a rescue job to be done which the Conservatives could do. The second point, and I'm not saying they're causally related. She wanted to leave her mark. The only place she could see to do this was at the beginning, preschooling, setting up a fourth tier even though another part of her thought it didn't work. That's why she found our conversation very interesting. It was her political ambition to leave a fourth tier that would bear her name. So she did encourage her civil servants to get on with it.<sup>30</sup>

The subsequent White Paper, *Education: A Framework for Expansion*, attracted a mixture of approval and frustration in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Labour MP, Roland Moyles, reminded the house that the NUT's General Secretary had accurately described the White Paper as a 'slow boat to China'.<sup>31</sup> It was the conservatism of response which frustrated Halsey. Thatcher acknowledged at the White Paper's second reading that nursery provision had to be expanded and that it was the children from 'homes which [were] culturally or economically deprived' who stood to benefit most and who would be targeted first. However, the responsibility for expansion was to be placed on the local authorities and headteachers who were 'in the best position both to identify disadvantaged children and to ensure that the new facilities are well publicised'.<sup>32</sup> The government was

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<sup>29</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter from Margaret Thatcher to Halsey, September 13 1972.

<sup>30</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

<sup>31</sup> House of Commons Debate, February 19 1973, *Hansard*, vol 851, cc41-172.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



anxious to identify how to get the 'maximum contribution from all concerned'.<sup>33</sup> Parents were recognised as an important partner for other agencies but Thatcher did not mention the EPA research. Others did. Roy Hattersley, Labour spokesman for education, claimed the White Paper was likely to inhibit local authorities from committing to new nursery classes because a 'wider prospect' beckoned. There would be pressure from the suburbs to supply new places which risked the degree of importance attached to educational priority areas.<sup>34</sup> Hattersley did not cite Halsey's recommendations but he did appear to align Labour policy with them:

Of course, we know that the simple physical improvement of schools in deprived areas, an improvement in the staff pupil ratio, or the provision of extra money for more equipment will not in itself solve the problems of the educationally deprived. But it is a step in the right direction.<sup>35</sup>

The only MP to explicitly cite Halsey was Labour MP Eric Deakin. He felt that Halsey's report offered a far more radical approach than the White Paper. He also queried the fact that 'Dr. Halsey's superb report talks of some very radical objectives to be achieved in educational priority areas, but they do not get a mention in the White Paper.'<sup>36</sup> Deakin understood Halsey's analysis of the complex interaction between education and social problems,' and was disappointed in the 'few passing references in the first section of the White Paper to this interaction'.<sup>37</sup> His call for closer partnership between home and school was a lone voice in the commons debate. Conservative MP, John E. B. Hill, was pleased that the decision to expand nursery provision was 'founded on research' and that the role of parents had been recognised as part of an essential mix of professionalism and voluntary response.<sup>38</sup>

Thatcher's White Paper effectively ended any hopes of a national EPA policy. It left pockets of innovation to continue their work under the patronage of forward thinking chief education officers. This left them in a precarious position, vulnerable to the changing economic and political context. A national EPA policy was not seen as a threat by government, administrators or the teacher unions. Terms

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

such as community, regeneration, active involvement, and home-school relations appealed to a range of interests. As Grace put it, EPA appealed to ‘conservatives, liberals and radicals: to romantics and pragmatists: to political activists and to urban planners’.<sup>39</sup> It was rejected, despite its broad appeal, because in the minds of the politicians who decided its fate, EPAs were costly. It was also vulnerable from an ideological point of view and became part of the ‘language of disadvantage’ which belonged to the professional groups who pursued it.<sup>40</sup> Even where continued financial support was secured the EPA concept was vulnerable. The events in Liverpool described below demonstrate an almost permanent state of vulnerability.

The demise of PRIORITY was recounted in Chapter Five using Midwinter’s reflections. Here, C.M. Darcy’s account is added.<sup>41</sup> Together, they demonstrate how the structuring effects of habitus, and the manoeuvrings of local vested interests reduced the degree of agency experienced by the proponents of community education.<sup>42</sup> The changes in Liverpool confirm the difficulties faced by local approaches to national problems, not least because of the tendency of established political and administrative bodies to respond to short-term economic and political pressures. The infrastructure built up over seven years unravelled in the space of a school term. For seven years Midwinter had expressed the view that schools could be change agents in society, or, as Darcy interpreted it, they could recognize and legitimate the ‘aspirations of the working class’.<sup>43</sup> It appeared that a more pragmatic view held sway within the local educational and political scene.<sup>44</sup>

Midwinter’s move to the National Consumer Council (NCC) was significant. His influence and leadership presence was a uniting factor and his personable, charismatic style was demonstrated in Chapter Six. According to Darcy, the distanced leadership of Midwinter was a ‘weakening factor’ rather than the ‘basic weakness’, more important was the ‘lack of a sense of common purpose among the

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<sup>39</sup> Gerald Grace, *Teachers, Ideology and Control A Study in Urban Education*, (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978) 83.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, C.M. Darcy, Notes on PRIORITY’s demise, not dated.

<sup>42</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, ‘The Vulnerability of Innovation, or, but look what happened to Rolls Royce’, not dated.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 4

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

people involved'.<sup>45</sup> The geographical separation of the various centres and immersion within their own projects meant staff didn't have much direct contact with each other. Once staff believed the LEA backing was not guaranteed, tension was likely to develop. Midwinter's unsuccessful application for the post of Director of Education in 1975 was taken by Darcy as a sign that the 'social activist role for education would not be supported for at least the near future'.<sup>46</sup> There are no records in Liverpool LEA Education committee minutes of decisions being taken to restructure the teachers' centre and the PRIORITY Centre. This is because the LEAs strategy was to do nothing and wait for organizational self-dissolution to occur. By January 1976 the teams had become 'unglued', at which point the LEA made the decision to establish each centre as a separate endeavour.<sup>47</sup>

The rationale and philosophy of the PRIORITY Centre was a direct continuation of the LEPA project and by 1976 it had ended. However, as Darcy pointed out, the ideas were not dead.

The concepts of positive discrimination, the schools as agents of social change, the involvement of parents in the education of their children . . . all these ideas live on. The purpose of temporary organizations like PRIORITY is to bring forth and develop the ideas. Somewhere a new group is firming and reading of the work done in previous educational and social experiment.<sup>48</sup>

This assessment would not have provided much consolation for Midwinter, or his colleagues, but there is more than a grain of truth in it. The work of the Community Development Centre in Coventry took forward the EPA philosophy and similar innovations occurred in pockets around the country.<sup>49</sup> The only way a lasting impact could have occurred was to establish a unified workforce embedded within the structure of the LEA. Midwinter recognized this and came close to establishing a single centre, with representation on the city's Education committee. He also

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Flora Macleod, 'Parental involvement in education: The Coventry experience', *Early Child Development and Care*, 21, no. 1 (1985) and, John Rennie, *British Community Primary Schools*, (Brighton: Falmer Press, 1985).

recognized that his appointment as Director of Education was the best way to ensure this happened. But, in the local elections of May 1975, the Liberal party ousted Labour and the political will changed. According to Midwinter this power shift ensured he could not be appointed as director and with his resignation from the head of the teachers' centre, and the LEAs strategy of non appointment, the PRIORITY Centre, and its philosophy, lost its protected position.

The collapse of PRIORITY should be seen as symptomatic of the tendency of policymakers to seek a quick fix rather than take the long view. Established administrative structures respond to forces emanating from the broad economic and political context. Thus the reticence of the Liberal run council should be understood within a national economic pessimism exacerbated by the 1973 oil crisis. The fallout from this event contributed to a policy shift away from the ABI, toward resourcing of targeted groups, particularly by ethnicity.<sup>50</sup> This was perceived as being a more accurate deployment of resources despite the development of an index for identifying levels of deprivation in 1972.<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to say whether the shift reflected a loss of confidence in the ability of ABIs to affect major change rather than a reaction to changing economic circumstances. However, the critiques discussed in the next section suggest it was not only due to the stringency of government spending.

### **EPAs: A case of what might have been?**

The most powerful and enduring critique of the EPA concept was that they were premised on a flawed notion of cultural deprivation. The idea that community education was a sufficient base from which to develop critically minded citizens capable of pursuing a more equitable society was a contested rationale during the 1960s and 1970s. Giroux's critique of ABIs, introduced in Chapter Two, encapsulated many of the questions asked about the potential of the EPA project.<sup>52</sup> The problem with the community education idea, Giroux argued, was that it was

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<sup>50</sup> Home Office, *Race Relations Act*, (London: HMSO, 1976).

<sup>51</sup> Alan Little, and Christine Mabey, 'An Index for the Designation of Education Priority Areas', in Andrew Shonfield and Stella Shaw, Eds. *Social Indicators and Social Policy*, (London: Heinemann, 1972).

<sup>52</sup> Henry Giroux, in Paolo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy Reading the Word and the World*, (London: Routledge, 1987) 2.

‘gravely under theorized’ and its pedagogical implications ‘patronizing and theoretically misleading’.<sup>53</sup> He implied that an attempt to utilise a pedagogical approach relying on an alternative curriculum would appear, to the state, as a threat rather than an opportunity.

Community education failed to challenge the contradictions within the culture students bring to schools, nor to deal with the relationship between knowledge and power, as transmitted through literacy. It failed to acknowledge that education was part of the social relations of production. These failings were something ‘invisible’ to social democratic ideology.<sup>54</sup> The use of ABIs was defined by the CCCS as a ‘kind of agitational community politics . . . displaced into the state apparatus itself’ and possibly the ‘outer limit of social policy solutions’.<sup>55</sup> ABIs could do no more than address ‘symptoms’ and could not ‘equalise’ outcomes ‘through an education which [was] supposed also to serve to reproduce relations within capitalist production’.<sup>56</sup>

This assessment oversimplifies the complexities of the relationships between participants inside the EPAs. The project did acknowledge the limitations of the community curriculum, but recognised its potential as a possible vehicle for achieving more significant gains, if further steps were taken.<sup>57</sup> Giroux acknowledges this himself stating that ‘the political and moral gains that teachers and others have made should be held onto and fought for with a new intellectual and political rigor’.<sup>58</sup>

It is quite feasible to argue that when pedagogical skills and critical analysis are combined, the curriculum has the potential to empower those experiencing it. The key is to generate a space where this is more likely to occur. However, to create an empowering curriculum a change to the power balance between the professional and the family is required. As Raffo put it, this change requires a shift in the ‘axes of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>54</sup> CCCS, (1977) 186.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

power from national and local policymakers and professional practitioners to community representatives, families and young people'.<sup>59</sup>

Since governments of differing ideological persuasions have all used ABIs it appears there is no simple relationship between a particular political ideology and their adoption'.<sup>60</sup> The consistent feature of ABIs has been an interventionist rather than structural approach, based on a particular conceptualisation of disadvantage and education. Power et al claimed that ABIs represented a 'restrictive policy repertoire' which would 'continue to fail'.<sup>61</sup> The boundaries of failure and success are not easily quantifiable however. The problem with criticisms aimed at recent conceptualisations of ABIs is that they assume a relative uniformity between interventions. The EPAs appear to be very similar in structure and objective to other instances of ABI policy. This thesis argues that they were not. The remainder of this section engages with other significant critiques of ABIs to demonstrate a lack of awareness of the message of the EPAs.

Bourdieu's work has been important because it offered the thesis a theoretical lens to view the EPA projects with. It also provided a theoretical bridge between the 1960s and contemporary analysis. Bourdieu believed economic circumstances were an inadequate explanation of unequal educational outcomes.<sup>62</sup> To Bourdieu, shared dispositions inherent within deprived communities were similar in their effects to different levels of economic capital. As a form of cultural capital, educational qualifications could be traded for profit and, more importantly, used to monopolise success within the education system from one generation to the next.<sup>63</sup> This implied that despite the public statements of intent from politicians and teachers, the school system was not as effective a tool for social mobility as claimed, and the use of ABIs would be unlikely to change that.

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<sup>59</sup> Carlo Raffo, 'Educational Equity in Poor Urban Contexts - Exploring Issues of Place/Space and Young People's Identity and Agency', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 59, no.1 (2011) 1-19, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Sally Power, Gareth Rees, Chris Taylor, (2005). 'New Labour and Educational Disadvantage: the limits of area-based initiatives', *London Review of Education*, 3, 2: 101-116, 113.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>62</sup> Raffo, C. (2011) 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 14.

Despite the increasing focus on micro aspects of communities by sociologists during the 1960s and 1970s, education continued to be seen as a social ‘good’. This ‘functional’ perspective remained the paradigm for policymakers. ‘Cognitive poverty’, attributable to factors outside the school was seen to be the explanation of educational failure.<sup>64</sup> The application of Bourdieu’s analysis to the EPA projects offers a socially critical perspective.<sup>65</sup> This interpretation questions whether education, within the English structure, is actually a ‘social good’. It suggested that education, in fact, reflected the unequal distributions of power and resource in society.<sup>66</sup> Using ABIs to challenge this position would be idealistic and naive. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the EPA projects were more pragmatic than idealistic. They saw their remit as the demonstration of possibilities, and the questioning of assumptions about relationships between school and community.

By the mid 1970s the direction of policy had moved from positive discrimination by area to the targeting of particular groups. However, according to Lupton, even by the 1980s there remained a sense of optimism within the Labour Party that interventions in poor areas could produce transformative outcomes, provided they linked with similar struggles elsewhere.<sup>67</sup> In 2010, Raffo et al also concluded that the link between education and poverty could be attacked using particular forms of ABIs, if they formed part of a sustained and broad front encompassing all institutions within the area, as well as the relocation of employment opportunities.<sup>68</sup>

What is absent from these relatively consistent diagnoses is an awareness of past achievements and failures. For instance, the assessment of Raffo et al mirrors the recommendations made in the Halsey Report in 1972. Reflecting on the EPA episode in 1987, Halsey felt that they (the teams) had ‘learnt painfully that educational reform . . . was unlikely ever . . . to bring an egalitarian society

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Carlo Raffo, Alan Dyson, Helen Gunter, Dave Hall, Lisa Jones, Afroditi Kalambouka, Eds., *Education and Poverty in Affluent Countries*, (New York: Routledge, 2010) 12.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ruth Lupton, ‘Limits on the possibilities of radical professionalism: the importance of a wider politics of place’. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, University of Manchester, 2-5 September 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Raffo, C., et al (2010).

unaided'.<sup>69</sup> Demands made on the education system would remain unrealistic unless a raft of reforms were made to the social and economic institutions of the country, including, devolution of power to localities, community control over health, planning, employment and education policies and income equalisation.<sup>70</sup> Halsey also believed that the EPA experience demonstrated the 'frailties of the connection between social science knowledge and political action' and the complexity of social policy. This was borne out by the events in Liverpool described earlier.<sup>71</sup>

### **Did New Labour really re-ignite the EPA flame?**

When the Labour party returned to power in 1997 they reintroduced the ABI as a policy to tackle educational underachievement in the inner-city. The return to ABIs was, according to Power and colleagues, partly based on the premise that 'with a little more foresight, careful evaluation of past experiences and the development of sufficiently robust evaluation based policymaking, such schemes might actually have important impacts on educational attainment and social disadvantage'.<sup>72</sup> The Labour government hoped the educational trajectories of children growing up in deprived areas could be raised upwards by utilizing new partnerships between health, welfare and early years education professionals, redefined as the children's workforce.

The initial policy was to create EAZs which, according to Don Foster the Liberal Democrat MP, 'would bring meaning to the concept of partnership and ensure a real impetus to drive up standards'.<sup>73</sup> Schools Minister at the time Stephen Byers, described EAZs as 'a fundamental challenge to the *status quo*'.<sup>74</sup> But as one correspondent noted, within three years, David Blunkett, the politician who launched them, was admitting they were 'overhyped'.<sup>75</sup> Their ineffectiveness was highlighted by successive reports from Ofsted, the school inspectors, and by the Institute of Public Policy Research and the National Audit Office.

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<sup>69</sup> A.H. Halsey, 'Plowden: History and Prospect', *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, no. 1 (1987)7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Power et al, (2005) 109.

<sup>73</sup> House of Commons Debate, *Hansard*, vol. 303 cc699-754, second reading of the School Standards and Framework Bill, 22 December 1997.

<sup>74</sup> Will Woodward, 'School action zones to be phased out', *The Guardian*, Thursday 15 November 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



Evans's report on the demise of EAZs only three years after their launch demonstrates the inappropriateness of viewing them as re-branded EPAs.<sup>76</sup> Evans suggested their introduction and subsequent demise would become required reading for 'any future student of social policy . . . standing out as a textbook example of how laudable intentions were scuppered by vested interests and overambitious expectations'.<sup>77</sup> The vested interests she refers to are once again the professional identity of teachers. EAZs were part of the government's 'hidden agenda' to break the status quo in education by chipping away 'at the stranglehold of the all-powerful teaching unions, and . . . the least effective LEAs'.<sup>78</sup> The EAZs became about the quick fix because of the reductive demands of accountability. The pressures of political expediency saw their practices reduced to a narrow focus on examination results. Evans's assessment was that EAZs were an expensive (£200 million) but 'well intentioned idea dreamed up by a relatively inexperienced government that tried to do too much, in too short a time, on too many fronts, and ended up panicking and switching its focus to the basics, and, sadly, failing'.<sup>79</sup>

The EAZ policy has been much maligned, often because it was seen to reflect neoliberal ideology. Strict accountability measures monitored outcomes and the recipients of resources were held responsible for transforming their own circumstances. Nevertheless, EAZs focused on the levels of attainment in deprived urban communities to an 'extent not seen since the 1960s'.<sup>80</sup> Despite the re-establishment of ABIs, 'disadvantaged neighbourhoods have been discursively positioned within policy texts and rhetoric in a such a way as to make it less likely that teachers will see the need or possibility for action.'<sup>81</sup> This view is not disputed by this thesis. What is important, is to understand the qualitative differences between the EAZs and the EPA project. Policy should not be formed in a historical vacuum. By revealing the weaknesses of the EAZs, research has unwittingly demonstrated the lessons provided by the WREPA and LEPA teams. What research has not yet done is to adequately explain what the EPA project demonstrated regarding the potentialities

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<sup>76</sup> Rhonda Evans, 'Twilight for the zones. Why has the government quietly abandoned its Education Action Zones after five years?' *The Guardian*, Tuesday 3 December 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Lupton, R. (2009) 1.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 2.

of the ABI. It is this absence which justifies the current thesis. The discussion below illustrates the point.

When New Labour launched the EAZ initiative its rationale was critiqued using ideas developed in the 1960s. Plewis saw the EAZs as a 1960s solution to a 1990s problem and felt they would fail on the same issue, the ecological fallacy. That is, targeting resources by area was not an efficient means of ensuring the people needing the resources would benefit from them. Plewis felt that 'one of the most depressing aspects of the way new policies [were] being formulated [was] that there [was] no evidence that the government [was] aware of, or willing to learn from, the experiences of the past, or of our European partners'.<sup>82</sup> Bell's view of the EAZs is a case in point.<sup>83</sup> He claimed that EAZs had evolved from the EPAs of the 1960s, which focused on improving pupil performance in basic subjects in deprived areas.<sup>84</sup> The EAZs were replicating the EPAs with the addition of a 'much stronger managerial thrust and a more clearly defined set of performance criteria'.<sup>85</sup> As the evidence presented in this thesis shows, Bell's analysis was inaccurate. He had ignored the point made by Plewis, that a substantial amount of research was 'devoted' to the EPA idea. New Labour had ignored the fact that 'institutionally based interventions of this kind, however imaginatively planned, cannot be expected to solve the deep seated problems they are hoping to address'.<sup>86</sup> In the *TES* the editorial view saw potential in the EAZ idea provided the 'politicians [were] prepared to give long-term commitment'.<sup>87</sup> Bell was correct in positioning the EAZ idea within 'an educational policy framework derived from the school effectiveness movement' but as the previous chapters have argued, EPAs operated in a different context and had different ambitions.<sup>88</sup>

According to Gamarnikow and Green the nature of ABIs deployed by New Labour reflected an ideological shift from a 'state sponsored

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<sup>82</sup> Ian Plewis, 'Inequalities in education: Targets and Education Action Zones', *Radical Statistics*, no. 68, (1998) 73.

<sup>83</sup> Les Bell, 'Back to the future: The development of educational policy in England', *Journal of Educational Administration*, 37, no. 3, (1999) 200 – 229.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 217.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 218.

<sup>86</sup> Plewis, I. (1998) 73.

<sup>87</sup> *Times Educational Supplement*, Editorial, 25 April 1997.

<sup>88</sup> Bell, L. (1999) 218.

communitarian/deliberative form of idealised educational democracy' present during the 1960s, toward a 'state sponsored civic and social/educational corporate capitalism'.<sup>89</sup> The New Labour ABIs were initially focused on development of new partnerships targeting the negative impact of habitus on aspirations, but this focus shifted towards the reprofessionalisation of an expanded, multi-agency children's workforce. What ABIs had failed to do was explain why concentrations of inequality exist.

Power claimed this was because ABIs were based on 'overly simplistic and under-theorised conceptions of inequality and geography, which fail[ed] to recognise the complexity of urban processes'.<sup>90</sup> Although area-based effects on educational outcomes were identifiable they were 'often considered to be small and of less importance to variations between, and influences at, the household and individual level'.<sup>91</sup> ABIs only addressed the surface rather than the structural causes of the problem. This was a criticism applied to the EPA projects. In Liverpool, Midwinter did paint a dramatic picture of life in an EPA to grab outside attention but he balanced this by stressing the positive qualities of the local community. The contextual differences that allowed the EPA teams to demonstrate the true potential of the ABI should be of interest to analysts of recent policy. For example, the EPA project was not under pressure to bid for funds. Nor were they driven by demands to produce immediate improvements in attainment, or by rhetoric of social capital building which assumed 'equivalence of networks' between communities where none such existed.<sup>92</sup>

It can be argued that there is little likelihood of schools developing curricula or pedagogies that are relevant to the needs of their community unless they are able to locate the source of their problems in the structure of advanced capitalism, and its spatial manifestations, rather than in the deficits of individual families'.<sup>93</sup> The problems faced by communities are structural and in order to have an impact on the

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<sup>89</sup> Eva Gamarnikow and Anthony Green, 'Social capitalism and educational policy: democracy, professionalism and social justice under New Labour', *International Studies in the Sociology of Education*, 17, no. 4, (2007) 384.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>92</sup> Gamarnikow and Green, (2007) 384.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, conclusion.

professional identity of teachers a new understanding of the way local, national and global forces structure communities must be forged.<sup>94</sup>

According to Lupton, teachers believed working class families 'had different orientations towards school than what [they] considered 'normal'. She identified three common issues: the social relation of the home, the educational practices of parents, and the nature of parental relations with school.<sup>95</sup> The data she collected suggested that although teachers were committed to the educational success of their 'deprived' pupils they viewed them as suffering from self-inflicted deficits. Thus, the element of the teachers' professional habitus which intersects with the home, actually impairs their ability to work in genuine partnership. Since teachers did not comment on the economic circumstances or structure of the catchment area they were unlikely to look to create learning opportunities which drew on the geographic and economic features of the community. This reflects what Lupton saw as a tendency to 'submerge economic and social explanations for working class underachievement beneath accounts of individual failure or mishap'.<sup>96</sup> This occurs because schools are designed to expect what can be termed 'middle class' behaviours and devote efforts to attempting to get pupils to be 'normal' or else not succeed. In deprived areas, schools given additional resources were more likely to retreat behind greater conformity to a basic curriculum than explore experimental pedagogies, which might empower, but not produce easily quantifiable results.<sup>97</sup>

Unlike New Labour's two waves of initiatives the EPA projects focused more on the recipients of education than school improvement.<sup>98</sup> The EPA teams paid attention to the way area factors compound educational disadvantage and they recognised that, as Lupton put it 'learning is a social, historically, and spatially situated activity: where you live helps to shape what and how you learn.'<sup>99</sup> Plowden's interpretation of EPAs shared the same pathologising (of familial

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, conclusion.

<sup>95</sup> Eva Gamarnikow and Anthony Green, 'The third way and social capital: education action zones and a new agenda for education, parents and community?' *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 9, no.1, (1999) 3-22.3.

<sup>96</sup> Lupton, R. (2010) 10.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, see p116-117.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 119.

educational deficits) tendency as New Labour. In Plowden, EPAs were ‘containers of people with certain detrimental characteristics’, people who had only learned how not to learn. However, the EPA teams did not focus only on how teachers could teach more effectively, they called for a different curriculum and a different pedagogy, one based on collaboration and one that might challenge existing habitus. They may not have articulated their response as an attempt to address ‘the situated nature of learning’ but this is exactly what they were doing.<sup>100</sup>

This is significant because the results of spatial factors impact on the dynamics of relationships between parents and teachers, or rather their perceptions of an idealised partnership. Parents and teachers can hold very different views of what the others’ role should be. However, this relationship has led to the dominance of a school-centred view of what constitutes appropriate parenting, parental involvement and parental support. Lawson found that this silenced the interpretations of parents and resulted in a limiting of potential partnerships.<sup>101</sup> The uniqueness of a school’s context ‘weigh[ed] heavily on people’ and within this context people construct ‘meanings and functions . . . in relation to one another’ that are contained within particular discourses.<sup>102</sup> Within a national context of neoliberalism this leads to emphasis on functionalist policy responses where initiatives focus on addressing deficits by building educational capital. But, by creating Red House, the WREPA team, was sending a message to the community. This was a resource for them, not just for the schools. It was opening up a new space where the existing assumptions of both parties might be challenged. In Liverpool, the team were not seeking to challenge the existing hierarchies between pupils and teachers but they were exploring the notion of a curriculum which would challenge existing power structures. The LEPA approach to the curriculum could be interpreted along Freirian lines where learning is based on ‘the lived experiences of learners’.<sup>103</sup>

The EPA project was ahead of the thinking of both policymakers and educational research. Using Lupton’s words they can be viewed as attempts ‘to come

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Lawson, ‘School-family relations in context: Parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement’, *Urban Education*, 38, no. 1, (2003) 77-133.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>103</sup> Raffo et al (2010) 47.

closer to young people's spatial meaning making, as well as recognis[ing] the porosity of schools and neighbourhoods and the wider power geometrics that make them what they are as living and learning spaces.'<sup>104</sup> The EPA teams recognised the enormity of the challenge this posed. It takes the problem to the level of who, and what, education is for. The EPA project was very different to the EAZs in both the rationale on which it was premised and the practices it developed. The EAZ episode shows that researchers interested in analysing the true potential of the ABI concept would be better advised to look at the evidence provided in the 1960s in order to inform their critiques.

### **What is the legacy of the EPA projects?**

In June 1968, *The Guardian* published a letter from Jack Holmes, headteacher of a Sheffield primary school. Holmes expressed his opinion of the forthcoming EPA project.

The time for research is over; the time for useful action is here. Projects just give higher degrees to redundant project directors . . . and give academics something to do . . . the money should go to schools.<sup>105</sup>

This letter is a reminder that not everyone welcomed the idea of positive discrimination or the interventions of academic research into the work of primary schools. There is no suggestion that the EPA project schools felt this way, but there is a suggestion that, in 1968, education discourse contained contrasting views on the worth of the EPA project. This thesis set out to assess the EPA projects. It can only do so by framing its conclusions in relation to the on-going ideological disputes over the value of area-based policy.

The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that a debt of historical acknowledgement is still owed to Halsey, Midwinter, Smith and their colleagues. First, for their contribution to our understanding of the organisational and pedagogical practices best suited to develop meaningful partnerships between

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<sup>104</sup> Lupton, R., in Raffo et al (2010) 122.

<sup>105</sup> Jack Holmes, Letter to *The Guardian*, Monday June 3 1968.

parents and professionals. Second, because their story offers a legacy which adds to our understanding of the form, and strength of opposition to projects attempting to alter the perceptions of teachers and administrators towards each other's roles.

Grace has come closest to offering an appropriate acknowledgement of their worth. He claimed that the Halsey Report represented 'official policy on urban education; the epitome of the liberal middle ground; the most extensive collection of action research findings on education in the inner-city areas; and a strongly developed ideology of the community school'.<sup>106</sup> Grace refuted the view that the EPA idea was nothing more than 'a liberal gloss on a cultural invasion of the urban working class and diversionary ameliorating activity designed to draw attention away from the real basis of inequality in the social and economic structure'.<sup>107</sup> He saw EPA as a representation of the 'permeability of boundary between school and neighbourhood' and as a tactic which sought to end the 'citadel school' by 'weakening specific teacher identities and in the long term the very category of school itself'.<sup>108</sup> Grace was circumspect in his assessment of the EPA project's achievements but this thesis argues that the significance of the projects is about more than their powerful mediation of the Plowden Report as ideology and practice.<sup>109</sup> This thesis has provided evidence that a range of achievements can be attributed to the EPA project. The project carries a historical message which should form part of research into ABIs from subsequent periods. Returning once more to the EAZ initiative allows the thesis to reveal the significance of the EPA project by highlighting the qualitative differences between EPA, and what Reid and Brain refer to as New Labour's 'networked market'.<sup>110</sup>

Reid and Brain agree that there were similarities between EAZs and EPAs but they cite the issue of governance as the major difference. The EAZs attempted to promote the private sector into education while building a new governance structure which would limit the role of the LEA. The EAZs had to develop a 'what works'

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<sup>106</sup> Gerald Grace, Teachers, *Ideology and Control A Study in Urban Education*, (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978) 81.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>110</sup> Ivan Reid and Kevin Brain, 'Education Action Zones: Mission Impossible' *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 13, no. 2, (2003) 195-214.

approach through experimentation and innovation. On the surface, similarities with the EPA project seem strong. However, EAZs were never original or imaginative because of the partners they worked with and the government determined criteria they answered to. The EAZs were 'subject to DFEE, Ofsted and Audit Commission inspection and there was 'a constant emphasis that [they] should concentrate on raising standards in basic skills and meeting attainment targets'.<sup>111</sup> The EAZ was a fusion of communitarianism, social democracy and neoliberalism and it is the final aspect that marks them as different and unoriginal compared to the EPA project.

EAZs were deployed as a lever to drive up standards. The government even provided guidance on innovation. There is a paradox evident between the pursuit of creativity within a context of accountability. The EAZs approach to parental partnership and governance also marks them as inferior, and historically of less significance than the EPA project. During their three year involvement with an EAZ, Reid and Brain observed that the school's demands on the parental role was concerned with 'securing children's attendance at school, ensuring the behaved appropriately, acting as teaching assistants in basic tuition at home, and . . . fundraising'.<sup>112</sup> This was the deficit perspective in action, not a recognition of the parents' role as first and most enduring educator. Reid and Brain were not attacking the attitude of schools and acknowledged that schools faced 'enormous practical difficulties in resourcing parental involvement' because they were not 'funded or designed to deliver wider parent and community links' beyond a core curriculum.<sup>113</sup> They concluded that the EAZ experience 'posed serious questions about the extent to which schools can expect to act as hubs of welfare and regeneration networks'.<sup>114</sup> This emphasises the significance of Red House as an intermediate educational space which might have challenged this position. The professionals in Reid and Brain's EAZ dominated so much that in two years of observing meetings the zone was unable to secure full attendance at the action forum and they witnessed not a single example of policy development or debate. The EPA projects were able to focus on relationships and not take a reductive view of school and its purposes.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Reid, I., and K. Brain, (2003) 205.



The existence of deprived areas may be inevitable within the existing economic structure and the use of ABIs reflects a longstanding policy deployed by governments 'to concentrate service provision' on 'the concentration of disadvantage.'<sup>115</sup> This was the case in 1968, but the extra £16,000,000 for building and the £75 teacher allowance secured following the Plowden Report were blunt and unimaginative when compared to the work of the project, which, as the evidence has demonstrated, amounted to a series of innovative experiments exploring new practices. The achievements of the two projects are discussed below in relation to different viewpoints on the potential ABIs have to transform outcomes.

In particular, two contentious issues demonstrate both the potential and limitation of the ABI. The first can be seen in the attempts by Red House to alter the parent-teacher dynamic. The WREPA team felt that increased contact between home and school was positive. However, it remained unclear what the effect on attainment would be in the long term and what would happen to the participants whose awareness and expectations had been raised. Or, to utilize Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, the structuring of the dispositions held by individuals within a social field.<sup>116</sup> For example, McNay argued that social fields are not static and where it appears that relationships are changing, this may be at the level of superficial social relations rather than 'deeper structural relations'.<sup>117</sup> Thus, even if the nature of social interaction between teachers and the community did alter, this would be an 'inevitable consequence of instability [within the field] rather than a potentiality whose realization is contingent upon a certain configuration of power relations'.<sup>118</sup> In 1968 the power relationship was so strongly weighted in favour of the teacher that new modes of contact with parents would not qualitatively alter the relationship or expectations of both parties. This would not allow Red House to alter the power balance, since 'in the final instance, all fields are determined by the demands of the capitalist system of accumulation'.<sup>119</sup> Teacher identity and teacher professionalism was structurally located in the experience of 100 years of state schooling. The pursuit

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<sup>115</sup> Raffo et al (2010) 74.

<sup>116</sup> Michael Grenfell, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory*, (Florence KY: Taylor and Francis, 1998) 161.

<sup>117</sup> Lois McNay, 'Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity Theory', *Culture and Society*, 16, no.1 (1999) 105.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. 106.

of professional status had distanced the teacher from her own socio-cultural origins and elevated her position to 'expert', distancing the teacher from the community.

The second issue relates to the EPA teams' acceptance that education was a social good capable of generating a more democratic society. This explains why the teams encouraged teachers to question the dynamics of their relationships with parents. This was a direct challenge to the 'inequalities built into society and the [existing] education system'.<sup>120</sup> The mechanism chosen to achieve this was preschool experimentation.

Widlake analysed the potential of the preschool work carried out by the EPA projects using Marion Blank's categorization of the two main forms of pre-school education.<sup>121</sup> *Academic* pre-schools focused on preparing children for the world of schools while the *shared rearing* model on extending the motivation of mothers to access support services to assist in the rearing of their children.<sup>122</sup> Both approaches, according to Widlake, fall into the compensatory category and were based on an inadequate theoretical rationale, particularly a misunderstanding of the term 'culturally deprived'. This term assumes that the poor are deprived of certain key experiences that put them at a competitive disadvantage to others within society.<sup>123</sup> This view opened the door to compensators who approached disadvantaged communities with a largely 'patronizing tone'.<sup>124</sup>

Widlake placed the preschool approach pursued by the EPA project in a third category, one that focused on parents working in partnership with professionals. This is a key point of difference between the two periods. Their understanding of existing structures led the EPA teams to adopt a pragmatic approach which allowed some progress to be made in challenging existing dispositions. Ultimately, their view was that it was the families that could make the difference and the teachers who needed

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>121</sup> Paul Widlake, *Reducing Educational Disadvantage*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

to change. Their view of partnership held parents as capable of contributing to teaching and learning and curriculum planning.

The challenge faced by the EPA teams lay in the extent to which the professional identity of those trained by the state presented an insurmountable barrier to parental empowerment. The focus in the EPAs was on subverting the existing structure by influencing the habitus of those deployed to operate it: the teacher and the LEA. The ideological position of those inside the project was to shift the power balance towards a reconceptualised partnership.

The achievement of the EPA team was to shift the thinking surrounding intervention, first from a compensatory to a communication model and then beyond to a 'participatory' model. That is, a belief that work which takes place in a collegial and 'cheerful' atmosphere and results in greater contact between the home and the school, is a 'good in itself' and likely to improve educational performance and allow partnership to flourish.<sup>125</sup> This was a small, but not insignificant shift, given the nature of parent – teacher communication typical at this time.

The critics of this approach argue that 'socio-cultural factors soon become *explanations* of educational failure' and the victims are blamed for their predicament.<sup>126</sup> The criticism was extended further by Sharp who claimed that at the core of these partnerships remained an understanding that the parental role was to support the teachers to 'achieve goals specified by teachers in ways specified by teachers'.<sup>127</sup> In WREPA once an 'intermediate' space was opened up (Red House), and controlled by workers with an ideological commitment to community education, participants possessed enough agency to challenge the structuring effects of habitus. The problem was that success was directly related to the extent their reconceptualised partnership emerged in practice. This in turn was dependent on their longevity, a factor beyond the control of the EPA team as the experience in Liverpool demonstrated.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Sharp, R., and A. Green, *Education and Social Control: A Study in Progressive Primary Education*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), cited in Widlake, P. (1986) 16.

The EPA teams were aware of the argument that designation of EPAs allowed teachers and more importantly politicians, to deflect the shortcomings of the education system onto the deficits of the community. The counter argument was that education, as the most popular and recognizable community focal point, was the best place to start. Community education could produce community development through participation and partnership building. Widlake defined the 'participatory' model as one that recognized parents 'exercising some control over their own lives' and the development of their children.<sup>128</sup> The populations of the northern EPAs were seen by the teams as capable of 'initiating, organizing and sustaining activities' and driving partnerships with professionals.<sup>129</sup> The evidence presented here points to a failing to sustain gains made by the EPA teams not necessarily a failing to demonstrate the validity of new approaches. However, the enduring question remains whether the EPA concept is a viable strategic response or merely part of the discourse of disadvantage.

The introduction of the EPA as a funding tool was a break with the tradition of allocating resources by area through the LEA. But, the project was more than a funding mechanism. It sought to explore qualitatively the reasons for educational failure beyond levels of resource. The EPA teams were in a strong position to reform or enhance partnerships that reflected 'the 'lived' social spaces of residents'.<sup>130</sup> They were ideologically in-tune with those to whom they were accountable, particularly Michael Young at the SSRC.

The dispositions of researchers toward exploration of potential solutions are tempered by the degree of accountability they face for public sponsorship of their work. While the EPA teams were acting on four clear objectives and were reporting regularly to the SSRC, they were not faced with the same demand to demonstrate the impact of research on policy and practice as New Labour equivalents. Halsey was able to select LEAs that were ideologically supportive as opposed to the EAZs whose creation was dependent on 'the strength of how well the special needs of [the]

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<sup>128</sup> Widlake, P. (1986) 16.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 106.

area [were] *presented (sic)* and the ideas and value for money . . . proposed'.<sup>131</sup> Halsey's greater autonomy was a significant factor in the project's ability to respond creatively and flexibly to local contexts.

The contrasting perspectives discussed in this section should be seen as part of the longstanding questioning of assumptions about the extent to which education can be an agent for change. Boyd's critique of the urban programme argued that despite Halsey's project not assuming deficits in the families they worked with, and having a sociological rather than psychological orientation, the outcomes were in fact very similar to those of the compensatory interventions introduced in 1960s America.<sup>132</sup> Once a project accepted a place within national and local funding mechanisms it was effectively accepting the existing hierarchy of headteacher – advisor – chief education officer. If this was the case then the focus would remain squarely on the home as the source of deficits.

This deficit accusation opened the door to educationists who believed that, as J.B. Mays had argued, the only answer is improvement to the quality of provision, whether teacher, resource or curriculum. As government turned away from the ABI approach in the early 1970s the 'school effectiveness' movement began to gather pace. This movement, associated with Lawrence Stenhouse and curriculum development reform, shifted the gaze from interventions, toward research into school improvement and practitioner action research.<sup>133</sup>

The EPA philosophy identified the failure of schools to inform and partner parents. It managed to do so without adopting an accusatory tone. This view did not recognise the poorest families as culturally or socially deprived. Intervention was necessary, especially in the preschool years, in order to bring children in line with the different patterns of socialisation expected within the school. At the same time it challenged schools to change their approach to parental relationships and their curriculum. As Midwinter pointed out in his final EPA report, this was a long term aim and would necessitate a shift from the academic to the social in constructing the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>132</sup> John Boyd, *Community Education in Urban Schools*, (London: Longman, 1977).

<sup>133</sup> James McKernan, *Curriculum Action Research A handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner*, (London: Kogan Page, 1996) 23.

curriculum.<sup>134</sup> A curriculum that focused its content on the local environment and experiences of local families could ‘cement’ links between teacher and parents.<sup>135</sup>

Despite such proclamations from Midwinter, the potential of intervention projects was disputed by his contemporaries. During a conference held at York University in 1972, it was reported in proceedings that there was a degree of indifference towards the EPAs since they had failed to address the underlying political and structural nature of the problems.<sup>136</sup> The issues discussed were ostensibly those analysed by academics writing about the potential of interventions during the early twenty-first century. There was agreement that deprivation was the inability to attain one’s goals. However, the question of how to respond was contested. One view was that a better society could only be brought about by the development and control of new institutional forms and processes.<sup>137</sup> It was argued that the EPAs could only be of use as a vehicle for creating greater awareness of the political structure. The idea of the community curriculum posed a dilemma for those who feared cutting off the escape route offered to some children by successful academic study. Unsurprisingly, New Left and Fabian arguments failed to resolve this dilemma in the conference debates. One has to decide whether the EPA philosophy was the manifestation of the contradictions between the expressed aims of reformist educators and the structural realities of the current system.

Halsey’s 1987 reflection on the EPA project helps researchers to consider this dilemma.<sup>138</sup> Halsey believed the pioneering work of Liverpool and the West Riding showed how schools could ‘bring up children capable of exercising their political, economic and social rights and duties’ provided they acted within a broader reform framework, but to do so in the absence of this context was ‘to court frustration for individuals if not disaster for the social order.’<sup>139</sup> Although this assessment was made two decades after the event it would be unfair to accuse the

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<sup>134</sup> Eric Midwinter, *Priority Education: An account of the Liverpool project*, (London: Penguin 1972b) 195.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Danny McDowell and Derek Robinson, *Social Deprivation and change in Education*, Proceedings of the Nuffield Teacher Enquiry conference at York University June 1972.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> A.H. Halsey and Kathy Sylva, ‘Plowden: history and prospect’, *Oxford Review of Education* 13, no.1 (1987) 7.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

EPA project, or Halsey, of naivety. Halsey accused both Labour and Conservatives of being at best, 'half hearted travellers' and described the 'tragic dilemma' facing the EPAs 'caught between the impossibility of total social reform through education and the ineffectiveness, waste and distortion of pedagogical reform in an unreformed society'.<sup>140</sup>

The EPA project was the first of a kind. It was testing the boundaries of acceptable policy. Without taking into account the mechanisms by which public policy is formed and the power relations inherent, it is no more likely that a 'more secure base for action' will be achieved today, than it was in the 1970s.<sup>141</sup> As this thesis has stressed throughout, the EPA teams were always aware that without broader institutional reform their impact would be limited. During a 2010 interview with the author, Halsey encapsulated the reality of the EPA project's position.

I was never a great believer in educational reform actually. I never did believe we were going to be successful, but that didn't mean I wasn't enthusiastic for trying. After all, the future belongs to our children, not us.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Eric Midwinter, Personal EPA papers, *Priority News*, number one, January 1972, 6-7.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>142</sup> Halsey, interview with the author, Nuffield College, Oxford, January 6 2010.

## Chapter 8 Conclusions

This thesis set out with a number of aims. The first was to assess the achievements of the two north of England EPA projects in relation to their national objectives: to raise the educational performance of children, to improve the morale of teachers, to increase parental involvement and to increase the sense of responsibility for their communities of the people living in them. The second was to reveal the beliefs and ideological positions that motivated the key characters and determine whether their actions resulted in any distinctive practices. This aim was concerned with identifying the legacy of the work carried out and its significance for those interested in breaking the link between poverty and education. The third aim was to understand why governments are so reluctant to make a long term commitment to what is considered as additional to mainstream educational provision.

The aims were addressed through an exploration of the following questions. Are there lessons from the past emerging from the legacy of Halsey, Midwinter, Smith and others that may help us to understand the dilemmas of the present? To what extent did New Labour replicate the policy repertoire of the past, or fail to see the potential of EPA practices? How did the educational ideology of the EPA characters offer a unique approach to the intractable problem of education and poverty?

The historical analysis contained within this thesis provides a missing link between contemporary research into the deployment of ABIs, and original attempts to tackle educational failure during the 1960s. The legacy of the north of England EPA projects is, at present, no more than a footnote in the history of education. While acknowledgement of the 1960s work can be found within literature it does not do justice to the EPA projects in Liverpool and the West Riding. This thesis provides an historical memory that is elsewhere. While the EPA projects appear to exist in the memory of some educationalists, their strategies, programmes and experiences



remain largely unexplored.<sup>1</sup> Keith Banting, and later, Harold and Pamela Silver, examined the policy process and political context to explain how and why the EPA project came to be, but neither examined the day-to-day innovations of the teams, nor their position in relation to pedagogy and community education.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary educational research is either devoid of historical perspective regarding the experiences of the 1960s or pays insufficient attention to them. This thesis offers a longer view of the use of ABIs, and, since the projects have not been satisfactorily represented in the history of education thus far, it represents an attempt to redress this imbalance.

It may be that the nature of state-sponsored research means contemporary academics are reluctant to ground their analysis and recommendations in the messages of past experience. There is a temptation for politicians to present their policies as new solutions. The educational research process has been criticised for adopting a non-cumulative approach, with both researchers and practitioners planning their actions without regard for the existing body of evidence.<sup>3</sup> The link between educational outcomes and poverty remains strong, particularly in areas of deprivation. It is therefore important that research on policy considers the account of the EPA project presented here. This thesis encourages educationists to consult the experiences of their predecessors. At the very least the thesis offers a contribution to research concerned with what works, what doesn't, and why. It offers new ways of seeing an enduring problem. The EPA project provided us with a legacy of innovation in the tackling of educational underachievement and the innovators involved continued to play significant roles in this field without the public acknowledgement they might have expected. To put it simply, there is merit in taking an historical perspective on past experiences as the conclusions and reflections which follow demonstrate.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Sally Power, Gareth Rees, Chris Taylor, (2005). 'New Labour and Educational Disadvantage: the limits of area-based initiatives', *London Review of Education*, 3, no. 2(2005)101-116, and Carlo Raffo, Alan Dyson, Helen Gunter, Dave Hall, Lisa Jones, Afroditi Kalambouka, Eds., *Education and Poverty in Affluent Countries*, (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Keith Banting, *Poverty, Politics and Policy: Britain in the 1960s*, (London: MacMillan 1979), Harold Silver and Pamela Silver, *An Educational War on Poverty. American and British policy-making 1960-1980*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991).

<sup>3</sup> See for example, James Tooley and Doug Darby, *Educational research: a critique*, (London: OFSTED 1998), and David Hargreaves, 'Revitalising educational research: lessons from the past and proposals for the future', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 29, no. 2 (1999) 239-249.

In 1984 Gerald Grace categorised the themes running through research into urban education. His typology provides a useful tool for considering where the EPA project should be positioned. Grace felt research, practice and policy were characterised by several themes. These included:

- (a) a strengthened focus on urban education policy during periods of urban crises;
- (b) an overemphasis upon cultural deficits as an explanatory category and an under-emphasis upon the structural;
- (c) a mode of enquiry dominated by various forms of micro-institutional studies that focuses on schools, pedagogy and local education systems;
- (d) an inadequate sense of the historical in the understanding of urban phenomena;
- (e) limited conceptualisations of power and resource utilisation.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis does not add to this list but it does offer new perspectives on the existing themes. The content of the thesis relates to the first four statements and its main conclusions concur with the fifth. The remainder of this concluding chapter explains why the EPA projects are worthy of greater attention than they have received and why, ultimately, they could not overcome the structuring effects of the power relations inherent in the fields of policy and professional identity.

A generation after the EPA project researchers remain interested in the relationship between school and community and the possibilities for reforming the partnership between the two.<sup>5</sup> The evidence presented here suggests that there were qualitative and contextual differences between the 1960s and recent use of the ABI. During the 1960s the focus was on establishing new pedagogical spaces and a reconceptualised home-school partnership. The EPA project concentrated on the exchange of ideas, new pedagogies, sharing of resources and different agencies working together. While the use of the term EPA as an indicator for resource

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald Grace, Ed. *Education and the City – Theory, History and Contemporary Practice*, (London: Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1984) cited in Carlo Raffo, 'Educational Equity in Poor Urban Contexts - Exploring Issues of Place/Space and Young People's Identity and Agency', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 59, no.1 (2011)1-19. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Keri Facer, *Towards an area-based curriculum Insights and directions from the research*, (RSA: Education & Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2010)18-24.

allocation was palliative, the EPA project drew on a more radical pedagogical and political interpretation of why children underachieve.

During the 1960s there was a shift in thinking about education and what it could provide for the nation. Education was increasingly viewed as an investment, rather than a cost. Social scientists became more convinced that if government invested in the findings of 'their' research, results would follow to the benefit of children and teachers. The LEPA and WREPA projects can be seen within this context, as an example of committed social scientists and teachers producing evidence of new ways of thinking about the relationship between schools, children and parents. Their commitment was explicitly based on an ideological position. They viewed education as a tool for securing greater social justice, a more productive economy and thus a healthier democracy.

A.H. Halsey's report, published in 1972, encapsulated the community education ideology that drove the project. His report is historically significant for research into the potential and limitations of the ABI. He pointed out that 'if one teacher can be converted to good home-school practice, 30 pairs of parents and their children can benefit', and, to realise a community school, teachers must be 'adequately motivated, equipped and supported to be effective partners with the parents and other potentially educative forces in the community'.<sup>6</sup> This meant they needed 'smaller classes, adequate curriculum materials, teachers' aides, teachers' centres, and effective links with colleges of education and with any sources of information about successful EPA innovations which become available'.<sup>7</sup> He felt that despite the difficulty in defining EPAs, it remained a viable unit 'through which to apply the principle of positive discrimination' and, if allowed a degree of independence from normal administrative functions, could operate within the current system to change its direction and alter the educational trajectories of disadvantaged children.<sup>8</sup> Yet, even allowing for the scale of resource redistribution required, Halsey recognised this would not be enough to break the link between educational failure and poverty. His final conclusion acknowledged that the 'EPA [could] be no more

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<sup>6</sup> A.H. Halsey, *Educational Priority volume 1. EPA Problems and Policies*, (London: HMSO, 1972)193.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

than a part, though an important one, of a comprehensive social movement towards community development and community redevelopment in a modern urban industrial society'.<sup>9</sup>

It is Halsey's emphasis on the absolute necessity of 'local diagnosis of need' and a new form of partnership between parents and professionals as a basis for action which is the defining message of the EPA project. A uniform approach would not have worked had EPAs been rolled out nationally. Liverpool 8 and Denaby and Conisborough were very different communities, but, educationally they shared certain characteristics: a degree of uniformity in the training received by teachers, the impact of training on teachers' preferred pedagogical approach, and, poor outcomes for children. The freedom to diagnose need creates a degree of tension between choice and accountability. Both EPA teams were able to establish positive relationships, despite the tension their presence created as 'outsiders' arriving to challenge the norms of existing practice. Despite such tensions, the EPA teams were able to produce results. Neither team was hampered by excessive pressures of accountability from the DES and SSRC. This relative freedom reduced the significance of the potentially damaging compromises the teams had to make in relation to action research. Chapter Three identified that the differing needs of action and research might result in less than valid research data. This did happen to an extent but it does not reduce the historical significance of the project. The EPA projects focused on action. Their legacy does not lie in the research data collected but in the practices explored.

In Liverpool, the speed and scale of actions was more impressive than the changes in classroom practice. The real achievement was in the demonstration of what was possible. Midwinter came very close to establishing the administrative machinery which would have impacted on the City's entire teaching force. He was attempting to challenge the ideological construction of teacher identity. Midwinter called for a reassessment of the teachers' present role as the professional 'expert'. The PRIORITY Centre had ambitions to spread the community school philosophy amongst teachers in the hope that their understanding of the school as an institution

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 180.

changed. It was a 'third way', not led by a government compensatory philosophy, but more by expediency and social justice. The action research of the LEPA team had produced the resources to take forward community education practices and it had designed a 'mode of interdisciplinary administration based on popular participation'.<sup>10</sup> PRIORITY set out to support the natural growth of local initiatives designed to improve and enrich the curriculum. The LEPA project had provided the community school model but in itself was no more than a stopgap on the way to a new approach to education.<sup>11</sup>

The WREPA project's legacy was the demonstration of what could be achieved in an intermediate space, a place between home and school. It was here that actions designed to explore a new understanding of parent-teacher partnership flourished. Red House was not a new concept. However, it was not the establishment of the centre that was significant, rather the exploration and demonstration of new practices, especially through a new approach to preschool. At the level of family, group, centre and community, Red House was effective because its activities involved physical attendance by schools *and* parents.

Both EPA teams recognised that partnerships between home and school should not be about the professional utilising a previously untapped resource to fulfil the aims of formal education. They shared a view, still expressed in some research, that parents should 'be seen as partners leading initiatives, sharing their expertise and insight into the local area and setting agendas' . . . in order to 'transcend familiar managerial discourses of 'partnership''.<sup>12</sup> To achieve this, new spaces were required to allow both partners to recognise the misconceptions, conflicts and tensions that surrounded their perceptions of each others roles, and to explore their ambitions for children. This was achieved by the EPA teams, at Red House and in the PRIORITY Centre. Their work highlights the view that schools were sometimes part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. The approach to parent-teacher partnerships adopted in LEPA and WREPA recognised the 'calculated self-interest' of both parties, but particularly the professionalism of teachers, as a potential source of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>11</sup> PRIORITY, *The EPA Community School*, (Priority: Liverpool, 1973) 18.

<sup>12</sup> Facer, K. (2010) 25.

problems faced by the community. Although the impact on partnerships was small and short lived, there is something to be learned by reflecting on their work. In 2008 an Ofsted report into the effectiveness of Children's Centres noted that 'only about half of the primary schools contacted . . . were linking effectively with children's centres and only one was tracking the long-term impact of its work on children and parents'.<sup>13</sup> In 2011 the Coalition government reaffirmed that the 'core purpose' of Children's Centres was to act as a hub for the entire community in order to build social capital and deliver school readiness by improving parental aspirations, self esteem and parenting skills.<sup>14</sup>

The rationale on which the EPA project was based did not view the concept of community in a one-dimensional sense, but was more in step with the interpretation offered by Facer's recent review of literature, which defined community as something 'complex, contested and alive with problematics'.<sup>15</sup> However, understandings of community during the 1960s were not subject to the same globalising pressures from technological advances in communication as the twenty-first century. A more defined and shared understanding of the EPA existed on which to base actions. This consensus did not extend as far as defining the community school, only in agreeing that the present school system was undemocratic. The WREPA and LEPA took advantage of their contextual freedom not just because they could, but because they were ideologically motivated to do so. They were relatively well funded and brought certain key qualities to their task. It is no surprise that Midwinter, and George and Teresa Smith, went on to devote a significant proportion of their careers to intervention research as Chapters Four, Five and Six explained. The success achieved by both teams was at least partly attributable to the individuals who took part. The LEPA team brought knowledge and experience to the project while the WREPA team were something of an unknown quantity. The WREPA team's lack of classroom experience worked in their favour and to some extent they operated without a script. Together, the teams

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<sup>13</sup> Ofsted, *The impact of integrated services on children and their families in Sure Start children's centres*, Reference no: 080253 (Ofsted: London, 2009) 4.

<sup>14</sup> Department for Education, *The 'core purpose' of Sure Start Children's Centres*, <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/a00191780/core-purpose-of-sure-start-childrens-centres>, accessed July 20 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell, *Artifactual Literacy: Every Object Tells A Story*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), cited in Facer, K. (2010) 4.

brought knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to their task. These qualities combined to generate a self-belief in their ability to succeed.

It is during times of economic prosperity that initiatives like the EPA project tend to happen. In 1968 there was still a sense of optimism that spending on education should be given a high priority. By 1973, as public expenditure was squeezed, this optimism had largely evaporated. The legacy of innovation achieved by the project became diluted, and their position as the source of new practices less obvious. Its small scale meant its achievements were lost in the broader context. Several criticisms were levelled at the project and the concept of ABIs, particularly following the cultural turn in educational research which gathered pace during the 1970s.

The EPA project was a product of the social democratic consensus of the 1960s and as such must face criticisms that they were part of the maintenance of the *status quo* rather than the pursuit of emancipation. As early as the 1930s John Dewey spoke of a 'pseudo-liberalism', where words mean something different 'when they are uttered by a minority struggling against repressive measures, [than] when expressed by a group that has attained power and then uses ideas that were once weapons of emancipation as instruments for keeping the power and wealth they have obtained'.<sup>16</sup> Once the EPA project was publicly accountable its utility as a mechanism for working towards radical change within the current system was compromised. It was not as organic as the practices it demonstrated and it quickly disappeared once government reacted to economic realities.

The project was too small and too short lived to have had any impact on structural relationships beyond the increased engagement of local parents. If Bourdieu's ideas are accepted, and the inflexibility of the habitus explains the lack of impact, then it is questionable whether the EPA project could ever have achieved more than it did. This would apply to other uses of such policies. The project appears not to have had an impact on teachers' views of their own professionalism, yet by the end of the 1970s many of the innovative ideas they pioneered had become common

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<sup>16</sup> John Dewey, 'The Future of Liberalism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 32, no. 9, (1935) 225-230.

practice. The production of high-quality publicity materials for schools, new forms of contact between the home and the school, events linking the community to its schools, more intensive collaboration between colleges of education and schools, were each examples of successful LEPA and WREPA strategies. There is no way of confirming how far the spread of these practices can be attributed to the EPA teams. New ways of thinking often pass slowly from ideas, to experiments, to practice rather than through wholesale change. Yet, it would be difficult to argue that newsletters and open days in many Liverpool schools at least, were not inspired by the work of LEPA.

In 1972, Halsey's call for a national EPA policy was rejected by Margaret Thatcher and the DES. The EPA approach to community education lived on but only through the commitment of individual LEAs, in Coventry and Leicester for example. The DES perhaps felt they had accommodated the views of Halsey et al, first by providing a record grant for a funded research project, and second, by committing to an expansion of preschool provision. Lodge and Blackstone interpret this as a response which 'endorsed policy preferences that already had support within the orthodoxy of the education system'.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the government 'were not prepared to fashion a policy in pursuit of greater equality by considering how educational development priorities could be altered to favour the working-class through the redistribution of existing resources'.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the government's response to the EPA project was designed not to radically alter existing arrangements or budgets.

The assessment above fails to take into account the added dimension of teachers' professional autonomy within the 1960s consensus. This was built on a degree of trust between national and local administrators, HMI, the teacher associations, and a Labour government guided by Fabian egalitarianism and informed by the empirical sociology of Halsey and his contemporaries. As Chapter Seven pointed out, curriculum decisions were largely in the teachers' domain so the practices modelled by the EPA teams could in theory, be adopted or rejected. Some

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Lodge and Tessa Blackstone, *Educational Policy and Educational Inequality*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982) 131.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 131.



of their practices were taken on board, but most were not, perhaps because as Simon concluded, it 'is the most difficult thing in the world to see objectively the system in which one is immediately involved'.<sup>19</sup>

Reflecting on the ABI approach in 2006, George Smith warned against promoting single interventions. If lasting change was to be achieved, a matrix of complementary programmes, incorporating all aspects of social policy, would need to be implemented.<sup>20</sup> By the beginning of the twenty-first century social scientists could draw on a large body of research evidence to make such an assertion but it has never been the case that research dictates policy. Policymaking is a multi-faceted process involving pragmatic and ideological influences. Conceptually, individuals and groups must perceive and interpret problems and the possible responses to them from within a constantly evolving context. Writing in 1987, Halsey concluded that 'the political redefinition of an expansive idea could be transformed back towards restrictionism by way of emphasis on selection in the distribution of public funds to those most in need'.<sup>21</sup> Preschool provision was expanded in the 1972 White Paper with positive discrimination measures used to prioritise by need. This was not at the pace Halsey had hoped for or with a funding mechanism allowing the flexibility required to develop the sort of hybrid approach he recommended.<sup>22</sup> When George Smith re-assessed the potential of the ABI in the same journal, he warned that 'passively retreating into a corner is not the only possible response'.<sup>23</sup> This was an acknowledgement that, regardless of the strength of the evidence base, intervention policies remain fragile.

The context that the EPA teams operated in was favourable. The system was not tightly controlled at the centre and this allowed local initiatives to flourish. The EPA teams used this as an opportunity to demonstrate the beginnings of what could

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Simon, *The State and Educational Change*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1994) 9.

<sup>20</sup> George Smith and Sonia Exley, 'The influence of overseas policy examples on DES policy-making for the school system in England, 1985 – 1995', *Oxford Review of Education*, 32, no. 5 (2006) 575-597.

<sup>21</sup> A.H. Halsey and Kathy Sylva, 'Plowden: history and prospect' *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, no. 1 (1987) 6.

<sup>22</sup> Department for Education and Science, *Education: A Framework for Expansion*, (London: HMSO, 1972).

<sup>23</sup> George Smith, 'Whatever Happened to Educational Priority Areas?' *Oxford Review of Education*, 13, no. 1 (1987) 23-38.

be achieved. Chapter Six argued that the success both teams experienced was partly attributable to placing the right people in the right roles. Halsey had chosen individuals who were ideologically motivated by the possibilities community education offered. They were able to take a long-term view of the four EPA project objectives. However, this apparent strength reveals one of the fundamental weaknesses of the ABI idea. Halsey celebrated the achievements of LEPA and WREPA but felt, overall, that the project ended in failure because the government rejected the idea of a national programme. Had Halsey's recommendations been met it was questionable whether it would have been feasible to staff hundreds of Red House Centres with the same blend of dynamic, ideologically motivated individuals. Behind the pedagogy there is a range of political challenges that face intervention projects. Any policy that relies on the commitment and ideological motivations of a handful of individuals will eventually run out of steam. Red House was not a national template capable of listing a set of practices which should be delivered by following a particular process. ABIs have to respond to local need. The issues and dilemmas raised by the EPA project remain unresolved. However, it is appropriate to finish by outlining why we should look to the past, and why taking a historical perspective can inform our understanding of current possibilities and constraints.

A generation after the EPA project, areas of disadvantage can still be found across England where children continue to underachieve. Undaunted, successive governments have launched strategies aiming to solve the problem, seemingly without regard to 'whether the reform in question is a new innovation, a castaway from another time and place, or the recycling of a prior initiative'.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, it appears that the strategy of each government does not succeed in solving the problems it set out to address. Government action has succeeded only in generating a higher profile for the social scientists producing the research that inspired it. The account of the WREPA and LEPA projects presented in this thesis are, therefore, wholly relevant to researchers assessing the effectiveness of current policy. It offers the historical perspective that all research into policy should seek. As Facer points

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<sup>24</sup> Barry Franklin, 'Gone before you know it: urban school reform and the short life of the Education Action Zone initiative', *London Review of Education*, 3, no. 1 (2005) 3.

out, 'despite its long history, the relationship between schools and external organizations is only poorly documented in the research literature'.<sup>25</sup>

At the time of writing, in 2011, the government believes it 'cannot solve complex social problems' alone and that by enhancing accountability and expanding participatory opportunities, 'it is hoped that an active citizenry will play a quantitatively and qualitatively greater role in tackling problems that affect communities'.<sup>26</sup> It can be argued that this policy turn is really about compensating for reduced public expenditure. The ambitions of ABIs have been continually frustrated by the short term pressures on national governments who make policy decisions according to political expediency. Furthermore, the neo-liberal ideology that began to underpin policy in the 1980s continues to frame the policy context, as it did under New Labour. This is very different from the state paternalism of the 1960s. The use of ABIs by New Labour was never a replication of the EPA project. A direct comparison of initiatives from the two periods, Red House and Children's Centres, for example, would be unproductive. Yet there are conceptual and ideological comparisons to be made. Red House and Children's Centres both sought to target deprived communities through the use of multi-agency practice in new institutions. An exploration of the 1960s is relevant to contemporary researchers.

The experiences of the 1960s were never acknowledged by New Labour, a fact that George Smith explained by a lack of institutional memory.<sup>27</sup> He argued that because civil servants generally hold high ranking positions for about twenty years, albeit with frequent movement between departments, it was quite likely that the departmental officials advising were not aware of the experiences of the 1960s. Halsey's view of the barriers faced by education reformers was somewhat harsher and was concerned with professional identity rather than bureaucracy. His meeting with the NUT's National Education Committee in 1972 is a good example of the problem as he saw it. It was a 'difficult' meeting and one that he did not enjoy. Halsey claimed he had 'stuck belligerently to the view that the teacher interest as

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<sup>25</sup> Facer, K. (2010) 24.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Hilton, James McKay, Nicholas Crowson and Jean-Francois Mouhot, 'The Big Society': civic participation and the state in modern Britain', *History and Policy*, Introduction, <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/papers/policy-paper-103.html>, accessed 14 May 2011.

<sup>27</sup> George Smith, interview with the author, Oxford, April 2008.

represented by the NUT has to be distinguished from the interests of children and does not necessarily coincide with them'.<sup>28</sup>

It would be somewhat fatalistic to accept that children living in deprived areas will continue to fail given the conclusions drawn so far. This may not be the case. Simon pointed out that during the 1960s, notions of a 'fixed pool of ability across a generation had been discredited and, in the words of one of those researchers, 'what the few could do yesterday the many could do today'.<sup>29</sup> The 1960s was a decade of advance in many areas of education but 'within a capitalist order' advance is far from linear and if circumstances are 'propitious to new ideas', advances made can be reversed.<sup>30</sup> The value of historical perspective is clear, and this thesis subscribes to Simon's view that 'belief in the mechanistic determination of educational or social change by structural forces outside human control' leads first to fatalism, then 'inactivity and, finally, despair'.<sup>31</sup> Simon's point is that education is about human empowerment, which takes place in contexts where human activity increases. It is this increase in human activity that can generate social change. This encapsulates what the EPA project was really about and how its achievements should be viewed.

This thesis has been concerned with the longer view. It has made reference to ideas about education which can be traced back or forth across the twentieth century. The EPA project was part of the ongoing intellectual struggle to explain the purpose and potential of the school. It was an example of a policy initiative which had a grander vision than its immediate objectives. The community school ideal pursued by the EPA teams was addressing the legacy of the Victorian era by challenging longstanding images of schools and teachers and their distanced, hierarchical relationship with families. The EPA project wanted to transform the school into a democratic institution.

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<sup>28</sup> George Smith, Personal EPA papers, Letter to George Smith, September 25 1972 discussing Halsey's meeting with the NUT on September 22.

<sup>29</sup> Jean Floud in *The Robbins Report. Higher Education. Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins Report of the Committee on Higher Education*, (London: HMSO, 1963) cited in Simon, B. (1994).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 5

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 9.

The creation of Red House and the momentum generated by PRIORITY were perhaps the key achievements of the northern EPA projects. LEPA and WREPA demonstrated that there was potential to produce critically aware teachers. Both recognised, and attempted to demonstrate through practice, the benefits of collaborative partnerships. Studying educational developments in their historical context can also help to achieve this criticality. Raising levels of historical awareness can open 'the teachers' eyes to the real nature of their work'.<sup>32</sup> Simon warns us that 'living unquestioningly in the immediate present is to run the danger of developing a conditioned response to current practice; a set of attitudes unconsciously determined rather than consciously formed . . . a feeling of powerlessness against the apparent immutable norms of institutional practices transmitted across time by teachers to teachers'.<sup>33</sup>

This thesis did not set out to provide an acknowledgement for a small group of educationists still awaiting the recognition their work deserves. Their achievements were important, not so much for the impact they had but for demonstrating what might have been. The EPA project showed that at a local level, it was possible to open up new possibilities for dialogue between schools and the communities they served. Schools form their own communities and the experiments with communication showed that the community created by the school could generate far more interaction than it was currently doing. Red House was a conduit that would allow this process to happen. A doctor's surgery, which fell fortuitously into the hands of the WREPA team, therefore represents the real legacy of the EPA idea. It can be small details, like the availability of the doctor's surgery, which open up possibilities for changes to happen. The alignment of certain factors: people, finances, political will, research evidence, can combine to open the door at a particular point in time. This door may close as quickly as it opens due to the transitory nature of the careers of people who hold power and the forces acting upon them.

Governments, and academics engaged in state-funded research projects, may choose to pay little attention to past experiences. This does not mean that the past

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 17.

should not be documented as far as possible. At some point, the architects of education policy may choose to consult the historical record of their predecessors more comprehensively. If so, it may be that this account of the north of England EPA projects proves useful to all concerned with the enduring problem of education, deprivation, and failure.

## **Interviews**

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## **Primary archived sources**

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