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The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education:

What is it? How does it work?

COURSEWORK 3

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ABSTRACT

After a brief exploration of the meaning of "pre-vocation", and a short history of the CPVEs development, the paper describes the framework of the CPVE in respect of how it addresses three questions of the curriculum debate of the 1970s. These questions are:

1. What type of curriculum should be provided in post-compulsory education?.
2. How should this curriculum be delivered?
- and 3. How should student performance be assessed?

Following this, the role of economics education within the CPVE framework is critically examined. Finally, a number of criticisms are expressed, and an indication given of areas in which further research is needed.

ABBREVIATIONS USED.

BTEC	Business and Technical Education Council
CGLI	City and Guilds of London Institute
CPVE	Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
FE	Further Education
FEU	Further Education Unit
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
TVEI	Training and Vocational Education Initiative
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

The CPVE. What is it? How does it work?.

The term "pre-vocational education" is, perhaps rather vague - if only because most education is pre-vocational. It is not clear from the term itself how pre-vocational education differs from the usual kind of school education on the one hand, and vocational education on the other. In the context of the CPVE, however, it has come to be used as a kind of shorthand for a particular approach to education rather than a specific course of instruction. It represents an attempt to get away from subject-centred learning in which intellectual achievement is often emphasised at the expense of other aspects of the learner's development, towards learning which focuses on a more holistic approach, and one which is more closely related to the world of work.

The present structure of the CPVE has its roots in the FEU's Report entitled, "A Basis For Choice" in 1979, which was a response to the public debate on the type of curriculum which should be delivered to young people in post-compulsory education, the methods of delivery and how performance should be assessed. It advocated courses which would be more vocationally oriented than existing school provision and would contain both core and vocational elements. The Report provided the basis for the DES (1982) publication entitled "17+ : A New Qualification" which maintained that existing provision in schools did not meet the needs of young people who did not wish to enter for employment immediately, and for whom another year or two of academic studies would be inappropriate. It recommended the establishment of a new framework which would not only fill the educational gap which had been identified, but also rationalise the existing provisions for pre-vocational education (of BTEC, CGLI and RSA) and at the same time be compatible with the YTS and TVEI schemes. This framework, as the word suggests, would not be a single course with a single examination at the end of it, but a structure which would reflect features of the subsumed courses that met identified needs, would meet the needs of the target group, and would be flexible enough to respond to changes in job requirements.

In May 1983 the Joint Board for Pre-Vocational Education was established by BTEC and the CGLI at the request of Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Education and Science. Its brief was to set up a system of pre-vocational education which would be available by September 1985. Because of the time constraint, the Joint Board concentrated its efforts into the needs of 16 year olds who would benefit from an extra year of full-time schooling, and who would require a mixture of academic and vocational education which would help to facilitate the transition from work to school or college. (Eventually, the CPVE is intended to be available to older students also).

WHAT KIND OF CURRICULUM.

The CPVE is intended to enable students to enter specific vocational courses, transfer into more academic studies, obtain credit towards or exemption from some of the requirements for some vocational courses, perform effectively at work and progress into adult life. The four general aims of the CPVE are to:

- a) assist the transition from school to adulthood by further equipping young people with the basic skills, experiences, attitudes, knowledge and personal and social competences required for success in adult life including work;
 - b) provide individually relevant educational experience which encourages learning and achievement;
 - c) provide young people with recognition of their attainments through a qualification which embodies national standards;
- and
- d) provide opportunities for progression to continuing education, training and /or work."

(BTEC January 1985)

These aims are to be achieved through the implementation of courses which, although designed accordingly to local² and individual needs, must be organized on the basis of a particular structure in which certain core experiences are integrated (wholly or in part) with vocational studies. These two elements, the Core and Vocational Studies, must comprise at least 75% of the course for its approval by the Joint Board. The remainder of the course, which should be between 700 and 900 hours in

length, is to be taken up by Additional Studies designed to meet individual needs. (While these Additional Studies are not mandatory on the part of the student, they must be offered by an institution if its CPVE course is to be approved.)

The Core consists of general education to develop knowledge and attitudes together with practical and interpersonal skills. The skills, knowledge and attitudes addressed in the Core are applicable in many subject areas, but for case of description 10 Core areas are identified. These are:

- 1/ Personal & Career Development
- 2/ Communications Skills
- 3/ Numeracy
- 4/ Science & Technology
- 5/ Industrial, Social and Environmental Studies ³
- 6/ Information Technology
- 7/ Problem-Solving
- 8/ Practical Skills
- 9/ Social Skills
- 10/ Creative Development ⁴

Each Core area consists of a number of aims, each of which is supplemented by (more specific) objectives. Each aim has to be addressed by students but not necessarily all of the objectives, which are intended as a checklist from which student objectives may be selected and developed, and against which to compare the student's achievement. The Core is meant to be taught on an integrated basis, since many of the skills involved are not Subject-specific. For example, Aim 2 of the Industrial, Social and Environmental section is:

"To develop awareness of political considerations in order to understand and participate in the social environment..."

(BTEC January 1985)

This ties in with main aim of the Problem-Solving element, which is.

"To explore a wide range of issues methodically and effectively..."

(BTEC op cit).

The aims and objectives concerning economics education in the CPVE framework are considered further on.

The Vocational Studies provide the focus for the application and development of the competences included in the Core. They are defined in terms of five occupational categories, which are:

- 1/ Business & Administrative Services
- 2/ Technical Support Services
- 3/ Production
- 4/ Distribution
- and 5/ Services to People.

These categories are divided into clusters based on particular occupational (and non-occupational) roles. For example, Services to People may be divided into health care, tourism, recreation, catering and so on.

The clusters are organized on a modular basis. The modules define learning outcomes and are of three types, these being:

- 1/ Introductory, which provide a general introduction on particular categories;
- 2/ Exploratory, which examine the roles within clusters;
- and 3/ Preparatory, which are concerned with the development of skills specific to particular occupations.

The introductory modules enable students to "taste" different types of vocation. When students decide either to switch to an introductory module for a different category, or to an exploratory module in the same category, they have accomplished some of the aims of the previous introductory model - namely, an awareness of their interests and aptitudes and an appreciation of the activities within each category.

The progression from one type of module to another is not confined to specific categories. For example, a student may take an introductory module in Distribution followed by an exploratory module in Business and Administration Services. This is to maintain the flexibility required to provide students with a course which satisfies not only general educational considerations but also individual students' needs and preferences. (The relationships between categories, clusters and modules are shown in Appendix 1, Fig. 3)

Students do not have to complete any preparatory modules in order to receive certification, but they are expected to have completed at least one exploratory module.

So far, we have been concerned with the Joint Board's response to the first question posed in the "Great Debate" mentioned earlier, viz "What sort of curriculum should be provided?" The framework described above is intended to provide maximum flexibility for students to follow curricula of their own choice. (or through negotiation with tutors) subject to constraints of aims to be achieved and procedures to be followed. The framework is "pre-vocational" in the sense that it is concerned with skills which have a wide range of application, enable students to sample different types of vocation, and provides for specific instruction when students have a clear idea of the type of employment they wish to enter (either immediately, or after a course in a college of fe.).

HOW SHOULD THE CURRICULUM BE DELIVERED?

This is partly answered by the structure of the framework described above, in so far as the vehicles of delivery are modules of increasing specificity. The answer also lies in the teaching methods to be employed, and related matters. The framework of the CPVE is intended to provide much greater involvement of the students in their own learning than is the case with more traditional curricula in schools. This is reflected not only in the opportunity, already mentioned, for students to negotiate their individual courses of study, but also in the trends of learning situations provided and the of students in their own assessment. (This latter is dealt with below).

These categories are divided into clusters on a vocational basis (and non-occupational) rather than on a general educational basis. For example, service occupations may be divided into health care, tourism, recreation, counseling, and so on.

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2) Exploratory, which examines the roles within the cluster.

3) Preparatory, which are concerned with the development of skills specific to particular occupations.

The introductory cluster provides a general introduction to the field of study. The preparatory cluster provides a general introduction to the field of study. The preparatory cluster provides a general introduction to the field of study.

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The teaching strategies advocated by the Joint Board are an integrated approach to learning and student-centred learning. The integrated approach is provided for in the framework described above, in that the core competences are not to be taught entirely as separate subject areas, and also are meant to be taught through the more specific vocational studies. This is in order to assist training in transferable skills and skills of transfer. Thus students will, it is hoped, not only learn skills which may be applied in a variety of contexts, such as information seeking, data-handling and problem solving, but also know when and how to apply those skills. The student-centred approach involves real or simulated work experience and practical work, project work in the exploratory modules, and student-centred learning in the classroom (e.g. through the use of role-playing games).

These strategies are based on the two needs⁵ of the student in relation to the CPVE:

- 1/ Orientation, to assist the student's occupational choice,
- and 2/ Exploration, to develop competences relevant to specific occupations.

(See Appendix 2)

These "learning phases", as the Joint Board⁶ refers to them, are related to the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, and also provide for what Hardman (1985) has called "multi-agency provision". This involves both co-operation between different subject areas within schools, including, of course the careers service to provide student counselling and guidance, and co-operation between schools and the wider community. Thus local employees should be involved in the planning of the minimum 15 days work experience required by the Joint Board so that it forms an integrated part of the students course, and enables several types of occupation to be samples. Such people (as employers) should also be involved in the classroom.

This co-operation between local employers and schools is intended to meet the career-choice and vocational requirements of the CPVE. However, personal and social skills are also an essential part of the course, and these attributes of self-confidence, ability to communicate in various ways, initiative and leadership qualities, as well as tolerance if alternative viewpoints are to be encouraged by classroom experiences (such as roleplay, as already mentioned), and student involvement in course objectives and design, and self-assessment.

HOW SHOULD PERFORMANCE BE ASSESSED?

It is obvious that there could be an infinite number of permutations of courses certificated by the CPVE, and that therefore external assessment would be difficult to apply on its own. Also, of course, it would contradict the principle of the development of self-awareness - and therefore self-assessment - on the part of the student. For these reasons, external assessment is provided by the Joint Board in "appropriate elements of the Core" (BTEC Jan 1985) and for preparatory modules, but it is not mandatory, the Certificate itself being a certificate of attendance. The external assessment provided is in the form of multi-skill assignments⁷, and is provided for the benefit of users other than the student, such as potential employers, and other educational institutions. In addition, students may enter for particular examinations as part of their Additional Studies, while the interim arrangements for the academic year 1984/5 allowed students to take subjects leading to the CEE and/or GCE 'O' level qualifications as part of their Core Studies. (In some cases, this arrangement has been allowed to continue in the current school year).

The CPVE framework is designed to enable the curriculum to influence the assessment rather than, as is so often the case, the other way round. Thus assessment is undertaken locally and moderated by the Joint Board, and is criterion rather than norm referenced. That is to say, it is designed to reveal what a student has achieved

The teaching strategies described by the joint board are an integrated approach to learning and student-centered learning. The integrated approach is provided for in the framework described above, in that the core competencies are not to be taught entirely as separate subject areas, and also are seen to be taught through the more specific vocational standards. This is in order to assist training in transferable skills and skills of transfer. These students will, it is hoped, not only learn skills which may be applied in a variety of contexts, such as information seeking, data-handling and problem solving, but also know when and how to apply these skills. The student-centered approach involves real or simulated work experience and practical work in the laboratory modules, and student-centered learning in the classroom (e.g. through the use of role-playing games).

These strategies are based on the needs of the student in relation to the GNVQ:

- 1. Orientation, to assist the student's occupational choice,
- 2. Exploration, to develop competencies relevant to specific occupations.

(See Appendix 2)

These "learning places", as the joint board refers to them, are related to the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, and also provide for what Harman (1988) has called "multi-agency provision". This involves a both co-operation between different subject areas within schools, including, of course, the career service to provide student counselling and guidance, and co-operation between schools and the wider community. Some local employers should be involved in the planning of the curriculum to ensure work experience required by the joint board so that it forms an integrated part of the students course, and enables several types of occupation to be studied. Such people (as employers) should also be involved in the classroom.

This co-operation between local employers and schools is intended to meet the career-choice and vocational requirements of the GNVQ. However, personal and social skills are also an essential part of the course, and these attributes of self-confidence, ability to communicate in various ways, initiative and leadership qualities, as well as tolerance in alternative viewpoints are to be encouraged by classroom experiences (such as role-play, as already mentioned), and student involvement in course objectives and design, and self-assessment.

HOW SHOULD PERFORMANCE BE ASSESSED?

It is obvious that there could be an infinite number of combinations of courses certified by the GNVQ, and that therefore external assessment would be difficult to apply on its own. Also, of course, it would contradict the principle of the development of self-awareness - and therefore self-assessment - on the part of the student. For these reasons, external assessment is provided by the joint board in "appropriate elements of the course" (LBO Jan 1988) and for preparatory modules, but it is not mandatory, the Certificate itself being a certificate of attainment. The external assessment provided is in the form of multi-skill assignments, and is provided for the benefit of users other than the student, such as potential employers, and other educational institutions. In addition, students may enter for particular examinations as part of their additional studies, while the internal arrangements for the academic year (A) allowed students to take subjects leading to the GCE and/or GCE 'O' level qualifications as part of their (core studies). (In some cases, this arrangement has been allowed to continue in the current school year).

The GNVQ framework is designed to enable the curriculum to influence the assessment rather than, as is so often the case, the other way round. This assessment is undertaken locally and moderated by the joint board, and its criterion referent in nature. It is designed to reveal that a student has achieved

and how far course objectives have been met, rather than to place the student in a rank order. Its aim is to inform employers and other interested parties what students can do rather than what they can't do and, by specifying the student's areas of competence, to be more meaningful than a simple grade.

Two types of assessment (other than internal and external) are prescribed, these being formative and summative. The former is to be used both as a means of determining the appropriate programme for the individual student to take, and to provide a means of making decisions on how the programme should proceed once it has been started. It consists, of continuous assessment assignments from which the student selects material for his/her own assessment portfolio, together with records such as work-experience journal.

The summative assessment consists of a variety of locally developed procedures reflecting the learning programmes used, and measures student attainment against national criteria (to be developed by the Joint Board) concerning the ten core areas and the preparatory modules, as well as the external assessment previously mentioned. At the end of the course, or after at least 60 days, the student receives a Summative Profile which records specific course details and evidence of achievements. This latter is to be in the form of statements drawn from a central bank of statements covering all 10 Core areas. Examples of core statements concerning Industrial, Social and Environmental Studies and Communication are shown in Appendix 3, Figs. 1 & 2 respectively. It will be noted that the skills are grouped into "factors", and that within each factor student performance is described by one or more statements of competence. Where there are more than one such statements, they are presented in what is held to be an ascending order of complexity.

Economics Education in the CPVE

So far, the CPVE framework has been described in general terms. It is appropriate at this stage to consider the role of economics education within this framework, and this is to be located in the Core area entitled: Industrial, Social and Environmental Studies. (See Appendix 1, Fig. 1, Appendix 4.)

We should consider the nature of the aims, whether the course objectives are likely to meet these aims and whether the suggested teaching/learning strategies are likely to achieve the course objectives. There are rather too many of these aims, objectives and strategies to be able to consider all of them here. However, some examples which appear to be representative of all of them might be profitably investigated.

The main aim of this section is:

" To develop knowledge of the workings of modern industry and society and a capacity to cope with the limitations and opportunities afforded"

(BTEC January 1985)

This rather general statement is broken down into 5 specific areas, these being the world of work, political considerations, economic considerations, legal considerations and social considerations. We focus here on the third sub-aim, Economic Considerations, which is:

" To develop awareness of economic considerations in order to understand and participate in the social environment..."

(BTEC January 1985)

and how the concepts objective have been met, rather than to place the student in a rank order. The aim is to allow employers and other interested parties who students can be rather than what is con't to be said, by specifying the student's areas of competence, to be more meaningful than a static grade.

Two types of assessment (other than internal and external) are presented, these being formative and summative. The former is to be used both as a means of determining the appropriate programme for the individual student to take, and to provide a means of making decisions on how the programme should proceed since it has been started. It consists of continuous assessment assignments from which the student selects material for further own assessment portfolio, together with records such as work-experience journals.

The summative assessment consists of a variety of locally developed procedures reflecting the learning programmes used, and measures student attainment against national criteria (to be developed by the Joint Board) concerning the core areas and the preparatory modules, as well as the optional assessment previously mentioned. At the end of the course, or after at least 60 days, the student receives a Summary Profile which records specific course details and evidence of achievements. This latter is to be in the form of statements drawn from a central bank of statements covering all 10 core areas. Examples of core statements concerning industrial, social and environmental studies and communication are shown in Appendix 2, figs. 1 & 2. It will be noted that the skills and groups are grouped into "facets", and that within each facet student performance is described by one or more statements of competence. Where there is more than one such statement, they are presented in what is held to be an ascending order of complexity.

Economic Education in the CPVE

So far, the CPVE framework has been described in general terms. It is appropriate at this stage to consider the role of economics education within this framework, and this is to be located in the core area entitled: Industrial, Social and Environmental Studies. (See Appendix 1, fig. 1, Appendix A.)

It should consider the nature of the aims, whether the course objectives are likely to meet these aims and whether the suggested teaching/learning strategies are likely to achieve the course objectives. There are rather too many of these aims, objectives and strategies to be able to consider all of them here. However, some examples which appear to be representative of all of them might be profitably investigated.

The aim of this section is:

"To develop knowledge of the workings of modern industry and society and a capacity to cope with the limitations and opportunities afforded"

(WJEC January 1982)

This rather general statement is broken down into 2 specific areas, these being the world of work, political considerations, economic considerations, legal considerations and social considerations. We focus here on the third sub-aim, economic considerations, which is:

"To develop awareness of economic considerations in order to understand and participate in the social environment..."

(WJEC January 1982)

In itself, this is quite laudable, until we look at how it is achieved. In brief, it is to be achieved by focussing on:

- 1/ Personal Budgetting
 - 2/ Financial Management & Business
 - 3/ Financial Management in Self-Employment
 - 4/ The effects of government policies on individuals and business
 - 5/ The effects of international trades
- and 6/ The relationship between costs and benefits of economic activity⁸

Where is the economics perspectives in these areas? And on what basis are the first three regarded as economics? On what basis was number 5 selected to the exclusion of, say, the effects of financial institutes or the size of firms or, indeed, any component of standard CSE or GCE 'O' level examinations in economics.

The outlook appears even bleaker when we consider the learning strategies recommended in the Consultative Document⁹. For example, objective 3.7 is to

" investigate the sources and deployment of central and local government resources."

This is not to be investigated by consideration of the opportunity costs of different kinds of taxes, and their incidence and burden; neither is the student to explore the opportunity costs of competing government project. The three suggested strategies involve:

- 1/ Examining pay slips;
 - 2/ Interviewing local councillors;
- and 3/ Analysing the salient features of the Budget.

It is interesting to speculate about the way in which such activities can contribute to the student's economic "competence" (to use a favoured CPVE concept). The third strategy (above) might be more useful if students had to select for themselves the "salient" features of the Budget, and indicate for whom they were salient: the word "salient" means most prominent, and so the features to which the term was applied would differ between different economic agents.

In essence, the Document emphasises information-gathering and descriptive processes, at least as far as economics education is concerned, and appears to lack a coherent economics framework. There is a lack of understanding of the nature of economics, perhaps reflected by the change, in the same publication, of the title of this Core area from "Industrial, Social and Economic Studies" (p.10) to "Industrial, Social and Environmental Studies" (p.32). All this testifies to the fact, made known by the Economics Association (1984/6), that there was no consultation between the Joint Board and the Economics Association, and to the apparent ignorance of the Joint Board of developments in the economics education of 14-16 year olds. The understanding of the economic and social environment is unlikely to result (automatically) from the Joint Board's proposals. A better framework would seek to give students access to the economics perspective. In the CPVE scheme, the very existence of such a perspective is not acknowledged.¹⁰

In addition to these criticisms of the economics component of the framework, there are more general criticisms concerning both the underlying theory and the implementation of the CPVE.

in fact, this is a very low level of achievement. It is not to be achieved by learning.

- IV. The relationship between costs and benefits of economic activity
- V. The effects of international trade
- VI. The effects of government policies on individuals and business
- VII. Financial management in 2011-2012 year
- VIII. Financial management & business
- IX. Financial management

The outlook appears even brighter when we consider the learning strategies recommended in the Committee's report. For example, objective 1.1 is to

"Investigate the sources and deployment of central and local government resources."

It is not to be investigated by consideration of the opportunity costs of different kinds of taxes, and their behavioural impact; neither is the student to explore the opportunity costs of carrying government projects. The case suggested strategy involves:

- 1. Identifying local conditions
- 2. Identifying the relevant features of the budget.

It is interesting to speculate about the way in which such activities can contribute to the student's economic "competence" (to use a favoured CWT concept). The first strategy (above) might be more useful if students had to select for themselves the "relevant" features of the budget, and indicate from whom they were selected: the word "relevant" means that prominent, and so the features to which the term was applied would differ between different economic areas.

In summary, the document analyses information-gathering and descriptive processes, at least as far as economic education is concerned, and appears to lack a coherent economics framework. There is a lack of understanding of the nature of economics, perhaps reflected by the change, in the same publication, of the title of chapters from "Industrial, Social and Economic Studies" (p.16) to "Industrial, Social and Environmental Studies" (p.32). All this leads to the fact, made known by the Economics Association (1997), that there was no consultation between the Joint Board and the Economics Association, and to the apparent ignorance of the Joint Board of development in the economics education of 14-16 year olds. The understanding of the economic and social environment is unlikely to result (automatically) from the Joint Board's proposals. A better framework would seek to give students access to the economic perspective. In the CWT scheme, the very existence of such a perspective is not acknowledged.

In addition to these criticisms of the economic component of the framework, there are more general criticisms concerning both the underlying theory and the implementation of the CWT.

First there is the invention of new vocabulary such as "clusters" and "factors". In particular, the implication that there are levels of competence, as indicated in the assessment sheets for the preparatory modules (see Appendix S), and as in the statement:

" It is not required that every student completes every competence to the same performance level..."¹¹

Is debateable. Collins (1983) argues that competence, like uniqueness, is an absolute. One either is, or is not, competent in a particular area, and so it is semantic nonsense to specify minimum or maximum levels of competence. This may be too sweeping a statement. There are certain fields in which levels of competence are meaningful (e.g. piano playing). But, as Collins points out, the issue is more serious than a simple matter of semantics or syntax. It involves what is essentially a process of excessive reductionism of deliberating "categories, sub-categories, content areas, levels of competency etc." ¹² - and a futile process at that, since it is almost certainly impossible to define all the properties of competent performance in many fields. The approach is remarkably similar to that found in the USA known as "Performance Objectives", in which subject disciplines are broken down into goal categories, which are in turn subdivided into module objectives, which are then broken down into behavioural and instructional objectives, instructional activities and evaluation.¹³

The underlying psychological perspective of the CPVE framework would appear to be behavioural. Even though its statements of learning outcomes do not always fully equate with behavioural objectives, and even though, its view of assessment is a radical departure from the behaviouristic style of precisely quantifiable tests, some of the disadvantages of the behaviourist approach are evident or potential. Thus the statements for the student's Summative Profile do not cover every possibility, but one precisely specified in a way that suggests they do.¹⁴ A potential disadvantage is that overemphasis may be placed on the skills which are easiest to describe: the relatively simple, "low level" skills, as has apparently happened with BTEC's General (now "Introductory") course.¹⁵

The remaining criticisms concern the implementation of the CPVE. Almost the only widely available information about the CPVE comes from the Joint Board itself to the FEU. It is therefore, difficult to be sure whether one's own experiences are a typical or indicative of more common failings in the translation of CPVE then into practice. The following should therefore be regarded as a checklist of areas in which independent research is required. To underline this, they are framed as questions rather than statements.

1/ Can this new type of course be grafted on to the end of a more traditional five years' schooling and succeed? Ought not the approach be introduced earlier in the child's schooling?

2/ Following on from 1/, are the schools which are most successful in their CPVE provision, as measured by student achievement, precisely those which had already gone a long way to providing integrated courses and pupil-centred learning before the arrangements for CPVE were available?

3/ Are all of the schemes approved by the Joint Board fully in keeping with the CPVE philosophy, or have some schemes "slipped through the net"?

4/ If some schemes have been approved when they really should not have been, why was this so? Was it because of insufficient moderators, or insufficiently knowledgeable moderators - or was it to gain a larger share of the market being competed for by the CPVE, BTEC and the CGLI scheme - precisely those bodies which constitute the Joint Board! Why does such competition exist - especially as one of aims of the CPVE was to rationalise the position in this area?.

First there is the invention of new vocabulary such as "clusters" and "factors". In particular, the implication that there are levels of competence, as indicated in the assessment sheets for the preparatory modules (see Appendix 2), and as in the statement:

"It is not required that every student completes every competence to the same performance level..."¹¹

is debatable. Collins (1993) argues that competence, like intelligence, is an absolute. One either is, or is not, competent in a particular area, and so it is semantic nonsense to specify minimum or maximum levels of competence. This may be too sweeping a statement. There are certain fields in which levels of competence are meaningful (e.g. piano playing). But, as Collins points out, the issue is more serious than a simple matter of semantics or syntax. It involves what is essentially a process of excessive reductionism of delimiting "categories" and sub-categories, content areas, levels of competency etc. "12 - and a futile process at that, since it is almost certainly impossible to define all the properties of competent performance in any field. The approach is remarkably similar to that found in the USA known as "Performance Objectives", in which subject disciplines are broken down into goal categories, which in turn are subdivided into module objectives, which are then broken down into behavioural and instructional objectives, instructional activities and evaluation."¹³

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The remaining criticisms concern the implementation of the CPVE. Almost the only widely available information about the CPVE comes from the Joint Board itself to whom it is therefore difficult to be sure whether one's own experiences are a typical or indicative of some common failings in the translation of CPVE into practice. The following should therefore be regarded as a checklist of areas in which independent research is required. To underwrite this, they are framed as questions rather than statements.

1) Can this new type of course be grafted on to the end of a more traditional five years' schooling and succeed? Ought not the approach be introduced earlier in the child's schooling?

2) Following on from 1), are the schools which are most successful in their CPVE provision, as measured by student achievement, precisely those which had already gone a long way to providing integrated courses and pupil-centred learning before the arrangements for CPVE were available?

3) Are all of the schemes approved by the Joint Board fully in keeping with the CPVE philosophy, or have some schemes "slipped through the net"?

4) If some schemes have been approved when they really should not have been, why was this not? Was it because of insufficient moderation, or insufficiently knowledgeable moderators - or was it to gain a larger share of the market being competed for by the CPVE, BTBC and the GOU scheme - precisely those bodies which constitute the Joint Board? Why does such competition exist - especially as one of the aims of the CPVE WAS TO RATIONALISE THE PROVISION IN THESE AREAS?

5/ Is it realistic - or even fair - to expect schools to develop a radically new system of education when not only was the timetable for its implementation extremely short, but the information on which its implementation was to be based was made available in a piecemeal fashion? What has been the effect of the current teachers' dispute on the extent and quality of implementation) ¹⁶

6/ What advances have been made in matching the CPVE recognised by employers and other interested parties (including YTS and TVEI)? Or is it, in terms of concrete opportunities, an educational dead-end?

7/ Is negotiation between tutor and student honoured more in the breach than the

There are, it must be said, some very worthwhile aspects of the CPVE: In particular, its emphasis on involving the student in his/her own course design and assessment, its emphasis on developing affective as well as cognitive skills, its commitment to transferable skills and skills of transfer, and its emphasis on what the student can actually do. But the criticisms and questions directed at it in this paper must be addressed if it is to receive the degree and quality of attention if, on balance, probably deserves.

NOTES

1. The term "post-compulsory education" is used to refer to education for 16-19 year olds, mainly within schools.
2. The term "local" is used to refer to either individual schools or to a consortia of schools or of schools and colleges in a locality.
3. It is in this Core Area that economics education is to be found.
4. Adapted from BTEC (Jan. 1985a). The Consultative Document (btec, may 1984) places the Core Areas in a different order.
5. No information is provided about who identified these needs, and how and when.
6. BTEC (May 1984).
7. No details of these have been given as far as I can tell.
8. Adapted from BTEC (Jan. 1985b).
9. BTEC (May, 1984).
10. See also Appendix 3 : Core Statements 23.1 and 23.2.
11. BTEC (Autumn 1985).
12. Collins (1983) p.175.
13. See Miller (1972) for an example of this approach.
14. See Appendix 3.
15. This point was made by Barrie King on 20th February, 1986.
16. "CPVE IN Action" (FEU 1985b) praises teachers work in this difficult time - but this doesn't answer the question.

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Appendices

1. The Curriculum

Fig.1: Core Areas

Fig.2: Vocational Studies

Fig.3: How Modules Relate to Categories & Clusters

Fig.4: Examples of Clusters.

2. Orientation & Exploratory Learning Phases: Examples.

3. Core Statements.

Fig. 1 : Industrial, Social & Environment Studies

Fig.22 : Communication

4. Economics Education in the CPVE : Aims, Objectives & Strategies.

5. Assessment Sheet: Example.