Occasional Paper 4

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Developing approaches in the community

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Note: Some proof-reading corrections have been made for this digital version of the occasional paper. While no substantive changes have been made to the text, the layout and typeface has changed and with it, the page numbering has altered.

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Introduction

Comparatively little has been written about the practice of political education in settings outside the classroom. In this paper I hope to redress some of this neglect. Rather than provide accounts of practice I have tried to set out some of the main intellectual debates concerning political education and to construct an analytical framework for understanding the work that is occuring. The paper outlines:

* a working definition of political education;

* some important debates within 'political education';

* a typology of approaches to political education utilised by educators 'in the community'; and

* some key dimensions of this political education practice.

'In the community' has been used as a convenient shorthand expression to describe the location of the work under discussion. At one level making a distinction between say, the school on one hand, and the community on the other is nonsensical. The school is part of the local social systems that many see as constituting the community. In this sense the educator is as much 'in the community' when teaching the third year French, as s/he is when engaged in a heated discussion about modern art in the Over-60s Lunch Club. However, when approached symbolically a rather different picture emerges (Cohen, 1985). Here I am concerned with the educator's 'locus of identity' (Wallman, 1984, p. 214). In other words I am concerned with the activities of those educators who feel themselves to be working with structures and forms which are labelled as being of the community. The paper is focused on work that is currently occurring within youth work although I have also included material from community work and from adult education.

I felt it was important to write something about the activities of educators in this sector because there is a serious lack of any sustained analysis or consideration of political education beyond the formal educational institution. Such work, which has been variously described as 'extra mural' (Porter, 1983),

'non-formal' (Fordham et al, 1979) and 'community education' (Fletcher, 1980), is making a significant contribution towards the development of a political education which directly engages the experiences of everyday living. The starting point for much of the work discussed here is those very experiences. Progress has been made in developing programmes that either provide information that helps people to analyse and act upon the political dimensions of their existence or that helps them construct a context for reflection, theory making and action.

The lack of attention to this area is surprising given the very pervasiveness of this form of learning. In this paper I am concerned with the contribution of youth workers and, to a degree, community workers. My analysis here is limited to political education involving such workers and thus only briefly touches upon the mass of learning projects undertaken by individuals. The significance of this area cannot be underestimated and has to be considered in the light of what we now know of political socialisation.

As David Marsh and others have shown, most of the assumptions about the relevance of youthful attitudes to adulthood and the political system are open to serious questioning (Marsh, 1971; Stacey, 1978). One writer comments,

> Political socialisation is now seen more as a continuous process, going beyond childhood to cover adolescence and adulthood. Such a shift of attention accords a larger role to cognitive factors and to the impact of political events. It also accords more emphasis to socialisation as an interactive process, one in which the individual plays a creative role as learner and user of information (Kavanagh, 1984, p.39).

The lack of attention to both adult political education and to those enterprises that involve people playing a more creative role as learners and actors therefore needs remedying.

In addition, I believe that the development of political education practice in youth work and community work raises a number of questions about the nature of political education that have not been fully addressed in the literature. Specifically I want to focus on the necessity to come to terms with the ideological nature of endeavours in this area and the impact this has upon practice and practitioners.

This paper began as an attempt to clear my head of a number of thoughts about political education that had accumulated since 1978 when I started with

the NAYC Political Education Project. The first paper I wrote came to some three times the length of this and rambled in an incoherent way through all sorts of backwaters. A number of people have helped me out of that indulgence. In particular I must express my thanks to Alex Porter for his comments on the earlier draft and Sara Marshall for her editing of the final paper.

Mark Smith
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1. Defining political education

My concern in this short chapter is to establish a working definition of political education. It is an area rich with rhetoric and good intention. In guiding the search for definition, five elements appear to be important. It should be clearly recognised in the definition that:

* the process of learning is deliberate and purposeful;

* self-initiated and conducted learning projects can be included;

* learning is not only concerned with knowledge and skills but also with attitudes and values;

* the process is directed towards both thinking and action; and

* the conception of politics utilised is explicit. I want to look at each of these briefly.

First it should be clear that the process is deliberate and purposeful in that the people concerned are seeking to acquire knowledge, skills or attitudes. However such purpose and intention may not always involve closely specified goals. For instance a community group wanting to influence council policy on say, housing, may spend a considerable amount of time in enquiries that are inappropiate because they are unable to specify what actual knowledge and skills are required to achieve their broad objective. Learning may well be haphazard and therefore unsuccessful at times (Brookfield, 1983, p.15).

Thus whilst it may be a process of which the learner is aware, outcomes may be intended or unintended. Does the educator have to share this awareness? Lawson argues that both 'teacher' and 'learner' must share learning objectives if an enterprise is to be considered educational (Lawson, 1974). Such a criteria could not be strictly applied here as we have already noted that there may not be closely specified goals. Perhaps then there will be agreement about broad aims?

Here again there may not be such agreement. The 'teacher' may have one set of curriculae concerns, the 'learners' a completely different set. For instance a worker may wish to develop a group's ability to work together and attempt to use the organisation of an Annual General Meeting to accomplish this task. However members of the group may be far more interested in learning about the processes involved in Annual General Meetings or indeed the outcome of the meeting. To overcome this problem we have to go back to the word 'learning' which can be used as both a verb, 'to learn', and as a noun, the outcome of the process (Brookfield, 1983, p.15). Rather than there necessarily being agreement about the outcome (learning as an internal change of consciousness), there may be agreement about the process.

This leads to a second major question - does there have to be two separate people labelled 'educator' and 'learner'? In common-sense usage there does not - we talk, for instance, of self-education. Also there is a mounting body of evidence concerning adult learning. In one report it was claimed that self-planned and self-initiated learning accounted for approximately two-thirds of the total learning efforts of adults in the USA (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 1979, p.20). For the sake of clarity it is helpful to think of there being two tasks - the first concerned with the process of enabling learning and the second with the actual study itself. These two tasks may be undertaken by the same person. When constructing a definition it must be clear that the process does not necessarily involve the direct intervention of any institutions or groups or individuals other than the learners themselves.

Third, given the restricted use to which the word 'education' is sometimes put, it is necessary to state I am concerned with the learning of attitudes and values ('feelings') as well as the acquisition of skills and knowledge. In order that we may both think and act we must be motivated and have a set of moral principles by which to judge our activities. We also have to call on a range of psychomotor and cognitive skills and an appropriate store of knowledge.

Fourth, one of the strengths of recent concerns with political education in this country is that it has not simply been directed at understanding political ideas and processes. It has also sought to encourage the active involvement of people in those ideas and processes. Proponents of action orientated approaches have attempted to meet the criticism raised by Oakeshott and others, that it is only through actual participation in politics that truly effective political education (in the sense of increased political activity) is likely to take place (Oakeshott, 1962, pp.111-136).

> The ultimate test of political literacy lies in creating a proclivity to action, not in achieving more theoretical analysis. The political literate person would be capable of active participation (or positive refusal to participate) and should not be excluded from the opportunity to participate merely because of lack of the prerequisite knowledge and skills....We are not trying to achieve a condition of ecumenical mutual exhaustion, rather a more vigorous kind of tolerance of real views and real behaviour (Crick and Porter, 1978, p. 41).

Whilst 'knowing about something' may create a proclivity to action it is assumed here that there is a higher possibility of motivation if the learning process engages with the experience of action itself. Thus any definition must make explicit a concern with both thinking and action.

Lastly a definition of this area of endeavour requires some delineation of what constitutes 'politics'.

If we examine the literature of the academic discipline 'Politics', we find competing and potentially contradictory definitions. To what phenomena does the word apply? Is it something that can happen in all societies through time or is it restricted to those with a particular form of social organisation? Is it something that happens around 'governments' or that can be seen in all of social experience? If politics is concerned with government and the legitimate use of force, then is it only found in the 'public' sphere and not the 'private'? If this is the case, how do we distinguish between public and private? (Leftwich, 1984, p.1).

A further set of questions follows from these - how do distinctive definitions of politics influence what is or should be 'taught' in the discipline of 'Politics' or in the activity known as political education?

My own starting point is the assumption that any definition advanced will be contested. At this stage it is worth noting two reasons for disagreement. First as the commodities all definitions of politics deal with (be they power, authority, government, or whatever) are much sought after, those who possess that commodity will be keen to retain it and will therefore seek to impose or encourage a definition of politics that serves their own interest. Thus, for instance, a spokesman for the Manpower Services Commission defined the area as follows: 'an activity is deemed to be political if it advances a new strategy' (The Guardian, November 3 1983). In making this statement MSC officials were

seeking to eliminate discussion of a number of issues from the Community Programme. These issues included nuclear disarmament, the level of benefits for the unemployed and government legislation concerning employment and trade union rights. Here a state agency is labelling something as 'political' within an educational or training context and then using that label as a means of excluding the area from discussion. More usual for agencies and governments who wish to preserve the status quo is the attempt to take issues out of the political arena and into administrative and technical concerns. Thus the high level of unemployment is not portrayed as the result of a series of political decisions but has to do with either forces beyond our control or the self-evident technical needs of the economy. In this sense the debate over the definition of politics has profound political implications.

Second, there are considerations and disagreements about manageability. The definition of politics may be so wide or diffuse that the subject matter loses any clear focus or becomes so tight that it is unnecessarily restrictive. Thus at one extreme we have definitions of politics that restrict themselves to the distribution, maintenance or transfer of power at the level of the state (for instance, Crick, 1964, p. 21) at another, definitions which make politics coterminous with manifestations of power and hence a tremendous range of social relations (Worsley, 1964, pp16-7). This particular formulation of politics can be found in some feminist thinking and has entered the vocabulary through the slogan 'the personal is political'.

Within some Marxist thought it could be said that at the most general level there is an insistence that the separation between the political, economic, social and cultural parts of the social whole is artificial and arbitrary. Thus the idea of 'economics' being free from 'politics' would be discounted and instead of economics we might talk of political economy. Ralph Miliband has commented on this:

> On this view, politics is the pervasive and ubiquitous articulation of social conflict and particularly of class conflict, and enters all social relations, however these may be designated. But this very pervasiveness of politics appears to rob it of its specific character and seems to make it less susceptible to particular treatment, save in the formal description of processes and institutions which Marxists have precisely wanted to avoid. (Miliband, 1977, p6)

Some other readings of Marx have tended to present politics as a highly determined or conditioned activity which grows directly out of the relationships

of production. As such it does not have any substantial degree of autonomy and is entirely subsidiary to the mode of production of material life.

If we take this sort of 'collapsed' reading of politics, then there can be little justification for a separate activity labelled 'political education'. Clearly, having got so far, that is not the view taken here. The starting point is that there is a range of activities and ideas that can be said to have a distinctive quality which is 'political'. Within this discourse there can be said to be two poles which Leftwich has characterised as process orientated and arena orientated:

> I think it is fair to say that the single most important factor involved in influencing the way people implicitly or explicitly conceive of politics is whether they define it primarily in terms of a process, or whether they define it terms of the place or places where it happens, that is in terms of an arena, or institutional forum. Those who tend to regard politics as being confined to certain activities within a certain kind of forum (the state, the institutions of government, etc.) will be less inclined to accept that politics is much more generalized process in human societies. On the other hand, those who see it as a process will be more inclined to identify it in a far wider range of groups, institutions and societies than the former group (Leftwich, 1984, pp10-11).

Undoubtedly there is an overlap between the two approaches. Writers with an arena orientation will sometimes see it as a process, but a process which is confined to certain institutions. Similarly those who see politics as a process may confine it to some institutions and exclude others. For most people, as Leftwich points out, the definition of what politics is will fall at a point formed where the dimensions of process and arena intersect for them.

My own orientation is to process, and I have tended to see politics as the ways and means by which social conflict (and particularly class conflict) is manifested. Sheldon Wolin has suggested that politics would include the following:

> a) a form of activity centring around the quest for competitive advantage between groups, individuals or societies;

> b) a form of activity conditioned by the fact that it occurs within a situation of change and relative scarcity; and

c) a form of activity in which the pursuit of advantage produces consequences of such magnitude that they affect in a significant way the whole society or a substantial part of it (Wolin, 1960, pp10-11).

If we then take the view that politics is about the power relationships that significantly affect the way societies work, then those relationships can be seen in debates between the political parties but also experienced in our everyday lives. The institutions in which we live, such as the family, school or club, reflect society-wide differences in power. These differences appear in relations between the sexes or between adults and young people for example. There is therefore a constant political dimension to our lives but what becomes significant is the nature of and means by which the dominant models of relationships, such as the family, are constructed and maintained.

However it is important that in any definition of political education we adopt here, we do not exclude significant areas of practice and discourse that are either self-consciously 'political' or that approximate to one of the areas of thought so far described. In other words for the purpose of investigation we must attempt to hold the debate over the definition of politics within our formulation of political education. There may well be insurmountable obstacles to this. As we have already seen there is an inevitable contest about the meaning attached to that which is political. One possible way through is to view this contest as essential. In other words to view 'politics' as an essentially contested concept. This would mean that it is one of a family of concepts, '...the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about the proper uses on the part of the users' (Gallie, 1955-6, pp. 167-198).

Given the relationship of any conceptualisation of politics to particular ideological systems and the way in which different definitions of politics structure thinking and action, there seems little option but to recognise that there will be endless debates about the word's 'proper' use. Where ruling classes rely on the ability to define politics in such a way as to take key areas of policy out of the arena of politics (as has been the case to some extent with unemployment in Great Britain in recent years), then there can be no way of getting agreement, unless that agreement is itself based on an ability to impose definition.

Accepting this we then might end up with a somewhat tautological definition such as the following: 'Political education is a conscious process by which people gain the knowledge, skills and feelings necessary to think and act

politically', where people can then read their own definition of politics into the equation.

Such a way of progressing leaves me unhappy as it gives no indication of the way I might be using 'political' here. If we follow Leftwich's discussion then it is possible to conceive of the process definition as including aspects of the arena definition, but as reaching further. We can therefore take a process definition and embrace the debate. Inevitably such a course will be contested but it does at least contain elements of both conceptualisations.

At first sight those who would wish to collapse the definition of politics into the whole range of social relationships pose a serious difficulty. Here there may be no way of reconciling the contested definitions in any procedurally meaningful way. In such circumstances the simplest way of progressing is to exclude this conception of politics from the investigation. This I propose to do. We therefore arrive at the following working definition:

> Political education is the conscious process by which people individually or collectively develop the knowledge, skills and feelings necessary to understand and act upon the institutions and processes that significantly affect society or a substantial part of it.

Here I am taking 'society' to mean a tribe, a nation state or an empire and 'institution' a group of people organised for a specific purpose or purposes. The 'processes' referred to include those activities involved with the generation of ideas.

This definition has the merit of recognising the concerns we have been discussing here. It sees political education as:

* a conscious process;

* an activity open to both individual and collective endeavour;

* including the learning of attitudes and values (feelings);

* being concerned with both thinking and acting; and

* holding within it debates about the nature of the political, (here the important word in the definition is 'significantly'.)

For the remainder of the paper this is what will be meant by political education unless otherwise stated. However, before leaving questions of definition it is

important to examine the extent to which political education can be conceived of as a distinct and separate area of activity. So far it has been argued that there is a phenomenon known as politics which people may learn about, but this does not necessarily imply a separate subject activity called 'political education'.

To some extent this question was present in some of the debates around the Programme for Political Education (Crick and Porter, 1978) and the earlier concern with Citizenship. The Programme was concerned with two distinct contexts for developing 'political literacy' - through the teaching of the traditional subjects which are commonly found in the curriculum, as well as through general courses which would include an explicit political education module. Much of the debate centred around what appeared the best way to ensure a widespread adoption of political literacy in the curriculum. Thus some arguments tended to ebb and flow around the advantages afforded by being recognised as a 'subject' on the timetable and the pressures that might lead to that not being realised. At a more fundamental level there were those who advocated a detailed scrutiny of existing subject curriculae in order to enable a rather more vigorous exploration of the political dimensions of what was already being taught (Heater, 1978).

The same debate has been present within youth work where there has been a tradition of dealing with areas such as political education as an 'issue' - something that can be simply bolted on to youth work programmes. A couple of evenings of political education and it's 'done'. Set against this are those who argue that it is necessary to politicise the whole of youth work practice.

> Many of us would argue that the site of political education is not our institution but the lives and experiences of those with whom we work. If we see young people as active and not just victims of poverty, state brutality and the wretchedness that turns people in on themselves and their own with violence, then we begin to sensitise ourselves to their engagement and resistance. The task then is not to make them our clients in our quest for truth and justice but to make ourselves their allies in their struggle.....The response of such workers is not the development of political education that is additional to youth work but the development of political youth work practice (Smart, 1985, p.42).

The focus on political education in this paper is in no way meant to suggest that the politicisation of youth work practice is undesirable. If we adopt a

process orientated understanding of politics, then it is difficult to see how something called political education can be compartmentalised and 'done'. Politics is a thread that runs through all social experience and hence the opportunity for thinking and acting politically is present in any social situation. Rather the focus here is born out of a belief that at certain points, even in a politicised practice, a more concentrated approach is required, and time needed for distinct political education activities such as courses and programmed activity. However the central point is that it is possible to take action of a profoundly political kind in our personal lives and in the way we work as educators. The material we are dealing with may or may not be political in itself, but the way we work with it is.

2. From citizenship to struggle

In this chapter I set out some of the background to the debates about political education in the United Kingdom. Most of these debates have concerned schooling or further education. In particular I have focused on the ideas of 'citizenship' and 'political literacy', debates about the extent to which schools can engage in action based or experiential forms of political education and the alternative forms that have appeared in Black Studies and Women's Studies. The treatment here is necessarily incomplete so I have included appropriate references wherever possible.

From citizenship to political literacy

Interest in the teaching of politics in British schools is often portrayed as largely belonging to two particular periods this century (Brennan, 1981). The first period was the 1930s and is perhaps best represented in the work of the Association for Education in Citizenship. This Association was founded in 1934 by a group of educationalists and public figures. The second period, the 1970s to the present day is perhaps best known through its concern with 'political literacy' and developments connected with the Programme for Political Education and latterly the developing interest in Peace and Conflict Studies. The 'two period thesis' can tend to tunnel vision. For example, the 'social studies movement' of the 1940s and early 1950s and the 'new social studies' movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, sought to 'make explicit teaching about and/or for life in contemporary society a more central feature of the school curriculum' (Whitty, 1985, p.150). However, what a focus on the twin peaks does highlight, is the relative lack of importance generally assigned to this area within the schooling arena. When compared with, say, the scale of support for, and debate about, citizenship education in the United States the contrast is immediate (Morrissett and Williams 1981).

The Association for Education in Citizenship has been portrayed as a model of middle ground political intervention into questions of education (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1981). Its intention was to unite a broad range of support around the following Object:

> To advance training in citizenship, by which is meant training in the moral qualities necessary for the citizens of a democracy, the encouragement of clear thinking in everyday affairs, and the acquisition of a knowledge of the modern world. (Association for Education in Citizenship, 1935).

The good citizen of a democratic state would therefore need the following qualities:

> 1. A deep concern for the freedom and good life of his fellows.

> 2. Such knowledge and power of clear thinking as will enable him to form sound judgements as to the main problems of politics and to decide wisely which party will be most likely to achieve the ends he desires.

> 3. The power to select men of wisdom, integrity, and courage as public representatives, and such knowledge of his own limitations as will dispose him to trust and follow his chosen leaders (Simon in AEC, 1935, pp.9-10)

Within the Association there was a debate about the proper place of these concerns in the total curriculum of the school. Some favoured the direct teaching of politics, while others advocated the teaching of citizenship through the development of existing subject areas. In the end it would appear that it was the latter group that prevailed in its efforts. The Association produced various papers and books that outlined the way in which citizenship could be introduced into the teaching of the various subject areas. Stress was put on moral qualities, and familiar questions such as bias and indoctrination were discussed. However, as the tone of the Object might suggest, the programme could be judged as grandiose, vague and elitist (Tapper and Salter, 1978 p.69). The rather grand nature of its aims and the proposed utilisation of existing subject areas perhaps contributed to the failure to significantly increase the teaching of politics in schools.

Tapper and Salter have argued that there may have been more fundamental reasons for this failure. It could be that the efficiency of implicit forms of political education was such that explicit forms were superfluous, or that the wider political context changed with advent of war, so that what appeared as an attractive proposition seemed less relevant in the new circumstances. Further disagreements as to the nature of the ideal democratic citizen, and the possible conflict over the political effects of civics education, may also have

diminished support for its goals (ibid, p.69). The rise of Nazism in Germany had provided a powerful stimulant for the Association - it was felt that an informed citizenry was a powerful counterbalance to fascism. However with the declaration of war the picture changed dramatically - patriotism, the national interest, and the need to 'support our boys' now provided rather more powerful forms of socialisation.

As the war progressed, the place of schooling in society and post-war reconstruction became an important element in discussions about welfare policy. Then in the context of the reformist social policies implemented by the Labour Government in the second half of the 1940s, notions of 'relevance' and 'education for all' 'stimulated further consideration of the role of social studies in secondary education' (Gleeson and Whitty, 1976, P.4). One of the key figures in what came to be known as the Social Studies Movement was James Hemmings. He argued for broadly-based social studies which made significant use of activity methods, and which challenged the traditional organisation of the secondary school curriculum:

> The outlook is essentially broad and exploratory and the course is broken up into a series of correlated units of study rather than conducted as a rigid sequence of lessons. It thus offers endless opportunities for active learning; for relating the lesson to contemporary events; for cooperative study by the form as a group (1949, quoted in Gleeson and Whitty, op cit, p. 5).

The movement was to fall foul of the strength of 'subjects' as the central organising category of the English school curriculum and 'the jealous defence of those subject slots by more traditional subjects' (Whitty, 1985, p. 151). These pressures became particularly acute as secondary modern schools were increasingly forced to compete with grammar schools on their own ground.

Rather than challenging the central organising values of the secondary system, proponents of the 'New Social Studies' in the 1960s sought to upgrade the status and rigour of social studies and called for greater 'relevance' in the curriculum. The broad direction of the movement was towards the establishment of sociology and a sociology-based social studies as a subject in the secondary school curriculum. At the same time the rhetoric was similar to that which had preceded it. In what came to be seen as the representative text of the movement, Lawton and Dufour talk of, 'the practical need for young people to develop an awareness and understanding of their own society' (1973, p.26). However, as Whitty has commented, 'although initially the new social

studies movement paid some lip-service to the alternative utilitarian and pedagogic traditions in English education, its central thrust involved the acceptance of the values of the dominant academic tradition' (ibid, p. 156). In doing so it lost claim to the 'relevance' it apparently coveted.

More recent debates about political education by educationalists in the formal sector could be said to have started from criticisms of the established examination curricula. Thus, Harber (amongst many others) has suggested that the formation of the Politics Association in 1969 was significant in that its members main concern,

> initially was to change the nature of what passed for politics at 'A' level. This meant moving away from what was termed 'British Constitution' with its stress on the mechanistic and legalistic description of the main institutions of central government to a more realistic approach which emphasised political behaviour and included non-governmental organisations and processes such as political parties, pressure groups, the mass media, voting behaviour, etc (Harber, 1984, p. 114).

The concern about the nature of the curriculum went beyond the teaching of 'A' level students. In 1974 the Hansard Society and the Politics Association launched the Programme for Political Education. The first discussion document states:

> We want to get away from the idea of a 'politics syllabus' which is a progressive simplification of a university discipline. Rather we plan to build from the bottom up by examining early perceptions of politics in non-academic contexts and streams, and to elaborate a growing process of political literacy through whatever discipline (in most of which the influence of 'political science' on the teacher is obviously only a very small factor) (Crick and Porter (Eds.), 1978, p. 34).

The main characteristics of this approach can be summed up as follows:

1) a very broad definition of politics. The concept is not restricted to the affairs of state or to the activities of political parties and pressure groups but refers also to group behaviour at school, in the workplace, trade unions, within the local community and in most other activities of everyday life;

2) an inductive approach to the teaching of politics through political issues. That is to say, an understanding of the political process is thought to be best

acquired through considering what happens when institutions and other groups deal with those problems arising when people with differing interests and beliefs disagree about what should be done, why and how;

3) an emphasis on the development of concepts and conceptual frameworks for understanding political activities;

4) emphasis is also given to the acquisition of practical knowledge and politically relevant skills, i.e. for communicating one's own ideas and beliefs, influencing others and participating in the making of decisions (Stradling 1981 pp.95-6).

The impact of the debates about political literacy within schooling has been significant. In 1979 almost 80% of schools surveyed claimed that they were providing some form of political education (quoted in Porter, 1984, p.103). Porter also cites the continuing contributions to the literature of political literacy from practising teachers based on their experiences in the classroom (ibid, p. 105). However, substantial amounts of politics teaching in schools remains situated in the traditional examination subjects such as British Constitution, or in small scale adjustments to the pastoral curriculum.

The present British debate about political education is seen by Porter (1982) and Harber (1984) as operating around what might called conservative and liberal-reformist positions. It is suggested that civics-orientated and British Constitutional approaches, with their focus on a certain set of institutions and the ways in which individuals and groups can influence their behaviour, come close to a conservative model, and differ in a number of ways from the political literacy approach, which is rather more 'liberal-reformist' in nature. Harber draws on Porter (1982) when he writes:

> More recent approaches...try to describe what actually happens and see conflict and controversy as at the core of politics. Traditional civics methods rely heavily on transmission methods of teaching - textbooks and 'talk and chalk' - and as a result tend to stress factual knowledge and the one right answer. Newer political education methods are more diverse...The civics approach implicitly promotes obedience, trust and conformity with the informed voter as the most desirable model of political participation whereas the liberal-reformist model seeks to promote personal autonomy, efficacy and a critical frame of mind and goes beyond voting to consider more active forms of participation... Finally, recent approaches in political education

tend to be more global in nature (world studies, peace studies, development studies etc.) rather than the, by definition, more parochial nature of British Constitution (Harber, 1984, pp.116-7)

We need to treat these assertions of difference with care - particularly because the author has, in effect, brought a whole range of approaches under the heading of the liberal-reformist model rather than simply that of political literacy. Thus for instance many of the central writers of political literacy also have a tendency to stress consensus and perhaps play down conflict and controversy. Here politics is seen as the process through which conflicts of interest and values within a group are conciliated (Crick and Porter, 1978).

Similarly we should not simply compare newer approaches with British Constitution and declare their relative lack of parochialism. They must also be compared with 'citizenship', which in certain formulations had a significant internationalist perspective as can be seen from the aims of the Association of Education in Citizenship.

In addition I question the way in which Harber presents the civics approach. Whilst there may be a tendency towards these things, the way it is actually worked out and applied in practice must lead us to treating Harber's assertions with care. Much of his questioning turns upon the degree to which commitment to the system is stressed either implicitly or explicitly. In fact the approach, as it is found in youth work and community work may well carry an ideological orientation not too dissimilar to the liberal-reformist ideology that has been described.

Problems in the academy

Whilst action-based approaches have been able to develop in youth work and community work, major problems have been encountered with these forms within formal educational institutions. Tapper and Salter in their survey of political education suggest that there are three main approaches associated with the school:

> An issue orientation organised according to a conceptual schema, and in Crick's case dedicated to furthering certain procedural goals; the attempt to provide practical forms of political education by stimulating participation within school societies and school decision making bodies; and less certainly, using the school as a basis for

community action which will involve pupils in issues affecting their day-to-day lives (Tapper and Salter, 1978, p.83).

It is their contention that none of these approaches indicate why the school should be an effective agent of political education. Whilst direct political education may have limited pedagogical advantages over the more implicit forms of political instruction, this is not necessarily the same thing as saying that it can achieve its stated ends. I want to look at the arguments about the two action-based forms Tapper and Salter have outlined as these parallel the approaches in youth work and community work.

Entwistle (1971) has provided one of the best-known explorations of the school as a micro-political institution which can be used to develop young people's political knowledge and skills. He examines some of the areas, such as school societies and school councils, where school students can become involved in decision making processes that affect the institution. Ungoed-Thomas (1972) has also described how democratic activity may be encouraged at secondary school level.

A number of questions have been raised about this type of approach in relation to schools. The most obvious of these is that pupils are only 'playing at politics' and are not engaged in real politics at all, 'for real politics is about power upon which real and important differences of outcome may depend' (Wringe, 1984, p.102). This criticism is most obvious when the activities concerned are things like mock elections. However, we also need to examine the extent to which any decisions that young people may be making in these settings are actually 'real'. For instance, the history of school councils is a very mixed one. In some places they have been little more than talking shops, in others there has been an attempt to give them control over an area of funding, in still other examples they have been a meeting place for students, teaching staff and support staff where they can discuss areas of common concern. The problem is, as Tapper and Salter point out, the extent to which such bodies can have real responsibilities or will be allowed to have such responsibilities.

Further there is a related question about how the boundaries to pupil participation are to be legitimated. For instance are there certain decision making areas pupils are to be excluded from because responsibility lies elsewhere, and there is nothing the school can do about this? Or is their exclusion to be based upon an assessment of a student's development - he or she has not yet acquired the experience to tackle such problems? (Tapper and Salter, 1978, p.79).

In addition, there are serious questions about the notion of 'participation' that is often adopted in this context. There is a tendency to view the school as a harmonious community and the idea of participation can be used with the aim of increasing pupils' commitment to the school without necessarily altering the nature of the power relations within it. There are, therefore, two major problems. First, schools are not harmonious communities and second, it is difficult to envisage any meaningful 'participation' when Entwistle himself says that, 'the government of most schools still approximates to that of the totalitarian state rather than to a democratic model' (1971, p.35). This point can be seen clearly when examining the experience of black students, where, as a minority group they are:

> ...virtually unrepresented in the teaching profession and suffering racial discrimination at the hands of white teachers and students. In order to express their political aspirations, black students have had to form **parallel** organisations in their youth clubs, churches, associations and supplementary schools, thus contributing to their relative isolation from mainstream school activity (Reeves and Chevannes, 1984, p.182).

Reeves and Chevannes are also making an important point here about the extent to which the development of political education in the community may contribute towards to a form of 'quietism' in the schools (ibid, p. 183). If it is suggested that certain forms of political education are only possible outside the formal sector, (or indeed that political learning can only be achieved in an extra-mural context), then there is a readymade set of excuses for not examining the way the school is experienced as a political institution and for not attempting to address the consequent injustices. In this way much can be avoided.

A further objection has been raised by Wringe and later can be seen in our typology where a distinction is made between 'leadership' and 'participation'. It could be argued that schools councils and the like do not provide education in participant democracy at all, but education in leadership for the few and political passivity for the many:

> It is rarely the case that candidates for school office are able to present alternative policies between which their electorate may choose. Voters therefore simply have to choose the "best person" to represent them in the best traditions of democracy in its elitist form (Wringe, 1984, p.103).

The second approach to action based political education outlined by Tapper and Salter, unlike the first, does seek to put young people into a direct engagement with the political systems beyond the walls of the school. At one level those systems may be those which are traditionally seen as being political. Here the idea may be to encourage young people in their efforts to find expression for their own views or those of the community of which they are a part. This may result in active campaigning around particular issues as diverse as nuclear disarmament or the lack of bus shelters. Such an approach produces (or would produce) many problems for schools in the current political climate. The charge of indoctrination springs very easily to politicians' lips.

A major problem occurs here in that such groupings of young people will not be organisationally separate from the school. Not only does this mean that actions of the group will directly reflect upon the school and their freedom be limited but it also severely hampers the potential for learning as people are not in a position to take responsibility for their actions. In other words young people are denied the opportunity to form and guide what Entwistle calls 'micro-institutions'. Such institutions are an integral part of his advocacy of 'associational democracy':

> This conception is based on the assumption that it is those micro-institutions (economic, cultural, educational, religious, philanthropic, recreational) encountered by people in their daily lives which offer them the reality of participating in the management of affairs which touch them closely in relation to their work, their play, their domestic affairs, as well as in their dispositions to be altruistic or charitable in relation to their fellow men... Nor is associational democracy merely the politics of the parish pump. Voluntary associations are the channels through which, for most of us, engagement with politics at the macro-level is possible (Entwistle, 1981, p.245).

If formal educational institutions are to be involved in developing this sort of approach to political education, then they have to be in a position to allow young people to form their own autonomous organisations.

In addition there are a number of practical problems - which neighbourhoods who regularly get community work students can testify to. One can imagine 'community action' appearing at a particular moment on the termly timetable, at which point students scour the neighbourhood for issues to campaign on.

End of term and the whole thing is dropped. Where such a campaign grows out from the work or experience of a local group such as a youth club or pensioners group then there is usually a rather different level of commitment, one which is not bound by timetabling and curriculum.

When examining action-based approaches and the way they have been mediated by the structure and nature of schooling it is difficult to see how the school as it is currently organised can provide an effective means of delivering action-based forms of political education. The experience of schooling in this respect would appear to place certain markers for any examination of political education practice in the community. In particular it is necessary to be aware of the extent to which any action-based enterprise is actually concerned with real politics. Does the practice under investigation consciously attempt to connect with those institutions and practices that significantly affect society or a significant part of it? Do any bodies have significant areas of responsibility and discretion?

Similarly we must pay attention to the way in which activities are legitimated and located. In other words, do bodies have both power and authority to carry out their tasks? Centrally, it is necessary to ask in whose interests political education may be operating: to what extent is it used in order to create in young people an acceptance of the institutions in which they are operating? How far does the development of community-based initiatives contribute to political passiveness within major institutions such as schools? Lastly, we must address the relation of any action-based approaches to the communities where they are located. Is there mutuality in any exchanges?

The development of Black Studies and Women's Studies

Porter, in his review of developments in political education since the Programme for Political Education initiative in the 1970s, suggests that the most significant development has been what he terms the 'single issue' approach to political education.

> Political education has become applied political literacy. Instead of promoting knowledge of 'the main political issues and disputes', many political educators have focused on a single theme and sought to develop a political awareness through a study of that one issue (Porter, 1985, p. 107).

Perhaps the most widely publicised example has been Peace Studies (Thacker, 1983; NUT, 1984). However, there have been many other areas treated in this way - the Third World, gender, race and human rights (Stradling et al, 1984; Hicks and Townley, 1982). In the wake of this there has been discussion about the way in which so called 'controversial' issues may be taught within schools (Stradling et al 1984). Inevitably there are major debates about a concept such as this, as what controversy can in effect mean is that a topic offends the sensibilities of someone or some people who have influence.

These developments cannot be seen in isolation from far-reaching changes that have occurred in society as a whole. The development of black political organisation and the re-emergence of the women's movement have led to the construction of courses around Black Studies and Women's' Studies. Their significance in the immediate context is the way in which they interconnect with developments within youth work and community work, and the fact that they come from outside the tradition of political literacy and look outside the school or formal educational institution for much of their thinking, legitimacy and power.

In recent years sustained critiques of youth work practice have appeared by feminists (for example Little, 1984; N Smith, 1984) and from those writing from a Black Consciousness perspective (John, 1981). Linked with this has been the development of distinctly feminist or black forms of youth work. These have made a significant impact upon the area. A comparison of government reports on the Youth Service (Fairbairn-Milson: DES, 1969; Thompson: HMSO, 1982) demonstrates something of this movement. As has already been indicated some of this work has developed in response to the perceived failures of the schooling system.

Whilst there has been a tradition of black political activism within this country for centuries (Fryer, 1984) this took on significantly different forms in the late Sixties and early Seventies. As Bryan et al comment:

> Never before had there been such an obvious level of fervent activity
> and debate around the issues which affected our day-to day lives in
> Britain. Racist immigration laws, second-class state education,
> treatment by the police, discriminatory housing and employment
> policies were exposed, confronted and denounced in every
> community where Black people figured (1985, pp.142-3).

Policy makers became increasingly concerned with black disaffection with the educational system and were forced to recognise its existence and develop policies to contain it. The rationale for policy makers' involvement in Black Studies appeared to be fairly straight-forward. This was to balance out the white bias in British education by giving black young people the opportunities to learn about Africa and instil in them a sense of dignity, even pride, in being African (Cashmore and Troyna, 1982, p.20).

As Reeves and Chevannes have commented, this has resulted in attempts to alter school regimes and curricula so that they cater for racial minority needs or, perhaps more accurately, to reduce the friction being generated between the schools and black parents and children. They summarise these initiatives under the following headings: language teaching, multi-cultural curricula, programmes of Black Studies, equal opportunity schemes, community involvement, and various kinds of extra-curricula activity. The power of some of these early initiatives is captured in the following:

> We started with Black Studies. We went to the Head and asked her to let us set up a Black Studies debating society. She was really shocked and upset by it all. She kept saying, 'But why, we're all one here'. So we went off to join the Black Studies Programme at Tulse Hill School until she gave in. That's when we began to come into our own. We started with the Black berets and carried it through, right down to Black socks and shoes! That's also when I went to my first Black meeting. I heard a Black woman speak there, and I was really impressed with her. Seeing a Black woman up there on the platform made me feel even more enthusiastic (quoted in Bryan, ibid, p.143).

However the results were often limited:

> What has to be recognised ...is that policy makers have nearly always taken these initiatives reluctantly against a background of pressure from professionals unable or unwilling to cope with the strains of the multi-racial school, black parents and students who saw the school as a hostile, unsympathetic environment, and a white population deeply opposed to accepting black people on the basis of equality. Inevitably the outcome is cautious, and primarily concerned with accommodating black children in existing social structures (Reeves and Chevannes, 1984, pp.180-1).

The introduction of 'Black Studies' may actually increase educational inequality for, as Sarup has argued, the emphasis of some programmes upon mental health goals such as the achievement of an enhanced self-concept, can actually be at the expense of academic achievement (1986, p. 35). The idea that 'under-achievement' in education by black young people was connected with a poor self-image or self-concept has received a considerable and justifiable debunking in relation to Afro-Caribbean young people (Stone, 1981). She argues for the use of more formal methods aimed at the acquisition of concrete knowledge and skills. Indeed the organisation of supplementary schooling by black parents and community groups directed precisely at this teaching of basic skills is used by Stone to support her case. Children who attended supplementary schools were found to have higher aspirations, more positive attitudes to school and less negative attitudes to teachers, than a comparable group of children. This was attributed to the supplementary schools having a positive model of black people, rather than a problem-orientated notion; an approach which stresses action; and the emphasis upon practical skills rather than 'relationships'.

Frustration at the inability of the formal educational system to deliver programmes of learning which addressed felt or expressed needs has led to the continued development of Black Studies in various forms in parallel organisations such as youth clubs, churches, supplementary schools, community associations and within the political movements themselves. Whilst some of this work has been sponsored by the state, the degree of disengagement has meant that the programmes have not necessarily been so cautious nor have they particularly sought to accommodate black people in existing social structures. However the cost of this has been their marginalisation within education. Their non-exam, non-vocational status means that funds do not easily flow in their direction except as a result of some moral panic and in the final analysis they leave a central problem - the inability of schools to respond to the needs of their students - unchanged. Further as Stone and many others have pointed out, where Black or 'Chicano' Studies are seen in terms of qualification, they may have little use in the employment market when set against technical or professional qualifications (Stone, 1985, p.125).

As a consequence of the growth of black disaffection, there was in the early 1980s, a growth in State funding of black initiatives such as self-help groups, women's centres and welfare projects. This can be seen as having a rather insidious effect:

> A whole generation of 'ethnic' workers and race relations experts has been born who are accountable not to the Black community but to the State which pays them. Their brief, however unwitting, is to keep the lid on the cauldron, and their existence is seen as proof of the governments' concern to soften the effects of it's own institutional racism (Bryan et al, 1985, p.179).

Now with government cutbacks and the abolition of the GLC and other metropolitan authorities many of such initiatives are under threat and activists have the difficult job of both attempting to hold on to what gains that may have been made and to wrest control over such resources from the State into the hands of the black community.

In a number of programmes there has been a tendency to concentrate on history. For instance Cashmore and Troyna comment on some study programmes that have focused on Afro-Caribbean history which:

> ...portray the black man as a courageous, skilful, intelligent creator of his own culture, a worshipper of his own gods, a politician of acuity and unremitting independence. His continent was one of prosperity and one which, if left alone by whites, would surely have flourished. This is not falsification but it is more a satisfying picture, an exaggerated representation highlighting certain, selected characteristics while neglecting others, than a graphic reminder that this <u>was</u> reality, it is no longer reality and has no necessary connection with life in England in the late twentieth century - not even for blacks (Cashmore and Troyna 1982, p.24).

The direction which such programmes take is inevitably entwined with the political traditions within the community or communities concerned. If we again consider the development of programmes addressed to the needs of Afro-Caribbeans then we can see a number of important strands. Henry mentions three particular political traditions from which black children may construct their political understanding. These are American Black Power, African socialism and Jamaican Rastafarianism (Henry, 1979). In addition to these three, Reeves and Chevannes distinguish a further two schools of thought. These are Garveyism (which has had considerable influence on both the development of Black Power and Rastafarianism) and 'a peculiarly British-based school of black thought and activism centred around the *Race Today* collective - best described as an attempt by black London-based intellectuals with Marxist leanings to apply black political theory to an analysis of community struggle against, for example,

the police, the immigration laws, the National Front and white authority in factories, schools, hospitals etc' (1984, p.177). Clearly programmes which are infused with the last form of thinking are likely to take a different form and direction from those which are influenced by the anti-colonialism of Pan-Africanism.

Women's Studies has not made the same impact on the schooling sector as has Black Studies. This is, perhaps, predominantly due to the lack of any comparative moral panic about the socialisation of young women. Nava has put it like this:

> ..it is not only that girls are less insurrectionary than boys, they simply do not occupy public spaces to the same extent. Girls are less of a problem on the streets because they are predominantly and more scrupulously regulated in the home. On the whole parental policing over behaviour, time, labour and sexuality of girls has not only been more efficient than over boys, it has been different. For girls, unlike for boys, the principal site for the operation of control has been the family.

> ..Where moral panics about girls have arisen, and social service intervention into the terrain of the familial considered justified, this has usually been...because parental authority over domesticity and sexuality has appeared inadequate (Nava, 1984, pp.11-12).

At present it is difficult to quantify the extent and nature of Women's Studies, although it would be fair to say that it has found its main expression in higher education and education work 'beyond the city walls'. Given the relative lack of moral panics around the socialisation of girls and women, the locus of initiative for Women's Studies has been the women's movement. Thompson has argued that the emergence of Women's Studies has been a direct consequence of the re-emergence of feminism and the growth and development of the women's movement during the last two decades. The women's movement has provided the context for educational activities which have only subsequently become the concern of more formal educational initiatives. 'The development of Women's Studies reflects one of the main concerns of the women's movement not to have the material, political and spiritual culture of women any longer deleted from the records kept by men.' (Thompson, 1983, p.108).

Thompson has suggested that it is no coincidence that the work has been organised in extramural departments and through organisations such as the WEA rather than within universities.

> Once Women's Studies are accredited with academic status and resources within universities, they offer not merely a discreet view on the world within the confines of a 'new subject specialism', but a commentary on the rest of the curriculum and of academia. This has led to some resistance. The non-vocational, non-examined, and non-statutory nature of adult education classes seems immediately more conducive to the philosophy and practice of Women's Studies, although developments have not been established without resistance in these areas, either (Thompson, 1983, p.112)

Hughes and Kennedy suggest that there are four broad strands in women's education which are broad enough and varied enough to embrace all types of foreseen need:

> 1. the extension of so-called women's subjects which are domestically orientated; the opening up of traditional so-called male subjects to make them more relevant to women;

> 2. education that is positive discrimination to make up for the fact that girls and women generally receive less education and training than boys and men, also because the existing provision does not fit the lifecycles and needs of women;

> 3. classes for women about women which both rediscover women's lives and achievements, use feminist research and raise awareness about re-visioning the world and women's place in it; and

> 4. ensuring that there is a feminist dimension and that women are actively visible in all courses and classes (Hughes and Kennedy, 1985, pp.29-30)

Whilst these are specifically discussed in terms of formal adult education, they do pay tribute to the range of informal opportunities for women to educate themselves. In a sense these strands can be seen within educationally based youth work with young women, but it is perhaps aspects of the third strand that are of most interest here.

On the whole it would seem that Women's Studies are less likely to utilise straight-forward information assimilation than is the case in say, Black Studies. Perhaps the major reason for this is the emphasis within much of the women's movement on the dangers of separating theory from practice. There is the associated concern to have theory that is of one's own making rather than having to accept that which is 'man-made' and that does not fit women's experience. 'Thinking is difficult when the words are not your own. Borrowed concepts are like passed down clothes: they fit badly and do not give confidence' (Rowbotham, 1971, p. 5). Indeed that theory:

> … is constructed from the experience of the dominators and consequently reflects the world from their point of view; they however present it as the summation of the world as it is. Their model of existence, ideology, to reaffirm their position. Thus the struggle to take hold of definitions, the tools of theory, and to structure connections, model-building, is an essential part of the politicisation of the oppressed (ibid).

What is at issue here is not simply women's absence from theory or the way in which they have been dealt with but it is also the way in which theory is made. Where traditional approaches have stressed the objectivity and neutrality of knowledge and have attempted to write the personal out, much of the theory making within feminism has brought the subjective to the fore. This emphasis on the value of women's experience, all women's experience, necessarily alters the relationship between the 'learner' and the 'teacher'. It means that approaches that allow women to understand their experiences and to create theories that make intelligible the world they know are more appropriate to the task (and to the underlying ideology) than are approaches that emphasise the dissemination of established bodies of theory and practice. Thus many of the programmes of work that go under the broad title Women's Studies will place an emphasis on experiential learning - on exploring people's experiences of the home, workplace, and community. This need not be the case when Women's Studies finds its way into the university - where the demands for neutrality and depersonalised theory making are strong. There the pressures to conform to existing subject boundaries and ways of working entail considerable resistance (Evans, 1982).

A further element that must arise out of any investigation of Women's Studies and Black Studies is the question of control. Within formal educational institutions much of the debate surrounding these areas of study has been concerned with the degree and nature of the control that course participants

can have over their programme of study. This is hardly surprising as the various academic boards and committees have as their members the people who have constructed theory 'from the experience of the dominators'. It is their concepts which are like 'passed down clothes'. The concern about control has also been on the agenda of those who provide educational opportunities in the community, although the debate has been experienced in a different way here. This is perhaps due to the ideology and methods of educators in the community in that they will tend to place considerable store on helping people to express and meet their own learning needs. The concern about control has often been around the fear that the professional educator might 'take over' the enterprise and seek to bring in ways of working or areas of study that do not fit the needs of participants. Thus there has been considerable debate between participants and workers as well as between workers and those who construct the policy framework in which they have to work.

The development of oppositional practice

At this point it is perhaps helpful to reflect upon the contribution that workers who locate themselves within the Women's and Black Consciousness Movements are making to educational thinking and, in particular, to debates about political education. Clearly there are significant differences in the nature and direction of these developments when compared, say, with study of British Constitution.

First, there has been a very real shift to working beyond the walls of the formalised educational institution. The inability of formal educational institutions to provide or contain what people demanded has led to a growth in various forms of community-based provision, often organised on a self-help basis. Such has been the nature of these developments that there is difficulty in accommodating them even within the educational forms supposedly constructed to serve the community - the community college or school. This, as might be expected, isn't only to do with the nature of bureaucratic structures and received concepts of what might constitute 'education' or a 'class', but also with the desire to own one's education.

Second, these organic movements, centred as they are on a characteristic that people possess and feel central to their experience, are able to locate people's concern with the political in a firm context. The movements give new meaning to everyday experiences. What was previously seen as unfairness or the way of the world is now recognised as an oppression. One of the key themes here is consciousness - recognising oppression as oppression. Recognising that you are

treated differently because you are female or black is one thing; understanding that such treatment is unfair and that the experience is shared with others is another.

Third, within such work there is the concern with self-respect or pride. Whilst you may feel oppressed, you may sense that this is somehow deserved because you are in some way second rate. Such oppositional practice has put considerable emphasis on valuing yourself as yourself. Linked to this is the concern to breakdown stereotypes and boundaries, to allow people to express and experience themselves outside the narrow confines of the expectations of others.

Fourth, there is the visibility of ideology. One thing that social movements are able to offer is a sense of identity, of belonging. This they are able to do because they have an ideology or world view which speaks directly to the needs and experiences of their members. The experience of being black or gay or female or working class can be explained and acted upon through such ideology.

Fifth, and central to our concern here, is the way in which the personal is seen as relating to the political within the women's movement in particular.

As a result of this thinking there has been a renewed emphasis on theory - making, analysis which addresses itself to the lived experience of people's lives. There has also been a desire to develop a history that is of people's experiences, and which is self-consciously Black or Female. Culture has also become a focus. The way in which popular culture carries racist or sexist messages, the way in which cultural forms specific to different groups are denied space or become undervalued have all received considerable attention within Black and Feminist thinking and practice.

In conclusion

In this brief overview of some of the key debates within and around political education in formal educational institutions, we have seen how there was a shift from citizenship to political literacy. This involved an additional emphasis on skills, a changing conception of what is political and an inductive approach to teaching. Secondly, there have been debates about the ability of the school to deliver the appropriate contexts for action-based approaches to political education. Thirdly, a number of commentators have noted a movement into what might be termed 'applied political literacy', which in turn has been

affected by the more fundamental critique and practice offered by proponents of Black and Women's Studies. As we will see, these debates and movements are reflected in the experience of political education within community-based approaches such as can be found within youth work.

3. Political education in youth work

The political education of young people has always been a significant concern of those sponsoring youth work. Milson described the nature of the political element in youth work in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as casting young people for a passive role in the political system: 'good citizenship' was the aim constantly repeated but it meant conformity to existing middle class mores and structures (1980, p.13). Three key nationalist strands link early male youth organisations in particular (Blanch, 1979). Firstly, the idea of <u>national efficiency</u> can be seen in the drive to mental and physical fitness, rooted in drill and discipline. Secondly, the idea of <u>model authority</u> was reflected in the ordered structures of these organisations. The system of authority by ranks and levels was seen by the proponents as providing a model for social organisation and leadership. Lastly, there was the threat of the <u>enemy outside</u>, 'Outside Britain there lay a hostile force, bent on mischief' (*op. cit.*, p.119). Much of the early work for girls and young women was directed towards reinforcing the emerging Victorian ideology of the family and preparing young women for their role as home makers (Dyhouse, 1980, pp 79-114). The leadership roles they were expected to occupy were those seen as suitable for women.

Whilst a great deal of the work may have been to buttress middle class power and salve conscience, there are examples of provision for young people from this period that took the debate beyond what might be suggested here. For example, much of the early work of the National Organisation of Girls' Clubs and its founders was concerned with lobbying for, and educating about, wage levels and factory conditions for girls. Girls were encouraged to take limited action themselves (Bunt and Gargrave, 1980, p.50; Bunt, 1975, p.18). Outside the boundaries of what the middle class defined as youth work, there are examples of radical practice (Smith, forthcoming). For instance the Clarion Scouts, founded by Robert Blatchford in 1894, as groupings of young socialist pioneers, claimed to have 120 clubs with 7000 members by 1896. They set up Clarion Youth Houses, forerunners of the youth hostels, and carried the socialist message from town to town on cycles (Simon, 1965, pp.38-9).

Here we can begin to see some of the traditions that have informed the development of youth work and a hint of the ideological strains that can occur. With the rise of youth movements in Nazi Germany, many youth organisations began to proclaim themselves non-political by which was meant non-party political. However, their programmes frequently expressed concerns about citizenship. Indeed the development of the Association for Education in Citizenship in the 1930s found a number of supporters within the youth work field (for example Brew, 1943, p.292; Edwards-Rees, 1943, p.138). Not unexpectedly the ebb and flow of concern about the political education and socialization of the young within youth work runs in tandem with developments within formal education. Thus key figures in the Social Studies Movement in the 1940s such as James Hemmings were given a ready platform within organisations such as the National Association of Mixed Clubs and Girls Clubs (later to become the National Association of Youth Clubs).

In 1969 the Youth Service Development Council called for work directed at 'the critical involvement of young people in their society'. It saw the Youth and Community Service providing many opportunities for young people to discuss matters of controversy and to share in the formation of public opinion (DES, 1969, para 211). The Report specifically endorsed political education and called for a level of partnership with political youth groups (para 212). Such recommendations have to be seen in the context of the growing concern about participation in policy formation, perhaps best expressed in the publication of the Skeffington Report (MHLG, 1969) and in some of the responses made by higher education institutions to the student unrest of 1968.

Similarly, the moral panic surrounding National Front activity provided a major impetus in 1978 to the DES granting substantial amounts of money to short term political education projects sponsored by NAYC and the British Youth Council. Indeed members of the government explicitly drew attention to the apparent drift towards extremism amongst the young and the need to encourage them back to 'the middle ground of British politics' (Whitty, 1985, p. 159). These organisations used the Hansard Society's Programme for Political Education (Crick and Porter, 1978) to provide part of the rationale for their proposals.

Submissions prepared by NAYC (1981b; 1981c) were to provide much of the material for the most recent national statement concerning political education within youth work:

> Political education is not the same thing as political studies or civics though it may contain some elements of civics. Much of the political education in schools or even within the Youth Service has this passive character. It is not enough. What is required is experience of such a kind that the young people learn to claim their right to influence the society in which they live and to have a say in how it is run. It is active participation in some form of political activity, formal or informal, which really counts. We have not found that such participation is at all widespread...

The Youth Service has the potential to fulfil a much needed and vital role not only as a forum for the theory of political education but also as a scene of political activity addressed to issues which are of concern to young people. Through the internal machinery of their youth clubs or centres, through the scope offered by various forms of youth council in the locality, through participation in local or national issues, the Service can offer young people a real opportunity to express their views in the relatively 'safe' context appropriate to the inexperience of those taking part (HMSO, 1982, para 5.37 & 5.39).

The report recommends that political education should be a normal part of the Youth Service curriculum, pursued in such ways as to involve active participation. However, the reality of practice is somewhat varied, with the vast majority of units and projects neither prepared to recognise the political dimensions of their work nor to implement specific political education initiatives. A sample survey of units in the largest non-uniformed organisation found that only 5% of the 7,000 units could be said to be making some conscious provision of political education (NAYC,1981). However, an interrogation of much of the content of Scouting and Guiding, for example, would show a considerable political education practice, but unacknowledged.

Thus, whilst the Review Group Report and its predecessor (HMSO, 1969) have advocated that political education become a central part of the youth work curriculum, much of the work remains rooted in long established traditions that have tended to assert their 'non-political' nature. What the Report does appear to have created is a renewed awareness of the debates surrounding political education (See, for instance, Chandler et al, 1984). Indeed it may be as D I Smith has argued following a review of policy responses since the publication of the Report, that political education has 'emerged in a more formally accepted and incorporated way' (1987, p. 21). In this survey it appeared that some authorities tended to see political education in terms of learning about the

political structures and processes of society, 'with the experiential dimension added through participating in the Youth Service at some level. More generally, political education was ultimately seen to be concerned with enabling young people to claim the right to influence the society in which they live and have a say in in how it is run' (*op. cit.*). Whilst there appeared to be some agreement in the policy statements analysed about some aspects of the worker role, there was less agreement about where the legitimate role of the worker ended. (*op. cit.*, p.21-2).

Political education in practice

In what follows I set out brief details of seven different approaches to political education that can be found within contemporary youth work practice. When constructing this typology of approaches, my initial starting point was to investigate the activities of workers who said they were engaged in political education. At this point five approaches were identified, and a working definition of political education derived (Smith, 1982a, 1982b). The working definition was in turn used to examine further examples of practice and to review the literature.

I have chosen to use the word 'approach' to describe the bodies of practices and ideas because it conveys their necessary looseness. The approaches overlap and one can find ideas and practices being combined and recombined across a number of them. The ideological position of the worker and the group are of crucial importance in understanding the direction of the political education they undertake. Thus whilst the approach will express in some form the ideological position of those taking part, there is a degree of flexibility in the ideologies that can be accommodated in any one approach. In practice it is not possible to label any of these approaches as the property of any one ideological position. To a certain extent they can be colonised by the users.

Over the next few pages I have laid out the approaches in outline form giving brief details of aims, practice and any key questions associated with each. In the following chapter I discuss some of these questions in more detail.

The seven broad approaches found can be characterised as:

1. Developing a civic responsibility

2. Working on issues

3. Building socio-historical understandings

4. Interrogating culture

5. Encouraging leadership

6. Enabling participation

7. Acting collectively

1. Developing a civic responsibility

This approach could be said to derive from an arena orientation to politics in that its main concern is the systems that are traditionally labelled as political. The broad aims of the approach could be seen as the following:

1. To increase people's understanding of the established political system, and in particular of those institutions concerned with representative government.

2. To encourage a broad commitment to that system and active participation within it.

3. To develop basic skills that enable people to act within the established political system.

Much of the practice associated with this approach tends to information giving, although there may be some attempt at developing 'system skills'. Characteristic examples are:

* Short programmes of talks initiated by the worker with representatives of the major political parties

* Mock elections

* Sessions and events to develop basic system skills such as debating

* Courses designed to give participants a working knowledge of the local authority. Often organised specifically for community groups (Winwood, 1977)

* Day to day interventions by the worker in meetings of say the tenants group or club committee concerning the operation of the civic system

For examples of practice in the literature see Milson (1979), Clark (1946), Macalister Brew (1943), Baden Powell (1967, Camp fire yarn 26), Henriques (1933) and Woodcraft Folk (1982; 1985).

I have made a distinction here between civics and citizenship. Civics is taken to refer to competencies relating to the governmental arena, where citizenship goes beyond that into developing an understanding of, and moral position on, significant questions facing people. In this sense citizenship is perhaps best seen as linking with the 'issues' approach that follows.

The worker plays a central role in this model. S/he initiates, organises and decides what is to be taught. Sometimes aims are defined by participants (most usually in community work settings). There can also a major concern with 'balance'. Representatives from all major parties are invited for instance. Generally, the attention paid to the reflective process is highly variable. The approach can be adopted instrumentally, that is for the purpose of equipping people with information so that they may use the system from fairly oppositional positions as demonstrated in some community work practice.

2. Working on issues

This approach has a long history in youth work and can be commonly found although the content may be presented as 'social' rather than 'political'. Its aims could seen as follows:

1) To increase peoples understanding of specific political issues.

2) To encourage people to see the debate about political issues as significant and to recognise the importance of their participation within such debates.

3) To develop people's ability to analyse and argue about political issues.

A further aim which is rarely seen realised within youth work is:

4) Through the use of debates about political issues, to enable people to understand political processes and principles.

Examples of practice are:

* meetings in pubs, clubs and people's homes with a 'populist' discussion topic, eg. 'Abortion -right or wrong' (Lovett, 1975, p.160).

* creating an environment in a club or unit that stimulates discussion eg. posters on walls, newspapers and leaflets left about, workers wearing badges, current affairs videos etc. Workers then informally start or encourage discussions.

* one-off meetings and events with a speaker or film, eg. nuclear disarmament, multi-cultural evenings.

* series of meetings/ events, residential periods, day workshops that allow a degree of depth.

Examples in recent literature can be found in Ritchie and Marken (1984), Masterson (1982), Wild (1982) but also in earlier books such as Macalister Brew (1943). Various examples of 'prompt' literature abound Wilkinson (1985), British Youth Council (1979-83) and Woodcraft Folk (1982b). An earlier example of the genre is Hayes and Martin (1944)

Here I have contrasted a 'political issues' approach with a 'political ideas' approach. In the former, issues are presented as debates about material conditions or policies or practices. A political ideas approach would focus on the ideologies that underlie political debate. In many respects the issues approach is similar to that of political literacy described in the last chapter, but the apparent lack of attention to the fourth aim in practice does differentiate it. The tendency to superficiality and the lack of sustained effort at reflection or indeed lack of time spent in getting to know the facts appears to be a weakness. There follows from this a danger of 'issuefying' major social divisions such as gender or ethnicity and hence trivialising them. However, the approach does have an important function in alerting people to political debate and in introducing ideas and materials that may otherwise have been inaccessible.

The worker has a key role in promoting environments that are conducive to debate. Also in ensuring that the resulting debates progress beyond superficiality. The ability to enable dialogue and debate, even in competition with other activities like discos and drinking and with an ebb and flow in group membership, is often underestimated.

3. Building socio-historical understandings

This approach is usually found within work associated with social movements such as the Labour Movement or the Black Consciousness Movement. It is explicitly ideological and can be seen as having the following broad aims:

1) To develop people's appreciation of themselves as black /female /working class /gay /etc.

2) To develop people's understanding of the economic, historical and political dimensions of their experience.

Practice ranges from highly formal lectures and courses to the highly informal recounting of past experiences. Typical examples are:

* The provision of series of lectures and talks, eg 'Afrika. The dawn of civilisation' or 'The making of the modern housewife'.

* Informal discussions, often anecdotal. For instance, in clubs where older men and women tell stories about the old days, their experiences of local employers and of living in the neighbourhood. They often emphasise the class or gender nature of their experiences.

* Cultural events such as evenings of traditional song or dance or new plays, poetry etc.

* Visits/trips to museums or longer study trips to countries or areas which are of particular cultural importance.

* The encouragement of people to take relevant courses in formal educational institutions.

Examples in the literature can be found in Yarnit (1980), Thompson (1983), Cashmore and Troyna (1982), and St Philip's Project (1983).

Whilst such activities are about understanding they are also about identity. The concern with history and the emphasis upon the experiences shared with others help people to gain a sense of belonging. The significant point here is that all the examples are of people who are collectively subordinated. Their experiences and cultures, as we saw in the earlier discussion of Black and Women's Studies, are generally excluded from school and other history books.

The methods are mainly those of information giving although examples of experiential approaches can be found. Two factors are important here. Firstly there is what Yarnitt has described as the gimmickry of much state educational effort directed towards working class and black people. There is a need, he argues, to put 'content before form' (1980, p. 180). Secondly, given the lack of attention to scholarship in these areas within the dominant academic elite there is a need for serious study, not only to provide what is missing but also to legitimate the study areas academically.

4. Interrogating culture

This approach involves the critical interrogation of particular cultures that touch participants' lives. Culture is taken to mean a whole way of life and would thus

include language, attitudes and values as well as the characteristics of social behaviour. The aims of the approach would appear to be:

1) To increase people's understanding of the political nature of the cultural forms they experience. In particular, to examine the ways in which these forms reflect and carry ideas about class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality.

2) To develop an appreciation of class, gender and ethnicity as dynamic factors in the shaping of the social, political and economic relations they see and experience.

3) To enable people to make judgements about and any necessary changes to their own whole way of life.

Examples of practice are:

* The writing of autobiographies to help people reflect upon the values and behaviours they have taken on and the forces that helped their adoption.

* Occasional or series of group sessions to discuss experiences. Perhaps the most consistent expression of this approach is within Girls Work.

* Involvement in various cultural forms such as photography, video and music along with an exploration of these forms and they way they express dominant images about gender, race etc.

* Workshops, residentials, groups to explore some dimension by which participants feel they are oppressing others eg Racism Awareness Training.

Examples in the literature can be found in Working with Girls Newsletter (1981-87), Cohen (1982), Schooling and Culture 1981-85), Young (1982).

Culture is seen as providing the material for liberation or domination. By making a distinction between dominant and subordinate cultures, we can begin to see how power relationships are played both within and between cultures (Giroux, 1983, p.163). By interrogating these cultures, critically examining the way relationships are produced and reproduced it is possible to see that which is one's own and that which is of other's making.

There is a danger in some of the methods, such as the direct involvement in the cultural form, of putting form before content. It was perhaps some of these methods that Yarnitt had in mind criticising certain forms of community education (see above). Some forms of Racism Awareness Training could be

included here as examples of cultural interrogation, but as Gurnah (1984) amongst others has demonstrated, RAT can all too easily deteriorate into somewhat suspect forms.

5. Encouraging leadership

This approach is used by organisations and workers that have very different ideological perspectives. In terms of youth work, leadership approaches can be found in Scouting, club work and in projects. It can also be seen at work in the Labour Movement. The aims of the approach could be seen as follows:

1) To develop the 'leadership' abilities of participants. This includes an emphasis on decision making, communication and the adoption of appropriate personal characteristics and attitudes.

2) To create an identity with and understanding of key institutions and values both within the organisation and without.

For examples in the literature see Eagar (1953), Henriques (1933), Cohen (1983) and Bunt and Gargrave (1980).

Leadership approaches commonly use a formal organisation with a hierarchy of roles. Participants move through these roles if they have 'leadership potential'. The obvious examples here are Scouting and Guiding with their structured roles and badges. Here the Scout or Guide master/mistress decides who is to be encouraged up the ladder and pays considerable attention to the hierarchy of roles that exist within the organisation and who in the membership could benefit from occupying them.

Youth workers and community workers may similarly use the experience of roles within an organisation in order to develop leadership and 'character' even. In this approach they continually look out for those with 'leadership potential' and encourage their progress through the organisation. In more democratic organisations the worker will tend to arrange things so that their preferred candidate gets elected.

Within the Labour Movement it is possible to see a similar hierarchy of roles and the need for young 'novices' to serve an apprenticeship by undertaking a graduated range of tasks from delivering leaflets to serving on and becoming officers of certain committees (Cohen, 1983).

Whilst the major emphasis is on the experience of particular roles or tasks there may be more formal learning activities. Exercises, activities and private study concerning knowledge about key institutions and practices within the movement or organisation may well be undertaken. As the emphasis is on structure and organisation so the requirements of individuals and groups can be overlooked.

An important feature of the approach is the amount of emphasis put upon the leader or worker as a role model. In this respect connections can be made with Blanch's (1979) concern with 'model authority' in the early youth movements.

Again, there can be a problem with a lack of attention to the process of reflection. However the uniformed organisations with their badges and tests do have some provision for this. Whilst they may primarily be used for the purposes of accreditation, they do have the merit of reinforcing or encouraging some aspects of learning.

A further, major, criticism of this sort of approach is that leader implies follower. At the same time as encouraging leadership qualities there is also the danger of creating resignation and acceptance in others (Wringe, 1984, p. 103). Thus the approach has a strong potential for divisiveness.

6. Enabling participation

If leadership approaches are a prevalent form of political education within uniformed organisations, then participation is the approach that is met most often in the rhetoric of 'open' youth work. Aims of the approach can be seen as the follows:

1) To structure organisations and their work in such a way as to allow increased involvement in policy making and operation by those most affected by the organisations' activities.

2) To help people gain the necessary knowledge, feelings and skills to work with others to significantly affect the organisations and systems of which they are a part.

As might be inferred from the title, the focus of this approach is upon enabling people to work in a 'participative' way. Given the rhetorical use that is made of this term, it is hardly surprising that there are considerable differences in what it actually means in practice. Thus examples of this approach in action would include:

* Club meetings and open forums where decisions about the operation of certain aspects of the organisation are made.

* The setting up of members committees or ad hoc groups in order to organise things, represent the membership etc. If they are to represent, then there has to be some mechanism by which they are answerable to their constituency.

* Training events and workshops to help people gain the relevant skills and knowledge of things like procedures.

* Work with individuals or with groups on a day-to-day basis as they set about their tasks within the organisation.

*the use of local and area-wide youth councils.

For examples in the literature see Youth Service Forum (1978), Long (1979-83), Burley (1982), Lindsay and Fair (1982, 1983), Eggleston (1976). 'How to do it' literature abounds e.g. Denham and Notely (1982), Spencer (1981) and Joyce (1985).

Unfortunately the two aims of the approach are potentially contradictory. The first aim can be to increase the effectiveness of management. By involving clients, consumers and those involved in the production of goods and services in the decision-making process it is hoped that the decision will be both better informed and more likely to be implemented because people feel they have contributed to the process. The second aim can be motivated by quite different concerns such as a belief in political ideas like equality, justice and democracy. Many youth workers attempt to ride both horses without making clear the boundary between their role as managers of a particular facility or organisation and their role as an educator.

By definition the participation approach involves a sharing of power between the worker and young people. The tensions in this process, for example between the workers and others' perception of what a youth organisation's programme should look like and the stuttering provision that occurs when people are learning, can be considerable. Thus managers who are used to judging the success of a programme by the number or types of events can find it difficult to understand that it is learning that is important. In addition there can be disagreement and confusion about the limits to various participants' authority.

The near mythical status of participation within youth work involves a tendency to treat it as an end rather than as a means of working with young people (Smith, 1982c, Ch.2). It also can lead to a misleading labelling of approaches. In many instances when workers talk of participation, what they in effect mean is leadership. The context may be an organisation with representative structures or at least structures which are notionally representative, but the worker may in effect operate in a way that focuses on the development of leadership rather than on participatory ways of working. People are participating but it is not Participation with a capital 'P'.

There can be an emphasis on working with individuals and small groups so as to improve their performance. This can mean a corresponding lack of attention to the structures they are expected to work within. In addition, by concentrating on the needs of the individual or small group there is a danger of failing to engage with the institutions and movements which structure the immediate environment. Workers may focus on the ability of a group to work together without exploring the use to which such collective ways of working may be put, how dimensions such as ethnicity, sex, age and class help to structure the relationships both within the group and with the 'outside' world. As such there is a danger of losing any significant political content.

Lastly, it must be noted that participation can be used to divert, frustrate and manipulate, as the literature of community work ably demonstrates (See in particular Smith and Jones, 1981, p.x). People are given the semblance of consultation and involvement without having any real responsibility for outcomes or indeed any effective power over the process.

7. Acting collectively

In a number of respects this approach educationally parallels what have been labelled as the community development strategy and the social action strategy within community work (Thomas, 1983, pp. 106-139). Whilst as community work strategies these differ in the extent to which local struggles are connected to wider movements and entities such as unions and parties, the degree of militancy involved and the extent of the orientation to self-help, as learning strategies they are very similar.

The aim of the approach is to enable people to:

1) recognise and feel that their opinions and beliefs are of worth and shared by others;

2) see that by acting with others they are able either to achieve what they want or to influence appropriate political and other systems to do so; and

3) gain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to organise and maintain networks and organisations that have the capacity to achieve required outcomes and represent their opinions.

People within a social action framework would also want to develop in people an identity with particular social movements and their explanations of the world.

Examples of this approach are largely drawn from community work, although there is a developing interest in, and work on, the approach within youth work. For example:

* workers helping groups of young people to organise campaigns and provision for themselves.

* providing resources and administrative back-up to groups who are campaigning and organising.

* workshops and training events to help people gain particular skills such as those to do with lobbying or organising campaigns.

* running conferences and similar events to brief people concerning particular aspects of their work, eg on dampness or housing finance.

Examples in the literature can be found in Baldwin et al (1982), Williams and Shoultz (1982), Lacey (1987), Taylor and Ratcliffe (1981) and John (1981). 'How to do it' texts include Smith (1981). These all contain details of work with young people. For an interesting discussion in the context of community work/adult education see Lovett et al (1983).

This approach is more commonly seen in community work than in youth work as it entails something of a shift in the framework applied. Youth workers still seemed tied to the idea of provision for young people, whereas a community work frame would likely concern itself with enabling others to do things for themselves (See Lacey, 1987).

It differs from the participation approach in that the young people themselves take responsibility for their actions. Within the particular area there is no sharing of power between the worker and the young people. The worker is in many respects a spectator. Given the emphasis on action, there can be a

relative neglect of the reflective and theory making processes and indeed a tension between achieving campaigning objectives and learning.

The approach tends to be ideologically explicit and would seem to line up with the radical or reformist ideologies outlined earlier. As the approach enters into the political arena as traditionally defined, workers can be put at considerable risk as they become blamed for the actions taken by young people (Smith, 1984).

In conclusion

The presentation of these approaches has of necessity been brief and the particular questions raised, such as the relationship of the leadership and participation approaches, are deserving of far greater analysis. My aim in this chapter has been to provide a typology of approaches so that key analytical and ideological questions can be addressed. It is to these which we now turn.

4. Taking stock

Having outlined the seven main broad approaches to political education found in youth work I now want to examine:

1) the learning process involved in the approaches: in particular, the pattern of learning utilised, the degree of attention given to reflection, possible sites for intervention and the tension between process and product;

2) the centrality of the notion of ideology and the different meanings attached to politics to an understanding of political education;

3) why other approaches are not found;

4) the significance of structures and settings;

5) why the concept of 'curriculum' is not present in youth work approaches and suggest an alternative conceptualisation; and

6) an overall way of considering the approaches.

The approaches reviewed

Three of the approaches which have been presented could be seen as conforming to a pattern of learning which largely entails the giving and assimilation of information:

Civics - where the concern is to develop the understanding of, commitment to and ability to use the established political system and in particular those institutions directly connected with representative government.

Issues - in which the aim is to increase people's understanding and valuing of specific political issues.

Socio-historic - where the aim is to develop people's appreciation of themselves as black/female/working class etc and the historic and socio-economic dimension of that experience.

Three approaches could be described as broadly action based or experiential:

Leadership - where the central aims would appear to be the development of an identity with key institutions both within a movement and without and the encouragement of particular skills and character attributes connected with 'leadership'.

Participation - here two strands are seen as important - the structuring of organisations so as to improve the extent to which people could contribute towards policy making, and the fostering of particular skills and attitudes in order that they can do so.

Collective Action - which focused on the development of both individual and collective sense of worth and the gaining of the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to organise.
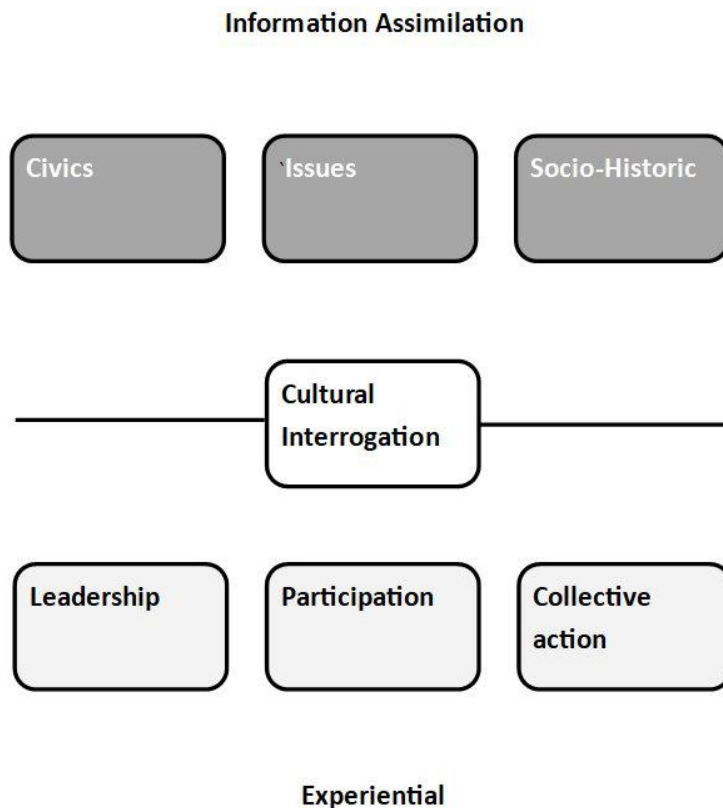
Finally the seventh approach is perhaps best thought of as largely action-based although in some instances it could approximate to the information assimilation pattern:

Cultural Interrogation - where the aim is to increase people's understanding of the cultural forms they experience, their appreciation of class/gender/ethnicity as dynamic factors in the shaping of their experiences and their ability to make choices about their whole way of life.

There is a peculiar combination of ideas and practices associated with each of the approaches. It is this combination rather than the ideas and practices in themselves that has led to the naming of these loosely termed 'approaches'. We find broadly similar practices and themes arising in a number of them: in this way there is a certain amount of overlap. Significantly it is possible to find projects and agencies where a number of the approaches are utilised, sometimes in work with the same group. Thus a community work project may be enabling people to organise and campaign, providing courses in civics, encouraging the discussion of political issues in something like a drop-in centre, using the participative structures of their own organisation to help people develop their abilities and providing the context and interventions necessary for people to begin to interrogate their culture. (For examples of this see the various reports produced by the Community Development Projects, Loney 1983 provides examples and details, or those produced by Community Projects Foundation e.g. Taylor et al, 1983, 2nd ed.)

With ideas and practices being combined, recombined, worked on and interpreted into different forms there are not likely to be abrupt breaks between the approaches but rather a stuttering transition. Some of these movements can be explored when the approaches are shown diagrammatically. This is done in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Approaches to political education in youth work

Information Assimilation

| Civics | `Issues | Socio-Historic |

Cultural Interrogation

| Leadership | Participation | Collective action |

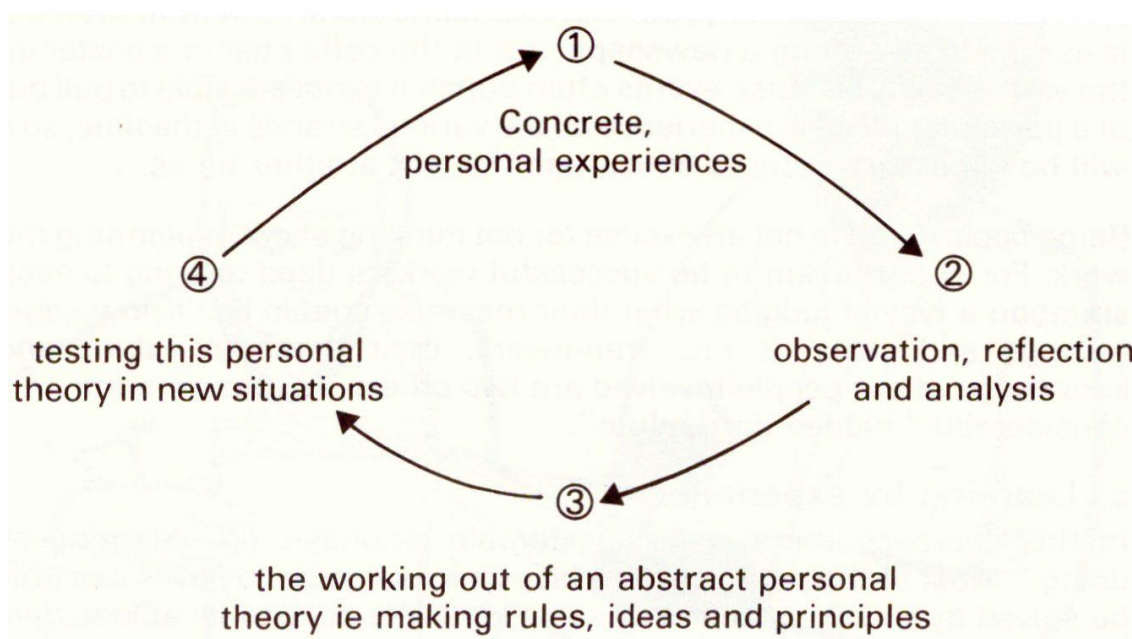**Experiential**

The learning process

I have made a distinction between the approaches on the basis of the predominant pattern of learning. Here I have distinguished between a pattern which approximates to information assimilation and one which approximates to experiential learning.

The information assimilation process begins with the 'teacher' transmitting information. At the other end of this transmission is the 'learner' who receives information. This information is transmitted in a symbolic medium such as a lecture or a book. As Coleman suggests, in these first steps the information transmitted concerns a general principle or specific examples as illustrations of the general principle. Following this the third step is to assimilate and organise

information so that the general principle is understood. The fourth step is to infer a particular application from this general principle. Lastly, the person moves from a cognitive and symbol processing sphere to the sphere of action (Coleman, 1976, p.50).

In contrast experiential learning in its 'pure' form would appear to progress in an almost reverse sequence. This pattern is perhaps best known through it's diagrammatic presentation by David Kolb.

Figure 2: Experiential learning

① Concrete, personal experiences

④ testing this personal theory in new situations

② observation, reflection and analysis

③ the working out of an abstract personal theory ie making rules, ideas and principles

(Kolb, 1976 / Johnson and Johnson 1975)

In much that has been written about experiential learning there has been a tendency to make experience the central element. Kolb took care to emphasise that no one of the four modes of learning associated with the stages is superior. For effective learning it is seen as necessary to develop abilities across the range and be able to move from mode to mode. One of the common themes in youth work and community work is the concentration on experience and the down grading of approaches that approximate to information assimilation. From what has been seen here, this is an unwarranted view, they are simply different ways of learning, suited to different contexts and purposes.

Reflection and theory making

The extent to which processes of reflection and theory making are given the necessary attention is a crucial consideration. There is a tendency in much that passes for experiential learning in youth work to rely on the experience itself as a means of learning. Little attention is paid to reflection. Here reflection is taken to mean the recollection of salient events, attending to feelings and the re-evaluation of the experience (Boud et al, 1985, pp.26-7). Without such reflection it is difficult to see how theory can be made.

This criticism can be applied to much youth work. Little time is spent enabling people to work on developing understandings and applying them. The informality of the settings, the voluntary and multifaceted nature of any 'contract' between learners and educators in the community and variety of pressures experienced by workers all add to the relative neglect of the reflective process. Some of the approaches have built in mechanisms in order to test memory and ability - perhaps the most obvious example here being the uniformed youth organisations with their tests and badges.

In many respects this links with the concerns expressed by Yarnitt (1980) and others of the gimmickry of community education approaches to working with working class groups. His interest in putting 'content before form' could be interpreted as a reaction against the failure to pay adequate attention to reflection and theory making.

Sites for intervention

Within the approaches there are different sites for the worker's intervention. Practitioners look to different points as the site for their actions. These included working:

* directly with a group or individual;

* with people who the group or individual might consider significant;

* on the institution and systems which the group or individual experience;

* on the physical environment or setting in which the work takes place; and

* on the activities which the group or individual undertake.

In some of the approaches it is the structure and the activities associated with the structure that is of specific interest. Thus workers within the leadership approach may concentrate on developing a hierarchy of roles and activities

through which people must progress. In Scouting for instance, this is very apparent with the process of initiation, the joining of a 'six', the offices such as 'seconder' and 'sixer' and the ways in which activities are ordered through both a badge structure and a set of procedures and rituals 'on the night'. As a result they may spend less time in direct work with the people concerned. This could be contrasted with say the cultural interrogation approach where the worker is likely to spend a considerable amount of time enabling people to reflect directly upon their experience.

Each of the approaches can be analysed in this way: no doubt within approaches there will be differing emphases, however these elements do provide the beginnings of a way of understanding the process of political education in informal settings (further developed in Smith, forthcoming).

Process and product

The situations described may or may not be set up for the specific purpose of enabling learning. This has important implications for the way in which participants view the endeavour. This is a familiar problem in youth work where what is apparently offered is some form of entertainment or social provision, yet workers within those settings may want to engage in social or political education. Whatever the case, all approaches will have both product and process outcomes. Here I am using 'product' to mean the concrete events or things that we create and 'process' to refer to the ways in which different resources (or inputs) are used. Both products and processes will have results or outcomes.

In youth work and community work there is a constant tension between product and process. For instance youth workers and administrators are often keen on work that can be readily seen and counted. Thus annual reports will contain information about the number of cups won, attendance at various sessions and so on. Process results are far less tangible. They are to do with the strengthening of people's competence and feelings. A group may be campaigning for the siting of a health centre on their estate. The product, if they are successful, would be a new health centre. The process - working as a group, organising, lobbying and so on - may well lead to certain process outcomes such as a growth in competence, confidence, enjoyment and knowledge. In this example we can see the classic tension for the worker and the group - should they concentrate on the gaining of the health centre (product) or the acquisition of knowledge, skills and feelings (through the process)? The situation is made more complex by the fact that the gaining of a

particular product objective may contribute greatly to participants' feelings of competence.

Ideology and definitions of politics

If we look again at the approaches as shown in Figure 1 and consider a horizontal movement from left to right on Figure 1 then a number of interconnecting phenomenon require comment. Crucially we can see a change in the underlying conception of politics within the approaches. The leftmost approaches - civics and leadership - could be said to feature an arena definition of politics. Thus politics and personal life are quite separate from one another. Politics is about what happens to nations; personal life is what happens every day to individuals. As we move through issues and participation, this same conception of politics may remain. There may be argument about what institutions constitute the arena, with those adopting a more conservative position attempting to define certain issues out of the political arena and confine them to managerial or administrative domains.

Somewhere within the issues and participation approaches however, there is a transition into a process definition of politics. Here politics is not a separate realm of public life and activity.

On the contrary, politics comprises all the activities of co-operation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby the human species goes about organising the use, production and distribution of human, natural and other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of its biological and material life. These activities are nowhere isolated from other features of life in society, private or public. They everywhere influence and reflect the distribution of power and patterns of decision-making, the structure of social organisation, and the system of culture and ideology in society or groups within it. (Leftwich 1984, pp. 64-5)

Such a conception may be seen in a number of the examples given within the cultural interrogation, socio-historic and collective action approaches. However, as we move through these, we may find definitions of politics that collapse their meaning to such a degree that politics becomes coterminous with all social relations, or that present politics as a highly determined activity which grows directly out of the relationships of production.

These conceptions of politics will tend to grow from or connect with particular ideological perspectives. The relationship is not a simple one and would appear

to be open to some debate both within and between perspectives. Debates about political education have to be considered with reference to the definition of politics protagonists use.

From this it can be seen that practitioners will tend to look to very different arenas and institutions for the legitimation of their activities. Those within the approaches to the right of the diagram will tend to look to the movements that give life and expression to their thinking. Workers within the civics and leadership models may also appeal for legitimation to social movements, but the movements in question may well have a higher degree of acceptability to the state.

The fact that the approaches run alongside each other in this way could indicate that different workers within a project or agency adopt different ways of working - and that a sort of truce is struck between the parties in order that the work can be done. However as has already been indicated these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus the civics approach could be used alongside socio-historical and collective action. In doing so there may be some conflict over the aims of the different approaches and indeed in the underlying concept of politics, but this can be limited by the extent to which the ideology of the participants colonises the approach.

Rather than neatly fitting into some ideological category, these approaches have to be seen as carrying differing definitions of what is political and aa focusing on different aspects of the political experience and process. In this way the approaches do carry ideological messages, but these messages can be interpreted and contained by people coming from a variety of ideological positions. Problems of compatibility can of course occur. Also there are difficulties when the underlying definition of politics goes unrecognised and is at odds with that of the participants.

Approaches can be adopted in a highly instrumental manner. Particular civic information may be required by a group engaged in collective action and it is acquired through attending at a course. It does not mean that the course members necessarily subscribe to all the value positions implicit within the conception of politics, nor even to aspects of its practice. Nor does it mean that the worker necessarily subscribes to all the values and practices. It may simply be that they have a high use value within the context of the worker's and the group's thinking and practice.

All this is rather different from much of the discussion of ideology from within the mainstream of political education within formal educational institutions. Here the discussion appears to have been informed by models such as that outlined by Porter (1983, pp. 53-56), where the five basic ideological positions on political education are:

Conservative. Aims are derived from the needs of society/polity as perceived by those in power. Knowledge focused mainly on how the political system is believed to function and, on the duties, and responsibilities of the subject, with little emphasis on skills. Values would be system supporting.

Liberal. Here aims are derived from the perceived political needs of the individual and the underlying ideology is individualistic. The concern with knowledge goes beyond the polity into an exploration of issues. Implicit support for liberal democratic values such as majority rule and explicit support for procedural values and the 'rational person' who appreciates others' points of view and weighs evidence before acting. There is some emphasis on the acquisition of skills to participate in the decision-making process.

'Apolitical'. The aims are seen to be derived from the perceived educational needs of the individual and the knowledge base from the academic disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. The only skills stressed are analytical. A stress on the knowledge of how the system works and a latent commitment to liberal and/or conservative values.

Reformist. Here aims are derived from the perceived political needs of individuals or specific groups, classes or strata. The content may be similar to the liberal approach outlined above. An emphasis on participatory and organising skills. More collectivist in values than the liberal approach and an emphasis on giving those with limited access to power the means and self-confidence to take an active role.

Radical. Aims are derived from a theoretical analysis of society and/or the perceived needs of a group, class or stratum and/or perceived future needs of society. Knowledge may be similar to reformist position plus a critical understanding of society. Emphasis is on acquiring skills - analytical and organising - through doing and the value base is more collectivist than the other approaches, although this depends upon the political perspective adopted.

Thus the civics approach has been cast in the image of a conservative model whilst the political literacy approach is said to be liberal reformist (Harber,

1984; Porter,1982). Two problems arise here. First, as we have seen, there is the possibility of people with widely different ideological positions 'colonising' the approaches. Second, just how adequate an account of ideology this is is open to some debate. Many of the questions that have been raised about similar linear models in the field of welfare apply equally here (Lee and Raban, 1983).

What this indicates is the importance of examining the ideological positions of those who are involved in a piece of work. Certain ideological perspectives may well predispose participants to particular approaches, they will certainly influence how the approaches are experienced and interpreted. Thus it may well be that much of the argument about political education practice is better understood as being argument about ideology rather than about the nature of intervention.

This point can be seen if we examine the ideological movements **within** approaches. For instance it was noted in the leadership approach that people could be coming from very different and often opposing ideological positions. There may be agreement about the need for leaders although the causes they lead would be quite different. Thus it is important to examine in some detail the ideological position of the people utilising a particular approach at a particular time. Until that is done it would be impossible to appreciate the nature of the practice in question.

At this point I do not want to enter into a long discourse into the competing conceptualisations of ideology. Rather I will just state briefly how the concept has been used here. My starting point is that in thinking about politics and social life it is impossible to think non-ideologically or in a value free way. I would therefore dismiss those theories or positions which claim such neutrality and describe opposing positions as ideological. This has been a characteristic of writers within what is in effect the dominant ideology of liberal democracy. (For a discussion of this in terms of welfare see George and Wilding, 1976; Mishra, 1977; 1984; and Lee and Raban, 1983).

I will begin by defining ideology as a set of beliefs, attitudes and opinions. However these ideas do not simply appear, they do not float totally free from the forces that create the social divisions of class, gender or ethnicity. On the other hand nor is ideology totally determined by its relationship to the productive process. Here I would argue that there are dominant and subordinate ideologies. However the sense in which I am using 'dominant' needs some explanation.

The dominant ideology is best seen as that which secures the coherence of the dominant class (Abercrombie et al, 1978, p.411). It provides a complex of legal, moral, and religious values. In a developed capitalist system there may not be a well-defined dominant ideology and different elements or fractions within the dominant class may oppose it or take on alternative views. People may also adopt the values that are part or symptoms of an ideology without actually knowing or recognising it as a comprehensive pattern of thought. However it does not follow that the dominant ideology is necessarily held by subordinate classes either. Ideology is seen as operating as a relatively autonomous set of ideas and practices which cannot be merely reduced to class interests or economic structure. As both the medium and the outcome of lived experience:

> ..ideology functions not only to limit human action but also to enable it. That is, ideology both promotes human agency and at the same time exerts force over individuals and groups...Ideology is something that we all participate in; yet we rarely understand either the historical constraints that produce and limit the nature of that participation, or what the possibilities are for going beyond existing parameters of action to be able to think and act towards a qualitatively better existence. (Giroux, 1983, p.145)

Ideology must be a central focus of political education. As Goodwin argues, the more aware people are of the ideological nature of their own thought and the more explicit about values, the better they will be able to identify and criticise those of others and to promote their own. 'Most important of all, understanding the pervasive nature of ideology helps us to expose and scrutinise the hidden premises and values which are treated as established facts in a particular society' (Goodwin, 1982, p.27). Such scrutiny applies not only to the people being worked with but also to the workers themselves. Here one of the key areas for interrogation concerns the ideology of professionalism and paternalism and the way in which people are variously labelled as 'clients', 'having needs', 'being at risk' and so on. This leads to a consideration of the power and rights of those who are 'being worked with' and the nature of the structures and settings they find themselves in.

Structures and settings

To understand the nature of political education in youth work it is necessary to examine the structures and settings in which the approaches operate and to note the relationship to the processes already discussed.

First, we need to recognise that the sorts of groups that workers work with and within will frequently have an organisational status quite independent of the local education authority or of the higher education institution. They are the sorts of groups that Entwistle listed (1981, p. 245) when advocating associational democracy: local drama groups, football clubs, churches, mothers' unions and townswomen's guilds, chambers of commerce, learned societies, co-operative societies, philanthropic associations and consumer groups. Thus while the worker may be employed by a local education authority and therefore bound by its policies, the groups which s/he is employed to assist are not. They are in a position to make choices and face consequences. In such situations the worker can find her/himself in some difficulty as they may be expected to act in quite different ways by employer and group (Smith, 1984).

The position becomes more complex when we consider the frequent practice of secondment - that is where workers are employed by, say a local authority, and yet managed by the group in which they have been sited. This is a common position in youth work. The majority of clubs and projects that go to make up what is called the 'Youth Service' will have a legal and financial status quite separate from the local authority. In effect we have organisations that are less hierarchical than most formal educational institutions, which through their 'associational' or voluntary status have structures that are open to a certain amount of direct participation by the membership or local community, and that engage with political institutions at the macro level in a way that is potentially more open. We therefore have a site for political education of the participative kind that is a good deal more convivial than that afforded by the formal educational institution (Jeffs and Smith, forthcoming).

It is necessary to note that that youth work and community work organisations are by nature 'front-line'. These sorts of organisations have three characteristics:

* organisational initiative is located in front-line units;

* each unit is able to get on with its work quite independently of other units; and

* there are considerable obstacles to the direct supervision of the activities of such units. (Smith 1965, p.388)

All this means that the local worker has a great deal of power over what they do. The reality of the situation is that many of the decisions that have to be

taken must be taken quickly and take account of highly localised factors. They cannot be passed up a long chain of command.

A further factor in the ability of youth workers and community workers to engage in experiential forms of political education is the very marginality of their work. The Youth Service budget usually accounts for less than 1% of any local education authority budget and is therefore on a par with adult education. As such workers tend to be subjected to a relatively lower degree of scrutiny, that is until a club or project enters into to what the politicians and policy makers feel is their territory. Even here the very marginality of these educational forms acts in the favour of those in power. Chevannes and Reeves made this point when discussing the development of parallel provision for black young people. The very existence of projects outside the formal sector that are engaged in the construction of a relevant education for black young people allows policy makers to slip away from tackling the more fundamental problem of racism in the school and its curriculum. They can always argue that they are already doing something (Chevannes and Reeves, 1984). It is one thing to allow a critical political education in a marginal sector, quite another to face it in schools.

This level of discretion at the front-line combined with the marginality of the work and the associational or voluntary nature of the groups with whom workers operate means that there is the potential for a political education that attempts to connect theory making with political action.

Second the nature of the contract between learner and educator is somewhat different to that experienced in formal education and is bound by different conventions. The learner enters into the process voluntarily. Young people are not required by law to attend youth centres nor adults tenants associations. It may be that the range of opportunities open to young people in a particular area is such that there is little effective choice, but the fundamental fact remains that they may choose not to attend. Nor is the process usually bound up with formal accreditation or certification. Hence the costs of rejecting youth work or community work provision could be seen as lower in this respect. The lack of concern with certification also has important implications for the nature of the youth work and community work curriculum as we will see. This apparent ability to accept or reject provision is an important plank in the case for political education in community work and youth work settings. However youth workers in particular have been open to criticisms because they may appear to offer one thing, e.g. leisure opportunities, yet articulate as their prime aim something else, e.g. social or political education. They could

therefore be accused of false representation. Young people are 'lured' into youth centres with the promise of music, dance and relationships and once there are subjected to subversive influences.

We also need to take note of the discussion concerning the distinction between the leadership, participation and collective action approaches and the extent to which these place the people being worked with in different positions. Underlying these approaches there would appear to be competing views of the capability of those concerned to take responsibility for their actions.

This must lead us to consider the nature of the setting in which the work takes place and its general ambience. What is noticeable is that the settings are by and large informal. They are well removed from the from the concept of the classroom that most of those engaged in the approaches would have. The location of work in social settings such as the youth club, the community centre bar and the street has many disadvantages particularly the problem of distraction by surrounding activities. A further problem is the fact that the groups of people worked with frequently do not have a fixed membership, are open and do not necessarily have a long or regular existence. However the location and flexibility of groups does allow the work a vibrancy that connects with local social systems and cultures. In this way there is at least the appearance of relevance to the lived experience of those involved. In fact there is more than just the appearance of relevance when one considers the reflective nature of many of the approaches.

The missing 'curriculum'

Compared to the formal educational setting the notion of curriculum is decidedly absent from the discussion of political education in youth work. There is of course, a confusing range of definitions attached to curriculum. In its original sense it could be understood to be 'the prescribed content' for study. Thus a curriculum is not a syllabus, which rather suggests a detailed account of materials or resources to be used, nor a statement of aims, but an outline of the subject matter to be studied (Barrow, 1984, p.3). However much writing in the field of curriculum studies has tended to redirect attention from content. For instance Stenhouse argues that the fundamental questions on which curriculum research and development can throw light on are questions of translating purpose into policy and trying to realise aspirations, whatever they may be (Stenhouse, 1975). This shift has come about with a growing awareness of the range of extraneous factors that affect how content is experienced and what is learnt. Terms like 'hidden curriculum' have come into

common usage and have been applied to an ambiguous range of concerns. Thus Jackson (1971) talks of the three R's of rules, routines and regulations that must be learnt by pupils if they are to survive in the classroom; Holt (1969) describes a set of strategies called 'right answerism'; and Bowles and Gintis (1976) have analysed the social control aspects in terms of 'correspondence theory' where the attitudes inculcated by the school are said to correspond to those required to maintain the class based system of production.

The problem with this extension of meaning is that it can become coterminous with 'education' and so lose use. As Barrow argues it is easier to recognise that a curriculum, defined relatively narrowly in terms of content, may have unintended consequences, and then to explore that issue, than it is to be alert to all the conceivable ramifications of a broad concept (Barrow, 1984, p.10). Here therefore I have taken Barrow's adaptation of Hirst's (1968) definition and chosen to see the curriculum as 'a programme of activities (by teachers and pupils) designed so that pupils will attain so far as possible certain educational and other schooling ends or objectives' (Barrow 1984, p.11).

Whilst the literature of the formal educational institution has been riddled with an explicit concern with curriculum that of youth work and community work has not. The reasons for this are not hard to find. First, as such work is not usually linked to certification there has not been a need to work through a prescribed syllabus. In this sense content has been less to the fore. Second, as we noted in our definition of political education, purpose and intention may not be marked by closely specified goals. Learning may be apparently haphazard and unsuccessful at times. Third, education is only one of a number of interlinking traditions that have informed the development of youth work and community work. In the case of youth work for instance, we need also to consider the impact of welfaring, leisure provision and character building (Smith, forthcoming).

There have been those who have sought to encourage 'curriculum thinking' in these sectors (NYB, 1975 and 1983), but it is in general, an unhelpful notion as a consideration of Barrow's definition demonstrates. Central to this consideration is the relative open-endedness of both aim and method. I would argue that it is a characteristic of youth work that exchanges are based around a broad set of aims or concerns within which objectives are formulated and reformulated as the learning project progresses. Such concerns and objectives arise from the dialogue between the educator and the learner. Outcomes at any one point may not be marked with a high degree of specificity. The concerns that workers bring may be to do with the subordination of girls and young

women, the desire to 'socially educate' the young, to give young people an opportunity to enjoy themselves or the wish to see people gain the ability and confidence to organise things for themselves. To call these concerns a curriculum is, I believe, to attempt to make a particular way of working conform to the norms and practices of the formal institutions and to contribute to the destruction of a powerful educational form.

In addition learners and educators are liable to alter processes and settings as circumstances and feelings change. When a fair comes to town, youth workers may well close down their building and use the fairground as the site for their activities. Community workers will have to respond to rapid changes in the political, social and physical environment. At one point the concern of the people they work with may be heating bills, at another the closure of a school, at yet another changes in social security regulations. Some workers will be able to describe and use a detailed programme of activities that could approximate to a curriculum, but they would have to create and maintain a working environment that limits the extent to which the changing concerns of those they work with are brought into the process. In other words they will have to sacrifice a degree of responsiveness in taking people's current concerns and working with them.

Why not other forms of political education practice?

At this point it is worth asking why these seven approaches are more prominent in youth work than in other forms which have been important in the formal sector. For instance the Curriculum Review Unit list a number of different focuses for the provision of political education in schools:

* Politics (as an academic discipline);

* public administration and political institutions;

* constitution and law;

* political issues;

* political concepts; and

* political skills. (Porter (ed.) 1983, p.39)

I suppose an initial answer could be that the focuses that are not represented in the community are already available to people through formal institutions as part of their evening class/adult education work. However that would assume

that people feel able to take up educational opportunities offered within formal institutions when we know that many are put off study by the operation of the institutions themselves. If there were a demand for the study of these areas in these ways then one would expect to see programmes established in other more convivial institutions and, as our survey has shown, they are not.

Perhaps a more productive line of enquiry is to see how demands for educational opportunity are constructed and expressed and how provision is organised and delivered. If we follow this line through then we can see that most of the focuses outlined by the Curriculum Review Unit (Porter, op cit) are constructed around existing subject areas - in other words they are largely determined by the way knowledge is organised within formal educational institutions rather than by what people want to learn. Turning to the approaches that we have discussed we can see that they have tended to be adopted and developed by educators and participants because they meet a particular set of needs at a specific moment. It has been the demands of the market that have not only influenced what is provided but the way it is constructed. There is evidence of a significant dialogue between the facilitators of learning programmes and the potential and actual participants in them.

In conclusion: a model for considering the approaches

In this chapter I have attempted to provide a framework for looking at the way in which youth workers and community workers approach political education. I have suggested that we have to consider the nature of five phenomena and the relationship between them. The:

* ideologies of the worker and learner;

* concerns to which that ideology is applied;

* institutions and structures in which the worker and learner operate;

* settings for their exchanges; and

*   processes that may be utilised.

Thus if we examine the approaches to political education in youth work already described we can see in them a constant interplay between these phenomena. Workers and learners bring with them a view of the world, particular orientations or concerns and a repertoire of methods and settings. Exchanges take place within certain organisational and social boundaries and need not be

marked by clearly specified goals. In some of the approaches there may be an interest in curriculum. This is perhaps most marked in some of the more formalised approaches to civics and socio/historic understanding. For the rest we can see that what the worker offers for the most part is a particular range of processes informed by an ideology and mediated by certain key concerns. Those concerns or orientations will be deeply embrued by the ideology of those involved.

This way of conceptualising political education practice is equally applicable to other forms of youth work intervention (developed in Smith, forthcoming).

From this survey I hope it will be apparent that in youth work (and community work) significant forms of political education are developing. The structures and settings in which they take place, the institutions and processes which they utilise and the ideologies and concerns which inform their practice provide for the possibility of a political education which connects with the material reality of people's lives. However it is far from being the dominant feature of youth work practice. That remains wedded to century old traditions balanced around a bargain between individual 'improvement' and the provision of 'rational recreation' (see Smith, forthcoming). As we have seen, there are signs of change. The extent to which they signal a critical break with past traditions only time will tell. The structures of domination which face those who want to construct a political education which is enhancing of human dignity and social justice are such that it is often difficult to see how things might change. Yet we live in hope. Gramsci described such a feeling as the "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will". What some of the approaches described here offer is a path through that intellectual pessimism, for do they reveal ways in which the contradictory nature of social relationships can be analysed and used to develop a liberatory political education.

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