

It would seem appropriate to state at the beginning of this article that the views and opinions expressed here are those of the writer and not necessarily those of Devon Education Authority. However, they are made from a background of teaching in mainstream and in special education, and from seven years' experience as the Head of Devon County's only secondary special school.

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Special schools arose from the needs of pupils who, to a large extent, were not having those needs met within ordinary schools. Day schools for the mentally handicapped and epileptic arrived with the motor car, whilst the first schools for the blind and deaf were founded in the lifetime of Mozart.

The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People was published in 1978. This took the Chairman's name and soon became known as the 'Warnock' Report. At that time it was reported in the Times Educational Supplement that '... the best way to improve the education of children with special needs is both to ensure early detection and identification of specific disability, and to improve the quality of the teaching and care the child receives, wherever that may be ...'

In 1980, in the Government's White Paper 'Special Needs in Education', in acknowledging the Warnock Report it was stated, '... only when the economic situation improves sufficiently will it be possible to bring to fruition all the committed efforts of those engaged in meeting special education needs ...'

The Education Act of 1981 assisted with legal powers, but it was a disappointment as it neglected the Warnock priorities of teacher training, further education, provision for the under fives, and totally ignored the need of extra funds. Yet we are now becoming more aware than ever before of the special educational needs of many children who are currently in ordinary schools and there is now a legal responsibility to cater for those needs.

In schools, children have been encouraged to ask questions, parents have opportunities to participate in the workings of schools, yet there is unhappiness in our schools. Many teachers fear a contraction of the education service. In this city dependable schools are disappearing and with change there is uncertainty. Local communities such as Plymouth will need to start to generate their own structures and programmes to give people a sense of belonging and support, particularly where many adults will be without meaningful and paid employment.

By the year 2000 microelectronic equipment will probably have been so enormous as to have completely changed our school system. Most secondary education will probably take place in the home, or at least not in a school as we now know it. Pupils will need to be prepared for life which will probably consist of much leisure and little paid employment. Education could well become locally financed with University, or higher education, being on a regional basis. Schools are likely to become centres for the community with open access for all ages, data being readily available through microcomputers. There is a growing realisation of the need to use natural resources sparingly and that individual responsibilities outweigh individual rights.

In the future the state will have to provide more people with financial allowances which could in part be vouchers for learning modules. Politicians, local and national, will have to be more accountable. Microelectronic computers will be used for local and central elections with referenda often through the home terminal. An example of this was the 'telection' portrayed in the 1984 Cambridge Footlights Review. This depicted a quiz-type by-election for Parliament with show business presentation, mid-Atlantic accents and audience participation through fireside voting. In the future there will be little requirement for unskilled labour and, for some, leisure will be television-type with some 'arm-chair' passive participation. However, others will find a new interest in culture pursuits such as sailing, fishing, horticulture, painting, pottery, etc.

It would appear likely that after a decline in the birthrate there would be financial inducement from the Government for children to be born.

Without further speculation and to summarise, in the remaining years of this century there will be vast changes in education, particularly in the way it is received, offered, where it happens, its scope and clientele. Similarly, there are likely to be considerable social changes which could range from parts of the country with extremely caring communities to other parts where law enforcement would be possible only with the active participation of citizens' law enforcement groups. In fact, it could be that this country would attempt to exercise social control to the extent that some handicapped and some criminals would be forbidden to procreate.

If there is this polarisation, its degree and its direction, either to left or to right, would vary with different regions of the country. With more locally, or regionally, delegated responsibilities, the provision for children in

need of special education in special schools, or in mainstream, would vary enormously. Meantime, the Head of a school has to lead a team of teachers and non-teachers to serve the needs of pupils. He or she should give some direction, yet, at the same time, be mindful of the wishes of parents and of the views of the local community. He should encourage creativity, follow National or County policy, with slight local variations, be mindful to respond to the thoughts of the school governing body and whenever possible, raise or encourage the raising of funds for the school. Important though these may be, it is absolutely essential for the head to be able to double as the caretaker, first-aider, supply teacher, mealtime supervisor or father confessor. At times the Head seems to be expected to walk on water. This is quite beyond the writer's capabilities. However, he can keep upright on water, but it has to be frozen and often the skating seems to be on thin ice.