The rationality of judgement: comparative perspectives on the social role of educational assessment

Thesis

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THE RATIONALITY OF JUDGEMENT

Comparative perspectives on the social role of educational assessment

by

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is the origins and implications of the elaborate apparatus of assessment procedures which characterises educational provision in advanced industrial societies. The analysis is divided into two parts.

Part I which is entitled 'Sociological Perspectives' is concerned with establishing the conceptual framework for such a study. An initial review of the literature, which delineates both the need for and the scope of such an analysis, is followed by a review which draws on comparative data to identify the major functions of educational assessment and the way in which such functions may change their form, but not their essential purpose, in response to changing social conditions. Having identified these functions as the attestation of competence, the regulation of competition and the control of both curriculum content and educational practice, subsequent chapters in Part I examine firstly the way in which the characteristics of industrial society give rise to the need for such educational assessment and condition its form, and secondly, how these forms and functions differ in relation to the idiosyncratic social context of different societies.

Part II of the thesis comprises case studies of two national education systems - France and England - in which the conceptual frameworks developed in Part I are applied in some detail to two very different social contexts. Each case study offers a brief historical review of the role educational assessment procedures have played in the emergence of the characteristic features of educational provision in the two countries studied and examines their contemporary role in terms of both the individual pupil and the system as a whole. A final, concluding chapter discusses some of the common trends which may be identified in both countries at the present time and attempts to assess their importance for the future role that education might play in such societies.
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During the years it takes to research and write a thesis, one receives help from many different quarters. Some of this help is quite gratuitous, where the source is a timely article or a chance remark. Nevertheless, it is the insights and stimulus provided by the work of the invisible college of colleagues in the academic community that makes any particular project possible. Thus my primary debt is to the many scholars in this field on whose work I have drawn even though, as is the way of these things, they are for the most part unaware of this debt.

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Above all, my thanks are due to Roger Dale, without whose sustained guidance, encouragement and intellectual inspiration through a number of years, this thesis would not have been possible.

PMB.
I confirm that no part of this work has previously been submitted by me or anyone else for a degree or other qualification to this or any other university or institution.

Whilst some of the data on which it draws were collected as part of a research project in which others were involved, the work presented is entirely my own.

P.M. BROADFOOT

May, 1984.
Parts of the analysis of this thesis have already appeared in the various publications of the author. The relevant publications are listed in Appendix B.
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PART I : SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
People are continually passing judgements on others - on their clothes, their accents, their actions, their beliefs - in fact in every area of human life. They pass judgement on products too - on books and television programmes, on buildings and furniture, on art and music, not least on football teams. People regulate and give meaning to their lives by the values they adopt. It is these values that influence their interpretation of the actions of others and their results. Most of the time people are not aware of the judgements they make for, unlike the drama or music critic whose job it is to evaluate an artistic performance in terms of the prevailing standards of a particular society, very few people would claim the right to pass a formal judgement in an area in which they have no special expertise. Rather, they appoint and train specialists who become expert at interpreting what they think are the values of society which operate in their own field and they are entrusted with the task of being arbiters of the quality of a particular performance. Thus, despite the fact that their criteria are often in fact greatly 'avant garde' in comparison with society at large, the decision whether to buy a particular painting for a national collection will be the responsibility of a few individuals whose experience and talent lead the nation to rely on their judgement. Informally of course individuals still reserve the right to decide what they personally find pleasing or moving, shocking or in bad taste, for such value-judgements are as integral to social life as social life is to being human.

Education is no exception to this general rule. 'Experts' are
appointed - people with specific qualifications and experience, who are entrusted with making judgements which conform to prevailing social values about desirable achievements. Thus in schools, teachers operate as 'educational critics' although they only evaluate educational performance and are not seen typically as setting the standards themselves. This evaluation takes many forms: in the classroom it may be the mark given for the weekly test or the ink exercise, or it may be expressed in the end of term class placement, the end of year exam, or the awarding of an external certificate. At the same time evaluation is continually taking place as part of the interaction between teacher and pupil: 'Johnny is always gazing out of the window', 'Susan will need more help with her handwriting', 'Lorraine always looks so untidy'. The same informal judgements are likewise continually being made by the pupils about the teacher and about each other: 'Mrs. Brown is even more boring today than usual', 'Sir had no right to tell Tom off like that', 'Tony is a creep'. Such evaluation, overt and covert, formal and informal, is as integral to school life as it is to all human relationships, immensely powerful but seldom questioned.

Teachers are also continually evaluating the learning process itself, trying to gauge the progress and problems of individual pupils in order that they may provide appropriate help and encouragement. Teachers need, too, to evaluate their own teaching in order to judge the value of particular teaching strategies and to discover to what extent the class as a whole has mastered a particular unit of work and thus can usefully be moved on to the next topic. Teachers have many techniques available to enable them to make such judgements. Research shows, (for example Brown and McIntyre (1977), Stubbs (1976), Flanders (1970), Boydell (1974)), that on average, teachers may spend almost half their time on oral questioning, partly of course as a teaching tool to move the lesson
on, but mainly to assess the understanding of individual pupils and, in aggregate, the class as a whole. In addition, marking written work, chatting to pupils, and even facial expressions will reveal relevant diagnostic information.

To the extent that the teacher is relating to the needs and interests of the individual pupil, this purpose of assessment would seem to approximate perhaps most closely to a child-centred interpretation of education. Indeed, the correspondence between the greatly increased emphasis on 'progressive' child-centred teaching methods and the decline of formal assessment seems to support the view that assessment can be divorced from social selection requirements and be geared only to the learning of the individual child. As Rousseau so well demonstrated in his Emile (Rousseau, 1911), the concept of an organised sequence of learning experiences depends upon the teacher's ability to judge the pupil's understanding and needs at any particular time.

Appearances are deceptive, however, for during the ongoing interaction between teacher and pupil, and even between the pupils themselves, over the weeks and months pupils come to an often unconscious assessment of themselves and their performance in relation to each other as they strive to achieve the socially-defined goals which underlie the teacher's activities. Although the teacher may seek to respond to the variety of pupil needs and interests, pupils become labelled by the teacher in relation to various pre-existing stereotypes (Becker, 1952) such as 'lazy', 'dull', or 'bright'. Gradually, pupils too come to recognise that only particular kinds of achievement are valued and they learn to assess themselves and adjust their expectations accordingly.

For whereas the 'formative evaluation' which is part of the process of teaching and learning is inherent in all educational activity worthy of the name, mass schooling systems have also evolved a quite different
sort of more formal evaluative activity - which may be termed 'summative evaluation'. This 'more or less formalized procedure usually separated from the classroom situation' (Ottobre, 1979, p. 12) comes at the end of a particular stage of school activity and has a quite different role to that of 'formative evaluation'. Its purpose is the externalisation of information about the process of education so that those not personally involved in it can still be provided with reliable information about the learning that has taken place. On the basis of such information, the characteristics, and hence quality, of pupils, teachers, institutions and even the education system as a whole can be judged. For 'insiders' such formalised judgements provide useful standards against which to measure their own progress, be they pupils, teachers or administrators. The internalisation by pupils of such assessments results in time in the very clear differences of behaviour and motivation characterising those labelled 'bright' and marked out for success and those 'less able' pupils destined for failure. Whilst it may be deplored educationally, this 'cooling out' process (Goffman, 1952; Clark, 1962, 1972) is highly significant in limiting the frustration that would be endemic in any system in which a large number of pupils aspired to a limited number of opportunities. For 'outsiders', the information generated by 'summative evaluation' can provide a rational basis for discriminating between individuals when there is a need to select, and is the basis of accountability in the sense that it provides for judgements to be made on the quality of the education being offered.

This kind of explicit educational evaluation is usefully distinguished by the term 'assessment' which may be taken to mean the deliberate and overt measurement of educational performance in order to provide information for purposes beyond the immediate interactive learning situation.
Some writers (e.g. Satterly, 1981) distinguish between 'assessment' as the actual process of measurement and 'evaluation' as the subsequent interpretation of such measurements against particular norms of performance. In formative evaluation these two stages are often synchronous. As teachers scan pupils for signs of non-attention or difficulty, they are also simultaneously interpreting what they see in terms of the criteria identified by their previous experience. In more formal assessments, however, there may be a more explicit distinction between the production of scores, often including a measure of standardisation, and the subsequent interpretation and use of those scores for various purposes such as reporting and pupil selection. Generally, however, assessment may be taken to refer to both the actual procedures and the uses to which they are put that have evolved as part of mass educational provision, whilst evaluation refers to the more general sense outlined above.

The repertoire of assessment techniques would be taken to include teacher-marked essays, exercises and class tests; standardised tests, periodic school examinations, and public examinations; school records, reports to parents, testimonials and references, as well as the more rare formal evaluations by outside bodies such as school psychologists.

This already lengthy list would be further added to, particularly in those education systems where schools enjoy a measure of autonomy, by the senior management of the school in their concern for the way in which the consumers outside the school, such as the parents of actual and prospective pupils, the local community in general, employers and further and higher education establishments, would judge the products of the school and, hence, its activities. Equally, senior management at least will be concerned with the assessments upon which the management hierarchy outside the school - the local education authority inspectors,
advisers, and officials, local political representatives - come to form their judgements about the quality of education provided in that particular school. There is also a third level of concern which preoccupies those charged with national responsibility for educational provision and standards - the Ministry of Education, the national Inspectorate and ultimately, Parliament. Indeed, educational assessment in various forms has been of central importance in the creation of educational systems per se through the rationalisation of educational provision and the control of educational practice. So integral to the mass provision of education has the ideology and the associated practice of assessment become that, like the honeysuckle and the bindweed, they are now so inseparable that any attempt to release education from the constrictions of assessment procedures would be likely to result in the collapse of the system itself. From the most informal micro-interaction of the classroom, through class tests, and certificate examinations right up to the macro levels of national monitoring, it is possible to trace a single underlying rationale, an ideology which embodies the contradictory purposes of mass education and powerfully controls the nature of its goals and rewards.

The scope of this thesis comprehends the whole range of such organised evaluative activity within the education system, from the judgements teachers form in the classroom about individual pupils through to the way in which various, more formal means of recording and reporting pupils' progress in the school as a whole provide for the accountability of the individual teacher, the school, the local authority and ultimately, national educational provision as a whole.
Theoretical framework: Selection, Certification and Control

This description of the pervasive and characteristic role of formal evaluative techniques in contemporary schooling defines and justifies the choice of subject for this thesis. It will be argued that assessment techniques provide one of the principal mechanisms by which those changing bases for social control within the broader society which gave birth to mass schooling in the first place are translated into the educational process. More specifically, it will be suggested that the solution to the quite novel problems of the regulation and legitimation of a proliferating division of labour which the process of industrialisation increasingly required, lay in the provision of formal assessment techniques within the process of schooling. Inherent in such an approach is the assumption that in those developed societies which have mass educational provision there is something generically different and characteristic about the way in which educational evaluation operates. These 'developed' societies which may be variously categorised as 'mass' or 'modern' 'industrial' or 'capitalist' - the latter being further divided into 'entrepreneurial', 'corporate', 'advanced' and 'post' manifestations - must nevertheless share common features which differentiate them from pre-industrial societies. For the purposes of the present analysis these common characteristics are taken to be those identified by Aron (1980):

"the simplest abstract definition of "industrial society" involves three principal characteristics: where the vast majority of the labour force is concentrated in the secondary and tertiary sector; where there exists a constant impulsion, in contrast to the relatively stable character of traditional societies to expand productivity; and, consequently, where there is a rapid rate of technology and innovation.' (p. 22)

To the extent that these characteristics are present in any particular society, they are likely to give rise to a need for some
rational (i.e. justifiable) basis to be found for the allocation of unequally-desirable social roles. The most obvious rational justification is likely to be merit-demonstrated competence to perform the role. Allied to the demonstration of competence, typically represented in certification, is the idea of competition or selection - that individuals should be allowed to compete on an equal basis to demonstrate their claim to competence. The provision of such a fair and open competition suggests that those who are not successful in achieving their aspirations will accept the rational selection criteria being applied and hence, their own failure. In so doing they acquiesce not only in their own defeat but in the legitimacy of the prevailing social order. To this extent the provision of an apparently fair competition controls the build-up of frustration and resentment among the least privileged.

The issue of control extends beyond that of the individual, however, to include control of the educational system as a whole given that the system is composed of individuals who must themselves engage in the competition over competence. In some societies this systemic control will take the form of a powerful state bureaucracy whose activities regulate both the process of education - curriculum, pedagogy - and its institutional provision. In other, more 'de-centralised' societies where there is no such powerful state bureaucracy, control is exerted by the interaction of interest groups and various, less formal normative pressures such as feelings of professional responsibility. Thus, as well as attesting competence, regulating competition and reducing the frustration of individuals, assessment procedures have a crucial role to play in providing for such systemic control. It is these themes of competence, competition and control, together with the associated issue of 'content', that provide the analytical key to understanding the unique and characteristic role played by educational assessment procedures in
industrial societies. Following this basic theoretical framework, historical and contemporary developments in assessment policy and practice may be understood in terms of the interplay between these themes and the different priority accorded to each of them as social, economic and political factors dictate.

Yet, despite the fact that the panoply of marks and grades, tests and exams, reports and inspections, is one of the most characteristic features of contemporary educational provision; that many educational administrators and most teachers would identify the periodic necessity of having to submit themselves and their pupils to some kind of formal evaluation as one of the most fundamental constraints on their professional practice; and whilst there is no lack of research on most of the major aspects of assessment such as its effects on pupils or the advantages and disadvantages of various different measurement techniques; there has, as yet, been little attempt to explain why assessment procedures have come to have such a dominant role in contemporary educational provision.

One explanation for this omission is a relative lack of interest in educational assessment on the part of sociologists. Although such assessment is an implicit issue in many major areas of concern, such as the curriculum or social inequality, it is comparatively rare for sociological research to address educational assessment as an explicit topic and even more rare for such research to seek to explain the ubiquity of educational assessment. Indeed the sheer scale of such a task and the theoretical complexities involved render it daunting and it is not surprising that fear of superficial generalisations and over-deterministic explanations have led most researchers to choose a more limited focus for studies in this area. Yet only such a comprehensive study can explain this fundamental, and in some ways determining, aspect
of schooling, and hence illuminate a major feature of social life. It is thus this perspective that informs the analysis that follows.

The scope of the thesis is broad - historical and comparative, structural and processual - and the danger of superficiality correspondingly great. Nevertheless the importance of the issue is taken to justify the risks inherent in such a grand design, the overall aim being to provide a conceptual model for the study of educational assessment as a social form characteristic of societies with formal educational provision. The first stage of such an analysis necessarily involves a fuller justification of its importance as a topic.

In the pages that follow, the foregoing introductory remarks are extended and justified by means of a brief review of the existing literature on educational assessment. Having thus briefly established the context for the analysis the final part of this chapter introduces the thesis as a whole and outlines each of the separate strands of the study.

The range of existing studies

There exists a not inconsiderable body of research on the characteristics and effects of inter-personal evaluation in classroom interaction (see, for example, Jasman, 1981; Gearheart and Willenberg, 1979; Nash, 1976; Gilly, 1980; Wood and Napthali, 1975; Morrison, 1974). This work is largely confined to the role of such evaluation in the social creation of identity. The essentially social psychological perspectives of labelling theory (Lemert, 1967; Matza, 1969; Hargreaves, 1976; Becker, 1963), stereotype formation (Cameron; Jones and Morrison, 1973, Willis, 1977; Hargreaves, 1967), and the self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1968; Rist, 1970; Fleming and Anttonen, 1974;
Rogers, 1982) are principally concerned with tracing the way in which such processes operate and their subsequent effects on pupil behaviour and attainment (Campbell, 1974; Beard and Senior, 1980; Sumner and Warburton, 1972; Gerlach and Sullivan, 1969). Other studies in this area are explicitly concerned with using assessment to create a different classroom climate in which the emphasis on mastery rather than competition increases pupil motivation. (Bloom, 1969, 1976, 1983; Thomas et al., 1978; Skaalvik, 1975; Mager, 1962; Glaser, 1963; Atkin, 1969; Berk, 1980; Block, 1971; Boehm, 1973). But although such studies of the effects of evaluation procedures in the process of schooling underline the latter's significance, they can in themselves throw but little light on why the extensive formalisation of such procedures should have been a defining characteristic in the emergence of mass schooling systems.

Again, although a number of more socio-historical studies of educational assessment procedures exist, notably with regard to the emergence of the two most explicit manifestation of such formalisation - academic examinations and intelligence testing - such studies (e.g. Evans and Waites, 1981, Torrance, 1981; Vernon, 1978; Sadler, 1931; Montgomery, 1965, 1978; Morris, 1961) are typically context specific and thus not explicitly concerned with generalising beyond the idiosyncratic concatenation of events to the broader social currents underpinning them.

By far the biggest volume of assessment literature, however, is concerned with the development of assessment techniques on the one hand and criticisms of the effects and shortcomings of these same techniques on the other. The issue of public examinations is typical in this respect with technical studies such as Nuttall and Wilmott (1968), Lauwerys and Scanlon (1969), Christie and Forrest (1981), Kelly (1976), Pilliner (1968) and Bruce (1969) - to give just a few examples of a huge
literature - being complemented by an equally large, if often less scholarly, body of literature which offers a more or less vitriolic critique of the harmful effects of such examinations on pupil motivation and creativity or exposes the inevitable inaccuracies of any formal assessment process (e.g. Pearce, 1971; Rust and Harris, 1967; Stones, 1975; Cox, 1966, Kelly, 1971). Often the technical studies are themselves highly critical of the shortcomings of educational measurement procedures even though they may not, like the non-psychometrician, deplore the need for such activity at all in the light of its claimed effects on the learning process (e.g. Murphy, 1982; King, 1955; Branthwaite et al., 1981).

The debate over examinations is matched by that over other forms of assessment. Objective testing and item-banking seem to some to overcome many of the technical disadvantages of traditional essay-type examinations and to allow a more curriculum-led assessment (Wood and Skurnik, 1969; Schools Council, 1971; Dobby and Duckworth, 1979). To others this very objectivity, with its inevitable restriction to the clearly defined curricular aims (Ebel, 1963; Eisner, 1969) is to be deplored since the price of more objective assessment is held to be curriculum banality (Hoffman, 1964; Tyler, 1964; MacDonald-Ross, 1973; Hogben, 1972; David, 1981; Herndon, 1975; Simon, 1978). The desirability of examinations versus that of continuous assessment is also a major and long-standing issue in the assessment literature (Burt, 1945; Forrest, 1974; Ford, 1980; Eggleston, 1974; Elley and Livingstone, 1972; Schools Council, 1967, 1975; Murphy, 1981).

These more or less scholarly debates are of enormous significance since they are often a major influence in the determination of assessment policy. It is thus not surprising that considerable sums of public money have been available to national research institutes and
psychometricians generally to develop and evaluate different assessment
techniques. Research and development of this kind has grown from being
a scholarly pursuit in the early years of this century (Hamilton, 1974;
Hamilton and Smith, 1980), into a major business, supporting organisations
the size of ETS (Educational Testing Service) in the United States and in a
smaller, but not less significant way, a whole range of research
institutes whose revenue is greatly increased from the sale of the
tests so developed. Indeed, the relationship between the psychometric
concern with the development of techniques for the measurement of
individual differences and that of the development of educational
research per se (Taylor, 1973; Landsheere, 1975) has been close since
the early years of this century; Indeed the psychometric tradition rapidly
became so powerful that it virtually constituted the 'normal science'
(Kuhn, 1962) of educational research for many years³ (see, for example,
Dockrell, 1984).

It is the very power of the debates over rival assessment techniques
to inform policy which has helped to exclude discussion of more
fundamental reforms. Given the very urgency of the issues under
discussion, and the high stakes of individual life chances with which
any formalised assessment procedures are inevitably involved, it is at
first sight not surprising that in the heat of debate relatively little
thought is spared for questioning the very principle of educational
assessment and the organisational practices of contemporary schooling
based on it. On the other hand, given the size and quality of the
critical literature that now exists about the shortcomings of assessment
procedures, the continued exclusion of any fundamental critique from the
policy arena does indeed seem surprising.

The fact that assessments are now widely acknowledged to be at best
only a rough estimate of particular kinds of ability despite the
statistical finesse of the processing of the results and the considerable quantity of research directed towards improving their accuracy, has been extensively documented in a large number of research studies since the seminal work of Hartog and Rhodes in 1935 (see Ingenkamp, 1977). The vagaries of pupil performance and especially of exam stress, of differences between markers and the difficulty of questions, are only some of the more significant causes of inaccuracy which would now seem to be largely unavoidable. Research has revealed, for example, that differences between examiners, such as speed of reading, fatigue, and competence (see, for example, Dunstan, 1966), ideology (Husbands, 1976), the order and speed of marking or even the examiner's personal social situation, may affect the marking process (Branthwaite et al., 1981) and cause considerable unreliability. Or, in the words of one teacher,

'My marking is no worse than most - better than some, but I know it is bloody awful. The time you get to do any marking, the amount you are paid, the pressure on you to do it, and the absolute lack of any kind of instruction - you meet and you discuss and you are supposed to know how it is done. People get made chief examiners, which is a lot of power without any kind of training and they are the ones that run the educational system because in an obscure way, if you pass the exam they set, within a very narrow margin, you go to university. It is a much stiffer hurdle to get that mark than it is to get a degree. The difference between A and B and A and D can be about 6 marks which is the one duff question and one bad-tempered examiner or incompetent examiner or lazy examiner ...' (a Devon secondary school teacher)

It may well be partly for this reason that such certificate results are a very weak guide to the likely quality of future job or higher education performance (Eyre, 1966; Schools Council, 1972; Oxtoby, 1973; Eggleston, 1973). Indeed Powell (1973) has documented a whole series of other influences on attainment in higher education of which the most obvious are motivation and effort, but which also include quite subtle dimensions excluded from certification assessment, such as introversion and extroversion and confidence.
It is largely because the technical aspects of assessment are so readily amenable to systematic study that it is these very shortcomings of particular techniques which have dominated discussions about desirability. The debate - and there is currently a good deal of it - is conducted almost entirely in this arena, the arena of efficiency. The heated discussion initiated in England in this decade by the Schools Council's proposals for what were, in reality, fairly minor changes in the structure of certification awards at 16, 17 and 18+ (DES, 1978; Schools Council, 1977, 1978a, b) was matched by a similar debate in Scotland following on the publication of a Report there in 1977 of the Secretary of State's Committee on Assessment and Certification (SED, 1977). The focus of such discussion is overwhelmingly on examining current practice and working out how it may be changed to become more efficient and thus ostensibly more just. This point is made explicitly in the Waddell Report (DES, 1978).

"We were aware of general questions which are often debated concerning the need for, and place of, examinations in society and the imperfections which are inherent in the nature of any system of examining. As a committee we were not constituted, nor had we time, to re-examine and come to a view on all these broad issues as they merit, although we kept them in mind as a background to our work. In the circumstances we did, however, accept that public examinations would remain an essential feature of our educational system for the foreseeable future."

This emphasis on short-term, pragmatic issues, this location of the problematic essentially within the status quo, is highly significant because of the legitimating influence of assessment procedures in reinforcing a particular understanding of the desirable nature of education. To put it another way, if only the efficiency of assessment practices is questioned and not their purposes and effects, and since formal assessment procedures exert a strong influence on the curriculum in reinforcing a particular interpretation of the nature of education
in contemporary society - one based on achievement stratified according to academic ability - then assessment procedures are likely to lead to inertia in the education system and its inability to respond to changing social needs.

Rarely have the various perspectives and traditions of research into educational assessment been brought together. The different professional communities represented and their different goals have encouraged at best a defensive neutrality, at worst, an overt hostility. Even more rare have been the attempts to widen the focus of debate in order to situate such research traditions within a more general understanding of the relationship between school and society. Test constructors, test users and test critics remain isolated from each other, locked into their professional communities and idiosyncratic concerns. At the same time, sociologists have been content not to intervene in the debate between psychologists, historians and pedagogues.

Why this should have been the case is a difficult question to answer. In part at least the explanation is the same as that for the comparatively recent sociological interest in curriculum and classroom processes generally, namely a preoccupation with the structural factors of input and output within the educational system. Until the early seventies the domination of psychological perspectives concerned with the measurement of individual differences (see, for example, Thorndike and Hagen, 1969; Pidgeon and Yates, 1968; Bloom, Hastings and Madaus, 1971; Ebel, 1965, 1972; Collins et al., 1976) and sociological perspectives concerned with the identification of educational disadvantage (see, for example, Banks, 1955; Halsey, Floud and Martin, 1961; Douglas, 1964; Floud and Halsey, 1958; Douglas et al., 1971), both supported an almost total commitment to positivist research techniques. Thus although formal assessment procedures of individual capacity and
achievement are clearly an important feature of such research, just as they are of the operation of the meritocracy itself, there was little explicit concern in such studies with the actual effects of the assessment procedures used. Although throughout the 1950s psychologists were assiduous in their attempts to uncover the inaccuracies of the 11+ and hence the assumptions on which it was based (Simon, 1953; Vernon, 1978) there was little attempt made to understand such procedures in terms of broader, social pressures.

In the early 1970s the sociology of education underwent a radical change in focus with the advent of the 'new' sociology of education (Bernbaum, 1977). But it was curriculum and, to a lesser extent, pedagogy which dominated such studies (e.g. Young, 1971; Whitty and Young, 1976; Eggleston, 1977). Bernstein was atypical in his identification of three message systems in schooling - curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation - in his work on education codes (Bernstein, 1977), but even here, evaluation received far less attention than the other two message systems which were embodied in the key concepts of 'classification' and 'framing'. Evaluation appears as a dependent, rather than a defining variable (see Chapter Three).

More recently, and particularly with the advent of the fashion for neo-Marxist political economy there are signs that sociologists of education have begun to take a more explicit interest in the origins and effects of formal evaluation procedures (Hextall and Sarup, 1977; Whitty, 1978; Mehan, 1973; Meighan, 1977; Broadfoot, 1984; Hargreaves, 1982). Some of these studies (e.g. Scarth, 1983; Turner, 1983; Bates, 1984) are directed at the curricular messages as they are effected by assessment at school and classroom level. Others (e.g. Collins, 1979; Dore, 1976; Ranson, 1984) are more macro-focussed, concerned with the credentialling function of contemporary school-systems. The amount of
work in this area is still small, however, and there remains a pressing need for sociological studies of assessment procedures of the kind represented by this thesis which can provide some kind of bridge between these various traditions and perspectives and so foster a more general understanding of the origins and effects of formal evaluation procedures in societies with mass schooling systems.

The thesis in outline

The topic of this thesis is thus, as its title suggests, an analysis of the part played by educational assessment in the kind of mass schooling systems which are typical of industrialised and industrialising societies. Such an analysis requires a combination of historical and comparative, theoretical and empirical, structural and processual perspectives within a general sociological perspective. In order to bring what is potentially a vast project within the scope of a single study, most of the empirical analysis of this study is based on two case studies of assessment practice in England and France. These two countries are taken to be sufficiently similar to be illustrative of the general themes yet sufficiently different from each other to illustrate important differences of emphasis in the use made of educational assessment which occur in national education systems and by so doing, guard against any trite determinism.

The organisation of the study reflects this tension between the general and the specific. The first four, largely theoretical, chapters constitute Part I of the thesis. This is primarily concerned with generating conceptual frameworks with which to structure an analysis of the range of assessment practices found in contemporary school systems. Part II of the thesis, which includes Chapters Five, Six and Seven, is
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much more empirical in focus, its aim being to elucidate and substantiate the analyses of Part I by means of detailed references to the two case study systems. Within this general framework, the chapters are divided as follows.

Chapter Two provides a fairly general overview of the nature and significance of educational assessment. It has two major functions. The first is to establish the pervasive presence and overwhelming importance of formal assessment procedures in any mass provision of schooling and, by so doing, justify the choice of topic for the thesis as a whole. The second function is to clarify in fairly general terms the reasons which lie behind the steady growth in the number and significance of assessment procedures in formal schooling. Given the essentially sociological rather than historical focus of the study as a whole, Chapter Two also includes a resumé of some of the more marked and generalisable trends currently identifiable in the assessment practices of industrialised countries. Thus Chapter Two introduces the major theoretical arguments which are expanded in Chapters Three and Four, at the same time setting a general empirical context for the more detailed case studies of Part II.

If the principal purpose of Chapter Two is to establish the importance of educational assessment as a topic of study, the principal purpose of Chapter Three is to explain why such evaluation procedures have become so integrally connected with mass schooling systems. This quest involves an examination of the generic characteristics of 'industrial' societies through the insights provided by sociological theory, notably that of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, and the more recent work of Bernstein, Foucault, Habermas and Marcuse. Whereas the focus of Chapter Three justifies and indeed requires a very general and extended theoretical analysis about the common characteristics of such societies, it is
equally important that these generalisations can be conceptually linked to idiosyncratic characteristics of particular schooling systems.

Chapter Four therefore extends a rather different level of theoretical analysis to that of Chapter Three. It is explicitly concerned with the provision and justification of an analytical framework for the empirical analyses of Part II, that is to say, it is concerned with the way in which the common characteristics of mass schooling systems are mediated by the institutional archaeology and ideological traditions of a particular nation state.

There has been a marked tendency in recent sociology of education for macro analyses to fail to distinguish between the common and the idiosyncratic features of different societies, particularly where such societies can be grouped under a generic term such as 'capitalist'. One of the principal themes of this thesis is that both constant and contextual analyses are necessary for an adequate understanding of contemporary practice and that there are considerable dangers in extrapolating uncritically to all similar societies from analyses based on a particular society, as in, for example, Bowles and Gintis' 'Schooling in Capitalist America' or Bourdieu and Passeron's 'Reproduction'. The perspective adopted in Chapter Four draws heavily upon the work of Archer and her neo-Weberian analysis of the education system per se as a unit of sociological study. Continuing the search for theoretical insights and conceptualisation about the role of assessment in mass schooling systems, Chapter Four links the central arguments of Chapter Three with a more middle-range theoretical concern with the relationship between ideology, structure and action as it finds expression in the national system. Thus Chapter Four provides for an articulation between substantive empirical detail and broad generalisations.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven comprise Part II of the thesis and
serve the dual function of illustrating empirically the general arguments of the thesis and, at the same time, demonstrating the importance of the national context in determining the precise manifestation of more general pressures and trends. The selection of two national education systems for detailed study which differ radically in their ethos, organisation and origins, reflects one of the major themes of the thesis which is the relationship between educational assessment and social control. The growing currency of the concept of accountability in the last decade has helped to focus attention on educational assessment as a vital element of systemic control alongside its already widely accepted significance as the chief instrument of individual selection and legitimation. The analyses of Chapters Five and Six address both these major dimensions in the role of educational assessment in an attempt to show how very different institutional manifestations of these key functions nevertheless provide for very similar outcomes in the way in which evaluation procedures provide for certain critical functions to be performed by mass education systems.

Thus Chapter Five offers an overview of the way in which assessment procedures have operated in the institution and development of mass schooling in France since the early nineteenth century. Such an analysis requires a more general account of the ideological and institutional traditions which have become characteristic of French education since the days of Napoleon Bonaparte. It is argued that the most notable of these traditions is that of strong central control. One of the major theoretical arguments of the thesis is that the way in which assessment procedures are used for control of the education system is a reflection of the degree of central control embodied in that system. This hypothesis is the principal reason for the choice of case study material. Since the two systems under study - the French and the English - differ
radically in their degree of formal centralisation, it was envisaged that they would highlight the very different ways assessment procedures have come to be used in individual social settings to fulfil the fundamental objective of system control.

To make the comparison between constants and contextually specific factors as clear as possible, Chapter Six provides a very similar case study to that of Chapter Five based this time on the development of educational assessment procedures within the highly decentralised English context, since the early nineteenth century.

The seventh and final chapter of the thesis pulls together the various analytical strands of Parts I and II in a more speculative consideration of the implications of contemporary trends in educational assessment in the two countries under study. Whilst the theme of Part I as a whole is the significance of the move from collective to individual social responsibility, which was associated with the process of industrialisation, Chapter Seven introduces what seems likely to be the next stage in this process, the move towards an increasingly technicist value-orientation. This latter development is taken to be a further stage in that pursuit of rationality which is characteristic of industrial societies. A technicist-value-orientation requires that the judgements which lie at the heart of any assessment procedure are transformed from being evaluations of an individual's qualities or achievements made against a given or chosen set of criteria into evaluations in which the criteria are apparently the absolute dictats of scientific efficiency. Against the relative values of personal choice, culture or belief and the whole realm of politics are pitted the impersonal, objective canons of scientific logic. The implications of the changes in assessment policy which can be identified in both France and England as a result of these contemporary trends as discussed
in Chapter Seven also provide a conclusion to the study as a whole, since they underline the way in which assessment procedures reflect the broader social context.

The empirical data for Part II of the thesis were collected in the course of a larger, SSRC-funded study entitled 'Constants and Contexts in Educational Accountability: A Comparative Study' undertaken by the author between 1979 and 1981, whose results are already available (Broadfoot, 1981). The principal source of data in both countries was a series of semi-structured interviews with educational personnel at all levels of the system from the Minister's office to that of the classroom teacher (see Appendix A: Methodology). In each country a detailed local case study was undertaken to identify how patterns of accountability and control actually operated in practice. These two case studies—of Calvados in France and Devon in England—and the more general programme of interviews at national level are the source of most of the personal comments used in Part II and elsewhere in the thesis. An equally important source of case study material was the rich fund of official and unofficial documentation generated in the course of the research. Whilst much of the contemporary analysis draws on primary source material, the study as a whole makes no attempt at original analysis from historical primary sources. Indeed the eclectic methodology of the study as a whole is typical of that required of a case study approach when a number of different perspectives is involved—structural and processual, theoretical and empirical, historical and comparative (Silver, 1983; Grant, 1979). Thus, whilst there is an explicit attempt to generate theory from the case study material, the emphasis in data collection has been on generating illuminative insight rather than on the systematic comparison of particular variables; on hypothesis-building rather than hypothesis-testing.
In addition to these limitations there are other, quite arbitrary limitations to the analysis which reflect the need to find the optimum balance between depth and breadth. In particular, the study has little to say about primary, tertiary or higher education being based almost entirely on that stage of education in which assessment has typically been most portentous, namely secondary schooling.

Every effort has been made in the study to observe the canons of qualitative research, to use its concern with the meanings and perceptions of respondents to explore the reality as well as the rhetoric of educational practice. Analyses of the data have been submitted to respondents at various stages to check the interpretations made and to generate further insights. In the same spirit, every effort has been made to avoid selective quotations which might deliberately perpetrate bias. The gradual sedimentation of ideas that has taken place over the several years of study represented in this thesis and the parts of it that have already been published offer some safeguards against any more or less deliberate bias. In the end, however, like all sociological accounts, this thesis can only be one, essentially personal, attempt to explain some aspect of social life. As such it is but a small part of an endless debate.
Footnotes to Chapter One

1. This has been clearly demonstrated in the English primary school after the virtual demise of the 11+.

2. See the responses reported in Chapters Five and Six.

3. That educational research apart from psychometric research has only recently become established as a distinct field of study is reflected in the fact that both the British and Scottish Educational Research Associations are only ten years old.

4. See Appendix A for list of respondents.
CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

This chapter is devoted to an elaboration of the central argument of this thesis that historical and contemporary developments in assessment policy and practice may be understood in terms of the interplay between the themes of competence, competition and control and the different priority accorded to each of them as social, economic and political factors dictate. To justify the assertion that this analytical framework is applicable to industrial societies in general, it is necessary to review historical and contemporary trends in assessment procedures from a broad, if necessarily superficial, empirical base. Such a review has a second, equally important function of providing a more general context within which the two case studies which form the bulk of this thesis may be located.

One of the many debts owed by contemporary sociology to its founding fathers - Marx, Durkheim and Weber - is their emphasis on studying social phenomena in an historical and international context. It is perhaps only with the growth of neo-Marxist perspectives in recent years that the importance of the 'grande vision' has been re-established, along with the equally important in-depth insights of the 'new directions'. Certainly as far as assessment is concerned, a study of the historical and international contexts shows clearly the dilemmas inherent in its social role, for the issues that have dominated the debates on educational assessment in France and England have been echoed in most, if not all, of the industrial and industrialising countries of the world. In Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands and in the less developed countries of Europe, in the United States, the USSR and the Eastern bloc and in Australia - indeed in any country with mass and extended education -
the same dilemmas are apparent.

In the Third World too, to the extent that such countries seek to emulate Western industrial society, and seek to engage in the world economy, they are likely to come to model their education systems in response to economic, social and political influences very similar to those affecting advanced industrial societies and, as Beeby (1966) has argued, go through similar stages of development.

Assessment practices reflect and reinforce the often conflicting values embodied in the education system. Debates over the reform of assessment procedures frequently illustrate the tension that exists between, for example, educational goals defined by industry and those of teachers, or that conflict already identified between elitists and liberal reformers. As Forsyth and Dockrell (1979) suggest, assessment procedures are likely to change incrementally rather than radically as a result of a process of oscillation in the degree of influence which various bodies associated with the education system are able to exert at any one time - itself a product of changes in the social, economic and political climate. To the extent that assessment practices are similar in different countries, they reinforce the importance of understanding education and, by definition, educational assessment procedures, in relation to the wider societal and indeed, inter-societal forces acting upon it, and hence of not overestimating the internal autonomy and scope for change of any one education system.

An analysis of developments in educational assessment procedures reveals more clearly than that of perhaps any other aspect of the education system, the irreconcilable demands which must be put on education in a stratified society. On the one hand it is possible to see the institution of various kinds of educational assessment as crucial steps in the necessary fight for rationalism against nepotism and inefficiency
and in opening up opportunity for social mobility to a quite unprecedented extent. On the other hand it is important to recognise the role of assessment in limiting such mobility and even more crucially, in legitimating what are essentially still education systems strongly biased in favour of traditional privilege.¹

In the pages that follow, these general developments and dilemmas in assessment procedures are reviewed. The advent of formal, written and ultimately, competitive, examinations is contrasted to the more directly instrumental assessments of simple societies. The increasing pressure for a means of regulating the potentially explosive demand for social mobility which underlies the overwhelming support for the newly developed 'intelligence test' is discussed in terms of its major influence on the shape of educational provision. The gradual erosion of the two bastions of the assessment edifice - public examinations and intelligence tests - by liberal reformist demands for greater equality in provision and competition in the 1950s and 1960s traced in terms of the four major changes in assessment policy to which it is typically giving rise - the postponement of selection, the 'comprehensivisation' of assessment, the increasing involvement of teachers in certification procedures, and a growing preoccupation with educational 'standards'. For the sake of clarity, the review is organised in terms of the three principal themes already identified - the attestation of competence; the regulation of competition; and the provision of control - of individuals and of the educational systems as a whole. It will become apparent, however, that these themes are not discrete categories in practice but are merely different priorities and pressures within a general spectrum of assessment activities and must be understood as such.
The Assessment of Competence

Even in the most simple societies, children must be trained and subsequently demonstrate competence in the appropriate forms of behaviour and skills required by all members of that society. In some societies, competences which are the result of such 'primary' socialisation will be extended by means of 'secondary socialisation' to include preparation for different roles in society. These are societies which are sufficiently complex to allow, and indeed require, their members to pursue a much greater variety of interests and to develop specific talents and skills. Typically such societies have more and more come to provide formally for such secondary socialisation in the institution of schools which are charged with the responsibility of imparting both a range of general competences to their pupils - now normally literacy and numeracy\(^2\) - and with differentiating between pupils for the fostering of specific competences.

But whether education consists simply of the passing on of a unified body of skills necessary for survival, often by elder siblings or, at the other end of the scale, is transmitted through the highly bureaucratised, elaborate and costly system which complex industrialised societies have typically evolved to provide for the wide range of specialist skills they require, some kind of evaluation procedure will be necessary. Not least because the willingness of the individual to submit to such evaluation reflects and reinforces his commitment to joining that particular society. Thus in simple societies the prevalence of 'rites de passage',\(^3\) often coinciding with puberty - the time at which a child is able and expected to take on the full obligations of an adult member of society - reflects the kinds of formal assessment procedures instituted in such societies. These are essentially 'qualifying' tests; the time at which a youngster can demonstrate his mastery of the norms and skills necessary for
effective participation in that society, thereby allowing the existing members of that society to judge his fitness to belong to it. Where the emphasis is thus on competence, the assessment procedures will be largely undifferentiated, except perhaps between boys and girls, since this is the only significant division of labour. Thus the questions of who to assess, what to assess, when, how and why, will be unproblematic. All aspirant members - and this will be almost exclusively children, since it is rare for adults to move from society to society in such situations - will be adjudged at the same stage of their life, on the same relevant criteria of basic competence in necessary skills, in order to ensure the continued survival of the society. How to assess will be largely determined by the need of validity in the test, that is, that the skills assessed match as closely as possible the potential real life requirements. Thus the Red Indian boy was traditionally required to slay his own buffalo and demonstrate his ability to provide all the essentials of life for himself from its carcass. Masai youngsters are required to demonstrate their ability to survive alone and un provisioned in the bush for a substantial period of time. In many societies boys must demonstrate their ability to be the courageous warriors needed to defend their society by submitting bravely to the pain of circumcision.

It is important to note, however, that in such simple societies it is expected that all members should pass the test: the emphasis is on competence; on qualifying, not on selection.

By contrast, the 'rites de passage' (Firth, 1969) of complex societies are likely to be differentiated, reflecting the allocation of privilege on the basis of ascriptive criteria such as age, sex, wealth and breeding. To the extent that such privilege can be passed on from generation to generation, its possession is likely to be self-legitimating in that the elite are in the best position to determine
the criteria for entry to that elite since their existing powerful position allows them to structure social institutions to favour themselves.

The Content of Assessment

In simple societies the content of assessment is largely determined by the competences required. There is likely to be little discussion about the desirable content of 'education' and little need to discriminate between the members of a society in terms of their mastery of it. In more complex societies these basic competences may be comparatively insignificant compared to other assessment criteria whose domination depend more or less entirely on their power to legitimate privilege. In stratified societies, the necessity for distinguishing between individuals and the high stakes involved result in powerful groups imposing what may seem quite arbitrary criteria for such ratings but which in fact reflect the characteristics on which that power is based and constitute a considerable handicap to the success of children from other social groups in the educational system. Indeed, the role of, for example, accent, dress, connections, birth and military prowess in pre-industrial but nevertheless stratified societies, as the basis for social status, is well-known. The lack of connection between such criteria and any rational allocation of privilege is well-documented by authors such as Molière or Sheridan.

As the advent of capitalism began to break down the existing bases for social divisions and the expanding economy of subsequent industrialisation created an unprecedented degree of social mobility in the early 19th century, the idea of competition for the more desirable social roles becomes an increasingly significant theme in evaluation procedures. Clearly nepotism and wealth are incompatible as selection criteria with
competence and competition. Thus, as the creation of wealth is more and more associated with the recruitment and fostering of talent on a large scale, competition becomes ever more important. The basis of this competition however - the form and content of evaluation - has been determined not so much by what the competition is for but rather by how such competition can best be controlled. That is to say, as the competitive element of assessment has increasingly come to predominate over its role in the attestation of competence, content has tended to be determined by its legitimatory power rather than its relevance to specific tasks. Although such choices are never clear-cut in their origins, it will be shown that the predominance of formal written examinations and intelligence tests (including the other, later forms of standardised test modelled on them) in the recent history of education, owes far more to the power of such devices to legitimate selection, than it does to their content or predictive validity. Apart from the degree of irrationality this injects into the selection process, and hence into that of occupational allocation, the content of schooling is itself closely affected. It is a common assertion that the 'assessment tail tends to wag the curriculum dog' (Wilson, 1975). Thus the content of assessment procedures is also very significant for the way in which it is likely to affect the entire teaching-learning process both in form and substance - a point that is explored at length in this thesis.

Following Foucault, Bernstein (1982) suggests that contemporary societies are characterised by a deep cultural 'fault'. This fault is the division between mental and manual labour, which is a product of an equivalent division between those who produce and those who reproduce forms of knowledge in society. One illustration of this 'fault' is the distinction between 'primary contextualising' - that is, the creation of knowledge; the 'recontextualising' of public examiners and curriculum
planners in the form of school subjects - and the final stage of 'secondary contextualising' carried out by teachers at various levels.

Those who control the process by which knowledge is 'recontextualised' into the particular versions of knowledge which become characterised in school subjects, curricula and text books, are in a powerful position to determine what kinds of intellectual activity are the basis for high status. Thus the assessment procedures used reflect and, in turn, reinforce an essentially arbitrary way of representing knowledge whose significance is not that it is the best or the only basis for knowledge, but it is that which happened to characterise elite culture in a number of countries when the force of the industrial revolution was being felt in the need for new work skills and new forms of social control. As other countries became caught up in similar movements - through colonialism, through trade, through various kinds of international contact and competition - they were not slow to recognise the utility of formal schooling and formal assessment procedures - not least as an acceptable means of regulating entry to different levels of job. In so doing, they helped to preserve and disseminate an approach to learning and curriculum organisation based on the traditions and conditions of a very different age and newly forced into the divisions of school subjects by the exigencies of the assessment system. One result of this, arguably, has been the persistence of a watered-down, nineteenth century elite school curriculum for generations of children who will be living into the twenty-first century, a mismatch between what is provided and what adolescents need which can only grow worse as the pace of social change accelerates (Hargreaves, 1982).

Assessment criteria are now normally based on certain academic and particularly linguistic achievements, although informally they may often still include the traditional status criteria of speech, dress and other
social behaviour as well.

"The style and wit, the correct dress and bearing, accent and style of speech which is the characteristic of a particular dress become the yardstick against which all are judged." (Goody and Watt, 1962)

The choice of academic ability alone for formal assessment and certification rather than, for example, non-cognitive social skills such as cooperation and reliability, leadership and perseverance, parental and citizenship skills— all ostensibly more relevant to the majority of prospective members of society and to employers than academic skills— shows the relative insignificance of competency-oriented assessment compared to that concerned with controlling and legitimating competition.

To understand how this apparently irrational preoccupation with the measurement of less relevant skills came about, it is necessary to consider the early history of the mass use of assessment procedures. It has been suggested that the institution of formal evaluation procedures in education has tended to be contemporaneous with the institution of mass educational provision per se with the advent of industrialisation. Indeed, it may be argued that assessment procedures have typically been directly instrumental in rationalising educational provision into a system. So comprehensive has this process been that it now seems scarcely credible that the type of national educational provision and organisation characteristic of advanced industrial societies and aspired to by developing countries is little older than the memory of the oldest members of such societies.

It is now as difficult to imagine schooling without assessment as it is to imagine society without the state-provided, compulsory, mass education it heralded. It would have been equally difficult for pre-nineteenth century society to have envisaged these developments, for apart from isolated historical examples— such as the civil service
entrance examinations instituted in Imperial China (Heyhoe, 1984) - the notion of educational assessment and, hence, educational qualifications on a mass scale finds its roots in the combined growth of political democracy and industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century.

It has been suggested that one of the most important influences on the development of assessment procedures in the nineteenth century was a new concern with competence. This concern was reflected in the institution of qualifying examinations for entry to particular professions or institutions at this time. The pressure of numbers, together with the need for comparability (Hoskins, 1979), meant such examinations were normally formal written tests. But the effects of the institution of such assessment procedures went much further than straightforward quality control. In the first place the use of a written, theoretical test for entry into high status professions invested the assessment technique itself with a similar high status - a status it still retains. Secondly, as Dore (1976) argues, the institution of formal examinations was made possible by, and was a symptom of, a more profound change - the systematisation of the body of principles on which the work of the profession was based and its rationalisation into a form which made it at least partly susceptible to teaching and learning in the classroom, thereby greatly enhancing the importance of schooling. The third outcome of the innovation of professional examinations was the impact it had on vocational training and qualifications in other types of occupation. Although 'on the job' apprenticeship training, traditional to many occupations, still persists even in those professions which early instituted examinations, the ending of the almost feudal 'whole man' concept of apprenticeship (Montgomery, 1965) was not slow to follow the increasing emphasis on educational qualifications and the change to
contractual, and impersonal employment. Recent studies of apprenticeship (for example Ryrie and Weir, 1978; Gleeson and Mardle, 1980) confirm this trend away from 'on the job' training in favour of the acquisition of more adaptable qualifications in educational institutions of various kinds.

Finally and most fundamentally, it was the institution of examinations related quite specifically to a particular vocation that marked the beginning of the trend away from the taking of ascribed occupational roles based on hereditary wealth and breeding alone - or lack of it - to a situation in which such roles were ostensibly at least the result of individual achievement and merit. As Chapter Three sets out, this move away from the simple ascription of occupational roles was made possible by the earlier major social upheavals in religion, knowledge and politics which found expression in the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, for in these three movements can be traced new rational, egalitarian and individualistic ideologies which, incubated in the industrial revolution, soon found their expression in the explosion of practices requiring formal demonstrations of competence. The notion of individual responsibility which Weber showed so clearly to be one of the most important contributions of Protestantism to the development of capitalism, was as clearly the contribution of capitalism to the developing educational system in the form of individualistic assessment. Although it was to be a long time before ascription, patronage and nepotism died out - if indeed they have - the fact that a variety of important social positions could no longer be procured without a certain type of demonstrated competence, was highly instrumental in the birth of the meritocratic ethos which has characterised to a greater or lesser extent all industrial societies since that time.
Assessment for Regulating Competition

Indeed, certification and the associated process of selection has always been the most commonly recognised function of school assessment. At the end of his school career, or a major stage of it, a pupil has the opportunity to demonstrate his achievements in relation to the goals of the educational system. His performance in apparently fair and objective tests is more or less formally evaluated by 'experts', usually teachers, appointed for their knowledge both of the subject matter and of appropriate standards. The results of this evaluation are compared with those of a large number of other pupils, thereby providing another means of 'quality control' on the system. This is not the specific intention of the exercise, however. The major aim is to rank the pupil in comparison with his fellow competitors against pre-determined criteria, a ranking which has a close relationship with entry to various points in the occupational hierarchy, allowing further and higher educational institutions and employers to select those whom they consider have 'performed' sufficiently well and have therefore obtained the requisite entrance qualifications. Such performance thus involves elements of both competence and competition. The extreme importance of certification as an influence both on educational practice and the wider society emerges from this 'gate-keeper' role, by which it can open and close doors for individuals to future life chances. The certification process is indeed the epitome of the overtly meritocratic basis of contemporary society, since in theory it allows free competition based on academic ability and industry and thus is regarded as the fairest basis for the allocation of opportunities for high status or remunerative careers.

The discovery that the process is not in fact 'fair' and in particular favours pupils with certain kinds of home background, was a major achievement of sociologists of education in the fifties and sixties for
whom the relationship between social class background and school achievement was a major preoccupation for many years.

Assessment for Individual Control

Another major reason for the proliferation of educational assessment procedures is their ability to motivate pupils. Whilst the constraining effects of selection and certification examinations on the educational process itself may have been deplored, such examinations and the less significant tests and assessments associated with them are widely welcomed as an important source of motivation and thus, of control. Today, for many pupils, passing examinations is the only purpose of being in school (Broadfoot, 1977; Turner, 1983; Buswell, 1983). Any proposal to abandon competitive assessment meets with an outcry among teachers who fear the removal of one of the most powerful weapons in their armoury. The converse of this situation is, of course, also true - the increasing lack of motivation among those pupils who are not taking external examinations, whose assessments are rarely positive enough to motivate them to try harder, and for whom no very tempting bait can be offered in an educational system that recognises in its assessment procedures only one kind of ability - the kind which, by definition, they do not have. It is this problem that partly underlies the growing tendency at the present time to make formal assessment more comprehensive.

Until relatively recently however this problem hardly arose. Children were assessed early for allocation to different kinds of schools according to their purported needs and interests and once so assessed aspirations tended to be raised or lowered accordingly and the self-fulfilling prophecy came into operation. To understand why such selection was so successful for so long in controlling competition and
maintaining a 'sponsored' rather than a 'contest' mobility situation in the majority of industrial societies (Turner, 1960) it is necessary to examine the ideology of assessment which rapidly developed, and, in particular, the contribution of intelligence testing which has been and remains the most significant basis for such control.

Intelligence Tests

No other assessment technique so far devised has so perfectly combined the two principal legitimating ideologies of industrial societies - the liberal democratic principle of fair competition and the belief in scientific progress. Yet, just because for many decades such tests were believed to be the most accurate way of measuring intellectual capacity this need not in itself have led to a policy of educational provision based on such different capacities. The explanation of the commitment to providing different educational routes for different sorts of children which dominated educational policy in most European countries at least from the 1920s until the early 1960s can only be found in the social pressures which prevailed at the time such tests were first devised.

So great were the changes in the basis of class division in the nineteenth century (Musgrave, 1968) and the associated developments of social and geographic mobility, urbanisation, bureaucratisation and economic expansion, that pressure on all the various rungs of the educational ladder increased rapidly. The scholarship and certification systems of selection alone would very soon have ceased to be an adequate way of regulating access to educational and vocational opportunity, had not another mechanism of legitimating selection been found to disperse the accumulating popular frustration. The pressure from those anxious to climb the rungs of the ladder was reinforced by pressure from those
espousing the developing educational ideologies at the time. Williams (1961) has identified these various causes as the 'industrial trainers', the 'old humanists' and the 'public educators' but whether their concern was to make the maximum use of 'the pool of ability' by the institution of what Beatrice and Sidney Webb termed a 'capacity catching' machine or whether it was to promote social justice and social order, the effects were the same – a search for an apparently accurate and thus fair way of identifying talent and of discriminating among pupils on purely educational, rather than, as had previously been the case, on social grounds. Above all, there was a need for a procedure which would be widely acceptable. From these ideological and pragmatic pressures, the concept of the 'meritocracy' was born, a lusty infant which quickly came of age to dominate educational thinking virtually unchallenged to this day.

In France and England, as in other rapidly industrialising countries, the search for some means of implementing this apparent meritocracy, of finding some means of objective measurement of merit, was not to be a protracted one. The solution, like the problem, was found in the new individualist emphasis in education which was in itself the underpinning of the meritocracy. A growing interest in individual achievement had led many nineteenth century psychologists to study the determinants of various personal characteristics. Gradually, with the work of scholars like Galton and Spearman, there developed a conviction among psychologists that the determining factor in an individual's scholastic achievement was his innate ability or 'intelligence', a quality that was both fixed and measurable. In addition, studies arising out of Binet's early twentieth century work in France with 'slow learners', such as Burt's (1912) article in England, 'The Inheritance of Mental Characteristics', and the widespread and apparently effective use of such tests by the
United States Army in 1918, quickly convinced academics and laymen alike that not only was it possible to measure 'intellectual ability' objectively but that from these measurements, future academic and occupational performance could be accurately predicted.

"To the scholars and men of science of the Victorian era, imbued as this era was with the spirit of the physical sciences, the thought that qualities as intangible and insensible as 'intelligence' ... could be accurately measured was revolutionary indeed." (Williams, 1974)

Nevertheless, by the mid-twentieth century, so firmly established had 'intelligence' testing become that it dominated educational thinking. Sir Cyril Burt was for many people merely stating the obvious when in 1933 he wrote:

"By intelligence the psychologist understands inborn, all round, intellectual ability. It is inherited, or at least innate, not due to teaching or training; it is intellectual, not emotional or moral, and remains uninfluenced by industry or zeal; it is general, not specific, i.e. it is not limited to any particular kind of work, but enters into all we do or say or think. Of all our mental qualities, it is the most far-reaching; fortunately it can be measured with accuracy and ease." (pp. 28-29)

It is not hard to account for the rapid establishment of intelligence testing. It must indeed have been seen as an answer to prayer that, by means of a simple test, children could be readily and justly identified as 'bright' or 'dull'; their future predicted and, on this basis, categorised into different channels of the educational system. Not only that, but the scientific, 'objective' nature of such tests, their proven predictive power (Kamin, 1974) and their measurement of a characteristic believed to be as inborn as eye-colour, meant it was almost impossible for the recipient to reject the diagnosis. Thus intelligence testing, as a mechanism of social control, was unsurpassed in teaching the doomed majority that their failure was the result of their own inbuilt inadequacy.

No less significant than the use of 'intelligence' testing in scholarship
examinations and other individual hurdles, was the rationale that the concept of fixed, innate capacity provided for the development of differentiated secondary schools - at least in Europe. Indeed a great deal of the twentieth century history of innovation in educational provision can be attributed to its influence.

Gradually, however, the combination of post-war egalitarianism and research revelations that intelligence was neither fixed nor readily measured (Vernon, 1957) coalesced into a strong lobby for the expansion of opportunity for all and the abolition, or at least the deferment of selection. Although individual countries have differed in this respect, Sweden being perhaps the first European country to institute 'comprehensive' secondary schools (gesamtschule) in 1946 (Burns, 1981), they have all moved some way towards the deferment of post-elementary school selection or, where it still exists, as in West Germany, the incorporation of much greater measure of teacher assessment rather than formal tests (Elvin, 1981). It is generally true to say that in Western industrialised countries at least by the 1960s, it was no longer possible as it had been earlier, to shut out large sectors of the population from the opportunity to compete for educational qualifications and new forms of assessment control have had to be found. The underlying ideology of 'ability' that intelligence testing introduced has, however, remained.

"The grading of children by ability (streaming and setting), the structuring of curriculum subjects into age-related blocks, assumptions about learning, motivation and teaching style, even the physical design of classrooms, all embody a number of significant psychological principles." (Esland, 1977, p. 38)

Thus although schools are apparently providing ever more opportunities, in practice, the notion of differentiated ability still predominates, allowing selection to continue as before but in a much more acceptable guise.
It is the continuing class bias in educational achievement (Bourdieu, 1974; Tyler, 1977; Carelli and Morris, 1979), despite all apparent efforts to overcome it through compensatory education, comprehensive schools and curriculum reform, which has led sociologists of education in recent years to leave the squabbles over the hereditary versus environmental effects on intelligence to the psychologists and to examine, by disputing the apparent objectivity of intelligence testing, the role such testing may have played in perpetuating class differences in educational achievement. Thus it may well be argued that 'IQ' provided for the twentieth century the selection that wealth and breeding provided for earlier times, obscuring rather than abolishing the class influence on educational success. That is to say:

"the educational system legitimates economic inequality by providing an open, objective and ostensibly meritocratic mechanism for assigning individuals to unequal economic positions." (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 103)

R.H. Tawney put the idea rather more pungently as

"the impertinent courtesy of an invitation offered to unwelcome guests in the certainty that circumstances will prevent them accepting." (Tawney, 1951)

Chomsky (1977) asserts that the ability of intelligence testing to obscure the perpetuation of class inequalities (which it did successfully for nigh on fifty years) has been one of its most important functions, for 'intelligence' tests served

"to so mask power as to effectively immobilize any real revolutionary opposition." (Bacharach and Baratz, 1962, p. 948)

Not only was the widespread trust in this apparently objective measurement of potential sufficient to ensure that once assessed, the effect of differential expectations was sufficient to make that assessment come true (Karier, 1973), the very content of the tests may be argued to
favour the dominant class.

Westergaard and Resler (1975) argue that although it was increasingly necessary from the late nineteenth century onwards to expand educational provision and opportunity so that the growing technical and managerial posts in the economy could be filled, it was not part of the plan that children from privileged homes should be thrown into competition with working-class children to sink or swim on 'merit' alone. Rather,

"the putting into practice of the conception of intelligence. acted to control social mobility in such a way that only those acceptable to the middle class would become mobile."

(Henderson, 1976, p. 148)

That is to say, the middle class were not better able to acquire intelligence but to define it according to their own characteristics. Bourdieu has perhaps done most to clarify this idea in his concept of 'cultural capital', in which the French middle classes, finding themselves unable to perpetuate their status through 'capital' alone, were able to fall back onto a second line of defence - a school system which, though apparently allowing equal opportunity, was geared to the cultural mores of the ruling class and thus allowed them to perpetuate their privileged position by giving them a head start towards success in the education system.

There has been a good deal of debate over the extent to which tests are in fact biased (Thorndike, 1968; Jensen, 1969). There is evidence to support the view (Giles and Woolfe, 1977) that intelligence tests, particularly the non-verbal variety, are typically less biased in favour of the middle classes than other kinds of assessment such as essay-tests or teacher-ratings. Other writers have argued that the questions in intelligence tests are indeed biased by drawing on cultural knowledge more readily available to some sectors of society than others.
(see for example, Havighurst, 1951; Davis, 1951, Hegarty and Lucas, 1979).

The result, Kamin (1974) argues, is that

"the tests measure only whether one has learned and believed what [the test-setters] have learned and believed. To the degree that one has, one may reasonably look forward to enjoying the kind of success that the [test-setters] enjoyed. The assumption that one who has not learned these things was prevented from so doing by bad blood is both gratuitous and self-serving." (Kamin, 1974)

The significance of such tests may lie less in any inherent bias but rather in their confirmation of intelligence as the key variable in school success. The scientific aura surrounding these tests was highly instrumental in hiding any hint of class bias in the very definition of what should constitute educational achievement.

"It is the ability of the middle class to select (if unconsciously) the criteria by which to judge intelligence 'in their own image' and then to effectively exclude questions about the class-linked nature of 'intelligence' from the arena of debate, which may be said to allow the perpetuation of the class system." (Henderson, 1976, p. 147)

It is arguable that such tests are inevitably biased. Firstly, the testing situation is an interactive situation between tester and tested. It can therefore not be seen as a neutral process but as subject to the same interpretation and negotiation that inheres in any social interaction. As Erickson (1970) points out, all experience is relative and thus all interpretation - of questions, of appropriate answers - must be equally relative. A class of thirty children given a 'standardised' test are making thirty individual responses to it. These responses, similar to the extent that the test relates to experiences the pupils have shared, such as teaching, are nevertheless uniquely influenced in each case by all sorts of personal characteristics. Application to the test, for example, depends upon a whole host of individual influences such as home background, previous school experience, attitude towards the tester
and so on. In the United States, Roth (1974) has shown for example that the ethnic group of the tester may well influence the pupil's responses to a test. Feeling anxious or threatened may affect a pupil's ability to recall knowledge at a particular time; he may have the required knowledge but be unable to reproduce it in the form required. Cicourel (1974) criticises such tests for typically only being concerned to measure the products of learning as demonstrated in a few highly restricted ways. By so doing, he argues, the tests fail to monitor the equally important cognitive processes involved in the testing situation and in particular, the way these processes are affected by their interactive setting. He argues that the entire nature/nurture controversy on the determination of intelligence which raged for half a century, totally ignored the profound impact on test scores made by the interactive situation in which the test inevitably takes place. Even if the test is administered by machine, the situation is still a social one in that the making and interpretation of the tests are social acts - they embody value judgements emanating from the dominant culture as to what constitutes evidence of 'intelligence' and what constitutes valid realisation of 'educational knowledge'.

That particular types of verbal skills dominate testing as much as they do teaching (Bernstein, 1971) ensures an advantage to those children who come from (usually middle-class) homes where they are encouraged to develop such skills. Many sociologists have argued that this is indeed an essential aspect of the reproductive and legitimating function of the school. Mackay (1974) puts the point with some force:

"I would suggest that the powerful pronouncement of science sanctifies common-sense prejudice and legitimizes the production of persons whose qualifications (or lack of them) block them from anything but menial or semi-skilled jobs. But it is a vicious circle since the objective test started
from these prejudiced beliefs about the world. The tests are used by test constructors, teachers, administrators and politicians to support their own beliefs and value systems. In use measures of performance relative to some unexplicated standard (usually face validity, i.e., constructor's commonsense view of the world) become an objective measure of competence that have a determinative impact on students' lives ... hanging on this thin thread is the entire occupational and status structure of society."

Thus, Roth (1974) argues, all sorts of 'intelligence' are not measured in tests and thus 'intelligence' is a social phenomenon rather than the individual phenomenon it has usually been claimed to be for not only does the test tell the teacher something about the pupil, it usually tells the pupil something about himself - information he may choose to accept or reject as irrelevant. Whatever his reaction however, the possession of such information by both teacher and pupil irrevocably influences their future interaction and ultimately the choice of career path aspired to by the pupil and his teacher.

Thus, until recently, the majority of pupils in most industrialised countries were denied even the opportunity to participate in educational competition, the parallel, elementary system of schooling in which they were placed having already excluded them from aspiring to more than the attestation of competence. But, as suggested earlier, the enormous expansion of educational provision in the post-war years which has resulted from a widespread belief in 'human capital' theory combined with popular demand for greater equality of educational opportunity, has led to a situation in which such traditional forms of control based on simple exclusion are no longer possible. Thus, for example, the consistent trend for the number of statutory years of schooling to be extended has meant that more and more what were previously 'elite' examinations have become the target for the majority of pupils. Where this is explicitly against national policy, for example in England where
the target group for the O-level examination is still limited to the
top 40% of the age group, the result is a massive build up of
frustration and a consequent pressure for change in certification
procedures. One of the major solutions to the problem of continuing
to provide for selection whilst maintaining control has been also the
least radical - the postponement of selection.

The Postponement of Selection

One of the most marked educational policy developments of recent
decades in many countries has been the bringing together of the
traditionally separate higher elementary and secondary schools into
some more 'comprehensive' form of provision. Thus, increasingly, it is
'elementary' education that now extends up to the statutory school-
leaving age (Grace, 1978). Where such education is provided in
comprehensive schools this makes overt, formal selection before this
stage unnecessary. This trend is particularly marked in Europe, where
post Second World War school organisation typically reflected a clear
system of 'sponsored' mobility (Turner, 1960). Where once the majority
of children would be allocated at around eleven to a non-selective
secondary school which they would expect to leave at the statutory
leaving age with few or no formal qualifications, whilst for the minority
there was the extended secondary school catering for perhaps 5-25 per
cent of the year group and geared to university entrance, opportunity
to compete is typically now greatly extended.

Just as the origins of this system lie in the social and economic
forces of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so similar
common social and economic forces are effecting a change in this structure
although national ideals of educational practice are sufficiently powerful
to account for important and distinct national differences in the rate
and form of such change. The trend is by no means uni-dimensional. But typically now, selection is deferred at least to fifteen or sixteen or the end of compulsory schooling and increasingly to eighteen or nineteen when those continuing with their education divide once more into academic and technical/vocational routes, the third group entering straight into the labour market (if decreasingly into jobs) (Ranson, 1983). Even in those countries where selection for secondary school still takes place, this is now typically a protracted, teacher-based process of 'differentiation' rather than selection.

The social and ideological forces underlying the move towards comprehensive reform, which is indeed defined by the OECD as the 'postponement of differentiation', are immensely complex, the explanation of which for England alone has filled whole volumes (see e.g. Rubenstein and Simon, 1969; Benn and Simon, 1970; Le Grand, 1977). It is possible though to identify several specific influences which both arise from and in turn affect assessment practices in particular. One such is Dore's (1976) concept of 'qualification inflation'. The increasing expansion of educational provision, he argues, allows more people to gain those qualifications which traditionally led to high-status jobs. Without an equivalent expansion in the number of such jobs, the result is a devaluation of qualifications and a raising of the 'rate for the job' on the classic 'supply and demand' principle with consequent pressure on the education system as students seek to obtain ever higher level qualifications. Staying on rates in advanced industrial societies clearly testify to more and more pupils achieving qualifications at each level of schooling with the likelihood that these qualifications will have less and less value as selection instruments.

The postponement of the crucial point for selection is clearly evidenced by typical changes which have taken place in certification
procedures - the formal expression of assessment at the termination of a particular stage of schooling. Although the primary school leaving certificate is likely to be still critical in developing countries, certification at the end of compulsory schooling or even at the stage of university entrance is being progressively devalued in developed countries, becoming more continuous and informal or even, in some cases, being abolished altogether (Dunn, 1973; Bajah, 1979). 11

Another reason for this change is the more or less explicit recognition that mass primary and secondary education requires a very different ethos for the education system than when it was basically geared to university selection if the university is not to determine the curriculum right down to the level of the lower primary school. The change required, according to Orring (1978), is an orientation in favour of getting all pupils above an "educational breadline", that is, providing minimum competency in, for example, reading. Thus, for example, as early as 1962 Sweden passed an Education Act which abolished pass/fail assessment in favour of 1-5 grading on voluntary, national, standardised achievement tests in Swedish, a foreign language and mathematics. Although voluntary, these tests are taken by nearly all pupils. After 1966 similar tests were instituted for upper secondary education as well, so that now not only are pupils freed from the pressures and injustices of formal examinations but schools too are freed from the imposition of examination curricula by higher education institutions and are consequently free to determine their own priorities. Since 1970 no matriculation qualifications for higher education entrance have been required. Instead, all students completing upper secondary school now receive a leaving certificate showing the subjects taken and the marks given by the teachers. Not even the standardised test result is shown since these are incorporated into teachers' assessments based
on all three years of the upper secondary course (Boucher, 1982).

The reality for the individual student is rather less Utopian than this description would suggest, however. For though no-one formally fails, students nevertheless know quite early on what kind of mark they will get, as do their teachers. Thus, although there is nominally a free choice between the 32 curricula 'lines' – vocational and academic – of upper secondary school, only about 60 per cent of pupils can get their first choice for practical reasons. The rest must take their second or third choice, their power to choose depending on their results as shown on the Elementary School Leaving Certificate. In the same way, although school-leaving examinations have been abolished between upper secondary and university education, there is a numerus clausus procedure operating for some of the most popular higher education subjects, entry to which again depends on marks reported on the school leaving certificate.

New Forms of Individual Control

To understand fully why the 'postponement of differentiation' should be such a powerful movement at the present time, it is necessary to explore in a little more detail how assessment procedures can operate covertly to control individual aspirations and frustrations. The control procedures that provided for the typically highly selective, differentiated forms of school provision characteristic of the early stages of mass schooling systems have now become so problematic that alternative selection and certification procedures are being instituted which draw on rather different sources of legitimation. "It is still certainly the case", as Eggleston (1984) argues, "that success in competitive examinations is, for most people, an essential prelude to the legitimate exercise of power, responsibility and status throughout modern societies. Lack of
accreditation constitutes a severe limitation and there is abundant evidence that the examination system, despite its technical and ideological critics, still enjoys widespread public acceptance" (p. 32). Now, however, the regulation of that competition is increasingly achieved by more informal forms of selection. Indeed the boundary between 'formative evaluation' and 'summative assessment' is increasingly blurred in this respect. Although there must be a form of 'summative' assessment when there are decisions to be made about alternative routes in the educational system, these decisions may be voluntary and based on informal discussion between teacher, parent and pupil, rather than imposed through a 'weeding out', formal selection procedure. Thus, for example, 11+ selection in Britain has been largely abandoned since the formal necessity for the allocation of pupils to different types of secondary school and thus to different educational routes has ceased with the institution of the comprehensive school. Less formal assessments, however, in the form of school records, may still follow the child from primary to secondary school where they may well be used for internal, informal 'tracking' in the receiving school.

This distinction between formal assessment and informal evaluation is an important one. As already suggested, teachers are continually assessing their pupils. Likewise, pupils are continually assessing themselves and each other. Such assessments are not significant in societal terms - though they may be to the individual - until they feed into the more formal, 'summative' processes of certification and control and the limitations these provide to future opportunities. The significance of any assessment procedure thus depends on a combination of its selection and legitimatory currency - its power to determine and justify the allocation of life chances. Thus, the significance of teachers' classroom evaluations may be confined in some circumstances
to their effect on the pupil's self-concept and aspirations only. In other circumstances, such as the current tendency for such evaluations to be formally incorporated into the processes of certification and selection, they become a great deal more significant, the verdict of a long-term in-depth positive guidance providing a powerful contemporary basis for the legitimation of selection.

Thus although more and more the mystique and ceremony, the fine grading, the formal external examinations which used to be an intrinsic part of summative assessment, have been transferred to the higher school certification stage and even beyond, the selection function itself is still present only in a more covert, benign form. Equally, although the expansion of educational provision has postponed the point of formal selection and the ensuing 'qualification inflation' is tending to postpone it still further, it is not safe to assume that this postponement of selection has in fact created any greater equality of opportunity in relation to social class than existed under the previous selective secondary education system. Bourdieu and Passeron (1976) argue by means of a complex statistical analysis that in France during the growth in higher education provision in the 1960s, the structure of the distribution of educational opportunities relative to social class did indeed shift upwards, but it remained virtually unchanged in shape. The increased enrolment of 18-20 year-olds was distributed among the different social classes in proportions roughly equal to those pertaining before. Bourdieu and Passeron also argue that a similar pattern of development of educational opportunity combining increased enrolment of all social classes, with stability of the structure of disparities between the classes, can be identified in most European countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden and indeed has similarly been identified in the United States (OECD, 1969). Eggleston
(1979), Halsey et al. (1980) and Goldthorpe (1980), among others, have shown that in England likewise, there has been little significant change in the relative achievements of social classes since comprehensivisation.

Thus it is arguable that the reorganisation of schooling and the postponement of selection, whilst freeing primary and elementary schooling from the worst excesses of cramming for the secondary school selection examinations, has done nothing to alter the tendency of schools to confirm pupils in channels according to their social class background. An alternative and complementary explanation of the international trend towards the postponement of selection is that selection has in fact merely been disguised, in order to prevent socially disruptive resentment and frustration among those who are early labelled failures in a system which they are obliged to endure for an extended period of time and which is apparently increasingly crucial in the allocation of life chances in a socially fluid society.

Whether or not Jencks (1972) is correct in arguing that education is not in fact a crucial determinant of occupational success - and there is little agreement on this - is less important than the fact that it is believed to be by pupils and their parents. A palpably class-biased, selective educational system is no longer politically acceptable, given the commitment to a meritocracy on both humanitarian and efficiency grounds which typically characterises contemporary educational policy in both liberal democracies and communist societies. Thus it may be argued that the changes currently taking place in assessment practice are typically informed by the need for a new form of legitimation, rather than any fundamental challenge to the basis of selection per se. In Western education systems at least, the class biases inherent in the internal organisation of the school in the practice of streaming and grading, in the curricula and language of the school, and in teacher expectations,
probably still perpetuate class divisions more or less as if children were actually divided into separate schools. 13

This argument that contemporary changes in assessment procedures are as much to do with social control as they are with the real desire to create a significant change in the structure of opportunity illustrates how difficult it is in practice to separate the various functions of assessment procedures. This impression is further reinforced by a consideration of changes in the method and content of certification which are accompanying the changes in the timing of selection just discussed.

Neave (1980) posits a law of educational development

"in which assessment for all constitutes a fourth stage in what might be termed 'the universalization' of extended secondary education". (p. 73)

Bearing in mind the foregoing arguments about the postponement of selection it is logical to predict that assessment during the compulsory comprehensive stage of schooling will take on a different form and function. This has indeed proved to be the case with assessment procedures more concerned with motivation and diagnosis than selection and applied to all pupils in a routine way now becoming the norm. Although strong arguments have been put forward in England to institute such an assessment procedure for all pupils (e.g. Schools Council, 1975), England is almost unique in clinging to the idea that all children cannot be included in formal assessment procedures without a lowering of standards. Elsewhere examinations at the end of compulsory schooling have typically given place to a regular series of standardised tests, routinely administered to all children at certain points in their school careers (Neave, 1980). The extension of formal assessment to all the members of a year group is less a reflection of a new principle of certification than the extension of earlier certification procedures
geared to a particular percentage of the year group when only that percentage was in school, to embrace the wider secondary school population. More novel, arguably, is the content, mode and purpose of that assessment.

**Increasing Teacher Involvement in Certification**

It is significant that to the extent that school certificates have become devalued, teacher involvement in certification has typically increased. From Europe to Australia and the Far East, there is a tendency for school assessment to be increasingly handed over to teachers (Ottobre, 1978). Elsewhere, such as anglophone Africa and India, teachers are playing an increasingly important role in the setting and marking of examinations (Maguire, 1975; Srivastava, 1979; Broadfoot, 1982). As Wanchoo and Raina (1979) have it, describing the changes in certification, accompanying the current 10 + 3 reforms in India,

"the emphasis will not be on teaching but on learning. Students will move from passivity to activity, from conformity to creativity and originality; from authoritative acceptance of ideas to enquiry and discovery ... co-operative rather than competitive learning ... The whole system of education will be characterised by flexibility and dynamism rather than rigidity and inertia." (p. 120)

Pupils are counselled into taking the subject and later, career options, for which their day-to-day school progress seems best to fit them. This trend for formal selective examinations to be replaced by a gradual 'cooling out' process (Clark, 1982) has the advantage of preventing the build-up of frustration and criticism of examination procedures, whilst still providing for the necessary process of allocating pupils to different levels of the occupational hierarchy (Broadfoot, 1983).
Thompson (1974) has explained this trend towards teacher-based certification as the result of an increasing level of public trust and confidence in schools. Since it has been known for a long time that teachers are as reliable in ranking pupils accurately on both specific abilities and non-cognitive qualities as are any other form of test (Burt, 1945), and since many countries are explicitly worried about standards, a more likely explanation seems to be in terms of legitimation. If the examination is of crucial importance for selection it must be invested with as much apparent objectivity, ritual and formality as possible so that, almost after the manner of a divine utterance and certainly in the same way as an intelligence test, the results and the failure which they imply for many candidates are accepted. As the qualification concerned becomes progressively devalued and thus less significant in the allocation of life chances, so it can more safely be left to the informal, more personal responsibility of the teacher. Such a move, however, is likely to be accompanied by the institution of increasingly-systematic expressions of accountability in order to replace the degree of control over curriculum and pedagogy, lost to government when teachers take charge of the certification process.

The Changing Content of Certification

The trend towards increasing teacher involvement in assessment has also permitted, if not prompted, the re-emergence of non-cognitive characteristics for inclusion in formal assessment. This originally crucial aspect of schooling, particularly for the two very different extremes of the educational ladder was for the most part eclipsed in the late nineteenth century by the meritocratic movements towards apparently more objective cognitive measures already described. The re-emergence at the present time of such assessment may be explained
in terms of control. For, given the importance of assessment in the allocation of career opportunities, whatever is assessed will be reflected in both the formal and informal curricular activities of the school. Thus, it is argued, if pupils know for example that leadership qualities count towards their final assessment, they will tend to strive hard, and be encouraged by teachers to show such attributes.  

Whatever educational behaviour or achievement is ultimately rewarded in society with the sought after occupational roles, will be the behaviour and achievements towards which aspirants are motivated. The teacher of a non-examined subject knows this only too well. In industrial societies, for the historical reasons already outlined, this is mainly academic ability. By and large, schools have not traditionally assessed in any formal way, non-cognitive qualities such as effort, cooperation, leadership, responsibility or useful experience in extra-curricular activities such as school plays, social service units, outdoor pursuits or debating societies, although of course information on such activities is often supplied in confidential references. Since in many countries assessment of such activities and abilities is not yet a significant part of the formal certification system, the influence of which permeates right through the informal assessment network, even where they are provided, these activities do not provide an alternative source of motivation or self-valuation for pupils. In consequence a potential source of motivation for non-academic pupils and a potential mechanism for the development of many personal qualities has been neglected. The result has been a small, but increasingly significant, threat to educational order and, hence, ultimately to the social order. A major strand in the changes currently identifiable in the assessment practices of industrial societies is the attempt to overcome this problem, to broaden the basis for assessment and widen the range of rewards so that virtually all pupils can find a
reason to participate in the assessment competition and so support the prevailing social order. 19

The increasing use of informal descriptive records during the compulsory schooling stage, containing both cognitive and non-cognitive information, may be explained too by the orientation to a different kind of school-leaver than was traditionally the case with 16+ assessment, when it was aimed typically at the top, academic end of the year group. Much recent writing in the sociology of education has argued the primacy of the school's role, not in encouraging intellectual development, but in developing appropriate non-cognitive qualities and self-perceptions which will 'correspond' with the pupil's future occupational situation (see, for example, Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977). Employers of the young school-leaver do not want high intellectual calibre for boring repetitive jobs. Indeed they would tend to see it as a positive disadvantage in that such people would be likely to become easily disaffected and thus disruptive. Rather they are looking for basic skills and a good character (Brown, 1975; SCRE, 1977; MSC, 1977; Cumming, 1982). Even corporations looking for potential management trainees may rate personal qualities - especially capacity for commitment - higher than intellectual achievement alone. By including non-cognitive assessment more overtly in certification, the inculcation of appropriate attitudes and behaviour, which has always been one of the informal effects of schooling, is reinforced. At the present time, if youth unemployment on a massive scale is here to stay - as seems likely - it also seems likely that this traditional emphasis of mass schooling will again become paramount, that is, the development of appropriate personal skills and attitudes and the orientation of education and assessment not towards jobs and job selection but towards personal development and fulfilment and, above all, social control.
In many countries the attempt to move from selective and matriculation examinations towards descriptive school-leaving certificates and, associated with this, a more explicit link between general education and vocational training, is a direct result of the problems caused by traditional procedures. These problems are particularly clear in Eastern Europe where attempts to match educational provision against anticipated manpower needs is resulting in considerable tension at the interface between school and higher education (Mitter, 1979a). Where there is a strict *numerus clausus* operating for the allocation of places in higher education and consequently large numbers of qualified students are unable to find a place, and at the same time lack any more vocational qualification, a considerable threat to social order may be built up. One of the principal ways of reducing the massive increase in application for formal higher education, which otherwise would result from the expansion of secondary education which has taken place, is the extension of 'differentiation' to higher education to embrace different forms of vocational training or even 'preparation for leisure' within a more comprehensive tertiary system. The 'old' model of school certification was typically a grouped certificate in which candidates had to pass in five or so subjects to 'matriculate' and gain the qualification which was both necessary and sufficient qualification for university entrance. Formerly, when selection had already largely taken place before this stage, certification at this higher school stage was more concerned with the attestation of achievement than discrimination. Now, where such examinations still exist, it is no longer sufficient merely to pass but to pass well.

The inauguration in countries such as England of a single subject examination replacing the former grouped certificate is also significant. Partly this may be accounted for by 'qualification inflation' for, as
the ultimate level of qualifications and thus of curricula rises, the specialist study which used to characterise post-graduate courses is adopted not only for undergraduate courses but even in schools. But it may be, too, that a single subject examination allows greater discrimination by including both horizontal discrimination between the value of subjects studied and vertical discrimination in the standard obtained. And yet, at the same time, it allows more people some chance of succeeding and thus fits better with the increasingly comprehensive intake of the upper secondary school. As Chapter Six sets out, England seems to be finding it harder to come to terms with these pressures than many other similar countries, although there are signs of a movement towards more descriptive teacher-based assessments, particularly at the end of compulsory schooling where there is widespread support for some kind of profile to be given to school-leavers (DES, 1983). But there is also a powerful lobby in favour of retaining and indeed strengthening traditional pass/fail certificate examinations (Whitty, 1983). As such, English procedures provide a good example of the way in which the general pressures affecting individual societies must be articulated within the idiosyncratic traditions of particular nation states, thereby producing quite wide variations in practice.22

Another advantage of moving from examinations to descriptive assessment in the selection of higher education students is suggested by the findings of Mitter (1979b) which show that in the majority of the countries he studied, school marks on secondary school leaving certificates were found to be the most reliable predictors of success at university, and more useful than scholastic aptitude tests, achievement tests, interviews or indeed lotteries which, whilst being formally fair, lack public acceptability in the places where they have been tried, such as the Netherlands. Mitter also found that counselling and work experience
could both contribute significantly to producing highly predictive school assessment.

Despite marked national variations in the rate and form of change which reflect their need to find the optimum balance between the selection and control functions of assessment in line with differences in the institutional and ideological context, the two case studies which provide the empirical basis for this thesis are reasonably representative of the current range of international practice, and of the general trends in assessment policy which have been identified. These are an ever-later key point of selection with a concomitant decline in the formality and significance of assessments for certification prior to this stage. Both these trends may be attributed to powerful and common pressures resulting from the combination of a changing employment structure and the emergence of a powerful ideology of educational equality.

In an attempt to summarise the foregoing analysis, Figure 1 sets out this changing social role of assessment with the growth of mass secondary education. At the left-hand end is the traditional picture of certification, when the exigencies of open and fair competition increasingly inherent in the meritocratic ethos of schooling throughout the industrialised world after the Second World War, were most strongly felt at the point of selection for secondary school and then later, at the termination of compulsory schooling. The right-hand end of the continuum reflects the changes which are taking place in certification with the postponement of the key point of formal selection to 18+ and beyond. In place of the emphasis on formal, external, impersonal assessment - essential where the determination of life-chances is at stake if disaffection is to be avoided - is a new emphasis on broader-based, teacher-conducted assessment which can allow a greater concern in assessment procedures with diagnosis and motivation. The stage of
Figure 2.1: The changing pattern of contemporary assessment at the end of compulsory schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>competitive</th>
<th>non-competitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Examinations</td>
<td>Moderated School Assessment (scaling, item banks, moderation committees etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL external</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

increasing public trust in teacher assessment

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decline in importance of certification for selection

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increasing importance of assessment to retain commitment

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increasing importance of non-cognitive assessment

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Note: Although the typical trend at the time of writing seems to be from left to right on the continuum, there are some indications, particularly in the Communist world, of a movement in the opposite direction, towards increasingly formal assessment. The diagram is best visualised as expressing a constant relationship between various forms of assessment, the particular point on the continuum being determined by the prevailing social, economic, political and ideological conditions at any one time in any one country.
pupil self-assessment only now beginning to emerge (see, for example, DES, 1983) is logically implied by this trend since if pupils are given responsibility for monitoring their own learning, the degree of personal involvement they have in their learning and their commitment to it is likely to be maximised (Broadfoot, 1979). Indeed, it is argued in later chapters that pupil self-assessment is likely to provide one of the most efficient modes of social control in the same way that Bernstein (1977) has argued informal pedagogy is most controlling by being both intrusive and apparently benign.

However, the delegation of control over the content and form of assessment to teachers and perhaps before long to pupils, raises other, macro-problems of control. Although, it has been argued, such delegation may enhance individual commitment to the education system, it leaves problematic the control over the system itself. Thus it is necessary to add a third dimension to Figure 1 which identifies the growth of a different kind of assessment in direct relation to the decline in external school assessment. This parameter is accountability - the means by which the controlling interests in society monitor the operation of the education system as a whole and make it responsive to the needs of society as they define them.

Assessment for System Control

Running through this discussion of the way in which assessment procedures have been instrumental in regulating the attestation of competence, the content of the curriculum, the competition (i.e., selection) function of mass schooling and the control of aspirations has been, more or less explicitly, the theme of system control. From this very brief, and necessarily selective analysis of developments in
assessment procedures it has been possible to show how the form of such procedures tends to change in response to new demands upon the education system whilst the underlying functions remain unaltered. Thus one would expect to find changes of emphasis in assessment policy and practice with the ebb and flow of events in a particular country. These changes would, however, be oscillations within the limitations provided by ideological tradition and institutional inertia and thus typically reflect the characteristic ethos of a particular national system. Thus, two countries faced with very similar pressures might be quite different in the way in which they respond to a changing balance between the competence, competition and control requirements of assessment procedures. Indeed, it is the detailed exploration of this argument that is the concern of Chapter Four and the empirical case studies of Chapters Five and Six. The purpose of raising the argument at this stage is to underline the importance of a consideration of systemic variables to any sociological analysis of educational assessment within the system itself as well as that of individual pupils and the way in which it is used to make schooling responsive to the needs of the wider social order. Indeed, it is this latter function which ultimately gives form and content to all educational assessment. It is therefore a central theme of this analysis thereby justifying the extended systemic case studies which follow.

Before the institution of state-funded education, schools played little part in the lives of the majority of the population, and so the issue of control hardly arose. Indeed the Church's influence was virtually unassailable. With the advent of industrialism, and its associated political and social upheavals, it became increasingly apparent that voluntary agencies and, in particular, the Church, could no longer be trusted to provide schooling which was adequate or suitable for the task of controlling the masses in societies in which so many of the old social
codes had been swept away. At the same time, privileged sections of society were more and more being forced to resort to schooling as the new means of perpetuating the elite status that land and money could no longer ensure. Thus it was necessary that a means be found of carefully controlling the nature of an ever-expanding state educational provision and of regulating the new basis for class differentials. Much has already been said about this latter issue of competition in this chapter and it is with the issue of the use of assessment procedures for quality control that the final part of this general discussion is concerned.

Perhaps the clearest expression of the combined need to control the content of mass education and to ensure standards which reflect a good return on investment was the nineteenth century 'payment by results' system in England in which school grants, and indeed teachers' salaries, depended on the standards achieved by their pupils in certain basic curricular areas, as measured by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (see Chapter Six). Such a crude basis for control would not now be possible in any advanced industrial society given the sheer size of the educational system and the potential strength of the opposition. However, it is still normal for education systems to support a large army of local and national inspectors and this is testimony to a continuing concern that schools should be accountable to society for the investment in them as measured by the achievements of their pupils and their conformity to accepted practice.

Such accountability can take many forms depending on the ideological and institutional traditions of a particular national system. As already suggested, where there is a strong central authority, control is likely to focus on provision. Where this is lacking, control tends to be exerted through judgements of the results of the system although there may well be variations in this respect even within a particular national system.
over time (Atkin, 1972). It is necessary too, to distinguish between legal or bureaucratic accountability to superiors and a moral element of responsibility to clients. Bureaucratic accountability may be regarded as a two-stage process involving first the identification of the performance of the education system in relation to its goals, as defined at any one time, and second, the response by educational institutions brought about through the mechanisms of system control in response to any shortfall between performance and goals. Although conceptually distinct, these two stages are frequently simultaneous in practice. As well as these bureaucratic and 'moral' accountability relationships, every education system may be characterised by other patterns of informal accountability in the form of the constraints and responsibilities that actors in the education system impose upon themselves as part of their 'professional' standards.

For greater clarity, bureaucratic accountability, which is the visible manifestation of authority and thus of legitimate control, can be further subdivided into performance reporting, the institution of technical analyses of the system, provision for political participation and provision for institutional response as in, for example, voucher systems (Levin, 1974; Kirst and Bass, 1976). A similar breakdown is offered by Eraut (1978) in which he suggests accountability can be based on student gain in terms of individual assessment; alternatively it can be based on feedback to central and local government in the form of inspection and reports (Sockett, 1980), the achievement of objectives (process evaluation) (Popham, 1971) or, less commonly, on an agreed contract (Atkin, 1972) and the maximisation of utility.

Where accountability has emerged as an explicit issue - typically in systems where there is weak central control - the focus has tended to be on student gain - the result of the system (Brodinskey, 1977; Atkin,
The assumption is that the supply of information and knowledge about the system is the basis for various forms of control - the sanctioning of individuals, the allocation of resources, and more general exhortation including occasionally explicit coercion, although as Chin and Benne (1968) point out, it is rarely effective to run organisations on a power-coercive basis. Educational control is thus much more commonly exerted through attempts to colonise professional attitudes and other 'normative re-educative' strategies. Rarely do specific proposals for action follow directly from the provision of information (Kirst and Bass, 1976). Rather, it is the act of assessment itself which is crucial, for the way in which information is gathered and the content of that information itself embodies prevailing values. Thus, the responsibility to give an account or be accountable acts in itself as an important force of control. This essentially theoretical perspective is discussed at more length later in the thesis. It is sufficient at this point merely to introduce the important argument that even where formal, bureaucratic provision for central control is weak, to the extent that indirect methods for influencing the content and style of educational discourse can be mobilised, and thus, the criteria for teachers' self-imposed moral accountability, the influence of central government can in practice be very great.

In Chapter Six, it is argued that this is the characteristic mode of central government influence in the decentralised organisation of English education. Thus it is suggested, the recent overt preoccupation with providing for more bureaucratic and moral accountability is less significant than it at first seems, and it is the much less controversial but nevertheless increasing power of government to influence the canons of professional accountability which has far more impact. But whilst the precise balance of pressures and policies concerning accountability is specific to
England, the way in which accountability provides for system control is also generalisable across countries.

Given the arguments of Chapter Seven that there are common and deeply significant developments currently affecting the control of education, which have their roots in international economic and political development, it is pertinent to refer briefly here to the historical context for this movement. It has been suggested that the use of assessment procedures in systemic control reflects a combination of concerns which includes the identification and maintenance of national educational standards. This is in turn closely connected with the need to ensure a reasonable rate of return on educational investment, and the political problem of maintaining public confidence in the educational enterprise. Alongside concern over the level of standards is the desire to control the content of education and, in particular, that the competences being fostered are such as will, on the one hand, meet national needs as identified by those in power and, on the other, maintain a sound basis for social cohesion and control.

In England it is not necessary to look further than the William Tyndale affair (see for example Gretton and Jackson, 1976) or the sacking of certain radical headmasters in recent years to see the sanctions which come into operation when individual head teachers or groups of staff attempt to depart from the accepted norms of school conduct. Part of the increasing concern for accountability in recent years and consequent pressure towards a more precise monitoring of educational standards in many countries is undoubtedly due to the 'democratisation' of education. Bourdieu and Passeron (1976) have suggested that the extension of academic education to a new population not equipped with suitable skills to benefit from it is likely to result in a lowering of academic standards and public concern. Certainly in England there is an
obvious connection between comprehensivisation and the consequent increased visibility of the failures of the erstwhile secondary modern pupil, and between raising the school leaving age, opening up public examinations to a much greater number of pupils, and the growing concern with falling standards. Although the evidence points to more pupils both attempting and gaining external qualifications, the insecurity induced by such major organisational and curricular changes has led to the institution of new 'quality control' mechanisms such as the DES Assessment of Performance Unit. This Unit, discussed in detail in Chapter Six, is not concerned with identifying the performance of individual pupils but is designed to assess the overall standards being achieved at the various stages of schooling and in different aspects of the curriculum. Although in practice the APU seems to be having relatively little impact, its activities do represent a backlash against what Williams (1961) has termed 'the public educators' and in favour of the 'old humanists' and the 'industrial trainers', and, as Salter and Tapper (1981) have it, the 'state bureaucrats'.

Part of the explanation for the recent explosion of accountability programmes can certainly be found in the logical extension of principles of management control which are increasingly being incorporated into the school system (Timpane, 1976) - the increasingly formal division of labour and bureaucratic hierarchy in the school are obvious manifestations - which may be expressed in bald economic terms as 'getting value for money'. This analysis does not, however, explain the relatively sudden upsurge in public concern in this decade. The explanation is certainly enormously complex but once again may be found in the tension between the two conflicting goals of the education system with, in this case, the pendulum perhaps having swung too far in one direction.

The 1960s had seen an international trend against elitism and towards
the expansion of opportunity for all in education. It had revealed in many cases a liberalisation of discipline; the increasing impact and radicalism of youth subcultures all over the world and a fashion for 'progressive' education. The effect of all these social forces was a major onslaught on the school's function as a socialisation agency - as a mechanism for social control. Although the debate is ostensibly about 'falling standards' in terms of academic achievement, Burstall and Kay (1978) point out that the concern is a much broader one - at least in America - about the extent to which the educational system is successfully meeting the present and future needs of society. Public discontent focuses on both 'standards' and 'behaviour'.

"In fact the current educational debate in spite of all the concern for assessment of performance is not really about the measurable but about values." (Watts, 1978)

It is thus certainly arguable that concern over supposedly 'falling standards' in England, for example - particularly in view of the (1978) HM Inspectorate report that standards in basic skills had if anything improved during the preceding years - was merely the tip of the iceberg of a much larger concern: that the decline of external examinations and the corresponding increase in the power of teachers to determine their own curricula and try out new 'progressive' methods during the 1960s had the effect of making the education system appear increasingly autonomous of any external control. In particular, it may be argued, the innovations which characterised education in the 1960s, in challenging the traditional elitism, curricula, pedagogy and discipline of schooling, appeared to threaten the ability of the dominant social groups who had themselves set up this system to work in their own interest to reproduce the status quo. In particular the cold wind of economic crisis in the mid-seventies meant renewed pressure too for education to be as closely geared as possible to the needs of the labour market. In an era which requires prolonged
'elementary' (i.e., mass) schooling; which is dominated by the ethos of meritocracy; it is no longer possible to deny the majority of school pupils a tangible goal in schooling, particularly when employers equally conditioned to the meritocracy ethos have learned to discriminate between applicants very largely on the basis of formal qualifications (Dore, 1976). Thus it can be argued that the international trend towards internally set school examinations (and, by implication, curricula) discussed earlier in this chapter, which was made possible by their declining importance for selection, brought with it unforeseen problems of control. To the extent that teachers can decide what they want to teach, how they want to teach it and whether they have been successful, with little reference to any outside authority, the dominant interests of the State are losing control of the most powerful agency of social reproduction.

In view of the fact that, as Raven (1983) has shown, teachers value most highly the personal and social development of their pupils, it is not surprising that the more autonomous the school system, the greater the disparity between the emphases and hence achievements of schools and the demands of industry and the job market in general. To the extent that the school emphasises responding to the needs and interests of the child, awakening critical awareness, informal pedagogy, liberal discipline and flexible curricula, it will be conflicting with employers' needs for recruits to the lower levels of the labour market equipped with basic yet flexible skills and appropriate attitudes, such as meticulousness and persistence in tasks (Neave, 1980).

It should be pointed out, however, that such had been the position of many teachers and pupils in higher elementary schools for many years without any very threatening changes in goals or practice having typically taken place. The difference at the present time is that the movement away from external control is concerned with those mechanisms (public
examinations) which regulate the first stages of entry to higher occupational status. Thus as such alternative forms of certification come to be accepted by universities - as they increasingly are in many different countries - such a lack of external control over the form and content of certification poses a fundamental threat to traditional definitions of educational knowledge and standards. The student unrest of the late sixties in France and in many other countries may well have produced an insecurity which, when exacerbated by an increasingly dismal economic picture at the beginning of the seventies and ensuing public concern over educational standards, resulted more or less directly in the institution of new, different means of system control. In the United States, national efforts to define and assess educational standards date back even to the halcyon days of 1964 when the tide of public opinion first began to flow strongly against liberal and progressive practices in education and in favour of more traditional pedagogy, discipline and 'minimum-competency' testing. There are echoes in this policy of the worst traditions of the typically European practice of children endlessly and often futilely repeating 'grades' they have not adequately mastered - a practice still common in less developed countries.

In England the legacy of the 'Revised Code' is a deep-rooted hostility to the kind of curriculum direction such testing implies. Nevertheless, the desire of many teachers and policy-makers to provide a motivating and informative certification process and the general trend towards descriptive, comprehensive records underlies a growing body of support for 'grade-related' tests and 'criterion' rather than 'norm' referenced assessment (Brown, 1980; Harrison, 1982). This development may readily be explained in terms of the postponement of selection beyond the stages at which such testing of competence is typically applied (16+ and below) and its replacement by the themes of competence - as workers, as citizens and
control - of standards and of individuals.

The historical examples of the use of criterion-referenced assessment are rare simply because the competition and eventual 'success' had so often to be on a 'numerus clausus' basis - limited to the number of places or scholarships available rather than the number reaching a given standard. 'Payment by results' was possible in the nineteenth century elementary school in England simply because the intention of these tests was quality control, not selection. Consequently, it was relatively easy to define specific criteria for the required standard such as "to make out or test the correctness of a common shop bill" (Midwinter, 1970) and it was desirable that every child should achieve this standard. The emphasis was on content, competence and control rather than competition, on evaluating the overall standard of the class, the school, the system, not the potential of the individual child.

These somewhat contradictory trends in the institution of contemporary testing may be explained with reference to the dilemma already identified, namely the problem of matching a liberal educational ideology with the need for social control and social reproduction inherent in a stratified society. Thus, competency-testing is by its very nature, conflictual, since it combines on the one hand the needs of employers for an attestation of competence and, on the other, is intended to provide, through a series of short-term experiences of success, the personal fulfilment and involvement in education which must be encouraged to maintain the commitment of individual pupils and thus, ultimately, social control.

Another effect of the closer monitoring and control of educational standards is that the attribution of responsibility for pupil achievement may come to be seen increasingly in terms of the school rather than the individual pupil. Focusing once again on the English and American experience, since these two countries have taken some of the most overt
measures in this respect, it is possible to trace a move away from the concentration on the environmental influences affecting the performance of certain class-and ethnic groups which so preoccupied the Newsom and Plowden generations in Britain and the Coleman generation in America. This preoccupation has, in these two countries at least, faded in significance relative to the emphasis on school responsibility for pupil achievement.29 Although the sampling of national standards currently being undertaken by the APU is designed to preclude comparisons between schools as much as between pupils, the underlying ideology of judging schools by pupil attainment has directly contributed to the legal requirement to publish public examination results and hence the local identification of 'good' schools. In the United States the New York Times publishes the city's 'League Table of School Attainments' without any qualifying information (Sherwood, 1978). Burstall and Kay (1978) describe the hostility and bitterness aroused in Michigan when the State educational authorities were pressured by politicians into releasing achievement test results for individual schools, having previously assured the teachers concerned that the results would be confidential—

"these results were published in local newspapers, giving rise to a 'league table' of schools (apparently much in demand among the estate agents of the area), which took no account of the school's differing human and financial resources. Teachers complained bitterly that the tests used did not adequately reflect the school curriculum, [and] that there had been little teacher involvement in the development of the tests ..." (p. 34)

Although 'light' sampling as opposed to 'blanket testing' has avoided in England some of the problems condemned in the American National Association of Elementary Schools Principals' book The Myth of Measurability, the recent move in 1983 by one local education authority to institute blanket testing for all the pupils in three different age groups as a basis for judging school quality and teacher competence is clear evidence that
such policies are still very attractive to some educational administrators.\textsuperscript{30}

The new emphasis on accountability and system control now to be found in many countries is likely to have a third very significant effect in allowing the State a much greater influence on educational content and standards.

Arguably, what is happening is a return to a more utilitarian emphasis in education and what Johnson (1976) has called, in the context of nineteenth-century English education, 'the cul-de-sac of skills' - education geared to only basic competences, the labour requirements of a technological society and the development of appropriate attitudes rather than free expression and personal development. On the other hand, external control of the content and practice of schooling in this form, rather than relying only on the more formal controls of either a nationally imposed curriculum (as for example in France) or a resurgence of external examinations based on externally-devised syllabuses, helps to mould professional standards in the same image and thus to prevent a direct confrontation with the powerful lobby of liberal interest supporting school and teacher autonomy. Thus, it may be argued, in England teacher-developed curricula and teacher-conducted school-based assessment, progressive teaching methods and even the greater pupil and parent involvement heralded by the recent Taylor Report (DES, 1977) on school management, were rendered largely impotent as potential agents of educational 'liberation' (Holly, 1976) by such unobtrusive accountability controls. Recent measures in both England and France to give parents increased consumer choice over education\textsuperscript{31} are also likely to reinforce rather than reverse this trend to the extent that parents and indeed pupils espouse the same goals for education as the system planners. Given the importance of assessment as a means of regulating life chances, the likelihood of parents and pupils emphasising alternative goals to those implicit in formal
assessment procedures is not very great. Thus it may be argued that in co-opting parents and pupils - who are often for this reason some of the more conservative participants in the education system - into the accountability process, the mechanisms of control over the education system, and teachers in particular, are in fact strengthened. An idealised representation of this balance of control is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2.2: Model showing overt accountability procedures as a function of declining public control of certification procedures

Underlying these more or less explicit concerns at the present time, however, is a much more fundamental, if rarely acknowledged, crisis of values. Although the provision of mass education has always reflected a range of motives - national development, personal fulfilment and social control being the most prominent, there was, until recently, a surprisingly
uniform belief in the power of education to liberate the individual whilst at the same time helping to provide a nation of committed and skilled workers from among whose number selected individuals could be rationally chosen for positions of power and privilege. A complex concatenation of factors including economic recession, affluence and its associated anomie, changes in the capitalist mode of production, an increasingly schooled and increasingly unemployed workforce, has resulted in growing disillusionment with the cost of education and an erosion of confidence in its value. Not only parents and politicians, but even teachers and pupils may be found among those who no longer know what school is for. "Thus those responsible for education were confronted by a double malaise: that of senior secondary school pupils rebelling against teaching which did not meet their needs and against an education system which did not give them enough responsibility and freedom, and that of the teachers who had to face up to the new demands being made by the young people and their families whilst in theory satisfying the traditional exigencies of a particular level. The objectives of teaching have ceased to be clear, particularly at the secondary stage. The status of teachers in society has gone down with the extension of schooling. Their expertise is no longer sufficient to maintain their prestige and their remuneration has fallen behind that of other professions demanding a similar level of qualifications."(Herzlich and Vandermeersch, 1981, p.8) Thus, the widespread institution in recent years of corporate management techniques at various levels of the education system may be seen not just as part of the pursuit of greater efficiency, but also as part of the more or less conscious desire to hide this crisis of values under the self-justifying demands of efficiency. But, as Pateman (1978) suggests,

"If there really is a deep-seated crisis of motivation and belief, the effect of the political and administrative measures being proposed may only be to increase conflict
at the classroom coalface and deepen antagonism between teachers, government and parents and within the teaching profession itself." (p. 29)

These questions are addressed in Chapter Seven which is specifically concerned with this contemporary and highly significant development in the role of educational assessment.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which assessment procedures mediate the relationship between education and society. Some common trends have been identified which illustrate the constant themes in this relationship - the attestation of competence, the regulation of competition, and the control of individuals and the educational system itself. There is a good deal of evidence to support the identification of similar trends at this time in many industrialised countries towards a decline in formality in individual pupil assessment with a corresponding increase of other external forms of system control such as monitoring, standardised tests and centralised curricula.

Equally though, it is important to stress that national education systems are each uniquely situated in an historical and contemporary social context which determines not only their position at a particular point of the continuum identified in Figure 1, but determines too the particular assessment techniques chosen at any particular time. Thus it cannot be argued that there is any unilateral trend. Rather a concept of oscillation is perhaps more helpful which situates the actual practices of assessment at any one time within the constant parameters of the functions of school assessment in an era of mass education. It is these same constants which are the continuing themes of this thesis: - that assessment mechanisms develop to operate as a series of checks and balances
on the education system in order to ensure its major function of perpetuating the social, economic and political status quo;
- that apparent changes in assessment procedures in recent years have been only superficial changes in response to changing legitimating ideologies
- that these changes have come about to defuse potential conflict and frustration whilst at the same time enabling schools to continue their traditional role of selecting and channelling pupils to different levels of the occupational and social hierarchy - a role which is indeed increasingly becoming problematic in a situation of chronic and large-scale youth unemployment;
- that assessment mechanisms are used to control the form and content of schooling, ensuring the preparation of youngsters in the necessary skills and attitudes for their various roles in advanced industrial societies.

Thus it is possible to trace in the growth of mass educational provision in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the way in which assessment procedures have simultaneously helped to expand opportunity and, at the same time, reproduce an apparently meritocratic status quo. In so doing they have also elevated particular forms of knowledge and ways of reproducing it.

The particular ways in which the assessment procedures perform these functions in any one education system depend upon the ideological and historical foundations of any one national context and the developments referred to briefly here are taken up in more detail in subsequent empirical chapters. The intention of this, more general, chapter has been to demonstrate and, to some extent, account for, the central role that assessment has come to play in the educational provision of industrial societies and so justify an analysis of the similarities and differences between such societies in these terms. The interrelated themes which have been identified - competence, competition and control - point to the
need for a deeper, more general level of analysis which will explore not only the ways in which school assessment practices operate in relation to industrial society but rather why it was that assessment could come to play this central role in societies so deeply divided in their political and social traditions and hence what are the characteristics common to that type of society which gave birth to mass schooling. In this sense, the origins of mass schooling and the origins of assessment are essentially similar - and this is the focus of the next chapter.
Notes to Chapter Two

1. It is necessary to point out, however, that this contradiction goes beyond any simple conspiracy theory or political argument. As is evident from contemporary trends towards selection and elitism even in people's democracies such as the USSR and China (Bonavia, 1978), the contradiction is, in many ways, an economic one, between the need to produce as quickly and efficiently as possible those who will lead society in the national and international economic battle, as against the commitment typically found in both liberal democracies and socialist states to creating equal opportunity for growth and development among the mass of the population.

China offers one of the clearest illustrations of this process. It has been one of the few countries to recognize as an explicit problem the deep division Bernstein refers to between 'mental' and 'manual' that contemporary forms of schooling and particularly contemporary forms of assessment lead to. For two decades after the revolution, educational and political priorities diverged radically. Academic learning, theoretical studies and memorisation continued to predominate.

"Manual labour, ideological education, local opinions and initiatives were ignored, rote learning remained the main mode of learning ... the reward system (examinations) was directly at odds with the philosophy of schooling." (Kwong, 1980)

The Cultural Revolution was one of the few popular movements against this division and against the associated recontextualising of knowledge in a formal curriculum. But there can be no better testimony to the world-wide power of the prevailing intellectual hegemony that a country of 960 million people (Sloss, 1981) was unable to challenge it. The excesses of the Cultural Revolution in practice are well known and its passing is not mourned by the Chinese (Unger, 1980). Still, in its early and spontaneous form, it represented a genuine and almost unique desire to challenge the irrelevance and injustice of an education system dominated by the exchange value of an arbitrary and limited set of intellectual exercises, namely formal examinations. The political shift which has taken place in China since the fall of the 'Gang of Four' in which ideological purity is less important than economic development, has led to a radical change in educational policy. A critical shortage of middle-level technicians and managers in particular has led to the proliferation of selective, academic examinations and the institution of a system of 'key'-schools and colleges in which selected students receive more than an equal share of educational resources in order that their development may be both better and swifter (Bonavia, 1978). If the consequence is that

"the nationwide examination system is likely to accentuate the inequities in educational opportunities that the government has been at pains to overcome all these years .... Chinese officials accept that this is the price they have to pay in order to modernise rapidly." (Kwong, 1980)

From this example, it seems unlikely that any country will be able to overcome the constraints exerted by existing forms of assessment by not giving primacy to currently dominant forms of intellectual performance and, by the same token, use such assessment procedures for the identification of individuals for different roles in the division of labour.
2. Current curricular priorities have a relatively short history, essentially post nineteenth century, the 'quadrivium' and 'trivium' which predated them in England having a very different emphasis. Hamilton, 1981, 1983, describes these various developments in England since the first formal schools were founded in the 11th century. Durkheim (1977) offers an equivalent very detailed analysis of such changing curricular emphases in France in response to developments in prevailing ideologies and conditions. See also Apple (1976) for a useful general discussion of the relativity of curricula.


5. It is recognised that such non-selective 'elementary' education has a much longer history in some other countries, notably the United States.

6. The tripartite model of secondary schooling based on 11+ selection introduced in England in 1944 was typical of European practice at that time in providing prestigious academic institutions for the few, technical schools as a second best for some and extended elementary schools for the majority. Thus for example in the Netherlands, selection at twelve and a half years of age channelled pupils into the Lower and Intermediate General Secondary School (LAVO), the technically- and vocationally-oriented Higher General Secondary School or, for a favoured 4 per cent (in 1968), the university-oriented high school (VWO). In Spain, before 1970, pupils were selected at ten years of age either to continue their elementary education to fourteen or go into the secondary school until they were seventeen or more. In France pupils were divided between the collège d'enseignement générale, the collège d'enseignement technique and the prestigious lycée. Similar patterns could be found in most European countries until fairly recently.

7. West Germany is making particularly slow progress in this respect, (Rowan, 1976)

8. In 1946 the Report of a Royal Commission in Sweden proposed a new comprehensive 'grundeschule' for all pupils, thereby pioneering in Europe the model of non-selective schooling throughout the period of compulsory education - a model which was already established in the Soviet Union and the United States, perhaps because of a more long-standing preoccupation in these countries with education as a means of creating equality of opportunity and national unity, in contrast to the more single-minded European association of secondary schooling with academic excellence.

9. In the Netherlands for example, the selective examination for secondary schools has been replaced by an Admissions Committee composed of the school's governing authority, the school's principal and some teachers who make a decision based on the report of the head of the primary school. In West Germany also examinations have been replaced by selection based on teacher assessment, followed by a common orientation stage in the fifth and sixth classes which decides, again
on the basis of class tests, whether the pupil has truly been allocated to the appropriate secondary school. This spirit of positive guidance continues in Germany as it does in France with a continuous monitoring of the pupil's progress. In Italy, too, the traditionally elaborate system of teacher grades and annual promotion in the elementary and intermediate (11-14) schools has been abolished and replaced by an assessment card providing an "analytical and rounded assessment for each pupil" (Elvin, 1981) which is also the basis for school reports.

10. Thus in the United States for example the percentage of 18-21 year olds enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions had increased from 20 per cent at the end of the Second World War to approximately 50 per cent in 1973 (US Bureau of Census, 1973). In Japan the numbers enrolled in higher education have doubled since the war and now over 90 per cent of pupils obtain the basic high school qualification and stay on beyond the end of compulsory education. In Norway, over 99 per cent now stay beyond the statutory leaving age and not only has university provision doubled, there are experiments with comprehensive 'post 19' education. In Britain, in 1963, 27,800 school-leavers entered degree courses but in 1973 the equivalent figure was 44,600. In 1982, it was 120,000. Similarly, the proportion of school-leavers with no formal qualifications dropped from 66.8 per cent in 1963 to 21 per cent in 1973.

11. Italy is perhaps unusual in still setting a final examination as early as age 14 after three years in the intermediate school for the Intermediate School Leaving Certificate and access to higher secondary education to which about three quarters of the age cohort proceeds. The Netherlands is marginally further along this path in that whilst still setting an entrance examination for the higher secondary schools providing pre-university education, such examinations are combined with the results of psychological tests and continuous assessment of the last year's school work for the final decision to be made. The picture is similar also in Belgium where the Certificate of Lower Secondary Education is increasingly being awarded on the basis of continuous assessment with only borderline candidates now sitting for a formal examination. But, in the USSR, the 'Attestation of Maturity' examination at the end of compulsory schooling still determines access to the various forms of continuing education and, although largely school-based, is a relatively formal examination (Gloriozov, 1974). In Denmark, despite the widespread reforms in the school system since 1970, including the efforts by most of the recent social democrat Ministers of Education to abolish selection for upper secondary school, public preoccupation with standards and the maintenance of academic excellence prevented Ms. Britt Bjerregaard, the Minister of Education, from succeeding in her attempt in 1977 to abolish such tests. France has recently (1978) gone slightly further in abolishing formal tests of selection for entry into post-16 education for all but borderline and private school pupils (Dundas-Grant 1975; Journal Officiel, 1977). In Norway, the Committee on Evaluation reporting in 1978 and in Sweden, the Commission on Marking which reported in 1977, both recommended the complete abolition of marks for formal assessment in the comprehensive school (Council of Europe, 1977, 1978).
12. See also articles in the TES, 3/12/83, 20/12/83.

13. As Bourdieu (1974) so cogently shows with his French data, for a working-class child to be 'sponsored' - that is, encouraged to stay on at school and aim high - they must do better than their middle-class counterparts (Neave, 1980). In France all children have at least their 'livre scolaire' or school record to take with them from school. In the United States all children have a leaving certificate which simply consists of a record of the courses the pupil has taken and the grades he has received (Maguire, 1976). In Norway and Sweden, assessment is a routine matter for all pupils, normed and standardised to allow teachers to gauge their pupils' progress in relation to that of the country as a whole.

14. Australia provides an interesting case study. All 16+ certification in Australia has been teacher conducted for some considerable time and has now begun to reach the next stage of disappearing altogether (Withers, 1982). (This has already happened in New South Wales and South Australia in 1976 (March, 1974; Maguire, 1976).) Likewise, 17+ and 18+ certification, although varying from state to state, manifests the same trend of being allowed increasing teacher control as its significance decreases until it ultimately withers away. Thus in Queensland, for example, certification is based on a school assessment scaled according to the Australian scholastic aptitude test. In Western Australia, likewise, school assessments are used. In Victoria, as in New Zealand, the accreditation system is used which requires only pupils from non-accredited schools to take formal examinations. In 1973 the Campbell Report in the Australian Capital Territory recommended the use of continuous school assessment as the basis for certification. But the most extreme example of this trend is in Victoria where in 1975 teachers refused to conduct the matriculation examinations for university entrance (Hill, 1976). They felt a lottery was the only fair way of selecting students for university until sufficient higher education provision could be made. Subsequently they have devised an alternative School Certificate which is now accepted by at least some universities (see Withers, 1982).

15. It is worth noting, however, that such effective objectives have always been more explicit in Indian educational goals than in the west.


17. In Denmark the U90 Commission, setting out the form of Danish education for the years up to 1990, has stressed the need to broaden assessment to include personal and social qualities (Central Council for Education, 1977). In France, the 'Haby' reforms of the 'livre scolaire' (although rescinded in 1978) were significant in including assessments on affective characteristics such as 'sense of responsibility' and 'team spirit'. In Sweden the new structure recommended by the Commission on Marking in which parents, teachers and pupils would be jointly involved in assessment, also recommends that non-cognitive aspects of a pupil's progress be taken into account along with academic achievements (Duckenfield, 1977). Norway has made similar recommendations (Neave, 1979). So, too, have India and Tanzania.
18. The United States is a good example, in this respect, where the inclusion of information about extra-curricular activities such as debating or sport, and personal qualities such as leadership and sociability, have always made the school record an important complement to the largely ungraded High School Certificate. King (1981) argues that schooling in the United States has always of necessity given highest priority to the need to socialise and weld into a social unit all the diverse cultures represented in its immigrants. The stress on democracy and patriotism in American schools as evidenced by, for example, the morning flag-raising ceremony, may indeed be at considerable cost given that one in five American adults have been claimed to be functionally illiterate (Binyon, 1976). At the other end of the political spectrum, too, communist countries such as the Soviet Union and China have clearly recognised the political and ideological conformity that can be reinforced by taking into account a very much wider range of information about pupils than simply academic attainment (Price, 1976, 1977).

19. Indeed there has been a good deal of criticism of such records in terms of the kind of '1984' control they are taken to herald. See, for example, Ranson, 1984.

20. As, for example, in Rumania, Poland and Bulgaria and the USSR where up to 50% of aspiring students are unable to find a place in higher education.

21. Throughout Europe the traditional policy of open admission to higher education for those with matriculation, in, for example, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, West Germany and France, is now being modified in many countries to restrict entry to the most popular faculties. In Germany, for example, the grouped subject Abitur is carefully graded to allow university admission on a strict 'numerus clausus' basis (Dungworth, 1977).

22. England's preoccupation with public examinations is indeed an interesting manifestation of the important and close relationship between certification mechanisms and mechanisms of system control - accountability. The hitherto very informal methods of system control characteristic of all the education systems of the British Isles to a greater or lesser extent have resulted in their being much slower to respond to the pressures for change in assessment procedures which have led to the international trends under discussion.

23. That such trends are not yet typical of Third World countries is because, as has been suggested, the particular assessment policies of individual countries will be a reflection of the stage of development reached, combined with the particular institutional
traditions, policy priorities and resources characteristic of that particular country. But, despite their very different stage of development, Third World countries are still identifiably on the same continuum of examination practice as the developed world, albeit at an earlier stage. As King (1976) suggests:

"as long as selection remains more important than socialisation at all levels of the educational system, it is probably unrealistic to expect any significant retreat from formalism ... The parents seem not at all anxious that they adapt the formal government curriculum to the solution of local community issues ... The main community issue still seems to be securing through education a few more jobs outside the local community."

This phenomenon remains typical of developing countries despite vigorous attempts to overcome it.

24. For example, Michael Duane from Risinghill, London, in the late 'sixties and R.F. Mackenzie from Summerhill, Aberdeen, in the mid 'seventies.

25. The Victorian alternative matriculation procedure (Withers, 1982) is perhaps the most radical but even in France, teachers' assessments are assuming ever greater importance in comparison with the Baccalaureat examination (Pautler, 1982).

26. So strong has this concern with standards now become that by the beginning of 1978, 31 States had introduced some form of 'basic skills' testing in their schools and only 4 of the 50 States had no plans to do so. The scale of the movement is clearly shown by the fact that less than two years earlier, only 8 States required 'minimum competency' testing (Cookson, 1978). In California alone the Reform in Intermediate and Secondary Education movement (RISE), set up to ensure minimum standards of competency, will cost £200 million a year. In Oregon, Florida and Arizona, school-leavers must already demonstrate minimum standards before graduating (Binyon, 1976) and in some States, the controls are even more stringent in that grade to grade promotion within the school ceases to be automatic and is dependent on adequate performance.

27. Thus, since most Third World countries are still at the stage of developing mass primary rather than secondary education, they still typically have their key point of selection at 11+, that is, at the end of primary school. Since secondary education is still normally highly selective in such countries, there is still little pressure for reform of the necessarily formal examinations upon which selection is based. The anonymity of public examinations is crucial in this respect. Any alternative would be likely to expose teachers to quite intolerable pressures in the need to select the favoured few from a very large number of aspiring and subsequently frustrated candidates. Thus, in Tanzania, despite President Nyerere's explicit identification of examinations as the source of individualism and elitist attitudes - despite a series of reforms in the organisation and orientation of public examinations - any attempt to move away from traditional academic standards is steadfastly resisted by parents, pupils, teachers and many administrators and politicians.
motivated by concerns over academic respectability in the eyes of the world, colonial tradition or occupational advancement (Morrison, 1976). Neighbouring Kenya provides an equally explicit example (National Committee on Educational Objectives, 1976) where even the radical Harambee movement has equally failed to make any serious impact on this attitude.

28. That is, assessment against a fixed standard rather than against a population. Progress towards 'grade-related' testing at the 16+ stage has been much greater in Scotland with the major reforms in certification which were instituted as a result of the 1977 Dunning Report. See also Savary (1984) re growing French interest.

29. In New Jersey recently, a court upheld the petition of two parents against a school for the child's lack of achievement.

30. For details of the furore provoked by the London Borough of Croydon's initiative in this respect, see TES, December 12, 1983.

31. Under the 1980 Education Act in England and the new system of representative Councils at every level of the system from classroom to Minister in France.

32. Enfin, les responsables de l'éducation etaient confrontes a un double malaise. Celui des lycéens, en rebellion contre un enseignement éloigné de leurs aspirations et contre un système scolaire qui ne leur donne pas assez de responsabilités et de liberté. Celui des enseignants, qui doivent faire face à de nouvelles demandes des jeunes et des familles tout en satisfaisant, en principe, aux exigences traditionnelles de "niveau". Les objectifs de l'enseignement ont cesse d'être clairs, en particulier dans le secondaire. Le statut des enseignants dans la société s'est dégradé avec l'extension de l'instruction; leur savoir, inégal, ne suffit plus à leur assurer du prestige, et leur rémunération a pris du retard par rapport aux professions exigeant un niveau d'études comparable.

33. Such a system is graphically described by the pupils of the Barbiana School in Italy in their Letter to a Teacher, in which they show that of the 454,094 thirteen year old Italians in school in 1969, 5 per cent were already in a scuola superiore, (to which pupils are supposed to transfer at fourteen), 33.9 per cent were in the third year (where they officially should have been), 28.7 per cent were in the second year and 18.2 per cent in the first year of the scuola media. The 13.9 per cent still in the elementary school, a third of whom had 'not yet reached the top class, must surely have been disillusioned with education': In the USSR, not only are children required to repeat grades they have failed but there is an increasing emphasis, after years of ideological prohibition, on various kinds of formal testing (Ingenkamp, 1977). A similar situation is developing in China too (Bonavia, 1978). Denmark was typical of the European liberal democracies in passing an Education Act in 1974 emphasising standards and formal testing and drastically redressing the balance against the earlier far-reaching progressive innovations in assessment instituted in 1972. The Netherlands, too, has almost reverted to a 'payment by results' system in that State grants are only given to schools whose pupils can demonstrate acceptable standards in numerical and other basic skills (Maguire, 1976).
Other countries are finding less obvious but nevertheless powerful modes of accountability. The new assessment system in Norway is designed to allow not only the monitoring of individual progress but indeed an evaluation of the performance of the institution itself by parents and pupils (Neave, 1979). In Sweden the nationally standardised tests used to scale internal school assessment and regularly administered to pupils have a triple function. They permit pupils to assess their progress and teachers to gauge pupil and class achievement against national norms. But they provide, too, detailed information of national standards and indeed a certain amount of curricular control as expressed in the nationally standardised tests of Swedish, mathematics, foreign languages, chemistry, physics, economics and accountancy (SED, 1977).