

VALUE-ADDED AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Proceedings of EMIE/NFER Seminars

28 November 1995 (Slough)

14 March 1996 (Stockport)

Edited by
Felicity Fletcher-Campbell

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FOREWORD

In response to clear indications that there was considerable interest among both head teachers of special schools and LEA officers in the application of value-added measures to the education of pupils with special educational needs, the Education Management Information Exchange (EMIE) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) held two seminars to address the issue. Forty LEA officers met at Slough in November 1995. This event was oversubscribed and, in order to cater for those on the waiting list and others for whom the first date had been inconvenient, a repeat seminar was held in the North-west in March 1996. The programmes for the two days were similar.

The ensuing document includes the papers given by the main speakers together with a composite summary of the issues raised in the each of the three delegates' discussion groups at both seminars. It should be pointed out that, overall, discussion was tentative and exploratory: no speaker and no delegate felt able to offer any definitive 'answer'. Rather, the seminars gave an opportunity for a number of issues and perspectives to be cast into the arena of debate and for there to be some interrogation and exploration of the various dimensions of 'value-added' and their application to pupils with special educational needs. Readers will note the underpinning concern running throughout all the materials to make effective provision for pupils with special educational needs. If value-added measurement, in all its facets, is a means to this end, then it is to be welcomed.

It is hoped that EMIE/NFER will be able to aid networking among LEAs working in the area of value-added and special educational needs. Readers of these Proceedings are encouraged to forward any relevant documentation for information exchange to EMIE at the NFER.

Conference Programmes

Tuesday 28 November 1995: NFER, Slough

- 10.00 Introduction (Dr Seamus Hegarty)
- 10.10 View from a CEO (Peter Coles)
- 10.45 Coffee
- 11.00 View from research (Lesley Saunders)
- 11.30 View from OFSTED (HMI Diane Chorley)
- 12.00 Plenary discussion
- 12.30 Lunch
- 1.30 View from an LEA: value-added in special schools in Avon (Penny Spiller & Felicity Wikeley)
- 2.30 Discussion groups
- 3.30 Plenary discussion
- 3.35 Tea and close

Thursday 14 March 1996: Stockport

- 10.00 Introduction (Ralph Tabberer)
- 10.10 View from a CEO (Tony Webster)
- 10.45 View from OFSTED (HMI Bob Dyke)
- 11.15 Coffee
- 11.30 View from research (Lesley Saunders)
- 12.00 View from an LEA (1) (Ken Ilett)
- 12.30 Plenary discussion
- 1.00 Lunch
- 2.00 View from an LEA (2): value-added in special schools in Avon (Felicity Wikeley & Penny Spiller)
- 3.00 Discussion groups
- 3.45 Plenary discussion
- 4.00 Tea and close

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INTRODUCTION

Dr Seamus Hegarty, Director of the NFER, opened the seminar at Slough. He said that he was particularly pleased to welcome delegates for two reasons. First, value-added exercises had the potential to marginalise pupils with special educational needs as these pupils tended not to fit the system and their progress was hard to measure. It was thus important to look at the potential problems and try to forestall them.

Second, there were intrinsic difficulties in the concept of 'value-added'. Dr Hegarty likened the concept to that of 'integration', which had become a convenient shorthand associated with considerable misunderstanding and lack of awareness about the need for school reform, widespread changes in the education system and attention to the whole curriculum. 'Value-added' was an odd term with a manufacturing base, carrying the sense of taking some material, doing something to it and then measuring the effect. He pointed out that 'measuring effect' was not clear and unambiguous: whether or not added-value could be claimed for the bulldozing of an unproductive, wild-flower-strewn, green-field site in order to erect a supermarket, depended on perspectives. There were considerable difficulties in the way in which the concept had been taken on simply – and, some would argue, simplistically – within education: not only were aspects other than the academic important to young people's development but also other non-school factors, such as the influence of the home and parents, had an impact on that development. These non-school factors could have different effects according to the special needs of the pupil. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties had a considerable degree of dependence on formal instruction both in and out of school; the input-output link was determined by the school to a extent greater than that for other pupils. Although this was an extreme case, it nicely illustrated the point. Thus value-added should be put in perspective and driven by consideration of the purposes of education.

Dr Hegarty concluded by saying that the seminar gave an opportunity to share reflection and experience; to ensure that those developing value-added systems did not set up negative situations whereby pupils with special educational needs were marginalised; and to move on the debate by sharpening perspectives on value-added issues.

A. VIEWS FROM CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICERS

Ai. Peter Coles, County Education Officer, Hampshire

Introduction

I want to make clear that I do not bring answers: I bring questions. I want to talk about:

- the context of developments in special needs, especially financial pressures and the Code of Practice;
- the common ground among LEAs;
- the benefits of a value-added approach to provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- some of the obvious difficulties and opportunities.

Context

I warmly welcomed the sections of the 1993 Act concerning special needs. A reassessment of the 1981 Act was essential. By any standards, the Code of Practice was: well intentioned and necessary; carefully considered; widely consulted about and changed accordingly; well disseminated and explained, chiefly by LEAs – we saw it as a chance to emphasise our role as well as a set of duties. It is hard work; costs time and money to schools and LEAs; and implies or requires support staff some LEAs do not have. But the Code promotes and requires good things; sets down what we should have been doing before; and makes clear, especially for mainstream schools, the responsibilities of schools. Hence, LEAs must be careful about complaining.

The effects of the Code and LEAs responses can be seen in changes that have come about in Hampshire.

A recent entry in *Hansard* (31:10:95) gave the figures for pupils in England with statements since 1990; these were supplied by Mr Eric Forth in answer to a parliamentary question from Mr William O'Brian.

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They showed a steady increase from 140,000 in 1990 to 192,000 in 1994, with a provisional figure of 198,000 for 1995 (figures rounded). Requests for statutory assessment in Hampshire have been decreasing as the following table shows.

Table Ai:1 Number of requests for statutory assessment: Hants LEA

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95
statement issued	1011	955	431
statement not issued	50	323	344

In Hampshire, the average time taken to complete statutory assessment has been reduced from 11 months in 1992/93 to 9.2 months in 1993/94 to 7.0 months in 1994/95.

Pupils with statements in Hampshire are now being placed differently. The Hampshire audit asks schools to assess levels of need in steps similar to Code of Practice stages and then ensures that there is internal moderation, provides external moderation, and finally distributes funds directly. The audit is presently implemented in primary schools and there is a move to greater delegation – effectively, for most children with statements for learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools. Secondary schools will be in the audit in 1996 and will also move to greater delegation.

Table Ai: 2 Placement following first assessment (percentages of new statements): Hants LEA

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95
mainstream school	62	67	58
unit	5	5	5
special school	32	27	34
out-county	1	1	3

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In Hampshire these measures were taken in response to: wrong but understandable practice by schools seeking money from statements; financial constraints; and the Code of Practice. These pressures are common to all LEAs.

The case for a value-added approach

The changes recorded above were driven by policy and money, not because we know, from evidence, that one approach works better than another. An extreme example of local differences can be seen in the following table giving figures relating to the number of support staff for special needs in LEAs of a size comparable to Hampshire.

Table A1:3 Full-time equivalent of SEN support staff in LEA maintained schools: January 1994

Hants	965
Kent	590
Leeds	547
Essex	406
Surrey	341
Notts	248
Staffs	209
Avon	168
Lancs	152
Birmingham	141

A valued-added approach to the evaluation of policies and the relative success of systems (including schools) would allow evidence about what particular strategies are effective.

Whilst it will be difficult and we cannot wait for answers, the quest is worthwhile because:

- We must challenge pupils. There is too much medico-social justification for policies and practice in special needs. Education is our purpose and it is that which is desperately needed by pupils with special educational needs.

- OFSTED systems are assessing special schools as *schools* – that is, through the quality of teaching and learning; these schools too often find this surprising.
- School special needs policies must be specific about their purpose and intentions and these have to be reported by governors to parents.
- ‘Integration to’ or ‘removal from’ mainstream involves complex philosophical, educational, financial and social judgements which should be informed by more methodical evaluation.

Some difficulties and opportunities in value-added work

Difficulties:

- (a) Value-added methods in mainstream assess inputs by contextual variables or prior achievement; they then use aggregated data to establish cohort or school level.
- (b) Most special schools are very small with variable intakes; aggregate assessment and standardisation would be difficult.
- (c) We must not inhibit movement to and from mainstream, nor restrict integration.

Opportunities:

- (a) There is a great deal of interest and vast expenditure in the area of special educational needs, not only by Education but also medical and social services.
- (b) Individual Education Plans are required for pupils – these tell us where a pupil is and where we want him/her to go.
- (c) Annual reviews and all the work of the Code of Practice stages requires ‘plan–do–review’ cycles and make explicit our need to concentrate on learning.
- (d) Hence the 1993 Act and the Code of Practice give us important tools.
- (e) Relatively stable funding from audit approaches and place funding for special schools improve staff stability and allow better development planning.

- (f) Tracking pupils and using IEPs would challenge research methodology but it needs to be looked at.

Conclusion

We have the need, and should introduce more reasoned, better evaluation, and careful analysis into professional judgements about where and how pupils with special educational needs should be educated. We are getting many additional tools. This is an area where emotion and sympathy are important motivators. But if we are to ensure equality of access and the best use of the huge sums invested in meeting special educational needs, we must have better ways of knowing how we are doing with what we have got. Hence our seminar today and the quest for value-added approaches to meeting special needs.

* * * * *

Aii. Tony Webster, Director of Education, Tameside

Special Educational Needs – the value-added debate

I want to begin this talk by saying that I find myself extremely uncomfortable with the words 'value-added'. They originate from industrial processes and these are greatly removed from education and, in particular, from special education. Nevertheless, 'value-added' has become the flavour of the last few months and it is inevitable that all of us concerned with education should start thinking about these issues. This is going to be as true for colleagues in special schools as it is for colleagues in other parts of the education system.

You may remember that it was Oscar Wilde who said that 'a cynic is a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing'. I have a really sneaky feeling that, in education, the cynic is the person who knows the value-added of everything but the real value of nothing.

In this talk I want to do four things. I want, first of all, to talk about what I believe the value-added concept means in education and what its main uses are. I want to look at how difficult that is to apply to special

educational needs and, in particular, to special schools. I then want to go on to say why I think we need, nevertheless, to consider some of these issues in relation to special education. Finally, I want to suggest some of the approaches that I think might be useful.

Let us begin. What is the concept of value-added and where does it come from? Obviously, the concept begins industrially. The value-added debate concentrates on identifying objective input and output measures that can be used to predict and then assess achievement as part of a much wider range of information for schools. In particular, the concept of value-added is linked to the whole movement which focuses on school improvement and on school effectiveness, although I recognise that those are two very different things. Simply put, it is possible to compare the improvement in performance – or lack of it – achieved by a school, by measuring a pupil's potential on entry and comparing it to what the pupil has achieved when s/he leaves.

The easiest examples clearly came from secondary education. This is almost inevitable. Secondary schools have a consistent way of measuring one part of their output through GCSE results achieved by pupils and it is possible to use some predictive measures of ability at the beginning of a pupil's school career.

It must be the case that the interest in value-added has to some extent arisen from the concern with published league tables. We all know that a school in a deprived downtown area is likely to achieve on the GCSE league tables a result lower than a school in a leafy suburb. But, the argument goes, a school in a leafy suburb may not necessarily be adding as much value, because the potential of its pupils is very much higher when they entered the school.

Of course it is not always as simple as that. How valid are the measures used at the beginning of secondary education as predictors of performance at the end of secondary education? There does seem to be some link between GCSE performance and A-level performance but, over the five years of secondary education, you have to ask some serious questions about the validity of whatever tests are given at the beginning – whether these are tests of 'intelligence' or some measure of wider ability.

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It is no accident that most of the debate about value-added has so far focused on secondary schools rather than on primary schools. The unreliability of the SATs at Key Stage 1 and, certainly, at Key Stage 2, and their very general nature, means that there is no statistically valid means of comparison available. If I am very uncomfortable with value-added then I am even more uncomfortable with the concept of baseline testing when children enter primary school – or, even worse, nursery school – at age 3, 4 or 5. Certainly teachers want to know how their pupils are achieving at that age but I would see those kinds of tests as diagnostic rather than as the base of some kind of prediction of performance.

The truth, of course, is that schools are extremely complex organisations and the measures of schools' achievement ought not to rely entirely on GCSE results or even on Key Stage 2 SATs results. There is the need to think very carefully about what other things we might measure. If I may quote Oscar Wilde again, 'life is never pure and rarely simple'.

If regular schools are complex, then the whole issue of value-added in special educational needs becomes even more complex. First, we have a very wide range of pupils and a very wide range of disabilities. I suspect that the variation in measurable ability within some special educational contexts is very significantly wider than the similar variation in mainstream contexts.

Secondly, there is a wide range of localities. Part of the point of the value-added debate is to be able to compare school X and school Y which have similar populations. In the case of my own authority, it would be impossible to compare two special schools, since my five special schools have totally different populations. I certainly could not compare them either with schools in the neighbouring authority (in which we are now sitting) because the determination of entry – the gate keeping – may well be quite different in Stockport from what appertains in Tameside, even in those schools which superficially bear the same label.

There are apparently very different learning outcomes from one special school to another and so it is not easy to compare what value is being added. The individual learning plans that pupils have are perhaps the most significant guides to their achievement and these are – by their very nature – individual. But – and it is a very big 'but' – as a Director

of Education I do want to know how my special schools are doing. I would like to be able to compare one with another if that were possible. I would like to know whether the approach that is adopted in a Tameside school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is more or less successful than the approach that is adopted in schools in another authority. Even more importantly, we have a significant number of pupils with special educational needs in my authority, as I guess in all of yours, who are being educated in mainstream schools.

There seem to me to be five reasons why we need to try – even if it is difficult – to get some grip on the value-added concept as it relates to special schools.

The first reason is that special education is about education. We must be concerned about the achievement of our pupils and there is an enormous danger of adopting what critics of the special schools sector would regard as the ‘soggy’ approach to achievement. I do want to know that special schools are enabling pupils to achieve their full potential.

Second, and you would expect me to say this, special schools are expensive. ‘Rightly so’, you might claim, and I guess I would support you. However, I am fond of quoting one of my former bosses who, I believe, thought I had a rather soft view of special education. He said to me that there is no compassion in inefficiency. Caring is not enough. I need to know that I am getting value for money.

Third, special schools do take very different approaches to achieving similar aims, as I have already said. I want to know how I can compare one approach to another. Is it possible for me to be able to say to the headteacher of one school: ‘If you try another approach it achieves better value because I have seen it in a school next door’?

Fourth, the special school’s focus is, quite rightly, on the achievement of the objectives of individual pupils. Those of you who heard Ron Davey at the North of England Conference will remember that he pointed to the fact that he felt that special schools might be blazing the trail for mainstream schools in this focus. That is all very fine and well, but how do I know that by focusing on those individual objectives we are really adding value to the achievements of those pupils?

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Finally, special schools also need to consider the issues related to school improvement and to school effectiveness. This is not said in any spirit of criticism. We have simply to recognise that it is only through striving for continual improvement in our schools that we can hope to keep them moving forward and to do justice to our pupils. What measures can I use to determine whether a special school has improved or not? I would not, in this context, want to rely solely on the judgements of our friends from OFSTED.

Just because it is difficult to do, does not mean that you should not try to do it. I want to suggest some possible issues that we might want to consider in determining a value-added framework for looking at special education.

First, can we use the Individual Education Plan? Could we assess the extent to which different schools add value by achieving or not achieving the goals set by plans? Would that, in fact, lead to our setting those goals low so that they could be achieved?

An alternative approach might be to reach some agreement about what should be the minimum expectation for the achievement of all children with different kinds of special educational need. The problem, of course, in adopting this approach lies in the very complexity of the needs that we assess.

Perhaps in looking at added-value in special needs we need to look at a much wider range of objectives than are demonstrated only by examination results. We will certainly need to do so. There are some issues about the quality of life experienced by many of our most disabled young people, and by their families, that are of real significance. These issues, which some might regard as on the soft end of special education, might be among the most vital ones for us to consider. Perhaps in special education we can lead the way to measuring the value-added of a number of areas through objective measurements of much wider kinds of achievement than can ever be encompassed by GCSE.

B. VIEW FROM RESEARCH

QUASE and the special education sector

Lesley Saunders, Senior Research Officer, NFER

Context

The purpose of this paper is to describe briefly NFER's value-added work and to elicit the issues and implications of undertaking similar work for and with the special education sector.

In 1993 the NFER established the beginnings of a 'value-added' service for secondary schools. Called QUASE (Quantitative Analysis for Self-Evaluation), the service came into being in response to growing concern about the limitations of so-called league tables comparing school performance on 'raw' GCSE results. From 1994, NFER has also undertaken a similar service for a group of local education authorities, called ERIC (Examination Results in Context). In that short time, there has been a proliferation of approaches to – and definitions of – value-added measurements of performance, provided by individual LEAs, by university departments and by commercial agencies. This situation has arisen partly because there is a real and necessary debate going on about the best statistical methods to use, as well as because value-added no doubt looks to some people like the latest gravy train. (It isn't.) But I would argue that the technical questions cannot be fully resolved until there is more clarity about the different purposes which value-added measurements can fulfil. The key functions which value-added analyses currently serve include:

- '*comparing like with like*' in terms of schools' background and context;
- representing pupils' *progress* rather than just raw achievement;
- identifying which institutions are doing *better/worse than one would predict* – this means identifying how far schools are

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making progress (or not) with their pupils *over and above* what would be expected of those pupils anyway;

- providing similar information about *individual departments/year groups*;
- identifying *which students* are performing above or below expectations.

I think it is of paramount importance for colleagues in the special education sector to address that issue of purpose in relation to their own needs. I will return to this later in the paper.

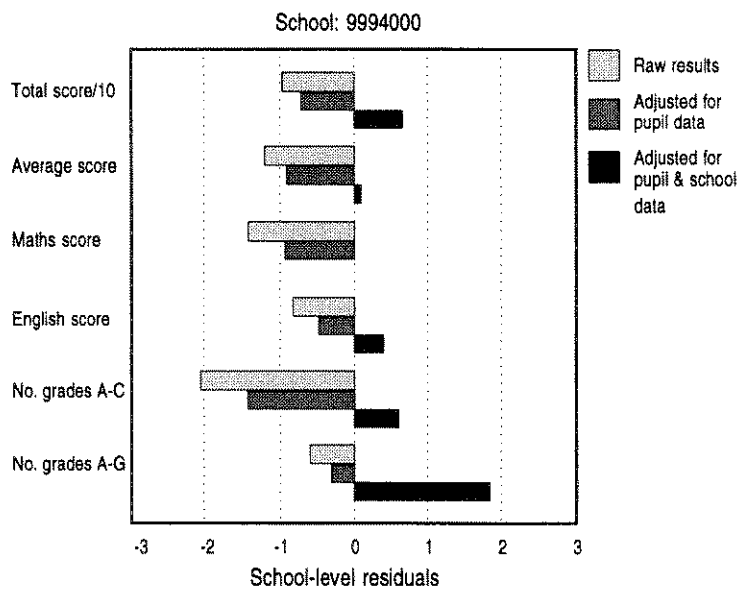
What NFER's value-added services provide

The starting point for NFER's value-added work is that schools and LEAs do need better quantitative information about their relative strengths and weaknesses than 'raw' outcome measures can provide. Put crudely, you need to know where your students started *and* how they might be expected, on average, to progress between Years 7 and 11, say, before you can ascertain whether your school has made any difference, for better or worse, to those students. So our analyses take account of students' individual characteristics, such as their sex, ethnic group and level of prior attainment, which we know to have an effect on their performance at 16. We also take account of factors in the school's context which influence student performance, such as catchment area, proportion of young people eligible for free school meals and level of parental attendance at parents' evenings. We then analyse each school's or LEA's results in the light of these factors. I should emphasise that these are not chosen arbitrarily – there is a measurable empirical relationship between each of the factors and performance of students at 16; though of course it may not necessarily be a *causal* one.

Schools and LEAs then receive a confidential Profile consisting of tables and diagrams and an accompanying commentary discussing their results and suggesting pointers for action.

Here is a sample of what QUASE provides:

QUASE Performance Indicators Data



And the sort of thing we might say to a school which had these kinds of results is:

'...what is interesting about your school's results is the difference the context factors make to the picture of pupils' performance. They explain a great deal of the difference between your school's performance (which is below average on raw scores) and that of the other schools in QUASE... But there is little or no sign yet of added value on the basis of pupils' prior attainment measures... The figures suggest that not only could the school expect more from its pupils generally but also that the lower academic ability pupils are most at risk of not achieving what they might... One could speculate that the levels of social disadvantage being experienced by the pupils have perhaps got in the way of teachers seeing their intellectual potential...'

Our analyses are provided for academic results – various GCSE-related indicators – and for attendance and destinations. We do not, at present, analyse vocational qualifications or any other type of educational outcome for the purposes of measuring value-added. The issue of identifying and agreeing appropriate outcome measures for children with special educational needs is clearly a critical one.

Involvement of special schools

During the feasibility study for QUASE, it emerged that colleagues in special schools – who, at least in the secondary sector, had become used to a greater degree of involvement and collaboration with ‘mainstream’ institutions – notably through TVEI – thought that a similar ‘added-value’ initiative should be developed for the special education sector. It was immediately obvious that the data NFER was collecting for secondary school students was not the appropriate or even a feasible means of measuring the achievements of SEN students. So we set up a small group seminar at NFER in the autumn of 1993 for a few special school colleagues and NFER staff, in order to explore the potential for developing a more suitable approach.

Some key issues came to light at that seminar, which I imagine are still relevant:

- **Representation on league tables of school performance.** Current representation of special schools on the league tables was felt to be unfair. Moreover, special school colleagues wished to insist on the very disparate and diverse nature of their institutions and of the young people within them, and one or two colleagues expressed the view that any quantification of relative performance would be impossible in principle.
- **Perverse outcomes of league tables.** There is some evidence to suggest that mainstream schools effectively ‘unload’ their difficult pupils on to special schools, which makes the latter’s raw performance look even less favourable. Some special schools are happy, nonetheless, to continue taking such pupils because it keeps them in business, but others find it distasteful because it works further against the integration of special needs children.

- **Measurement of achievement, especially in 'small steps'.** There would be a substantial technical and operational challenge in quantifying the various *types* of achievement special schools would wish to have acknowledged, and also the wide range of *levels* of achievement likely to be obtained by individual students. One positive feature in this complex picture is that special schools tend to be very thorough and wide-ranging in their monitoring and assessment of students, and concerned to measure small but significant learning gains. So it is not so much a question of getting the information as of quantifying it in such a way that it can be standardised. Standardisation basically ensures that a particular score on, say, an aspect of interpersonal skills means exactly the same thing for any student in any school, irrespective of age, sex, etc. Standardisation is a time-consuming process in itself and, by definition, can only be done on a nationally representative sample.
- **Reliability of testing.** Measuring value-added also requires there to be a demonstrable relationship between attainment at point A (say, on entry to the school) and attainment at point B (say, at age 16), in order that we can make valid predictions about expected progress and thus see how far the school has helped a youngster meet or even exceed expectations. In QUASE, for example, we can show that a student with such and such a score on a cognitive abilities test at 11 could be expected, all other things being equal, to get such and such a score in his or her overall GCSE score. Of course, we have to build in confidence intervals to allow for statistical error, but there is still useful and truthful information to be extracted from the regression analyses that we construct from such data. What would be the equivalent 'inputs' and related 'outputs' in special schools?

The seminar suggested that all these issues would need thorough debating and full consultation within the SEN sector – no single or simple system could, it appeared, be imposed from outside with any hope of credibility, let alone success. Nevertheless, special school colleagues were very keen to find ways of sharing in the culture of rigorous self-evaluation – including the use of quantitative indicators – which some mainstream secondary schools have been in the process of developing.

Interestingly, another NFER colleague, Simon Gallacher, has identified a very similar range of issues in relation to measuring value-added in the primary sector: what are the appropriate, acceptable and meaningful measures of achievement that can be applied? Do they exist already? Will they have to be (further) developed and standardised? Could assessment systems be developed on a local level which would enable schools to track progress over time and to make some estimate of the value they are adding to their students?

The group which met in 1993 made a little progress over the next few months in terms of drawing up some preliminary draft research instruments, but it was clear that developing a proper system for measuring value-added would actually require a considerable input of work from both practitioners and researchers. No finances to fund any further developments were forthcoming, so there – as far as the NFER was concerned – we regretfully left it. Of course, the NFER has continued to carry a substantial programme of research with and for the SEN sector more generally. The most recent to be completed is the so-called *Small Steps* project for SCAA, which has identified effective practice in the assessment of pupils who will be working within level 1 or up to level 3 in the national curriculum through all key stages.

What is value-added for?

This seems the right point, therefore, to revisit the issue of purpose in some detail. At the moment, there are essentially two distinct agendas for value-added measurement of performance, understood in some statistically robust sense: *public accountability* and *institutional improvement*. Generally, our view is that value-added analyses are more able to help with the second than the first and this is where NFER has been concentrating effort over the last two or three years.

But what is it that those working with pupils with special educational needs wish to achieve by adopting a value-added approach?

- a lever for change or legitimation within the LEA around the issue of special education provision?
- a way to put pressure on mainstream schools, to call them to account for their special education provision (or lack of it)?

- a challenge to special schools themselves, to scrutinise and improve their performance?
- a means of helping special schools explain their lower achievement in the league tables?

Public accountability

Let us first briefly explore the *public accountability* agenda from the point of view of special schools whose remit, we could say, is to support and enhance the learning of less academically able children.

It is clear that the current presentation of schools' results does not adequately help anyone – the schools, the parents, the LEA – to understand or to represent the achievements and progress either of the less academically able pupils in general, or of the specific pupil population in special schools, because:

- ◆ schools' *standards* in the sense of high academic achievements (e.g. 5+ A-C grades) tend to be promoted, more than their *reliability*;
- ◆ special schools and schools with larger proportions of less academically able children on intake are rewarded with lower positions in school comparisons;
- ◆ schools in more disadvantaged areas and schools working with higher numbers of children with learning difficulties are not adequately recognised.

Are alternative representations possible? Yes, one could report on a different performance indicator, such as average GCSE score (which would give a better indication of achievement across a wider academic ability range). Or one could represent differential effectiveness, for example, by using indicators relevant to the top third of the academic ability range on intake, the middle third and the bottom third respectively. Or, possibly, one could present added-value data for every school, though the collection of the requisite data, and its analysis and representation, are very complex (hence the recent project commissioned by SCAA).

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In fact, all of these solutions would result in a shift away from league tables, not simply an adjustment of them. The debate about value-added analysis has actually complicated league tables by:

- promoting a range of different outcome measures;
- introducing two main types of contextualisation, background/ socio-economic status and prior attainment;
- introducing confidence intervals.

It seems that, in order to report schools' achievements more accurately, we need something much more akin to a balance sheet than single scores on a league table – which would seem absolutely justifiable, considering the complexity of what schools do. So at this stage we would like to see a cautious approach to developments in the public accountability agenda, as follows:

- reporting of performance should consist of pilot work only, until data and methods can be made more robust and credible;
- comparisons between mainstream schools should be made on the basis of the full ability range (e.g. by using average GCSE or looking at effectiveness specifically for the bottom third of the academic ability range), in order to sensitise schools to the measurable progress they make with all their pupils;
- the notion of constructing national measurements for pupils with severe, or profound and multiple, learning difficulties should be dropped as being unfeasible;
- a move towards a national or regional set of tables for special schools (for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties primarily) should be considered, in order to improve the comparison of 'like with like'; the data should be contextualised by socio-economic indicators and prior attainment scores (such as on a reading test).

School improvement

Now let us turn to the second agenda of *school development* and how value-added can make a contribution here. The starting point must be the individual school's review cycle, of which it is pertinent to ask questions like:

- what *criteria* are used to assess the effectiveness of the school?
- what *evidence* is used?
- what *external and/or internal qualitative checks* are there on a four-yearly and on an annual basis? Do they work and are they clear? (e.g. how does the school use a combination of case histories, statements and IEPs to review the relative quality of different interventions with different children?) For whom are the checks made: the school senior managers, school staff, the LEA and/or parents?
- what *quantitative checks* does the school currently have? For example, how and when are test/examination results used, by teachers, teachers with pupils, school senior managers and/or the LEA?

How might value-added analyses help in this context? Contextualised analyses of performance can do a number of things relatively easily, such as:

- add *comparative progress data*, provided some simple initial measures can be agreed upon and provided we can be reasonably sure of the reliability of a test given at a particular time (which probably means that measurement of relative progress with SLD pupils is again too difficult);
- provide *comparisons with other schools* on a like-with-like basis, so that the senior managers (and staff) can judge if the school is doing well overall;
- provide data against which to *monitor particular pupils' relative progress*.

Even so, managers of special schools/LEAs would still need to consider:

- do we need to generate this data every year?
- do we need to analyse data for every child or just for those who have reached a certain level of attainment already?
- do we want to use the data to judge the school or to challenge individual children to improve?

This is essentially a question of deciding what is cost-effective for the school/LEA in each case. But an underlying issue which schools and LEAs need to bear in mind is that the use of more sophisticated quantitative data to inform school improvement is *an innovation* in itself and needs to be handled as such. All the issues pertaining to the management of change – like ‘ownership’, resistance to new-fangled ideas or impositions from outside, conflict with old habits and structures, paying lip-service and so forth – are as relevant here as with any other initiative.

Key strategic issues

Now it seems to me that all this raises some important prior questions which are best addressed at a sectoral level. I would group them as follows:

- ◆ What questions do we still need answers to, about the *effectiveness of the sector* as a whole and individual institutions within it? How should effectiveness be judged? Is there a consensus about these criteria within and beyond the sector?
- ◆ What should count as *evidence*, both quantitative and qualitative? Who should be responsible for collecting it? Should it include evidence about the comparative achievements (where applicable) of mainstream schools? A key issue here would be on what basis the expectations/predictions for individual pupils’ achievements are made.
- ◆ Who should be responsible for *acting on* this evidence? How should the school’s and the LEA’s responsibilities inter-relate?
- ◆ Should the evidence be made *public*? And would we, for example, welcome or feel disturbed by the development of a wider debate involving parents and the media, such as is happening in and around the mainstream sector?

Would the value-added data, as outlined above, add *real* value?

Addressing these kinds of questions collectively might offer the practical possibility of moving the debate forward, so that the special sector is not continually forced into taking a defensive position.

Key technical/operational issues

Below are listed the main issues which would need to be tackled if such a system were to be operationalised. They represent an enormous challenge for all concerned and schools would need to decide whether the game was really worth the candle.

Outcome measures:

- It would be necessary to find a way to record, in a standardised form, the very small steps taken by young people with severe or multiple learning difficulties during what could be a 16-year span (from age three to age 19) in education;
- For some youngsters, there are periods of regression for emotional/social reasons ('chaotic learning') or even of irreversible deterioration because of physiological factors such as degenerative disorders of the central nervous system. Calculating added value may therefore need to include a distinct measure of 'care and nurture' or some such idea, in order to allow for that small minority of young people to whom the concept of progress in skills and/or knowledge is unhappily inapplicable.
- Personal development, social skills acquisition and prowess in leisure activities are at least as important for many SEN youngsters as academic skills and knowledge in so far as the former areas contribute to the overall objective of independent living. Parents and adults other than teachers may therefore need to be involved in data collection.
- In general, it would be important to establish explicit agreement about the learning objectives to be set for SEN students, so that appropriate outcome indicators can be established.

Intake measures:

- Research shows that the prior attainment of students has the greatest bearing on their later performance. Some measure of 'prior attainment' of students with special educational needs would accordingly need to be collected. Colleagues in special schools have made strong recommendations that students' medical and psychological histories need to be taken into account as part

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of the intake measures, otherwise 'normal' learning and progression rates may be assumed to be higher (or lower) than is actually the case.

- For those young people whose learning gains in terms of measurable skills is limited, it would be necessary to have extremely sensitive assessments of prior achievement in order to measure small changes over time.
- It may also be desirable – given the range of needs and circumstances of students with special educational needs and the varying lengths of time they may be in particular institutions – to think in terms of a series of annual measurements rather than a single intake measure (such as a standardised test on entry to school) which has been correlated with a single outcome measure (e.g. 16+ National Record of Achievement data). This would need very careful thought, however, because all such yearly measurements would have to be standardised in some way.

Contextual information:

- It has additionally emerged from the body of value-added research that school contextual factors also have a bearing on student outcomes; the most influential appear to be catchment or location and the proportion of young people in the school eligible for free school meals. Other factors such as parental support, staff turnover and so forth may also play a part. In the case of special schools, similar information would need to be collected and tested, though we imagine that, again, there would be differences from mainstream schools.
- One of the recommendations of the Warnock Report nearly twenty years ago was for the integration of SEN students into mainstream education wherever possible. But provision in mainstream schools for such students varies between LEAs, as does the extent and variety of special institutions themselves. Whilst it would be important to use 'integration' as a key outcome, the range of possible entry and exit points for SEN students in different LEAs would somehow have to be allowed for.

- Some special schools cater for young people for a large proportion of their educational careers; others, however, may in effect be acting as last resorts for youngsters whom the system has otherwise failed, particularly those with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The length of time a given individual spends in such a school may be very short: sometimes, indeed, less than one academic year. (One or two special school colleagues have in fact voiced suspicions that the transfer of young people in their final year of compulsory schooling is on the increase owing to the current pressure on schools to optimise their 'raw' outcomes on academic performance and attendance.) Finding ways of building in this kind of variable so as to give a truer account of added-value would be challenging.

Specific tasks for the preliminary stage of development work with special schools would be:

- to develop appropriate diagnostic instruments for the measurement of student attainment;
- to apply these instruments to a set of students in the participant special schools;
- to re-apply them after a period of one year;
- to carry out an 'added value' analysis based on the two sets of data, and also allowing for school contextual factors.

Conclusions

I shall finish by saying that value-added measurement of performance is a very interesting and important development in education, but that it has some drawbacks. First of all, it is time-consuming for those who have to collect data. Secondly, there are no valid value-added measures which are simple to compute and understand, and at the same time give true and useful insights into school performance. The statistical analysis is complex and not easily explained to the statistical lay-person. Furthermore, there is no magic number, and never will be, which can summarise all that is good or bad about a school, thus doing

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away with the need for careful and conscientious professional judgement based on a wide range of different kinds of evidence. We can forget about the pursuit of the perfect value-added measure straight away.

So it seems to me that the main tasks for the group are to identify:

- ◆ the collective purposes of value-added measurements, in so far as that is possible, relevant to the sector as a whole;
- ◆ individual ways forward, on an institution-, consortium- or LEA-wide basis, which are manageable *and* insightful;
- ◆ how further partnership with agencies like NFER might be developed, especially in relation to the need for central information or research.

C. VIEWS FROM OFSTED

Ci. Diane Chorley HMI, Team Manager for Special Educational Needs

OFSTED's new framework for inspection

A new framework for inspection would be in operation in April 1996: it was hoped that it would be more usable and manageable for inspection teams and more helpful for schools. One of its most obvious innovations was the opportunity for schools to make statements about their institutional vision and the context in which they were educating their pupils. The new framework was trying to untangle the whole issue of 'achievement'. This was bipartite, involving attainment and progress. A week's observation was inadequate to ascertain the progress of a pupil with moderate learning difficulties so it was important to look at targets over time. It was the responsibility of schools to produce data about pupils' prior achievement so that inspectors could make informed judgements about progress.

The setting of educational targets was the responsibility of the school, in line with the cycles established in the Code of Practice. 'Caring' for pupils with learning difficulties was necessary but not sufficient for a school. Questions could, perhaps, be asked of the aims of schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and of therapeutic communities: could not education be regarded as 'therapeutic'? It was important to get across the message that there was evidence that where pupils were challenged, achievement and attainment ensued.

Miss Chorley pointed out the difficulties of making cross-LEA comparisons – for example, schools designated for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in different LEAs might have very different pupil profiles and individual special schools were increasingly providing for a range of special educational needs.

The initial effects of the implementation of the Code of Practice

OFSTED were monitoring the effects of the implementation of the Code of Practice in primary, secondary and grant maintained schools in seven LEAs. The programme of visits had started in September 1994 and schools were being revisited in the Autumn term 1995 so that some idea of the *effects* of the Code could be gauged; an Interim Report was scheduled for April 1996. Emergent issues included:

- schools' commitment and positive response to the Code;
- lack of involvement by governors (a few had helped develop a policy);
- stronger links with parents;
- problems with the concept of the 'named person';
- restriction of SENCOs' effectiveness by their other timetable commitments;
- action following identification of need being more problematic than identification;
- a need for focused training for classroom teachers;
- a need for boundaries to be set for the SENCO's role;
- the variety in IEPs, ranging from the extremely detailed and extensive to the short and manageable which set realistic, achievable targets, clear timescales and gave review data;
- variations in schools' access to support services and in the quality of interventions.

Other OFSTED initiatives relevant to assessing 'quality' and 'value'

- a) The recent OFSTED study, *Promoting High Achievement*, compared different practical support arrangements in primary and secondary school classes in 33 LEAs: classes with and without support staff, and withdrawal groups. A critical issue was the contribution of special support assistants and the way in which this was related to their experience and qualifications.

- b) A report on *Effective Teaching in Special Schools* (published in Spring 1996) described practice which gave rise to challenging, exciting work in stimulating environments.

Miss Chorley then referred to OFSTED's examination of effective schools and governing bodies. She commented on the challenge to head teachers to be aware of practice within individual classrooms and to disseminate good practice within the school. It was not yet common to see teaching taking account of pupils' different paces and styles of learning.

As illustration of the environment that engenders pupil progress, Miss Chorley presented extracts from OFSTED reports on schools educating pupils with special educational needs. The extracts follow.

The school provides a climate in which pupils are able and willing to learn. The atmosphere is orderly and purposeful, and the working environment is attractive.

The school's activities have one central purpose – helping pupils to learn and to achieve.

An environment which enhances and refines language.

The development of language skills is aided by all staff, including lunch-time supervisors, kitchen staff and the school secretary – encouraging children by holding conversations with them, helping them to make observations and talking about what they do.

The headteacher is the professional leader of the school. S/he is purposeful, fully involved in what goes on in the classroom, and helps make sure that staff have opportunities to show leadership and to take part in making decisions.

Staff work together with a common sense of purpose and clear targets.

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. These are communicated clearly to all pupils and lessons are intellectually challenging.

Discipline is clear and fair. Staff make sure that pupils know how they are doing, and take particular care to praise them for good work.

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A significant strength of the school is the commitment of all staff to school review and curriculum development. There is an effective network of strategies in place to monitor the quality of education provided, and staff reflect regularly on their teaching and on children's learning.

A rich learning environment and high quality experiences aid the development of positive attitudes to the different curriculum areas.

Imaginatively planned opportunities for first hand experiences and the opportunity to practise skills.

The quality of teaching is high, particularly because: lessons are efficiently organised; they have a clear purpose and are well structured; and the teaching takes account of the fact that different pupils learn in different ways.

High quality planning (comprehensive at both an individual and whole school level) takes full account of the results of ongoing teacher assessment to ensure that the learning activities are matched to the needs of individual pupils.

Planning is effectively translated into practice and all sessions are well prepared.

Teachers and support assistants work together as a team.

Monitoring, assessment and regular dialogue with parents is used to ensure that children are making the progress that is expected for their age and/or capability.

An appropriate amount of money is allocated to supporting pupils with SEN but ... the quality of the outcomes in terms of pupil learning is unsatisfactory.

An evaluation of the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of teaching and learning is necessary in order to judge whether the school is achieving the best outcomes possible with the resources at its disposal.

IEPs which are well designed and implemented through a variety of strategies which include individual help, small group activity, specialist intervention and focused additional support during general activities.

Staff intervene appropriately to direct children to the next stage of learning.

All work conducted in small groups is carefully recorded and reported to other staff, so that progress is reinforced and maintained at other times.

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Cii. Bob Dyke HMI, Special Educational Needs Team, OFSTED

Mr Dyke stressed that he would be presenting *an* OFSTED view rather than *the* OFSTED view.

The first section of the presentation concerned special schools. Ofsted is very concerned as an organisation with value-added measurement, although this phrase is not often used within the inspection process. Recent developments in the inspection process, introduced via the new Framework for Inspection, have focused strongly on value-added concepts. Under the first Framework for Inspection, the notions of achievement and attainment were used fairly loosely.

The new Framework (in operation from April 1996) focuses clearly upon attainment as it relates to national standards for all children. This inevitably means that most pupils with special needs emerge as demonstrating low attainment. A teenage pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) for example, may smile in order to demonstrate a preference. This (in former terms) would possibly have been seen as a high achievement for that pupil. Now it must be recorded straightforwardly on the new-style OFSTED lesson observation form as what was attained by that pupil at the time of observation. There are no national standards for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, so that the only standard available is that for all pupils. Against this standard, the attainment is very low.

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OBSERVATION FORM

Inspector's Initials		DFEE School No		Observation Type	L S I O
Year Group(s)		Grouping	A M G S B O	Present / NOR	
Subject Codes		Accreditation	GC AL AS VA VI VF VO XO	Observation Time	
Teacher's Status	Q N T U S	Lesson Type	CL GR IN MI XO	Supp't Teacher/Staff	
Context of the Observation					
Evidence and Evaluation					
Teaching	Grade 0 - 7 <input type="checkbox"/>				
Response	Grade 0 - 7 <input type="checkbox"/>				
Attainment	Grade 0 - 7 <input type="checkbox"/>				
Progress	Grade 0 - 7 <input type="checkbox"/>				
Other Significant Evidence					
Use grades 0 or 1-7 with: 0 = insufficient evidence 2 = very good/well above average 4 = satisfactory/about average 6 = poor/well below average					

However, the observation form also provides for the evaluation of progress, and it is in this section that the performance of the pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties may be expressed in strongly positive terms. In providing for the recording of progress the new observation format encourages the consideration of value-added. Mr Dyke noted that the unavoidable regression in a very small minority of pupils may present a particular challenge for this evaluation of value-added.

The process of reporting on progress may result in some changes in the activity of inspectors – for example, spending more time delving into pupil records before the inspection and making notes from these so as to evaluate long-term progress in the groups seen; or taking away lesson observations and relating these to individual records. It is interesting to speculate on the notion of this progress as focusing on ‘long-term value-added’ as opposed to the ‘short term value-added’ which will be seen in some lessons where pupils visibly make progress during the period of observation. The process of comparison of pupils’ current performance with the school’s record of their earlier performance will help to answer the critics of the inspection process who dismiss it as ‘merely a snapshot’.

Some schools, both special and ordinary, are very well placed to demonstrate pupils’ progress (i.e. the school’s value-added) as they maintain comprehensive and easily understood record systems. Other schools, again both special and ordinary, are very poorly placed to demonstrate their own value-added, and thus to support the inspection process.

In both special and ordinary schools, the Code of Practice is encouraging more effective record-keeping and, in particular, the setting of targets in pupils’ Individual Education Plans (IEPs). These targets, and their regular review, should enable schools of all kinds to demonstrate their value-added in relation to pupils with special needs as never before. However, the ability to set clear, objective, achievable targets is crucial to the effective use of IEPs and many schools are at the earliest stages of learning to write these. Until schools master this relatively new art, the IEPs will not fulfil their role effectively in demonstrating value-

added. Mr Dyke demonstrated recently encountered examples of IEP targets which related principally to the activities of teachers, or which, in attempting to be very precise and objective, pointed to stereotyped classroom activity. He noted that targets relating to behavioural objectives were particularly difficult to set and review in an objective fashion.

The Code of Practice should enable ordinary schools in particular to demonstrate value-added through the process of charting pupils' progress 'down' the Stages of the Code, the pupils becoming less dependent on outside intervention and support as their problems diminish. Recent work by Ofsted concerned with schools' implementation of the Code suggests that many schools have yet to apply the notion of Code Stages in the intended fashion, with confusion in placements between the early Stages in particular. Like IEPs, this aspect of the Code has yet to achieve its potential in identifying value-added.

School governors have been given a responsibility under the Code to report to parents on the nature and the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for special educational needs – this might be seen as their review of value-added within the special needs area. Ofsted's experience is that while governing bodies acknowledge the responsibility, few have yet found the means of reporting schools' success or otherwise in their reports.

Finally, Mr Dyke noted that differentiation is a key aspect of provision for pupils with special needs. All schools are aware of the desirability of this process of matching work to pupils' capabilities. However, it is essential for the process of differentiation to be carefully planned if it is to add value to the education of pupils with special needs, as it is all too easy to provide 'differentiated' work which merely occupies pupils with special needs, without challenging them.

D. VIEWS FROM LEAs

Di. Developments in Special Schools in Avon

Felicity Wikeley, Centre for School Improvement at the University of Bath, and
Penny Spiller, Theme Leader, County Advice and Development Services, Avon LEA.

The work in which the presenters had been engaged was a tentative pilot project, developed from local interest; no claims about generalisability could be made at this stage. The project was about a limited number of schools developing and sharing information about themselves with the aim of helping improvement. The project was set up on the basis that each meeting could be the last one and the project could be abandoned at any stage if the teachers involved felt that no useful purpose was being served.

Origins of the project

One of the consortia of schools formed within the LEA as part of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) had become involved with the NFER value-added service QUASE (see previous paper by Lesley Saunders). The QUASE process was not considered relevant to the special schools in the consortium because of problems in measurement of prior attainment and common outcome measures.

Meanwhile, two deputy heads of special schools in another TVEI consortium wanted to explore ways of working with value-added measures; TVEI had encouraged them to perceive special schools as part of the whole education system and thus to consider the application of a system such as QUASE to meet their needs. However, as their colleagues elsewhere, they acknowledged the difficulties of using intake and outcome measures within individually-based special education.

As further interest was expressed from special school staff elsewhere in the LEA, the special needs Theme Leader took the initiative of co-ordinating the various strands of interest.

Participants in the project

The majority of participants were staff from four schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and from two schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties. At the initial meeting it was decided not to include schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties at this stage as their needs were rather different. All participating teachers were either members of the senior management team or had their support. The Centre for School Improvement at the University of Bath had been involved in research on effective departments as part of the follow-up to the NFER QUASE pilot project. LEA staff participating included special education specialists as well as other personnel who attended intermittently and acted as critical friends for the development of ideas.

The purpose of the meetings

The meetings addressed the possibility of the following four issues:

- The involvement of special schools in developing added-value measurements relating to their effectiveness, which were relevant to their particular students.
- The development of a set of performance indicators relevant to student needs/abilities and common inter- and intra-institutions.
- The relevance of other forms of indicator, such as the 'Ethos indicators' developed by the Scottish Office Education Department (GB. SOED, 1992), to special school self-evaluation.
- Research that ensured that any indicators developed were directly relevant to the context of special educational needs.

These four issues provided the parameters for an exploration of value-added in special schools which would harmonise with the overall aim of helping schools to share practice for the purpose of improvement. Any strategy had to be feasible, useful and of manageable proportions.

Outcome of the initial meeting

The group discussed its vision for the future and expectations as regards the knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience with which the student should leave school, having been exposed to resources (input and context), educational opportunity and process. A graphic representation of these expectations showed a happy young person carrying the outcomes of the curriculum (which might include the national curriculum), relevant accreditation, positive experiences, a work experience record, a transition plan and Record of Achievement, together with the ability to travel independently and look after him/herself, and an awareness of the concept of time.

A theoretical framework

The group were influenced by the work of James Ysseldyke, who was developing indicators to enable special educational outcomes to be measured in the same systematic way as those in mainstream education. These indicators appear on the vertical axis in the following table:

	KNOWLEDGE	ATTITUDE	SKILLS	EXPERIENCE
Presence & participation	awareness of local community	self-esteem, self-advocacy to work	assertiveness, speaking up for oneself, self-advocacy	other adults in other environments, world of leisure
Accommodation & adaptation		attitude to 16+ horizons, flexibility	following simple instructions, problem-solving	
Physical health	aware of safety & risk		looking after self, personal hygiene	
Contribution & citizenship				

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	KNOWLEDGE	ATTITUDE	SKILLS	EXPERIENCE
Responsibility & independence	aware of 16+ opportunities, knowledge of the world of work, can tell the time, skills of home management	respect for others' property, responsibility to place in world, initiative, motivation	using phone, mobility, looking after own things, self-management	
Academic & functional literacy	appropriate NC level		read, write, simple numbers, communication, money	
Personal & social adjustment	aware of self and environment, appropriate behaviour	self-respect, self-reliance, confidence		
Satisfaction		self-worth		

The project's testing schema

Using Ysseldyke's analysis as a framework, the project participants decided to measure students':

- concept of time
- self-management skills
- appropriateness of behaviour
- confidence/self-esteem
- communication: academic and social interaction

After a survey of available assessment instruments, they decided to use, in the schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties:

- Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales
- Profile of Mathematical Skills Level 1
- New Reading Analysis
- Cognitive Ability Test – non-verbal battery Level 1

The first of these tests (Vineland) was used in the schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Although it was considered out-of-date and hard to administer, it was yet the most appropriate assessment available and allowed the project teachers to test what they wished to test without the pupils knowing that they were being assessed. TVEI funding allowed staff time to administer the tests.

It was decided to administer the tests to all pupils in years 7, 9 and 11 across the six participating schools (representing 200 pupils) in the course of one month (November) and, as far as possible, under test conditions. Individual scores would be numbered but not named. The Vineland Scales would be completed by the teachers participating in the project as they did not directly involve the pupils.

Complementary contextual data comprised:

- each child's chronological age
- size of school
- parental occupation
- percentage eligibility for free school meals
- specific school factors – e.g. staff turnover, external support and the specific nature of pupils' difficulties.

Analysis

Raw scores were sent to the Centre for School Improvement, which was responsible for the initial data analysis, the aim of which would be to look for emerging patterns and anomalies that could not easily be explained by contextual differences. The usefulness of the analysis for schools involved was a paramount consideration. Participating schools were encouraged by the initial data analysis and a decision has been made to extend the project, working along the same lines, to further schools.

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Dii. GCSE Performance of pupils with statements in Walsall

Ken Ilett, Education Officer, Walsall MBC

Thank you for the opportunity to talk today about the work we have done in Walsall. I am told no other authority has reported doing similar work. I am surprised, because it is so simple.

The work arises from a more general study of the GCSE attainment of Walsall secondary school pupils with statements in mainstream schools. This is therefore the group that I am going to concentrate on.

GCSE as an indicator of achievement

I recognise that GCSE may well not be an appropriate way of measuring the progress of pupils with statements. Even for mainstream pupils, it only covers part of their development, as can be seen by the recognition given to Records of Achievement. For pupils with statements, this is even more true.

GCSE is also a single examination at the end of 12 years or so of schooling. There is a case for assessing pupils on more short-term and individualised targets, such as those in Individual Education Plans. It is especially important that we work towards assessing pupils with special needs in these terms.

However, if value-added is to be measured in a statistical sense, it has to be possible to give a numerical value to the achievement at both the beginning and the end of the period being investigated. It is also important to do so in a way which is consistent between pupils. It is impossible to express value-added in traditional terms unless it is possible to relate the progress of one pupil to the progress of another, and to relate both to their respective positions at the beginning of the period.

I accept that this is very difficult to do and that some people may be philosophically opposed to it. However, it is not possible to show value-added in the usual sense unless we do.

One possible solution might be to give a value to a number of different parameters in parallel, covering different aspects of development. However, it would still be necessary to give values to the standards achieved in each parameter separately. It might then be possible to add together the values achieved in all the parameters in the same way as success in individual GCSE subjects is added to give an overall total point score.

Justification for using GCSE in practice

This said, the work we have done in Walsall is with GCSE only and I believe that it is relevant, at least for some pupils with statements. GCSE is seen as a school-leaving certificate for all pupils – almost an entitlement. It is an assessment of achievement in skills relevant to employment which employers understand. Many pupils are capable of obtaining GCSE; they have a right to be given an opportunity to do so and should be given the support necessary to achieve what success in it they are capable of.

I have no doubt that most teachers and parents believe this, although some may feel that concentrating on GCSE may get in the way of other (possibly more important) objectives, and others may be wary of accepting that a child with special needs, brought up in a relatively sheltered environment, needs qualifications intended for the harsh world outside.

Some pupils with statements will never be able to take standard curriculum tests. We clearly need an alternative way of measuring their progress. However, most of those who manage to stay in mainstream secondary schools until they are 16, have taken such tests. Even special schools are subject to the national curriculum. The government must therefore see it as an entitlement for such pupils that, as far as possible, they should be tested and that they should be able to demonstrate the progress they have made through the tests.

When the national curriculum levels were first established, suggestions were made about which levels were appropriate to each age. These levels implied a progression as pupils had more years at school. If pupils do not always attain the standards which were originally expected, this is a case for fine-tuning the hierarchy of levels to fit more closely

with reality. It does not undermine the principle of establishing standard levels of achievement at each key stage and of measuring progress from one to another.

If a pupil with a statement is in a mainstream school, it is because, on balance, that pupil is considered to require to be treated more or less as a normal pupil with the assistance of whatever extra support is necessary. In my mind, the key issue for such pupils is that, ideally, the support should exactly correspond with the difficulties which have led to the statement. The aim should enable this pupil to proceed at the *same rate* as pupils of equivalent ability who have neither the difficulties nor the support. If a pupil with a statement does not progress as well, the special education provision is inappropriate, or inappropriately delivered. If a child with a statement does better than other equivalent pupils, it may be that the provision should be reduced, or that the support available to other pupils needs to be reconsidered. Efficient use of resources would suggest that a pupil with special needs is not entitled to a level of resources which enables him or her to proceed faster than his or her peers. In other words, the starting point should be that, unless there are indicators to the contrary, a pupil with special needs should be expected to proceed at the same rate as other pupils without the disability but also without the support.

At least, this is the hypothesis on which I have operated. The objective was to obtain data to indicate whether it is valid. If the national curriculum, and GCSE in particular, are seen as the entitlement of all pupils, then it is reasonable to assess the progress of pupils with statements in these terms.

The data available in Walsall

We are lucky in Walsall that almost all pupils took a verbal reasoning test in Year 6 until 1990 (last year's Y11 cohort) and that we are continuing with borough-wide reading tests at Y3 and Y6. Both of these reading tests are only snapshots and it would be easy to 'teach to the test'. However, schools have never been put into published league tables on the basis of test results, so the results are probably reasonably reliable. They are recognised national tests, although probably too old to come up to the standard expected of modern tests. Despite these

reservations, the tests do give some indication of a child's ability and achievement. The ones we have used in this research are the Y6 verbal reasoning and reading scores. Any authority which is able to get permission from its schools to use Key Stage 1, 2 or 3 assessment data could carry out a similar analysis in due course.

The project

Walsall has been a member of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities' (AMA) 'Examination Results in Context' (ERIC) Project since 1991. Processing was taken over by NFER in 1994. It is based on a multi-level modelling process which is able to isolate the effect of a large number of separate variables.

The central aim of this research was to measure the effectiveness of schools. I accept all the provisos about using GCSE as a sole effectiveness output measure but, as I have already suggested, we are not yet in a position to quantify other aspects of effectiveness. The research looked at the GCSE attainment of all Y11 pupils in secondary schools. Success is known to be related to the ability, prior attainment and social background of the pupil; if we want to know the value-added by the school, we need to be able to make allowance for these factors.

The 14 authorities which took part in 1994 (I believe there are some more in 1995) were required to submit a wide range of data on individual Y11 pupils. One piece of information was whether the pupil had a statement. This information was not used in the 1994 report because there seemed to be no logic in the way statements were distributed among schools. This conclusion is probably correct and the number of statements probably tells us little more than the school's eagerness to get additional funding, or of its inability or unwillingness to provide for pupils with difficulties. However, there is value in looking at the performance of pupils with statements as a group, in the same way as it is useful to look at the performance of ethnic groups.

A by-product of the ERIC project as carried out by NFER was a series of tables on the data submitted, both for each individual LEA and for all of them together. We in Walsall have just submitted our data for the 1995 cohort to NFER for processing. We decided to produce a similar

set of tables ourselves. This is a fairly simple task and, by doing it ourselves, we get it four months earlier.

We chose to add a number of parameters, one of which was pupils with statements. On the basis of the information generated, it looks as if the ability of pupils with statements was, on average, more than one standard deviation (i.e. 34% of the age group) below the norm (the 50th percentile). It looks as if, on average, their attainment was almost exactly one standard deviation below the norm. In other words, their achievement was better than could be predicted from their VR scores. They were definitely not falling further behind their peers, but were doing rather better than them. So, overall, we were very happy with the performance of these pupils.

We have since carried out a linear regression comparing VR scores with GCSE scores. This enables us to predict the GCSE results from VR scores. Although the line in the graph hides a considerable variation of performance, it does give some indication of what we should be able to expect. On this basis, a VR score of 80 should be expected to turn into an average GCSE grade of 1.9 (a grade F is two points). This is equivalent to 7.8 points overall from 4.18 entries.

On further examination, it became apparent that there was one pupil who achieved 50 points and others who achieved none. The averaged performance was therefore hardly meaningful. The child achieving 50 points was a very able pupil. If there were no such pupil in another year, the average score could be significantly lower. It was therefore decided to look at the pupils individually.

Replicating similar research

What I want to stress to you is that the level of analysis used here is very simple; it is therefore easy to replicate. The sample was only 22 pupils, so conclusions have to be drawn with great caution.

Ideally, you need a measure of prior achievement both for the pupils with statements and for a control group. This could be an authority-wide or area-wide test, key stage assessments or test on entry to a

secondary school. If none of these is available, it is still worth finding out how the GCSE results for pupils with statements compare with those of the remainder. I would be interested if any of you could look at your own results and see whether our prediction is confirmed; that is, that the average for pupils with statements in mainstream schools will be one standard deviation below the authority norm.

I would not like to overstate the accuracy of our predictions. Authorities vary in their policies on who receives statements and who goes into special schools. To judge by Walsall's experience, a majority of pupils with statements in mainstream schools are those who have learning difficulties.

It may be that fewer pupils of low ability in Walsall have a statement than in some other authorities. On the other hand, an authority which places almost all its pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools may find that some pupils are included who have even greater difficulties than those included here.

In conclusion, comparing the GCSE achievement of pupils with statements, whether limited to mainstream schools or including special schools, would have some value, even if all it did was to provide a means of showing the difference in practice between authorities on which pupils should have the protection of a statement.

E. VIEWS FROM DELEGATES

Summary points from discussion groups in Slough and Stockport

Perceived benefits of value-added measures included: an increase in schools' confidence; the development of self-evaluation; networking and the sharing of good practice; and collaboration to identify schools' strengths and weaknesses.

Barriers to a positive perception of value-added measurement were identified. Particularly where special schools were in competition with each other, the exercise could be seen as threatening and schools might be cautious in providing data. It was considered that there was a particular danger in LEAs implementing value-added measures too quickly and linking them with levels of resourcing.

The *financial monitoring* of resources for statements which had been delegated to schools was an identified purpose of value-added measures in some authorities.

There should be *clarity of purpose* of value-added exercises, with an explicit relationship between purposes and data gathered.

Data sources should be wide ranging and include all those commonly used to assess the progress of pupils with learning difficulties – for example, video and photographs. Existing documentation such as school special needs policies and governors' annual reports to parents could also be used to generate success criteria for all pupils. There was currently an absence of accurate data and 'reputations' often rested on frail evidence. A recurring problem was lack of time to gather evidence effectively: moderation was particularly time-consuming. Any approach needed to be sustainable.

Outcome measures needed to be common to all pupils wherever they were placed. Measures needed to be able to accommodate assessment of provision for pupils with deteriorating conditions.

Use of the *Code of Practice stages* was considered to be fraught with difficulties as there was no guarantee of compatibility as regards the application of the stages across schools. The question was raised as to how progress was identified in relation to Code of Practice stages: movement to a higher stage or movement to a lower stage?

Individual Education Plans were also considered to be unsuitable as measuring tools for comparison purposes. They were rarely moderated and were not comparable either across schools or across different types of provision. There was an enormous range in their quality and there was the danger of setting easy targets in order to ensure that they were achieved. Furthermore, it was considered that value-added measures should focus on cohorts of pupils rather than individuals.

Annual reviews were also considered as yielding useful data but, again, there was a variety of practice surrounding these and much depended on the 'status' afforded them by the school.

The *timeliness* of applying value-added approaches to special schools was questioned. A number of delegates considered that there was a lot of developmental work in curriculum, assessment and recording to be done in these schools before value-added was at all meaningful. Measures *per se* did not make any difference to practice. Perhaps efforts ought to be focused on improving individual institutions rather than making comparisons between them. Different perspectives used different measures of progress (for example, parents, teachers and therapists might each have different aims for a pupil).

LEA support services were the subject of much discussion as they could be instrumental in promoting added value. It was considered important that there should be effective monitoring and evaluation procedures so that the authority could assess if support given was appropriate.

VALUE-ADDED & SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Account should be taken of the part played by *other agencies* in effecting pupil progress.

Approaches should recognise that pupils with the same type of special need could be placed in *different settings*: for example, a mainstream school, a resourced school or a special school. Little is known about the variations in pupil performance according to environment, though some authorities were beginning to evaluate different types of provision. It was suggested that higher costs in special schools could be justified if it were shown that they were more effective with a particular group of pupils.

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VALUE-ADDED AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
Proceedings of EMIE/NFER Seminars

This publication presents the papers delivered at two exploratory seminars held by the Education Management Information Exchange (EMIE) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on the application of value-added techniques to the area of special education. The views of Chief Education Officers, OFSTED, the research community and practitioners are presented.

These proceedings will be of interest to all those working with value-added measures in mainstream and special schools, and who are concerned with measuring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties.

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